

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

*Welcome to the Asbury Community!*

## Smart Sheep

As we continue our series *Do you hear what I hear?* we consider the role that faith has in hearing and discerning the voice of God. Faith gives us confidence that God speaks to us and that we can hear God's voice clearly enough to gain understanding. Yet we witness all the time people claiming to hear God's voice — "God told me to tell you..." and we immediately doubt their authenticity. God gets blamed for a lot of nonsense by persons unable or more likely, unwilling, to listen. We are, after all, quite self-focused.

Most of us have both a logical and a spiritual relationship with God. A logical relationship is associated with reasoning. It is a relationship of the mind. It may go something like this: "I don't think we got here by some freak accident of nature — although

evolution makes a lot of sense. Humankind started somewhere, but the creation story in Genesis seems like a stretch. I really hope that Jesus Christ is the son of God and that I haven't blown my chances with Him." Sound familiar? Your logic may vary a little or a lot. But let's face it, faith and belief usually begins with logic and certainly logic



enters in at some point. Even if we can avoid thinking about the details there is usually someone who brings it up. A non-believer may challenge us as naive. Someone with a different worldview might agree that

daily coverage. She also took the time to talk to other people. Staying in touch was a high priority.

I recall my mom telling her grand and great grand children to find something to do when they seemed to sit around lifeless neither playing nor talking to the people around them. "Your acting like an old person" my 90 year old mother would sometimes say. She followed her

there is a God but challenge the notion that Jesus Christ is God.

A spiritual relationship with God comes from the heart. It may unfold something like this: We read or hear something that defies logic. It doesn't quite add up. But rather than try to rationalize what we hear with some contorted logic, we suspect that there is something that we are missing. It doesn't shake our faith and it doesn't dilute our beliefs. If this new information is important enough we may study the subject more in-depth, asking God to reveal what we need to know. We may simply wait patiently for the time when we will have more clarity.

For some, the metaphor of sheep following a Shepherd is disturbing. We may bristle at the idea that we are sheep, following blindly, without the benefit of knowing the path we are following. *Page 2*

observation with "If your going to act like an old person find some place else to go...I don't care to hang out with old people." I suspect that my mom may have said this to friends of hers in the same category of age. She was a woman on the move even when she was sitting or unable to physically get up and go. She often spoke about her older friends who inspired her by their energy. *Page 2*

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*Special points of interest:*

> **Asbury Café is Now Open!**

**Remember that the Asbury Café is opened for lunch on Fridays from 10:00am-2:00pm outside the Worship Center on the main floor.**



**These selections will also be available on Sunday mornings before and after worship.**

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## Out of Time ...cont. from Page 1

There is another expression that I don't recall ever hearing from my mother but I have said it and heard it too many times. "We are out of time." Its one thing to hear this on a game show and another to hear it while feeling the pressure of completion in our daily lives. There is so much finality to this statement. And anxiety.

My mom was one of those persons who saw the glass as half full rather than half empty. Rather than fret over spilled milk she grabbed a mop and cleaned it up. Its funny when I think about it now. I don't recall a time when I thought that God was speaking to me through my mom's words but I do now. Mom wasn't out of time. The messages that God spoke to her are still ringing in my ears



## Smart Sheep ..cont. from page 1

Perhaps our problem is that we know very little about sheep. Perhaps a bigger problem is that we are still too much in the dark about Jesus Christ.

First, a little more about sheep. Smart sheep, which is nearly all sheep, recognize the voice of their Shepherd. This comes from a focus on awareness of that which is most important to their survival. A dumb sheep would follow any voice. A smart sheep can tell the difference.

I remember years ago when I googled "stupid sheep" to see what would happen, I got a list videos showing sheep doing stupid things. I get the point. By the way that we measure intelligence – sheep are not the sharpest knives in the drawer. This time

like church bells awakening me to her reminders that God controls the time.

It is amazing how often I hear Jesus in the words of people around me. I suppose that one advantage I may have is that I have had the privilege of studying scripture for years, particularly the Gospels. There is not a day that passes when I haven't read and learned something new from Scripture. Often, the same lesson I learned in the past. Conversations with Jesus never end as long as we are willing to "sit at his feet" with Mary and others to hear His voice.

Alison Ledgerwood is a professor of social psychology. She did a Tedx talk that is still available on YouTube about our propensity to get stuck in the negative. Research indicates that once we see a glass as half empty it takes a concerted effort to see the potential in a half glass of water. I'm convinced that this affects our discernment of God's voice. I can't imagine God focusing on the negative. Otherwise, salvation wouldn't be possible. I'm glad that God sees my potential as a glass half full.

"But what about the time" I frequently hear from persons after suggesting they spend more time with prayer and scripture. I get it. Its the same reasoning

around I noticed that the more popular (those at the front of the list) are articles that suggest otherwise. That sheep are not so dumb.

A BBC article described research that discovered that sheep are good at recognizing familiar faces in a crowd. I'm actually pretty good at that so I'm willing to enter this contest. Now had they discovered that they are good at remembering names I would have been really impressed. Are sheep really dumb or are they actually quite smart? Perhaps the use of sheep as a metaphor for following others without using our own head is an unfair depiction of sheep, and the point is more about using our logical minds within the context of what we

that I use to justify not running as I have done in the past. Time is our most convenient go to reason for not doing something that, let's face it, we have decided is not as important as other things in our schedule.

*So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day bring.*

*Matthew 6:34 GNT*

I don't think we need to feel ashamed of how we spend our time. This is the lesson for this week. We so often think of time as the past and the future we can easily miss that the only time that matters exists only in the present.

Time is a convenience for us or should be. We agree that Sunday worship begins at 10:30 am so that we can all plan on being together at the same time. Starting a little late is no big deal. Deciding to start at 9 am or Noon creates a problem for anyone who didn't get the email or text and had other plans during the new time. Choosing a time was a group discernment based on a bunch of factors that culminated in discerning what God had to say on the matter.

Jesus spoke about time and even more about anxiety and worry. Time, however, seemed to be about living in the present and letting the future take care of itself. Which is another way to saying let God handle the future who knows what is best. "Do not worry" are words that require trust that God is really in charge and has plans for our well being.

Join us each Sunday as we grow together in love. Invite others to do the same.

Pastor Tommy

know in our heart to be true. Christ tells us in many ways just what it means to have faith.

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## Smart Sheep ...cont. from page 2

In John 10 Jesus tell us that his sheep know his voice – In Matthew 25 Jesus tells us that in the end the sheep will be separated from the goats – those who fed and clothed the poor – those who visited and took care of those in need – they will be the sheep that Jesus will claim as his own.

Jesus often used sheep as a metaphor for what it means to have faith. In John 10:11 Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd who will lay down His life for His sheep. Jesus contrasts the Good Shepherd in the very next verse with the hired hand who runs away when the wolf comes and isn't willing to risk His life for the sheep. John 10 begins

with a description of how sheep behave that I think is key to understanding what Paul writes on the subject of faith rather than actions – that the gatekeeper opens the door for the shepherd and when the sheep hear His voice they follow. The sheep follow the Good Shepherd not because they either smart or not – they follow the Good Shepherd because they have faith.

If one of them gets lost, the Shepherd will search until they are found. The Shepherd leads them to greener pastures so that they may eat and to water so that they may drink. Yes – a sheep is a good

metaphor for the kind of faith that Paul speaks of – a faith that allows us to know that our shepherd loves us so much that He laid down His life for us. And to live our faith is to follow Him – to turn away is to die. The question is not how well a sheep does math – the question is how faithfully a sheep follows the Good Shepherd.

The gatekeeper opens the gate for him; the sheep hears his voice as he calls his own sheep by name, and he leads them out. When he has brought them out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice.

*John 10:3-4 GNT*

Friends – BE A SHEEP. Sheep are brilliant! But to be a sheep requires a change of heart - to have faith is to have a change of heart. A change of heart is not a "work-a-round" it is a turnaround. Unless there is a change of heart nothing really changes. A few symptoms may disappear – but eventually we go back to where we were.

On the other hand, changes of the heart involve true, often scary change. Changes of the heart involve the unknown. Such changes may mean not only facing the unknown – they may mean giving up something we are familiar with for something that we know little or nothing about.

Join us each Sunday as we grow together in love. Invite others to do the same. Remember, September 16 is Back to Church Sunday.

Pastor Tommy

### PICTURES FROM BACK TO SCHOOL EXPO



### HELD ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 31ST !!



### In Our Prayers

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Curtis Young         | Shirley Craig     |
| Rachel Bastine       | Christopher Lewis |
| Norma Buzzard        | Sarah Tanner      |
| Virginia Bigger      | Elizabeth Wright  |
| Barbara McIvor       | Judy Tanner       |
| Jonathon Misner      | Mary Lyons        |
| Nancy Auger          | Brenda            |
| Austin & Mary Suffle |                   |

### FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

- |                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| Sharon George    | Mary Nations  |
| Elaine Lamoreaux | Carmen Misner |
| Mary Russell     |               |



**Prayer is at the heart of our beliefs**

### Asbury Worship Series Do you hear what I hear? Second of Three Series

One of the goals for our first series in our trilogy was to shift our focus from the rules of religion to the opportunities for relationship with God and each other. One of the goals of this series is to help us further shift our thinking towards relation-

ship by considering how to listen for the voice of God. Religion calls this “discernment” and talks a lot about God’s Word particularly when criticizing others. Here we will explore what this word means for our community. Our focus in this next series is on how to listen, compare what we hear, and coming to a common understanding.

Discernment requires a relationship with God and with others. It is best done in community since God seems to offer a little bit of insight to each person in a group — even a group of two — requiring that we compare notes and requiring that we ask each other “Do you hear what I hear?”

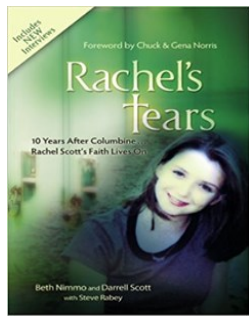
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### Book Club News

**NOTE - WE ARE NOW MEETING ON WEDNESDAYS AT 12 NOON.**

Has any one ever invited you to watch a movie or read a book with the qualifier “Are you ready for a good cry?” For some of us, this “sweetens” the invitation and the answer is nearly always YES. For some, this qualifier is a dis-qualifier. Why set my self up to cry on purpose? Then there is the middle ground — the majority. We may dip our toes in emotionally but hold out as long as possible. “There’s no crying in baseball!” is a line that comes to mind for me. That’s a lie. I’ve coached hundreds of children in baseball and tears are a part of the game. And a part of life.

As we put our last book selection behind us we turn from analysis to real life. While our last book was non-fiction and full of reporting on life it was mostly at a societal level as we analyzed the



state of our democracy, or lack there of, from a safe distance. Our next book invites us into the story — into the lives of a family devastated by our inability as a people to provide safety for our children. Not because we aren’t trying hard. But perhaps our lack of democracy plays a bigger role than we may care to recognize.

In our study just finished, authors Frances Moore Lappe and Adam Eichen argue that “Democracy is not a choice. Creating democracies truly accountable to their citizens is essential to our very survival—to the flourishing of societies supporting human life, and now, because of climate change, to the survival of the Earth...” The burning question is “What is the world that we want to create together?”

Certainly, our children are at the center of our hopes. As school shootings continue at an increasing rate while politician huddle in back rooms to find new ways to protect the interest of gun manufacturers and political contributions our youth are rising up and calling them to come out and look into the faces of children who are both afraid and tired of adults unwilling to take action. Our children are using their voices and their votes for change, even as some states try to create new obstacles that discourage them from voting.

Our next book takes us also into the heart of a teenager. A student at Columbine High School who once wrote in her personal journal, “I am not going

to apologize for speaking the name of Jesus . . . If I have to sacrifice everything . . . I will.” While I am not one who readily takes on a book that promises to turn on the tears I was hooked as soon as I began reading. And the tears...well have some tissues close by. Amazon’s website describes our next book, *Rachael’s Tears*, as follows:

The Columbine tragedy in April 1999 pierced the heart of our country. We later learned that the teenage killers specifically targeted Rachel Scott and mocked her Christian faith on their chilling, homemade videotapes. Rachel Scott died for her faith. Now her parents talk about Rachel’s life and how they have found meaning in their daughter’s martyrdom in the aftermath of the school shooting.

*Rachel’s Tears* comes from a heartfelt need to celebrate this young girl’s life, to work through the grief and the questions of a nation, and to comfort those who have been touched by violence in our schools today. Using excerpts and drawings from Rachel’s own journals, her parents offer a spiritual perspective on the Columbine tragedy and provide a vision of hope for preventing youth violence across the nation.



### Leadership in Worship & Service

Welcome Team Tony, Mirium,  
Ushers Anthony, Jim  
Production Team Mark  
Children Mirium & Emily  
Worship Leaders Cyndi  
Café Christine & Norma

Jim Craig Leadership Chair  
Connie Portillo Office Secretary  
Kevin Croom Farm to Table  
Israel Unger Business Operations

### Asbury Café

Plan to meet outside the sanctuary each Sunday before worship for coffee, tea, snacks, conversation and so on. The music will start when it is time to wrap up and head in for worship.

### Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor  
Mark Vorenkamp Children & Youth  
Sylvia Pittman Worship Arts

We encourage you to come to our Wednesday gatherings. Our small group hopes to widen our circle and so we hope that you will join in on our discussion. We meet each Wednesday at Noon. Come join us for a light lunch, fellowship and discussion. Our food selections have been fantastic and we always have plenty to share. And we are always on the lookout for our next book, video lesson or topic. Your participation and suggestions are greatly appreciated.

\* Nimmo, Beth, and Darrell Scott. *Rachel’s Tears: The Spiritual Journey of Columbine Martyr Rachel Scott*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000, 2008.

**Do you hear what I hear?** *continued from page 4*

There is an ancient parable that was constructed into a poem by John Godfrey Saxe, about six blind men who encounter an elephant. Each man has a different understanding of the elephant based on the part of the elephant that they are touching. None of them really know much about the elephant overall since they are each limited to their own experience.

*Six men of Indostan  
To learning much inclined,  
Who went to see the Elephant  
(Though all of them were blind)  
That each by observation  
Might satisfy his mind...  
And so these men of Indostan  
Disputed loud and long,  
Each in his own opinion*

*Exceeding stiff and strong,  
Though each was partly in  
the right,  
And all were in the wrong!*

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1 John Godfrey Saxe, The Poems of John Godfrey Saxe. (1873), (pp. 135-136)

**Coming up this week**

- Sept 3 Mon 6:00pm HAPPY LABOR DAY!**
- Sept 4 Tues 10am-2pm Water Pick up**
- Sept 5 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club**
- Sept 6 Thu 10am-2pm Water pick up**
- Sept 7 Fri 10am-2pm Asbury Cafe Open**
- Sept 8 Sat**

**Sept 9 Sunday**

- 9:30am Café Opens
- 10:30am New Beginnings
- Contemporary Worship

**Last Week for Worship**

**Attendance 30 Offering \$ 3,505**

Look for announcements scrolling on the our screen prior to the start of worship.

Email announcements by the Friday before to:  
FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com  
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**September 16, 2018 is Back to Church Sunday. Be sure to invite your friends, family and neighbors to join us for worship.**

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**Ways to Connect**

**Donate** –You can give online at FlintAsbury.org/donate

**Music Ministry** –We are looking for vocalists and musicians.

**Community Gardening** – The Asbury Farm needs volunteers.

**Pantry** - We need food items, including meats, paper products; personal items diapers, and financial support.

**Social Media** allows us to tell others about the work that God is doing. All of us can

help enhance our presence in the social media by posting on our Facebook and utilizing our website for blogging.

**Housing** - the Asbury House offers local college students a way to use their gifts and passions together with their faith in building a better neighborhood.

**Women’s Circles** - The women of Asbury meet regularly in small groups.

**Pastor’s Book Club** meets each Tuesday at 12Noon for fellowship, food and learning.

**\*\* New Asbury UMC Coffee Cups**



are available by bringing a friend or neighbor to Sunday Worship with you! Just fill out a Connect Card so we can get to know them too, turn it in to the Café ladies and you and your guest will be given one of these coffee cups.



**THE FLINT FARMING PROJECT**



## Life Group Questions & Notes

*The gatekeeper opens the gate for him; the sheep hear his voice as he calls his own sheep by name, and he leads them out. When he has brought them out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice.*

John 10:3-4 GNT

### NOTES FROM WORSHIP

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### QUESTIONS FOR SMALL GROUPS

1. When you think about your belief that Jesus Christ is God are there some parts that don't add up for you? How do you deal with doubt that comes from your logical mind?
2. Do you sometimes find yourself frustrated when someone questions your faith as irrational? Does this cause you to doubt? What helps you get past this?
3. How can the members of your group help you this week?



# Welcome to the Asbury Community

1653 Davison Rd  
Flint, MI 48506



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
FLINT, MICHIGAN  
PERMIT #151

Phone: 810-235-0016  
Fax: 810-235-0016 (call first when faxing)  
E-mail: FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com

## Neighborhood Connection



*We envision a community in love with God, each other, and our neighbors evidenced by the transformation of ourselves and our neighborhood. We are a center for worship & spiritual growth, a center for connections and a center for health & wellness.*

Our goal is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into citizens who contribute to building and maintaining a vibrant neighborhood, and all residents are able to enjoy safety, good health, a culture that fosters life long learning and satisfying lives.

We believe that such an ambitious goal can never be attained without God's grace and abundance and Christ calls each of us to be disciples willing to share our witness through words and acts.

## Asbury Worship Series ..Do you hear what I hear? *cont.. from page 5*

Discernment involves a community open to the possibility that God is speaking through actions and decisions all around us. For example, why is our weekly book club small group studying a book about democracy? Clearly, our situation in Washington has reached an all time low, but some question whether the church should take a position on politics? When Jesus said to give to Caesar (government) that which they claim and give to God what God claims was He making a politically neutral statement?

Here is a possible discernment: What if God is calling Asbury to become more active in making a political statement of inclusion and democratic process?

*...anyone who hears these words of mine and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain poured down, the rivers flooded over, and the wind blew hard against that house. But it did not fall, because it was built on rock*

*Matthew 7:26 GNT*

After all the work that we are doing in our community cannot be done in a vacuum.

The City's Master Plan affects our community and the people we serve. Decisions about land usage, whether we can combine lots, drill wells, eliminate streets and use

buildings are all a part of God's plan for good.



But FIRST ... Do you hear what I hear?

Pastor Tommy