

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

## Cracked

This is the Sunday in our liturgical calendar when we celebrate the baptism of Jesus. In this rite-of-passage is a holy mystery. And this mystery is made tangible through what looks to the world like a transformation of who we were, to the person we become. But I suspect that what really happens is a rebirth of the person God created us to be. We are a new creation in the sense that the person God created us to be emerges from within layers of insulation built by instincts of self-preservation. Let me explain.



## Spilled

Don't you imagine that God must roll His eyes at a lot of our requests? We think that we need the latest fashion, that we need to impress others, that we want our party to be the best ever. I suspect that most of us think that God not only holds us to a tight budget, but it is a rather meager one at that. "Just the essentials" we im-

In order to make it through life we needed to "layer up" as a defense against the attacks of the enemy levied through persons we encountered who were in positions of power. Many didn't realize that they possessed this power. Worse, much of the hurt comes through people who loved us.

As a result, we live in a virtual cocoon waiting to emerge into the light of Christ awakened by the beams that find their way through the cracks in our armored layers. "There is a crack in everything" sings the late poet and song writer, Leonard Cohen, "that's how the light gets in."

We are cracked but this is a good thing. God's light shines in through our cracks and even-

agine God saying, "You don't need anything except My approval."



tually our light finds a pathway out from our core that the world can see that we are children of the light.

**"I have seen it," said John,  
"and I tell you that he is  
the Son of God."**

*John 1:34 GNT*

This metaphor offered by Cohen has inspired me through the years to celebrate and give thanks for the process of metamorphosis that began with my baptism. Perhaps the process of rebirth began late for me. I wasn't baptized as an infant but as a young child sometime after my family settled into a home in Memphis.

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## Special points of interest:

**Asbury Café is Open!**

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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## Spilled ...cont. from Page 1

It's true. We serve a God who chose to live among people. Not the rich and powerful, but among people living on the margins. The poor. The outcasts. The sick and the lame. We serve a God who did not use divine power for His own comfort and purpose. Isn't it hard to imagine that God doesn't expect the same sacrifices out of us?

Doesn't God expect each one of us to sell everything, give the money to the poor and follow Him? And if this is true, what is the good news all about? No wonder so many people decide to sleep in on Sunday mornings rather than go to church. Who wants to be made to feel guilty that they either have, or want, a house, a job, a car, a family and money to take a vacation every year? No one who has these things.

**There was a wedding in the town of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine had given out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They are out of wine."**

**John 2:1-3 GNT**

## Cracked... cont. from page 1

But living in an environment that included a church family in addition to my own family, allowed the process of rebirth to continue. The process that I am illustrating here using a cocoon as a metaphor, to allow the light of Christ to shine into my very core where the image of my Savior is found. An image found within the very DNA that describes my true identity. I am a child of Christ.

Baptism is a ritual that is repeated all over the world. Sometimes in private, due to persecution and danger. But always in a community of others who similarly are in the process of shedding their cocoon so that their light can shine from the source of their identity. Our collective lights provide a beacon to a world living in darkness where

So I imagine that one of the best arguments that people have with themselves, perhaps without actually voicing the words, is why get involved in church if it means that I have to put myself and my family's need behind the needs of others? For a lot of young people just setting out into the world with great expectations of finally having some extra money in their pocket for something they always wanted, even if they grew up in a church family, there is an overwhelming temptation to wait to get involved with church until sometime later. "Let me enjoy life for a while" I hear them saying. "I'll come back to church after my career gets off the ground."

I remember the first time my daughter, Nicole, came to hear me preach while I was serving at Second Grace in Detroit. It was my first sermon there and I shared some of my testimony. How I had come to realize that I needed to give up my career in the computer industry and devote my life entirely to Christ as a pastor. "It's not fair," Nicole said to me after worship. "You had your career. You had your success. And then you had

too many have allowed their metamorphosis to stall. Too many have let their rebirth wait upon a rekindling of their internal flame that is kept dark by a world dominated by fear, greed and scarcity. They think that they can do it outside of the church. This misconception is the result of a fallen world. Our brokenness requires a miracle healing that can only come from our Creator. Healing is a

**"How can a grown man be born again?" Nicodemus asked.**

**John 3:4 GNT**

gift offered to all of creation. Baptism is a celebration of its receipt. The church is the cocoon that feeds and nurtures this process.

your conversion. I want to have a career too."

I wasn't sure what to say. It was clear that my sermon touched a nerve. It sounded like my daughter thought that my sermon was tailor-made to her. But I didn't know that she would be there when I completed my notes that week. I was simply sharing my story. Not her story. I didn't ask anyone to

**They filled them to the brim, and then he told them, "Now draw some water out and take it to the man in charge of the feast." They took him the water, which now had turned into wine.**

**John 2:7-9 GNT**

give up their career to follow Jesus. I said to her what I truly believe and I will say to anyone "waiting" to get involved in a church. "That's ok. You can wait as long as you want to have the joy that I feel now. No one is rushing you."

In the Gospel of John, chapter 2, we read about a time when Jesus, His mother and His followers attended a wedding in Cana. When we think about Jesus and all of the healing and feeding miracles, His teaching, His turning over tables at the Temple, we might not catch the idea that Jesus went to parties. That Jesus attended wedding receptions. In Cana, that day, Jesus attended a wedding reception where the budget wasn't enough. Midway through the evening the unthinkable happened. They ran out of wine.

Hospitality at that time was considered mandatory. If you had guests you fed them. If you threw a party you made sure you had enough. To fail to do what expected was to bring shame to your family and damage to your credibility. And since families were not just centers of consumption but centers

**Cracked...cont. from page 2**

John the Baptist had a holy purpose that sprang out from within who he was created to be. He preached to the crowds with words that encouraged repentance and baptism in preparation for the One who was to come after him. John baptized with water. Likewise, the baptism we offer is with water. An important but impotent testimony that we believe that salvation has come. The power comes not from us or from the water but from the power of the Holy Spirit manifested and nurtured through our collective work as a church. "Jesus," testified John, "baptizes with the Holy Spirit of God." An undeniably powerful initiation of passage that begins the rebirth of the recipient.

A rebirth that can never be completely stopped. Only temporarily stalled. But the birth pangs are felt by the emerging believer so strongly that each day of delay is torture that cannot be relieved by anything the world offers.

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**In Our Prayers**

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

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

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

**Spilled...cont. from page 2**

Of production—in other words, every family was also a family business—bringing shame to your family also brought a not-so-good reputation to your family business. Who is going to buy olives from a business that didn't plan ahead? And what better evidence of reliability than a wedding reception that is off the hook.

Jesus' mother was tuned into the pending shortage and went to her son to let Him know. Mary asked Jesus in the most subtle way that mother's know how to ask without really asking and Jesus responded the way a good Son responds. He did what His mother expected. Jesus took care of the problem.

This miracle that Jesus performed in Cana is the first of seven miracles that demonstrate that Jesus had power that was beyond human power. And Jesus made it clear that He did only that which His Father God gave Him to do. And what was on God's agenda?

According to John's Gospel, God empowered Jesus to make wine out of water to save a party. As John's Gospel continues, Jesus then heals the son of an official without even going to his house. Jesus then heals a man who had been lame for 38 years. And Cana

won't be the last party Jesus will save — He will feed over 5,000 people without a caterer and with a feast that seems to come out of nowhere. Later Jesus will walk on water, heal a man blind since birth and raise Lazarus from the dead.

Tell me, are these the miracles of a God of mediocrity? Is this a God who expects us to just get by? Do these miracles sound to you like Jesus Christ wants us just be happy with whatever comes our way no matter how little we have?

**Time after time, we see God's generosity come through in such abundance that it defies logic.**

God's nature is abundance. We see this in nature. We see God's abundance in times of need. We see God's abundance when we ask and are obedient. True, we don't get everything we pray for. True, we sometimes run out, come up short, miss a payment and go without something that we really need. But time after time, we see God's generosity come through in such abundance that it defies logic. We see miracles.

And joy is the most abundant of all when we are faithful. If your Sunday mornings are reserved for sleeping in or just hanging out at home. Take your time. Enjoy yourself. And when you are tired of feeling like you're missing something that you can't live without, come join us for worship. Find the abundant joy that does not come when you put anything else ahead of serving God. See you in church.

Pastor Tommy



Prayer is at the heart of our beliefs



**Asbury Worship Series  
Insight  
Believing is Seeing**

Stories of people's sight being restored by Jesus are found throughout the Gospels. Blindness is both a lack of physical sight and a lack of divinely inspired insight. We are spiritually blind if we see the world strictly from a human perspective. Divine sight sees

much more. Divine sight is like X-ray vision that can see through hurt and struggle. Divine sight sees healing while human sight sees only brokenness. A person can be physically blind but have insight. A person can have 20/20 vision and have no insight.

Our new worship series, *Insight*, begins appropriately on the day we Christians call "Epiphany" Sunday (January 6). While most

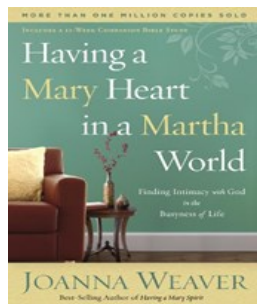
of our manger scenes include the astrologers from the East, commonly called the Wise-man, the reality is that they likely arrived afterwards.



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**Book Club News**

Do you consider yourself a busy person? Are your days generally filled with things to do? Are there some days where



you feel like you are falling further behind? These are questions that according to the author of our next book could be proceeded with "You may be a Martha if..." Perhaps you not a Martha-type. Instead of busyness

that never ends you take time to "smell the roses" and talk to strangers and manage to be the target of rolling eyes and harsh comments about not doing your share of the chores. Well, "You might be a Mary if..."

On Wednesday, October 31, we begin our next book titled *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*. Mary and Martha are named in the Gospels in three places: Luke

10:38-42, John 11:1-44, and John 12:1-11. Scholars suspect that Jesus frequently stayed with the two sisters and their brother Lazarus, but these are the three stories of Jesus visiting them that we find in scripture. One thing is clear in terms of their type-casting, Mary is not Martha and Martha is not Mary. They are two very different people who both want to know and serve Jesus Christ.

This study offers an invitation for everyone of us who feels like we just aren't godly enough... or loving enough... or that we just aren't doing enough. Our lives today really are not all that different from that of Mary and Martha in the New Testament. Like Mary, don't you also long to sit at the Lord's feet... but the daily demands of a busy world just won't leave you alone? Like Martha, don't you love Jesus and really want to serve Him... yet don't you often struggle with weariness, resentment, and feelings of inadequacy?

Just like the story told by Luke, Jesus comes right into the midst of your busy Mary/Martha life and extends the same

invitation He issued long ago to the two sisters of Bethany. Tenderly He invites you to choose "the better part" of life. A joyful life of "living-room" intimacy with Him. An intimacy that flows naturally into serving Him. Come learn how can you make that choice. In this study we will learn how all of us, Marys and Marthas alike, can draw closer to Jesus Christ, deepening our devotion, strengthening our service, and doing both with less stress and greater joy.

Author Joanna Weaver' book has sold over a million copies and her books and Bible studies have been used by hundreds of churches, life groups and individuals. Our time with Joanna's book will be guided using a ten week study guide that she provides along with short video clips from her companion DVD. Joanna is the mother of three children and the wife of a pastor in Montana so she has plenty of experience in the church environment. While this book is written from a woman's perspective the story and lessons are equally applicable to all gender identities.

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.

Pastor Tommy

\* Weaver, Joanna. *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World: Finding Intimacy with God in the Busyness of Life*. CO: Crown Publishing Group, 2000.

**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

**Asbury Worship Series ... Insight...Believing is Seeing.. Cont. from page 4**

So we set aside a separate day of recognition to celebrate, not so much their arrival, as their departure. It is a miracle that these individuals travelled to find the newborn King. But the miracle began with the insight that they received to know to make the trip. We call this an "epiphany" or divine insight.

Beyond the obvious, these astrologers were not Jewish. In biblical terms we know them as Gentiles. That's the biblical term used for those of us who are likewise not Jewish. We believe in the same God found in our Old Testament who was initially known as the God of what became to be the people of the Exodus and are known as the "Jews". But this God is also the God of Abraham who is claimed by the people of Islam

**- Coming up this week -**

- Jan 21 Mon 6pm Leadership Team**
- Jan 22 Tues 10am-2pm Water Distribution**
- Jan 23 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club**  
6pm Beginners Bible Study
- Jan 24 Thu 6pm Worship Band Practice**
- Jan 25 Fri 10am-2pm Asbury Cafe Open**  
6pm Asbury Youth Group
- Jan 26 Sat**
- Jan 27 SUNDAY**  
9:30am Café Opens  
10:30am New Beginnings  
Contemporary Worship

**Last Week for Worship:**

**Attendance 22 Offering \$ 1,527**

to be Allah — the God they worship.

What sets us apart as Christians is the epiphany that these astrologers were given that led to their discovery. That this newborn "King of the Jews" was also God who chose to be born human, live as human, die by execution at the hands of the powerful, only to rise from the dead. Human power cannot reduce divine power. Human insight cannot see that which divine insight can see. An epiphany is only a glimpse, but an epiphany can be life changing and affect the world in substantial ways.

By some estimates there are 285 Million people in the world who are visually impaired. Persons who are visually impaired are unable to see better than 20/40 even with corrective lenses. Approximately 39 Million persons are considered blind. According to the CDC, 3%

*"One thing I do know; I was blind, and now I see."*

*John 9:25 (GNT)*

of people living in the U.S. are visually impaired. The CDC doesn't offer estimates of the percentage of people who are spiritually blind, but I'm guessing that we are all visually impaired, spiritually. We all lack divine insight to various degrees.

The tag line for our worship series is *Believing is Seeing*. When

we receive the gift of faith, of belief, we are also given a dose of divine insight. We are able to "see" that God lived among people. That Jesus Christ is also God. This gift of sight, like the epiphany given to the astrologers from the East, is the beginning of our journey to the manger. Our trip to the heart of God. The Bible becomes our corrective lenses. We are still mostly blind spiritually, but we as we grow in our faith we gain more divine insight each day.


During our journey together that begins on Epiphany Sunday, we will consider how doubt and faith are friends, how doubting God is part of our journey. Without doubt there is no need for faith. And sometimes "just believe" is simply not enough. I'm thinking that we ought to spend a little bit of time on why I don't like "church" people. This will take some explanation so stand by. Which comes first, faith or doing? This "chicken and egg" question is a great one for understanding divine insight.


I hope that you will join us each Sunday to talk more about gaining insight. The trip to the manger is filled with amazement and awe. Come and see what God has done for yourself.

Pastor Tommy

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**SAVE THESE DATES ...**



 **MAGIC**  
THE GATHERING

**AS EDUCATION**

A three-part class teaching Math, Strategic Planning, and Teamwork Strategies through learning Magic: The Gathering.

All participants will receive two "welcome decks" that will be used for the class and can be kept after.

Thurs Jan 24, 31, Feb 7 - 4:30-6:00PM  
FREE  
Participants 8 to 18 are welcome

**ASBURY CHURCH  
1653 DAVISON RD  
FLINT, MI 48506**

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## Breakthrough Concert & Celebration

Pastor Nick Hill, a beloved friend of Asbury, is releasing his 2nd CD - Breakthrough.

Asbury Empowerment Arts Center will host a concert celebration on Friday, Feb 1 at 7:00 PM.

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## Asbury Farm to Table



While turning blight into beautiful and productive landscape is good on its own, transforming a food desert into abundance is life giving. But Asbury wants to make sure that produce is available on the tables of our residents. Our culinary arts and nutritional education programs offer residents the know how just as our farms offers nature's bounty. In addition, the Asbury Café is a culinary experience accessible to our neighbors and anyone with an appetite. Our "pay what you can" approach means that no one is turned away. Those who can help either on the farm or in the café are offered special MyFlint-Stones tokens that can be used either in the Asbury Café or in exchange for produce to prepare at home.

We proudly accept MyFlintStones

The Asbury Café is open Fridays 10am to 2pm & Sundays 10 am to 12 Noon

### ASBURY CAFÉ MENU

Open Fridays 10am to 2pm

*Pay what you can*

#### DELI SUBS

Lettuce, onions, tomato plus choice of ham, turkey or beef

#### STIR FRY

Local grown garden vegetables sautéed with love and herbs

#### GARDEN SALAD

Local grown greens & vegetables. Ham, turkey or beef upon request

#### WRAPS

Lettuce, onions, tomato plus choice of ham, turkey or beef

#### MUFFINS

Chef Kevin's special recipe with fruit, love and other delights baked in.

#### SMOOTHIE

Assorted flavors of the day

#### COFFEE

Regular or decaf





# 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.

## Cracked... cont. from page 3

Try as we do to find relief through any means available whether drugs, power, and whatever feels like temporary relief, but the pang is so deeply seated within that the effect soon wears off and leaves us feeling unsatisfied. Only the completion of our rebirth can bring relief. But the enemy excels at hiding this gift within our own brokenness in clever ways that we cannot detect on our own power.

"There is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" shouts John the Baptist in front of the crowds as Jesus approaches. The "sin" of the world. A singular noun that encompasses centuries of brokenness dating back to the first humans in the garden. An accumulation of layers of denial and attacks on our identity levied by an enemy who knows our weakness more thoroughly than we can ever know. A burden of universal proportion that cannot be lifted by our own power. But the hand that Jesus offers us must be grasped. We are invited but we are not

Mandated. Holy love is so pure that it can only be consumed by our own willingness to drink the balm that has been prepared for us since the beginning of time.

"Come Holy Spirit. Come" we whisper to ourselves. "Come Jesus. Come." the Holy Spirit intercedes on our behalf when we are unable to formulate the words on our own. God is with us even in the midst of our own failure. Come to the waters of baptism. Be refreshed.

**"There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in."**

*Leonard Cohen, Anthem*

If you have never been baptized I invite you to schedule your baptism with me. I would be honored to be a part of your rebirth. If your children have not been baptized we will plan a celebration of baptism for them. Their age doesn't matter. Baptism is something that God does. We simply do the ritual. If you have been baptized once will do it.

The results already took even if you haven't felt it and others haven't seen it. Your baptism simply needs to be awakened within the nurturing love of a church community.

We celebrate the baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ because in offering us this ritual which God Himself also participated in, we have a tangible expression of a life-saving event that otherwise would be even more mysterious. How do the water molecules have their effect? This is a mystery that we can only explain with metaphors like metamorphosis and cocoons, but it is a mystery that can be seen in our rebirth.

"How can a grown man be born again?" Nicodemus asked (John 3:4). Come and see. Come and experience. Don't let the enemy convince you that your faith has little or nothing to do with church. Jesus gave us church as a means for coming together to be birth attendants for one another. Come and see.

Pastor Tommy