

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Welcome to the Asbury Community!

Weird Uncle John

The world is full of weird uncles and weird aunts. Let's face it. The world is full of weird people. Many of us gathered with family and friends for Thanksgiving and we will do this again as part of celebrating Christmas. Some of them will be weird. And we will experience some weird moments.

"Weirdness" implies a characteristic that is outside what is expected. Outside the norm. Sometimes people purposely go for weirdness like a fashion statement. It occurred to me that the term "dress for success" generally suggests the opposite of weird in most cases. Instead of tattered clothes with stains we choose a busi-

ness suit. What's weird for a lot of us is that instead of choosing comfortable we choose uncomfortable. So why be successful if it means be uncomfortable? How weird is that?

My point is that "weirdness" like art, is in the eyes of the beholder (s). When I say a weird thing happened to me the other day I am declaring that whatever happened was not normal for my day and by inclusion, your day. Have you ever had something happen that you suspect was the result of divine intervention and you referred to it as something weird? For example, I might say, "The

is little doubt that John was the weird one in the family. And for a lot of us, John was an interesting character.

What is it about John the Baptizer that makes him so interesting? What makes John weird? Is it the foreshadowing of his life to come by his father, Zechariah's prophecy? Is it the

weirdest thing happened this morning. I was looking for a sale on shoes and I came across this book that I couldn't stop reading. I think it may change my life!"



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way he dressed, his diet? Could it be that John had a way with words? John the



Baptizer was apparently not one to soft pedal the truth and his message cut to the heart of the matter.

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December 16, 2018

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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Breaking News ...cont. from Page 1

There is a lot written about John in the Gospels. He makes an appearance in all four Gospels and both Matthew and Luke talk about John in five different chapters. We know about John's birth from Luke, his death from two of the Gospels, and his purpose is told in all four Gospels.

All of John's attributes combine into a person who gathered crowds. They came from all over to the desert located East of Jerusalem to see and hear this man who some said might be the Messiah himself. But John knew that he was no Messiah. His job was simple. To prepare the way for the coming of the real Messiah who would baptize with Spirit and fire, and who would bring divine justice to the people. While this claim still leaves a lot to the imagination, John was clear on one thing — preparation begins with repentance.

What if John, like so many of the illustrations in scripture, is a metaphor? What if his calling is an illustration of our calling? What if John has passed the

baton to each of us to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah? If not, then who is preparing the way for Jesus' return? How does the prophecy of Zechariah fit our circumstances? Are we called to be weird, like John the Baptizer?

When someone steps outside the cultural norm and holds up a mirror for the rest of us to see ourselves plainly we generally don't respond graciously.

Tell all the nations what he has done! Tell them how great he is! Sing to the Lord because of the great things he has done. Let the whole world hear the news.

Isaiah 12:4-5 GNT

We are more likely to respond the way we did on the school playground. "Well so do you!" In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus highlights this human reaction contrasting the criticism levied at John the Baptist with the criticism used against himself. Both John and

Jesus called for repentance and a new way of living in the world.

In Luke, Chapter 7 and in Matthew, Chapter 11, Jesus says: John the Baptist came, and he fasted and drank no wine, and you said, 'He has a demon in him!' The Son of Man came, and he ate and drank, and you said, 'Look at this man! He is a glutton and wine drinker, a friend of tax collectors and other outcasts!' God's wisdom, however, is shown to be true by all who accept it." (Luke 7:33-35 & Matthew 11:18-19).

However, there is one difference in the last verse of these two. In Luke, the Good News Translation says that the proof is those who accept it and in Matthew, Jesus says that the proof is in the results. Both point to those of us who claim to be believers. That the truth of Jesus Christ is evident in us. This truth also concludes that the truth of our belief is seen by others in what we do and don't do. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus emphasized that the Kingdom of God is within us and the evidence of its existence in us is seen in how we respond.

Each of us are called to prepare the way for the return of Jesus Christ. Much is written about what we are to anticipate at that time. Promises of eternal life with Lord Savior are contrasted with judgment and death. John the Baptist had a certain "edge" about him. He had a sense of urgency. John knew that the Kingdom of God was at hand and his purpose was to prepare the way by sharing his testimony as evidence of the truth.

Weird Uncle John... cont from page 1

There are weird events and there are weird people. In fact, the early Christians were referred to using adjectives that implied a certain weirdness. After all, they claimed that the God they worshiped lived among them, died and was resurrected. This is not normal. This is weird. Others called the early Christians weird because of the odd way that they expressed love by helping people. And it was weird to share all of your possessions.

In the last book of the Old Testament we find the prophecies of Malachi (Mal'akiy). Generally, prophets are considered weird because they are telling us that something out of the ordinary, something

weird, is going to happen. And some of the Old Testament prophets wrote the book on weird. Malachi prophesied that God would send a messenger to prepare the way for a time when God would be present with God's people.

The idea of God being present among God's people was not new. After all, God led the Hebrew slaves out of Egypt. However, during that time, Scripture describes God's presence in supernatural terms. God's presence was more like lightning, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires and other occurrences in nature that frighten us and remind us that we are not in control.

Breaking News.. Cont. from page 2

Like John, like Jesus, we will be criticized by some regardless of how we dress, what we eat or drink, and with whom we choose to spend time. But consider this possibility. Each of us has a deep, insatiable yearning to know Christ but many are still searching. Perhaps they have heard the good news and even claim to believe it. But they are holding tightly onto the trappings, the imposers, that claim to offer satisfaction.

This emptiness is haunting and drains them of their joy. For many, denial is the only escape left. Denial com-

This Christmas give the gift of life. Give your testimony ...

bined with reducing that which we know, that which we claim, by reducing us. To the “norm” we are weird. We value others as more important than ourselves. We give without expecting anything in return. We love even in the shadows of hate.

This Christmas give the gift of life. Give your testimony that Jesus Christ, the Son of God was born, lived among people and will come again. Be weird. You don’t need to dress like John the Baptizer. Be the person God made you to be. **Merry Christmas!**

Pastor Tommy

CALLING ALL ACTORS & ACTRESSES!

- ASBURY WORSHIP CENTER IS HOLDING AUDITIONS -

Auditions for “Dusty the Donkey, Seeking His Destiny” the Christmas Pageant, to be held at Asbury United Methodist Church 1653 Davison Road, Flint 48506. Please contact Terrance Williams at 310-804-2087 to schedule time. The pageant will be showing on Monday December 24, 2018 from 6pm-7pm only.

List of Characters:

| | | | |
|-------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Narrator | any | | |
| | Ages: | | Ages: |
| (3) Camels | 20-60 | Elizabeth | 30+ |
| (2) Goats | 7-15 | Zachariah | 30+ |
| (2) Sheep | 7-15 | Gabriel | 40+ |
| Dusty | 40+ | King Herod | 40+ |
| Mama Donkey | 60+ | (3) Wise Man | 40+ |
| Mary’s Mom | 30-40 | (3) Shepherds | 40+ |
| Mary’s Dad | 35-40 | Inn’s Keeper | 40+ |
| Mary | 12-16 | Townspople | 3-90 |
| Joseph | 18-20 | | |

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 |



Prayer is at the heart of our beliefs

Asbury Worship Series Weird Make Christmas weird again

It's that time of year again. The red kettles and bell ringers are out. Black Friday, cyber-Monday is now cyber-week, Christmas decorations and concerts. A time when our emotions can move back and forth from reckless exuberance to dark depression. Witness a random act of kindness brought on by the spirit of the season while listening to a favorite Christmas song and our outlook for human-kind soars. Check our bank balance while

making out our gift buying list and darkness settles over us.

It is also that time of year when I find myself explaining what "Advent" means. Advent is a rather odd sounding word that is for the most part, insider church talk. Although Advent Calendars are quite popular since they allow us to count down the days to Christmas.



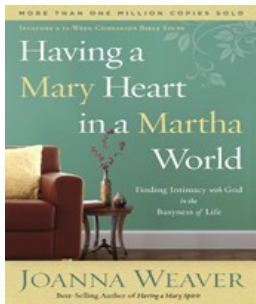
"Advent" comes from a Latin word — *Adventus*. It means arrival. So advent doesn't have to be a church word. We could be talking about the "advent" or the "arrival" of any event or special guest. But this Latin word was derived from an ancient Greek word that appears in scripture — *Parousia*. This word actually means "being present" and refers in Scripture to the return of Jesus or second coming. So the word Advent has special meaning for Christians even if we don't use the word.

So as Christmas, we use the word "advent" to talk about our expectation of Jesus' arrival as we prepare to

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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..."



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?

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

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

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

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.

Asbury Worship Series ..Make Christmas weird again.. Cont. from page 4

celebrate Jesus' birth along with celebrating the promise of His return. One really interesting point for me is that Jesus didn't really go anywhere except metaphorically. He is still present with us. While we more precisely say that it is the Holy Spirit, sent by Jesus, that is present, we also claim that Jesus, the Holy Spirit and God are One and the same. This must seem rather weird to non-believers.

Speaking of weird, I read an article this morning titled *Make Christmas Weird Again*.* At first I thought that this would make a great title for our worship series for this season. I still think that it is a good title but perhaps too many words. So its our subtitle. I like the one or two word titles that leave a lot more to the imagination. So I called our series *Weird*. I do agree with the writer. Christmas is a season that has evolved in weird ways. Christmas is weird enough to make a great topic for a worship series.

Pastor Caleb offers one way of describing the "Christmas story"

Visits from other worldly messengers, a preteen pregnancy, a burdensome road-trip, the worst hotel luck of all time (one star Yelp reviews for every chain in Bethlehem), barn animals as doulas (birth coach) and shepherds as attending nurses, whispers of ancient prophecies, and the idea that this little baby,

being washed in the water from a cow's trough, is the very son of God.

So in an effort to "make Christmas weird again" here at Asbury we plan to tell the Christmas story using a play titled "Dusty the Donkey Seeks His Destiny" that tells the story through the eyes of Mary's donkey. This original play, written by our own Terrance Williams with assistance from Sylvia Pittman and yours truly will debut on Christmas Eve. You won't want to miss it. The parts that feature the donkey are only loosely supported by Scripture but the overall story is right out of Scripture.

So what if we spent our "Advent" — our time of preparation looking at other stories through the eyes of the animals that made travel and other chores easier? Would this make our Christmas weird again? Perhaps next year.

Our theme Scripture for this series comes from the Prophet Jeremiah. God is reminding us that the divine plan is that we will return to God with all of our heart. We will be all in. We will surrender our earthy ambitions to God's will entirely, realizing that God may have a purpose in mind that will shock us and certainly a plan that will surprise us once we surrender. But trust is the key. Total surrender.

We believe that the prophecies found in Scripture that announced the coming arrival of a Messiah are referring to Jesus Christ. The controversy begins with different interpretations and expectations of what God had in mind. Not unlike the weirdness of this season we call Christmas. It is reasonable to conclude that the controversy was setup at the beginning when our first parents disobeyed the only rule that God gave them. Their reaction to their shame created a seemingly impenetrable barrier between them and God. This is where the Messiah comes in for Christians. To break through this barrier.

But Messiah for some may have more to do with freedom from oppression. And it does. For others, the Messiah will bring relief from hunger, poverty or homelessness. And it does. Whatever our idea of what the Messiah is expected to do, whatever salvation means to us, affects what we expect from our Messiah and affects how we relate to the weirdness of Christmas. But ultimately, whatever "extras" we believe that the Messiah bring, reconciliation to God is where salvation begins for us.

Going back to Pastor Caleb's provocative explanation of the weirdness of Christmas we find a few of the points of the controversy. Preteen pregnancies surely cannot be a good thing. But they happen. There should always be someplace for a couple in distress to find a room for the night. A Red Roof Inn at least, Super Bowls and other special events not withstanding.

And whoever heard of a child being born in a barn. How unsanitary!

But it happened, we claim, and even weirder is that this family is the "Holy Family" who gave birth to and raised the Son of God. This seems rather far-fetched. Yet, Millions of people have held firmly to the belief that this is what happened. And it seems rather strange to mix this event up with a man in a red suit visiting houses around the world with presents. But we do. And this is really weird.

Neither this series nor this article is about the history of Christmas and how this holiday that initially recognized the winter solace — the time when the days start becoming longer, nor are they about how this holiday became both a religious holiday and the hope for retailers to make most of their profits for the year. But, this series honors all of our weirdness and presumes that if we are created in God's image, perhaps God has a thing for weirdness and for weird people like us.

This is the bottom line, isn't it? The question of whether God has a thing for people like us has a lot to do with how we view God, the world and this weird holiday season we call Christmas. Some folks feel like the idea of a Messiah that comes in with guns blazing. Yet Jesus did not have a carry permit. It's doubtful Jesus owned any form of weapon. Perhaps a pocket knife.

Some folk's idea of a Messiah is someone who followed all the rules. But, Jesus followed the heart of God which sometimes led Him to stand against rules as the world interpreted them. Some folk's idea of a Messiah is a king who has the finest ride, a 747 to jet around the world and an army that does his bidding. But Jesus had none of that. He was born into a poor family in humble surroundings and hung out with people who a lot of folks wouldn't give them the time of day. If Jesus had used tweets they would be life giving and full of love rather than hateful and destructive.

The truth is that God does have a thing for people like us. Worriers, carefree and careless, over sensitive, overly critical and fairly described by a list of non-flattering adjectives that would take too much time to write down, people. This is the good news that Jesus Christ came to share with us. There is nothing that we have done that disqualifies us from the love of God and actually there is nothing that we can do that will nullify God's love for us.

I invite you to join us each Sunday during this Christmas season and help make Christmas weird by knowing and sharing the story of the Messiah and God's plan for us.

Pastor Tommy

Coming up this week

Dec 17 Mon

Dec 18 Tues 10am-2pm Water Distribution
4-8pm Way Academy Graduation

Dec 19 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club

6pm Beginners Bible Study

Dec 20 Thu

10am-2pm Christmas food boxes

Dec 21 Fri 10am-2pm Asbury Cafe Open

Dec 22 Sat

Dec 23 SUNDAY

9:30am Café Opens

10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship:

Attendance 23 Offering \$ 3,920

SAVE THESE DATES!

DUSTY THE DONKEY, SEEKING HIS DESTINY

The Christmas Pageant

Join us in discovering how a very special donkey, Dusty discovers his own destiny and helps bring the Son of God into the world.

December 24, 2018 6pm-7pm

Asbury United Methodist Church 1653 Davison Road, Flint 48506, 810-235-0016



The Longest Night Service is a Contemporary Service for those who struggle or suffer for any reason during the Christmas season. Less jolly and more reflective, the Longest Night is a Service in recognition of the Advent for those who endure rather than celebrate this time of year. Please join us at Asbury UMC on Friday, December 21st at 6:00pm!

Theme: "Halfway out of the Dark"

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



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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.

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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.

Weird Uncle John... cont. from page 2

Centuries will pass between Malachi's prophecy and the prophecy of a Priest and Father by the name of Zechariah that is the theme for this week's message. While attending to his duties as a Priest, Zechariah was visited by an angel of God who told him that his wife would become pregnant. The thing is Elizabeth, his wife, was too old to have children so Zechariah did not immediately buy the story. As a result of his hesitancy to believe that God could do such a thing, Zechariah wasn't able to speak for the next nine months. Until after his son was born.

By now, Zechariah is believing what he was told by the angel. So much so, that he writes a note to his gathered relatives at his son's dedication, that the name to be given to his son is John. This is the name that the angel told him to use. This was weird because it was not expected. Then Zechariah goes on to predict that John would fulfill the prophecy of Malachi. John would be the messenger who will prepare the way for God's arrival.

Zechariah blurts out, among other predictions, that "You, my child will be a prophet

of the Most High God. You will go ahead of the Lord to prepare his road for him, to tell

You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High God. You will go ahead of the Lord to prepare his road for him, to tell his people that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven.

Luke 1:76-77 GNT

his people that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven." Picture a one week old baby and a Father who hasn't said a word during the entire pregnancy, a room full of people anticipating that the baby's mother, Elizabeth, would tell them that the baby would be named after his father. Instead, Elizabeth says that his name would be John.

The relatives protested. Why? Because this is what we do when we witness weirdness. They protested because the name John did not reflect the lineage of their family. But Zechariah confirmed with his note that this was the plan. Now picture Zechariah blurting out his prophecy. John was destined to be weird. And the prophecy turned out to be truer than life. John was weird. Because John did what God expected him to do.

How about you? Do people think that you are weird because of how you live out your faith? Do you do weird things because you also are a part of preparing the road for Christ's return? Given all that is going on in the world — given what goes on around us as a "celebration" of Christmas, it would be weird — different — for us to behave the way that Christ has called us to act. Putting others before ourselves, sharing each others things and burdens. Weird. Given our currently po-

We protest because this is what we do when we witness weirdness.

litical situation in our country, it would be weird to welcome strangers into our home instead of building wells, spraying them with tear gas and declaring them evil. It would be weird to focus our energies this Christmas season on the One for whom Christians celebrate this time of year at all.

This Christmas season, make Christmas weird again. Live the good new of the Gospel even during those times that you aren't pretending to be a Christ follower. Take pride in others calling you weird because love is all the world sees from you.

Merry Weird Christmas!

Pastor Tommy