

# 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.



## Good Intentions

Sometimes our good intentions come with negative consequences. We let someone in line ahead of us who we perceive needs a break and those behind us disagree with our plan. We offer shelter to someone who is desperate and they leave with something that belongs to us.

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-

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.

Page 2

negative consequences for doing right is part of our journey.



Page 2

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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.



## Inside this issue:

Cracked	1
Good Intentions	1
In Our Prayers	3
Asbury Worship Series—Insight	4
Pastor’s Book Club	4
Leadership in Worship & Service	4
Coming up this Week	5
Updates	6
Asbury Farm to Table	7
Small Group Questions & Notes	8
Cracked	9

## Good Intentions ...cont. from Page 1

Jesus is attending a festival in Jerusalem and while there He observes a man sitting on one of the five porches around a pool. Apparently Jesus realized that the man was lame and had been so for many years. Jesus asked the man a rather invasive question. "Do you want to get well?"

Why did Jesus single out this particular individual? Did Jesus know that the man had been lame for 38 years? What might the Holy Spirit have said or done to get the attention of Jesus? Perhaps the man thought that Jesus had

Jesus saw him lying there, and he knew that the man had been sick for such a long time; so he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" ... Jesus said to him. "Get up, pick up your mat and walk."

John 5:6, 8 GNT

mistakenly concluded that if he really wanted to get well the man would be in the pool, when he answered "Sir, I don't have anyone here to put me in the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am trying to get in, somebody else gets there first."

Jesus tells the man to pick up his mat and walk. That's it. No splitting in the dirt and rubbing

## 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

mud on the man's legs. No laying on of hands accompanied by a wordy prayer. Jesus' words must have been received with authority behind them because the man obeyed. Perhaps he recognized Jesus as a Rabbi and thought it best to at least try and do what Jesus told him to do. Whatever the thought process the man did as he was told.

This story has a couple of twists as it unfolds. First, it was the Sabbath. When Jesus heals the man who had been lame for 38 years, Jesus was breaking the law. Second, carrying a mat was also breaking the law, which the man did at Jesus' instruction. We can argue that what Jesus did was well intended and I am certain that it was. We can argue that a man just healed after decades of suffering should be allowed to carry their mat with them as they leave the place where they had begged for help day after day, but it doesn't change the law nor the consequences that accompany Jesus and the man's decisions.

Later in this story when the man is stopped by the authorities for carrying his mat on the Sabbath he explains why he was carrying his mat, but Jesus was not around for the man to point him out, and the man did not know it was Jesus by name. Later that same day the

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.

man sees Jesus in the temple and tells the authorities that it was Jesus who healed him and told him to carry his mat. Jesus, at this point in John's Gospel becomes a wanted man.

Such relatively minor violations could be overlooked but in the dialogues to follow, Jesus makes it clear who He says He is and what His relationship is with God. The helping

Then the man left and told the Jewish authorities that it was Jesus who had healed him. So they began to persecute Jesus, because he had done this healing on a Sabbath.

John 5:15-16 GNT

of a man who was suffering was not the case that would lead to Jesus' arrest and execution but this incident is an illustration of the consequences that sometime accompany good deeds.

Doing that which God calls us to do will often come with unpleasant consequences in the short term. If this has been your experience then it is quite understandable if you decline to help even in a situation where you feel like you should.

The more important question is whether it is God's intention or your own. Jesus is later arrested because He claimed a special relationship with God that the authorities could not reconcile and most of all Jesus was a threat. In the same way when we speak up in defense of the helpless, when we lend a well-intended hand we may find that there are other consequences that seem unwarranted.

Sometimes our good intentions come with negative consequences.

So we begin our new worship series, *Insight*, with the possibility that receiving divine insight may come with consequences that we would rather not face. Join us each Sunday as we travel along with Jesus in the Gospel of John to learn more about divine insight.

**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.

Page 9

**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 |

**"Dusty the Donkey" an "Inspired Success" presented December 24th!!**

I am very proud...



The maiden voyage of the "Asbury Community Players" was a success. Which joined the talents of Asbury members and members of the community, in my inspired efforts to tell a story that would touch and remind all of us that we are all "special gifts" created by God. With only three (3) table reads and two (2) full rehearsals we "nailed it".

Just imagine what **"We"** may create in the future as the Asbury Community Players continue to produce "Inspired" original works.

Personally, I am very proud of my sister Gale De Leon. This is her first Play/Production/Acting endeavor and she brought the role of Mary's mother to life. Additionally, she took over the sewing and creating the costumes for all of the animals.



Congratulations to the members of Asbury's family that pulled together to create this marvelous original Christmas drama. Although it didn't always "look" like it, for me, this production was an exciting pleasure and opportunity to collaborate with Pastor Tommy McDoniel, Sylvia Pittman and Mark Vorenkamp to produce and bring to life the "Dusty" in all of us.



Thank you for the opportunity to Enlighten and Empower you.

Terrance Ottis Williams



**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

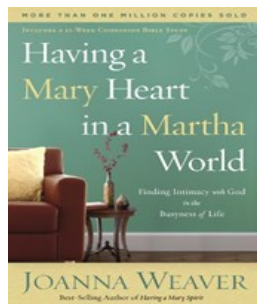
of our manger scenes include the astrologers from the East, commonly called the Wise-man, the reality is that they likely arrived afterwards.



Page 5

**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

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%

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

- Coming up this week -

- Jan 14 Mon 6pm Worship Design
- Jan 15 Tues 10am-2pm Water Distribution
- Jan 16 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club  
6pm Beginners Bible Study
- Jan 17 Thu 6pm Worship Band Practice
- Jan 18 Fri 10am-2pm Asbury Cafe Open  
6pm Asbury Youth Group
- Jan 19 Sat
- Jan 20 SUNDAY  
9:30am Café Opens  
10:30am New Beginnings  
Contemporary Worship

"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

Last Week for Worship:

Attendance 25 Offering \$ 830

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.*

## 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 MyFlintStones 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