

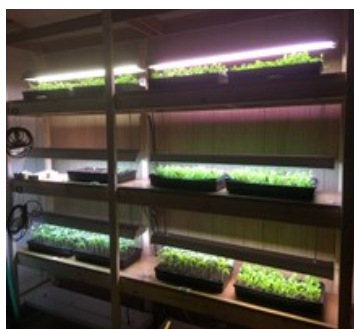
ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER



Seeds (culturally relevant planting)

The staff and volunteers that tend to the Asbury Farm are busy preparing for planting. Some of the rows to be planted currently have winter crops that either need to be harvested or plowed under before re-planting. Some rows are waiting to be tilled and we will add compost that is rich in nutrients before planting. Some of the rows are ready to go. Preparation is important in order to get a productive harvest. Each row is an investment in soil amendments, seeds and labor. Plants, like people, flourish in healthy environments and do less well in unhealthy environments.

Different families of plants differ from one another in what makes for a healthy environment. They



Asbury Germination Room

may require a different mix of nutrients. . Some plants do better in soil that is alkaline while others, like blueberries, flourish in acidic soil. Some plants require large amounts of nitrogen while others may require more potassium. Different cultivars within plant families also vary in the amount of sunlight, temperature variations and soil conditions.

should we expect another. Instead of a physical transfiguration of Jesus' body being the evidence of Jesus' divinity we read a summary of actions. Jesus responds to John's question with "*the blind can see, the lame can walk, those who suffer from dreaded skin diseases are made clean, the deaf can hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is preached to the poor*" (Luke 7:22).

A few of us in the Asbury family have taken courses and volunteered in our community through our local MSU Extension office and received "Master Gardener" certification. In my case, I discovered how little I know about plants. So in this regard this training was valuable to our farm team since I'm not trying to tell them how to get the best results. In fact, many of our decisions are made in consultation with each other and other experts from our local conservation office and other sources of experience and expertise. Our goal is to provide the most hospitable and relevant environment for our seeds so that they become healthy plants.

Page 2

There is a joke about a man who was arrested for being a Christian. On the day of his trial the Judge dismissed all charges when the Prosecutor couldn't show a shred of evidence. "Are you the One?" John the Baptizer asked Jesus. The evidence speaks for itself. Jesus is the One that scripture told us would come. The evidence is clear. How about the evidence that your claim to be a Christ follower?

Page 2

Volume 19 Issue 17
March 17, 2019

Special points of interest:

>>> **Leadership Team** will meet on Monday, March 18th at 6pm in the Asbury Library.

>>> **Worship Design** will meet on Monday, March 25th at 6pm in the Asbury Library.

Inside this issue:

Seeds (Culturally relevant planting)	1
R U the One?	1
In Our Prayers	3
Asbury Worship Series—Multiply	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
Seeds	9

R U the One?

Our text for this Sunday's message is from Luke chapter 7. In this story, John the Baptizer is asking whether Jesus is the One or



R U the One? ...cont. from Page 1

Does the evidence prove without doubt that you follow the One you say that you follow?

It's confusing at times. We know that we are saved by our belief that Jesus Christ is Lord. We pray the sinner's prayer that Jesus will come into our life. We surrender our past mistakes, our faults, our misgivings to the One who died for the sin of the world. And we are saved. We are clean again. We are Christ followers. But now what?

Christ followers do what Christ did. Perhaps not everything Christ did. But at least some of the things He did. We are each gifted differently. Some of us are healers and we have seen miraculous healing take place after prayer. Perhaps we have helped a person come back from a path that would lead to certain death. Perhaps we have preached the good news to those who have not heard about Jesus Christ. Most of all, we love as Christ loved. Or at least we try to.

God sees through insincere prayer for God knows our heart. I wonder how many feel pressured into saying the sinner's prayer and it's like they have their fingers crossed behind their back. Perhaps, in the moment we believe that we are sincere. Perhaps we know that we have a long ways to go but our hope is that Christ will sort of meet us half way. And He does. But do we meet Christ even part way? Or do we conclude now that we are members of the club we can continue living our life as we did before, but guilt free?

When they came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to ask if you are the one he said was going to come, or should we expect someone else?"

Luke 7:20 GNT

In 1 John we find what it means to know God. We read that *Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love* (1 John 4:7b-8). Easy enough. Right? And when

we love it shows. We do what love does. Or at least we try. And sometimes we fail.

Left to our own power we fail to be that which Christ calls us to be. Turn control over to the Holy Spirit and the miraculous happens through us or even despite us. Try to control the details and we get results that don't look much like a miracle. We get that which we can do on our own, which may be good but falls short of that which we could never do on our own.

Fortunately, our place in the Kingdom of God does not depend on our report card. But our place does depend on our willingness to surrender all that we are holding onto to God. And when we do so we cannot help but love God by loving others. We are guilty of being a Christian and our conviction is certain. There will be a line of witnesses eager to tell all of the ways that our love can be visibly seen.

Page 3

Seeds... cont. from page 1

I realize that my experience and training lies more in matters concerning our faith in God and how this should affect how we live. But there is a powerful connection between horticulture and faith. Jesus was a "Master Gardener" extraordinaire. With so much "insider" information I believe that Jesus was careful to teach practical lessons so that all of us can benefit. Jesus was a *multiplier*. His mission in part was to invite others into the Kingdom of God. A mission that Jesus gives to every believer.

In the Gospel of Luke Jesus uses an example from farming as a way to illustrate a few challenges facing us in multi-

plying the kingdom of God. And in our text for this week, Jesus uses seeding as His metaphor for the good news that is the Gospel. That all persons are invited to live and be a part of God's Kingdom. You all are invited.

Jesus tells us about a farmer who went to seed a field of grain. Seeding grain is different than seeding most of the vegetables that we grow on the Asbury Farm. We use rows and vary the number of plants in each row based on how much space the plant needs to flourish. We plant lettuce, such as arugula, a very favorable and popular variety, with 5 to 6 rows within a row and the seeds close



together. Grain, such as wheat, may be planted even closer together and instead of spaces between rows, the seed covers all of the area to be planted. The hope in all cases is for the plants to have the best environment for multiplying the harvest.

Jesus explains that the farmer spread the seed, in this case by hand, the seed landed in different sorts of soil conditions. Not all of the seeds fell in good

Page 3

Seeds...cont. from page 2

soil and produced an abundant crop including seed for the next season's planting. Jesus explains that some of the seeds actually fell on the path. Perhaps the wind caught the seeds and took them there. Some of the seeds fell among unfriendly terrain where there was more rocks than soil or where there were aggressive plants that prevented the seeds from reaching their potential.

As he scattered the seed in the field, some of it fell along the path, where it was stepped on, and the birds ate it up. Some of it fell on rocky ground, and when the plants sprouted, they dried up because the soil had no moisture. Some of the seeds fell among thorn bushes, which grew up with the plants and choked them. And some seeds fell in good soil; the plants grew and bore grain, one hundred grains each.

Jesus goes on to interpret His story for His followers suggesting that this was a very important lesson that we all need to understand. I believe that Jesus wanted to punctuate that the Gospel is so important for humankind that all persons must hear the good news in a way that is relevant for them. And this is where *multiply* comes in — this is where you and I fit into God's plan.

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 |

R U the One?...cont. from page 2

Are you guilty of following the One who loved you so much that He gave Himself so that You can live? Is the evidence clear? For most of us, the case is not so clear. There may be a few witnesses, mostly our closest friends. But there are plenty of witnesses who cast doubt on our sincerity.

In this same letter of 1 John we are reminded that if we are honest with each other we do fall short. And we know it. But we don't give in to the temptation to give up. We pray the sinner's prayer over and over again, and each time our sincerity is a bit more real. A bit more authentic. And we readily confess. We are who we say we are. We are children of God, Christ followers, lovers of all creation. And when our spirit surrenders to the power of God's Holy Spirit, the evidence is clear.

This message brings our worship series, *Love does*, to a close. The Season of Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. We will meet for worship and celebration on March 6 at 6 PM. Our new series is titled *Multiply*.

Fortunately, our place in the Kingdom of God does not depend on our report card. But our place does depend on our willingness to surrender all that we are holding onto to God.

You won't need to brush up on your math but keep your Bible near by. Christ followers spread the love that Christ offers to all persons. And when we do so, others join us, like a movement that gathers momentum week by week until the numbers seem to multiply. Come join our movement and we will follow Christ together.

Pastor Tommy



-WORLD WATER DAY-

➔ **WATER DISTRIBUTION** ◀

There will be a water distribution on Friday, March 22nd in the Asbury parking lot from 3:00-7:00pm...We will still have our water distribution on Tuesday March 19th , from 10am-2pm, as usual.



Prayer is at the heart of our beliefs



Asbury Worship Series Multiply Be Fruitful and Multiply

We move from our February worship series, Love does, into the Season of Lent. A time when we prepare for our Easter celebration. The Season of Lent is generally a time of reflection. Winter will soon come to an end. The Asbury Farm team is busy germinating

transplants in anticipation of longer and warmer days. The Spring flowers will soon emerge from overwintering as bulbs. We associate the Season of Spring with new birth when creation seems to *Multiply*.

Jesus was a *Multiplier*. He multiplied in his "doing". Jesus equipped His followers to do the same. And then Jesus sent them out to tell others and to multiply the Kingdom

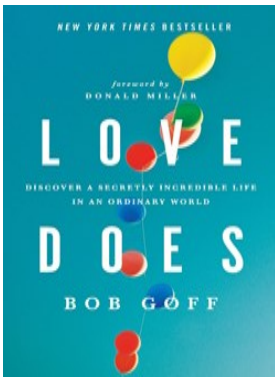
of God. Jesus often used metaphors in His teaching that are found in the multiplication of creation.

I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit.

Page 5

Book Club News

Our next book for discussion at our weekly Book Club is *Love Does* by Bob Goff. This book is an easy read and a great joy that is hard to put down. Bob's view of life comes through the pages and his literary skills allow his readers to feel a part of the action. And a part of the life lessons.



See Pastor Tommy, contact the office, or just show up for Book Club to receive a copy. A donation of \$10 is encouraged for each book and we appreciate any help with purchasing books for those unable to pay for

one. Please refrain from taking a copy if you don't intend to read and discuss the book with us. Copies are readily available through Amazon and other sellers.

Bob writes that he keeps his office on Tom Sawyer Island at Disney World. Sporting a season pass he spends time in a place where many people who visit Disney World don't bother. One travel guide listed Tom Sawyer Island as an oasis within the madness of long lines, crowds and the hot sun. But our writer uses this getaway as a metaphor for missing out.

Tom Sawyer Island is no amusement ride. You bring your imagination to the attraction. And apparently it is one of those attractions that most visitors to Disney World leave on their "if I get around to it" list and they are fresh out of "round tuits" and pass — and miss out on an adventure. "Tom Sawyer Island is like most people's lives, I think: they never get around to crossing over to it" writes Bob Goff.

In his assessment of "people" the writer brings the words and stories of Jesus into his analysis as well as his own journey that began with a couple of believers who seemed to live out their faith to a relatively unimpressive high school student. While Jesus told parables and stories to illustrate truth Jesus also spoke plainly about a lot of very important topics. For one, Jesus made

it clear to the people around Him that it isn't enough to just look like you love God. Instead, Jesus pointed out that the way to tell how much we love God is by how well we love people.

Let's face it. People can be hard to love at times. But if we truly believe that God created us and wants what is best for us, this makes God rather easy to love. And I suspect a lot of people — most people stop there. They love God but not so much God's people. And let's face it, church people can be hard to love. But this isn't the point.

Perhaps this is one of the challenges for those who don't believe that God lived among people as Jesus Christ. They may even like Jesus but they don't care much for what Jesus told them they needed to do. In one of the stories Jesus tells a young man with a lot of belongings that he needed to get rid of his stuff. It must have been getting in the way of the young man loving others. He went away sad we read. Most of us go away sad at the thought of giving something up.

Bob takes the Gospel seriously by living whimsically. A contradiction? Not really. We can never quite know what God is up to so even our best laid plans may get interrupted by a God request. Are we willing to drop everything, or sell everything, or just change our mind about what we plan to do tomorrow? This is how love does.

Since God is insistent that we love one another, this state of feelings toward another person we call "love" must move from a noun to a verb. We do because we love. We go because we love. We respond because we love. This all looks quite whimsical to the world outside the Kingdom of God. But this is how love does.

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— Be Fruitful and Multiply ... Cont. from page 4

In John chapter 15, Jesus says "I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will bear much fruit" (John 15:5). Within each seed exists an entire field. An entire orchard. Jesus teaches us to think of multiplying Himself through us into others.

This Seasons of Lent we will prepare for our Easter celebration by reading and studying a few of Jesus' teachings on farming. Our theme scripture begins with Jesus as the vine and each of us branches. We will work along with the Asbury Farm team in sowing seeds that will produce the nutrition that we need to live. And perhaps we will find that we are all farmers who follow Christ. For each of us is an orchard that produces fruit which results in still more fruit.

Join us each Sunday. Easter is right around the corner and our Empowerment Arts team is working on a special presentation for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. More to come. Let's Multiply the Kingdom together. Let's sow seeds of love together. And we will become a movement that continues to multiply and to flourish.

Pastor Tommy

Book Club News.. Cont from page 4

Author Donald Miller, writes this about his friend and colleague, "Bob Goff loves people with a force that is natural, and by natural I mean like nature, like a waterfall or wind or waves on the ocean. He loves effortlessly, as though love packs annually in snow on a mountain, melting and rushing through him in an infinite loop. There's no explanation for a man who can love this well save God. I think Bob Goff knows God, and I think God's love flows through him."

The review on Amazon writes that "When Love Does life gets interesting. Each day turns into a hilarious, whimsical, meaningful chance that makes faith simple and real. Each chapter is a story that forms a book, a life. And this is one life you don't want to miss. Light and fun, unique and profound, the lessons drawn from Bob's life and attitude just might inspire you to be secretly incredible, too."

Jason Russell, Co-founder of Invisible Children writes "If all people loved the way Bob Goff loves all people, the world would change overnight. In this book, he reminds us of the truest virtue the kingdom calls us to practice: Love Does. It's active. The Jesus we serve is surprising and subversive. Bob knows this because he himself is both paradoxically wise as a wizard and as joy-filled as a toddler."

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

* Goff, Bob. *Love Does: Discover a Secretly Incredible Life in an Ordinary World.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012.

- Coming up this week -

- Mar 18 Mon** 5pm Youth Choir
6pm Leadership Team
7pm Flint Jubilee
- Mar 19 Tues** 10am-2pm Water Distribution
7pm Community Gospel Choir
- Mar 20 Wed** 12Noon Pastor Book Club
6pm Beginners Bible Study
- Mar 21 Thu** 6pm Worship Band Practice
- Mar 22 Fri** 10am-2pm Asbury Cafe Open
6pm Asbury Youth Group
- Mar 24 SUNDAY**
9:30am Café Opens
10:30am New Beginnings
Contemporary Worship

**Last Week for Worship
Attendance 30 Offering \$ 699**

HOLY WEEK

April 14—Palm Sunday



April 18—Holy Thursday

April 19 – Good Friday



April 21 – Easter Sunrise

Easter Sunday





2019 LENTEN SERVICES

Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate ..."

Joel 2:12-13a



TIME: <u>4:30PM</u>	HOST CHURCH
DATE:	(REFRESHMENTS AFTER SERVICE)
March 17	Asbury 1653 Davison Rd, Flint MI 48506
March 24	Atherton 4010 Lippincott Blvd, Burton MI 48519
March 31	Calvary 2111 Flushing Rd Flint MI 48504
April 7	Bethel 1309 N Ballenger Hwy, Flint MI 48504

Join us for a time of sacred reflection on Sundays at 4:30pm, to share our faith as we wait, with great expectation, for the Resurrected Jesus the Christ!

Jesus said, "The time has come, The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Mark 1:15

Update on... Album Release Celebration with Pastor Nick Hill



Artist Pastor Nick Hill presented an amazing concert here at "Asbury Empowerment Arts Center" on Friday, February 22nd. It was exciting to be a part of history in the making.

We experienced multi-generational, multi-ethnic worship in spirit and in truth. Pastor Nick presented original music with excellence energy and exuberance.

Stay tuned for our next event!

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

Life Group Questions & Notes

As he scattered the seed in the field, some of it fell along the path, where it was stepped on, and the birds ate it up. Some of it fell on rocky ground, and when the plants sprouted, they dried up because the soil had no moisture. Some of the seed fell among thorn bushes, which grew up with the plants and choked them. And some seeds fell in good soil; the plants grew and bore grain, one hundred grains each.”

Luke 8:5-8 GNT

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read the parable in Luke 8:5-8 about the farmer seeding his grain field? How do you interpret this parable? What are some of the different interpretations among your group? What makes for good soil so that the seed has the best chance of multiplying?
2. Jesus explains the parable in Luke 8:11-15. Does His explanation surprise you? While it is a stretch to think of the soil as the environment in which persons hear the Word (seed) this metaphor helps us to understand the importance of Asbury being relevant to the people we invite to worship. Suppose you visit a church with no idea of what the church is like, what would make you feel like you fit? What would cause you to feel like this isn't a good fit?
3. How can the members of your group help you this week and on-going to help you remove obstacles that stand in the way of your witness?

Welcome to the Asbury Community

1653 Davison Rd
Flint, MI 48506



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

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PERMIT #151



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.

Seeds . . . cont. from page 3

The seed, Jesus says, is the Word of God. The good news that God loves all of us and wants us to live as God's beloved. A kingdom of peace and joy that exceeds anything that we could build for ourselves. And God lived among people to deliver this good news in person! But sadly, not everyone hears the good news in the same way. This is where cultural relevant planting comes into the picture.

There is a further complication in farming that our farm team pays attention to when planning where plants will go. If the same crop is planted in the same soil year after year, the yield gets less each year as the nutrients required by the particular plant variety is used up. Large factory farms will use chemical additives to address this — a human made solution to the problem which has proven to be harmful to the planet and to us. We instead, rotate our crops. This adds critical diversity to our farm that strengthens our soil and produces healthier plants.

It is sad when a community of faith stops being fertile soil for people who are not the same as them. It is the opposite of "crop rotation" and the community (the soil) becomes depleted of the nutrients needed for healthier growth. Adding "chemicals" is a metaphor for the various shallow attempts that churches in this situation make that are toxic to the seed. The environment becomes like the pathway, or the rocks or the thorns in Jesus' illustration and

new people are unable to hear the good news and thus are unable to thrive. And the whole kingdom suffers.

To do culturally relevant planting is to open ourselves up to diversity. To recognize that each and every person that we meet is also God's beloved but may need a different mix of nutrients to flourish. One way to begin to prepare our soil (our community) is to forget the idea that our own needs must be met first. For example, a church building that looks like a memorial to those who came before us is not hospitable. While respectful, this is not inviting to someone who doesn't look like the pictures on our walls.

Likewise, our artwork that illustrates how our ancestors viewed Jesus may not be relevant to someone with a different heritage. None of us really know what Jesus looked like but all of us prefer an image of Jesus that makes Him look like a relative. The irony is that none of this is relevant in the Kingdom of God. Each of us already looks like a relative because each of us was created in the image of God. But as long as we look only at the outside we miss the image of God found on the inside and it's what is on the inside that matters.

Cultural relevant planting goes beyond where our grand parents were born or where we grow up. Diversity runs much deeper. For example, while most of us believe that our gender

matches our physical bodies the truth is that we are misinformed. Gender for everyone of us is a mix of male and female. This makes sense when we consider that God is described as both male and female depending on which attributes we reference. God's attributes that suggest power is presented as male, while the attributes of God as wisdom and God as creator are presented in a feminine context.

How is our preparations for planting seeds? That is, how prepared are we for sharing the Word of God — the good news of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God? Are we inviting all persons because they are our neighbors - they reside in our mission field? If so, we are certain to have a healthy farm (community). But if we insist on scattering seed without intention of cultural relevance then we will miss out on all that God has in store for us.

At Asbury we invite all persons to be a part of God's kingdom regardless of how God chose to create you. This means more than just inviting persons who identify with LBGTQ or with any other letters. At Asbury, you are not a letter. You are a child of God. And you are welcomed here.

Join us each Sunday at 10:30 am for Spirit-filled worship. A few of us meet in the Asbury Café at 9:30 to discuss the day's scripture before worship. Come join us.

Pastor Tommy