

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Clean (Holiness among the unclean)

In the ancient texts of that which we call our Old Testament we find a distinction between the adjectives “pure” or “clean” and the word that is translated as holy. That is, there is a distinction made between purity and holiness. We come across the Hebrew word for holy in Exodus 3:5 when God tells Moses to take off his sandals for the ground that he is standing on is holy ground. In Exodus 16:23 God declares an entire day to be holy. Being a holy day makes the Sabbath Day special. A day when most daily activities that involve work are to cease. “Take one day off each week” God commanded the people of the Exodus.

Our struggle as humans seems to come down to this. We can’t control holy. God is in complete control of holy and doesn’t relinquish this control nor delegate it. Purity, on the other hand, is different. We can set up rules, boundaries and the like in an attempt to control purity. Many of the 613 laws found in our Old

Testament are purity laws. They deal with the idea of being “ritually clean” which should have the impact of grabbing our attention so that when God decides to have a holy moment with us we are paying attention.



But I also suspect that God doesn’t need us to be freshly bathed to provide holy moments or to declare that ground is holy. There is nothing that we do on our own to create holiness. God creates holiness and we participate in the experience. For me, holiness is everywhere. I like the illustrations offered by Nadia Bolz-Weber in her book *Shame-less*. When we share

our pain with another person and their response is “me too” we have experienced holiness Nadia writes. When a mother breastfeeds her baby both are experiencing holiness. Holiness happens in those moments when we manage to free ourselves from our ego and yet be totally connected to our self and something else. *

Nadia describes holiness as harmony. What makes harmony so powerful is that it requires diversity. Two or more persons singing different tones on the musical scale that blend together into a beautiful harmony. Without diversity there is no harmony. Yet too often, and the church is more guilty than other institutions, we demand sameness. Which we confuse with purity. Which worse, we confuse with holiness. And sameness has nothing to do with holiness. They are oxy-morons.

And we cannot sing harmony alone. It takes a crowd of two or more of us. Does the phrase

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Volume 19 Issue 12
May 12, 2019

Special points of interest:

*** **Worship Design will be meeting on Monday, May 20th at 6pm in the Asbury Library.**

*** **Leadership team will meet on Monday, May 13th at 6pm in the Asbury Library.**

*** **Kearsley Park Neighborhood Assoc will be meeting on Tuesday, May 14th from 7-9pm in the Asbury Wesley Room., and thereafter they will be meeting the 1st Tuesday of each month, starting June 4th. For more info you can call Tom Allen 1-641-233-0368.**

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Crop Circles (Reaching the corners of our mission field)

The term “crop circles” has been around for a while. The dictionary that is connected to the app that I use for most of my writing defines a crop circle as an unexplained, flattened area within a farmer’s field. But Nadia Bolz-Weber, in her book *Shame-less*, offers a more practical explanation. First, the circles are not flattened, but are lush and green as compared to the surrounding area. From an airplane the lush areas form a

circle within a rectangular field.*



The farmer didn’t plant her field in circles. This phenomenon dates back to 1940 when Frank Zybach developed the

idea of a center-pivot irrigation system. The source of the life-giving water turns on a pivot which results in those plants that are within the circular pattern of the scattered water receiving that which they need for life while the plants that came from seeds scattered in the corners are deprived. The difference is obvious from above. Circles of what appears to be lush, healthy greenery encased by unhealthy vegetation of a less appealing color.

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Crop Circles (Reaching the corners of our mission field)...cont. from page 1

Nadia was setting her readers up to gain insight. This system of irrigation which is designed in such a way that some seeds become well-watered and others are left to wither is a metaphor for the traditional church. The center-pivot represents the locus of power within the traditional church. The life-giving water represents the means of salvation that is scattered in a predictable pattern of human design. Rain, on the other hand, which was developed by a loving, Creator God, reaches the corners as well as the center.

Jesus used rain as an illustration of a God designed system of irrigation when He explained that we are to love all persons, even those who we can't understand, or don't like, or that don't like us. Jesus reminds us that rain falls on all of us without regard to whether one of us thinks that some of us don't deserve it. God doesn't utilize a system that only waters those of us that God planted within a particular circle (Matthew 5:44-46).

Nada's metaphor grabbed my attention. God had put on my heart at a very young age that there are people living in the corners who do not receive what they need to

flourish. But I didn't understand at the time why my heart ached as it did. I was in the circle, close enough that I couldn't see the corners. I wasn't yet tall enough. I wasn't ready. And I wasn't thirsty.

We find people in the corners for a lot of reasons. It depends on how we draw the

For God makes the sun shine on bad and good people alike; and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil.

circle. Smaller circles exclude more people than larger circles. But the problem is in the center-pivot distribution of that which gives life. Not how big we draw the circle. We can be a mega-church with tens of thousands of people in our circle, but if we are still a circle, there are people in the corners who are not thriving.

Metaphors suffer from over use.

Since a metaphor is only a substitute and was not designed to be the real thing, metaphors breakdown at some point. But I'm not done with this one quite yet. It's a pret-

ty healthy metaphor. The water, in this case, can be thought of as acceptance. It matters when a person with the power to claim to possess a special insight into salvation draws the circle that is used to decide who is in and who is not. The more convincing, the more powerful — the more potential for harm.

Jesus clearly had his issues with the religious leaders of His time. While Jesus truly loved them I think that Jesus could see that they had drawn circles around what it meant to be acceptable to God. And this power had gone to their head and blinded them to the corners. And it wasn't that they weren't tall enough to see outside of their circle. It was as though the power to claim to know the mind of God was used to hoard that which gives life and to only offer it in calculated amounts to those living in the circle. The problem is that they drew the circle. They decided on the center point for the pivot. And Jesus called them on it.

As a pastor I get quite uncomfortable talking about the weakness and failures of religious leaders.

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"two are more" remind you of other bible verses? Jesus said that "where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them" (Matthew 18:20). Let's break this down. It takes more than one but no more than two. We acknowledge Jesus. God is on our minds. Jesus is there with us. We can experience holiness. There are no other requirements. Holiness is a God thing.

For where two or three come together in my name, I there with them.

I believe that we are all invited to experience holiness and do so oftentimes without realizing that we are in the presence of holiness. The ground we are on is holy — whether we take off our sandals or not. Whether or not we remembered to wash our hands. Even if yesterday, even

if five minutes earlier, we did something that we know we should not have done. Jesus is with us. This has nothing to do with purity. Humans, particularly humans on a power kick, make up purity requirements.

I am not thumbing my nose at the purity laws in the Old Testament. I have a great deal of respect of persons who strive to follow them, although there are quite a few that I don't get and I follow the New Testament teaching that we are no longer obligated to follow them. As an adolescent I did not understand the connection between the teachings of Jesus with respect to Old Testament laws and would not wear clothes made of more than one type of fiber. My Mother suggested that if I insisted on wearing 100% cotton shirts then I needed to learn how to iron.

One way that "purity" is defined is "free

"free from contamination." We know that our public water here in Flint was not free from contamination a short time ago. And most of us have our doubts even now. A few of us aren't so sure even after our water passes through a sink filter. We worry that there are contaminants present. Keep in mind that contaminants are things that don't belong there. We "purify" water by removing contaminants. But this does not make the water holy. They are not the same thing.

At Asbury Church when someone is baptized I pray over the water that we intend to use. My prayer may vary in words from time to time but there are critical components. I like to utilize poetic expressions about the importance

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of water in our lives but the critical part of the prayer is to ask God to bless the water with divine power. I pray that through the act of baptism the person being baptized is transformed into the likeness of Christ. Together we pray that this person will live in harmony with our community.

The reality is that I don't do anything of importance on my own. It is the power of two or more and the presence of Jesus Christ that creates the holiness of baptism. It is the harmony of our gathered-ness in the name of Christ that gives baptism the power that it has. We say that baptism is an outward sign of an inward miracle. A miracle that likely began long before our prayer and will continue without end.

Contaminants come into our water and into other parts of our lives all the time. In humankind's insistence on abusing the earth for profit we must look like a world living in a cesspool of our own waste. And in terms of our own inner purity this disgusting metaphor of a cesspool seems even more appropriate.

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In Our Prayers

Curtis Young	Shirley Craig
Rachel Bastine	Christopher Lewis
Norma Buzzard	Sarah Tanner
Virginia Bigger	Elizabeth Wright
Barbara McIvor	Judy Tanner
Austin & Mary Suffle	Mary Lyons

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Elaine Lamoreaux	Mary Nations
Mary Russell	

Crop Circles ...cont. from page 2

It's a bit like a lawyer reading how Jesus argued with lawyers pointing out their misunderstanding of the law. But imagine that you have the power to draw your own circle. A circle that you decide who is in and who is not. Now imagine that you use scripture to justify the size of your circle. And you can quote chapter and verse those statements that support your choices and you can cleverly leave out statements that don't support your case. Or you settle on an interpretation that works for you.

The truth is that none of us decide on who is in God's circle and who is not. In fact, Jesus seemed to go to the corners where the people were malnourished when it came to acceptance and declare that they were closer to the center-pivot, if we can use this as a metaphor for God's love, than those who claim to be planted in the circle. Jesus didn't take His Bible with Him into the corners. Jesus was the Bible. He was and is the Word of God in human form.

I have met a lot of evangelist who claim to go to the corners to "save" those who aren't in the circle. The problem too often is that they come with their predetermined circle drawing compass insisting that those planted in the corners have to be transplanted inside the circle. Jesus didn't go to the corners to tell the people who didn't measure up to the standards of the circle to transplant them. Jesus was turning the circle inside out, stretching the boundaries that exclude so that they enveloped anyone left out. Jesus was not trying to transform those in the corners into circle dwellers. Jesus unwrapped the layers of protection that corner-dwellers have wrapped around themselves for protection from the circle-dwellers.

One of my favorite things about creation is the diversity. I like that my dog Duke doesn't look like Savannah's new puppy. And that they each have their own unique personalities. I've tried modifying some of Duke's quirks with treats but by the time the treat hits his stomach he returns to being Duke. His quirks are what

makes him who he is. And to him they're not quirks. They are his natural attributes. I love that pineapple doesn't taste like coconut but for me they seem to taste good together.

And I love that Cyndi's quirks are not my quirks. And that our children are each so different. I am amazed at God's creativity. God never runs out of unique patterns because if God does use patterns there must be enough of them that we can't find two alike. God begins with a divine image and the rest is left to so many complex factors that the results are not predictable.

As we begin this journey that we are calling *Chosen*, it is my prayer that we are able to have holy conversations around topics that in the past seemed off limits. It is my prayer that the Holy Spirit will remove the scales from our eyes, that the Holy Ghost will exorcise the demons within and that more of us will begin to feel what wholeness is like. For as our sister Sylvia says, quoting another friend, "wholeness is holiness."

We are a holy people wrapped tightly within layers of brokenness. This is particularly true those of us that religious systems, churches and denominations have decided belong in the corners. But the corner is a great place to find Jesus at work. Casting out the demons that have kept persons from receiving the nourishment that God intended. And welcoming all persons to meet the One from whom all life flows and salvation is assured.

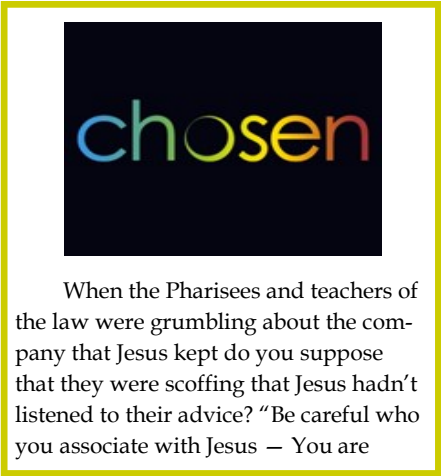
I pray that you will join us not just on this Sunday for for many more in the future. I only make one promise that isn't even mine to make. God will be with us. And if you allow yourself to lift Your heart to the holy One, Jesus will be with you. And Jesus will hold onto you and make you whole.

We worship each Sunday in the Asbury Empowerment Arts Center at 10:30 am. The Asbury Café opens at 10 and we have conversations about the week's scripture beginning at 9:30. I hope to see you there. Let us worship God together.

Pastor Tommy

Asbury Worship Series Chosen All are Welcome

We have all heard it from parents, from aunts, from anyone who is concerned about us. "You are judged by the company you keep." There are numerous other pearls of wisdom that come at us like a declaration of truth. And some of them are true. But a lot of them aren't. But even the less true ones have a seed of truth.

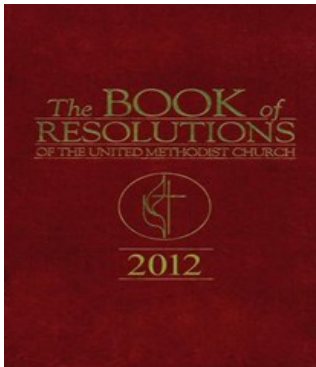


When the Pharisees and teachers of the law were grumbling about the company that Jesus kept do you suppose that they were scoffing that Jesus hadn't listened to their advice? "Be careful who you associate with Jesus – You are

judged by the company You keep?" After all, the tax collectors and "other outcasts" were coming out to hear Jesus speak. And Jesus was having meals with them. Scandal!
After beginning Chapter 15 with this observation the writer of Luke goes on to share that Jesus told a parable to "them." I'm guessing that Jesus told the parable to the gathered crowd knowing that His critics would be listening.
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Book Club News

We completed our study of the book *Love Does* by Bob Goff. This book was an easy read and a lot of fun. 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.



Our group is spending some time on the written beliefs and principals of

our denomination. At our April 24 gathering we took a brief look at the Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church using a short video presentation. And we will take a deeper look into this publication that comes out of each General Conference.

We also took a slightly deeper dive into the history of our doctrine. Our denomination became the United Methodist Church when the Methodist Episcopal Church merged with the Evangelical United Brethren Church. Therefore, our history is also a merged history.

Not all persons who claim membership in the United Methodist Church agree on how we should interpret scripture. In fact, our heritage encourages each generation to interpret scripture with fresh eyes and

open minds. We make a non-exclusive claim to a way of interpreting scripture that undergirds this idea encouraging us to read scripture through the lenses of tradition, experience and reason. And since we don't all have the same experiences or even the same traditional interpretations our reasoning ends in different places.

I believe that this richly diverse tradition is a strength. We are encouraged to engage each other in holy conversations around our beliefs. When our conversations take place in love and are surrounded and supported by prayer we are able to be more in love with God and each other. At least this is the intention.

Sadly, all of the United Methodists that I have ever met are human. And as humans we continue to carry the brokenness that can separate rather than unite us. Our conversations are too often far from holy because they do not always take place in love. Our last general conference resulted in a divided body with far too much hurt. And many of us have yet to recover. And none of us know where this will lead us in the future.

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

Sylvia Pittman Worship Arts
Jim Craig Leadership Chair
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
Connie Portillo Office Secretary
Mark Vorenkamp Children & Youth

Asbury Worship Series– Chosen (All are Welcome)... *Cont. from page 4*

Book Club News.. *Cont from page 4*

The parable was about searching for the lost. But “lost” applies to the outcasts whom God searches for and gathers into God’s kingdom.

The Pharisees on the other hand believe that they are righteous. They believe this to be true about themselves in contrast to the outcasts. Rather than celebrate with God that the outcasts had gathered to hear the good news that the kingdom of God is near, they scoffed at the idea that God would want to be in their presence at all.

Think about the attitude that too often comes across from us church goers. We declare ourselves righteous, or at least more righteous than those who we don’t see at worship. Imagine if we could see what God sees from a vantage point of seeing the whole picture. Might we see Jesus sitting with outcasts while we celebrate our righteousness without Him?

I’m not saying that Jesus isn’t present in worship with us. I believe

that He is every week and during the week. But in our worship we are to celebrate the lost being found. Not because

One day when many tax collectors and other outcasts came to listen to Jesus, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law started gambling, "This man welcomes outcasts and even eats with them?"

Luke 15:1 (GNT)

they are less righteous and now can become like us. But because we welcomed them into our community and celebrated with them that each of us is searched for until found by the Good Shepherd.

One additional point to this parable. By the time that Jesus told this parable, shepherds were also considered outcasts. And Jesus had the audacity to compare God to a shepherd. God is an outcast in this context. No wonder we are more apt to find Jesus with the outcasts!

I pray that you will join us for our new series, Chosen, that begins on Sunday, May 5, 2019. As we prepare to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we will explore what it means to be chosen – to be an outcast whom God is especially fond of – and prepare for the celebrations to come as more of us outcasts gather together to worship the Shepherd who found us. Join us each Sunday at 10:30 am in the Asbury Empowerment Arts Center for a Spirit-filled worship experience. At 9:30 am a few of us meet in the Asbury Café to discuss the scripture for the week. Join us.

Pastor Tommy

Nevertheless, our conversations were and will continue to take place in love as we continue this tradition of interpreting scripture with fresh eyes and open hearts supported by prayer. We do not have to agree on the details but we must agree on love and respect for all persons. Even when we take issue with what they believe.

Our conversations about our shared and differing beliefs will take us into our next topic and book. I am grateful for all of the suggestions that have been shared. I continue to be in prayer about our subject matter. There are a lot of good books to choose from and we may be able to take on most of them in time. I try to bring us current books on subjects that are relevant to our daily lives. And I often try to connect our worship series so that book club allows us to dive deeper into our topics.

I encourage you to come to our Wednesday gatherings. Our small group is a diverse group and we are delighted when new persons join us. I 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

** The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Publishing Company, Nashville: 2012.*

Coming up this week

- May 13 Mon** 5pm Youth Choir
6pm Leadership Team
7pm Flint Jubilee
- May 14 Tues** 10am-2pm Water Distribution
7pm Community Gospel Choir
7-9pm Kearsley Park Neighborhood Assoc
- May 15 Wed** 12Noon Pastor Book Club
6pm Beginners Bible Study
6pm Youth Group
- May 16 Thu** 4:30-6pm Gaming as Education
6pm Worship Band Practice
- May 17 Fri** 10am-2pm Asbury Cafe Open
6:00pm Asbury Youth Group
- May 18 Sat** 10am-12N Japanese Jiu Jitsu
- May 19 Sun** 8am-10am Japanese Jiu Jitsu

- May 19 SUNDAY**
9:30am Café Opens
10:30am New Beginnings
Contemporary Worship

**Last Week for Worship
Attendance Offering \$ 281**

THE FLINT JUBILEE CHORALE CONCERT

AND SPECIAL GUEST ARTIST: PASTOR NICK HILL

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH OF CLARKSTON ON
MAY, 18-2019 @ 4:00 PM**

Who: The Flint Jubilee Chorale/Celebrating Twelve years of Music Ministry!

With: The Flint Community Gospel Choir and Special Guest Artist: Pastor Nick Hill

The concert is free, donations are gratefully accepted!

The Flint Jubilee Chorale is known locally and nationally for their skill and excellence, presenting an eclectic mix of music from Classical to Gospel!



WHEN
SATURDAY, MAY 18TH, 4PM

WHERE
5449 CLARKSTON ROAD
CLARKSTON, MI



[Get Directions](#)

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

“And I tell you more: whenever two of you on earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them.”

Matthew 18:19-20 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Matthew 18:19-20 this week’s article titled *Clean*. What images come to mind? In what ways does the text or article appeal to you? Where do you see yourself in this text or in the article? Have you ever been told that you are not holy because you were not in compliance with the critic’s version of pure?
2. This week our focus is on holiness. But given the church’s track record for confusing holiness with purity we need to be clear ourselves on the difference. Holiness is relational. When we come together in the pursuit of life with God in our heart we experience holiness.
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

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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.

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.

Clean ...Holiness among the unclean..cont. from page 3

We are saved by the grace of God who lived in the midst of our cesspool making so we could experience holiness first hand. Without regard to our purity. We still hope to be clean. We just cannot do so through our own power. And when we get dirty, like a Mother picking her son out of a muddy puddle and comforting him in her arms, Jesus does the same for us. The mother isn't concerned that her child's filth will harm her. She will be clean again. And so will the child. And so will we.

The church has often confused purity and holiness. And people get hurt by the confusion when they are told that they aren't holy enough because they do not comply to the definition of purity held by, but seldom followed by, those living within the circle that enclosed that particular community.

Our call to action this week is to let go of this idea that we must be a particular way or do a particular thing to earn

God's love. My prayer is that you will reach out to God from within whatever puddle that you have fallen into knowing that you are loved.

And know this. The church has often confused purity and holiness. And people get hurt by the confusion when they are told that they aren't holy enough because they do not comply to the definition of purity held by, but seldom followed by, those living within the circle that encloses that particular community. Don't listen to their lies. God created you to be who you are and loves you.

Join us each Sunday for our new worship series, *Chosen*. At Asbury we believe that God created a diversity of people. We are a mix of different skin tones, eye colors, voices, shapes, sizes and more. We are a mix of differing amounts and recipes of quirks and gifts. God brings us together like unique threads that make up a beautiful tapestry

of artistic harmony that is holy. We are ourselves part of a holy fabric.

Worship is at 10:30 am each Sunday. Join me in the Asbury Café at 9:30 for a short bible study. Let us worship the God who calls us together.

Pastor Tommy

Nadia Bolz-Weber. *Shame-less: A sexual revolution*. New York: Convergent Books, 2019