



ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER



Seeding (Anticipating a Harvest)

We have a saying around the Asbury Farms. "You can't expect to harvest if you didn't put any seeds in the ground." Seeding is necessary if there is to be a harvest. On the Asbury Farms since lettuce is a crop that grows quickly, doesn't keep for long and is widely popular, we try to seed beds with lettuce every week. We know that if we miss seeding for very long we don't have lettuce to harvest. The same is true for any other harvest that we hope to have in the future. If we don't plant strawberries we don't harvest strawberries. No carrot seeds, no carrots, and so on.



Likewise, if we don't seed we don't have a future harvest. In this case, seed becomes a

metaphor for a number of actions that we may choose from dependent upon the harvest that we hope for in the future. If we hope to know more about the Bible then we will need to read and study scripture. If we do this with others we are increasing our variety of seeds and our future harvest.

Welcome to week one of our new worship series *Grow*. Over the next several weeks we will be using a lot of farming metaphors to convey lessons from scripture and how we can apply them to our daily lives. All of our farming terms will have multiple meanings. But these other meanings can be what helps us to better understand how to apply the teachings Jesus has for us. Part of planting seeds is sharing insight with each other. This seems to be God's favorite way of conveying divine insight. We learn from each other.

Chapter 13 of Matthew is full of parables and we will cover most of them over the next few weeks. But we begin with the question why parables? Why did

This people will listen and listen, they will look and look; but not see, because their minds are dull, and they have stopped up their ears and have closed their eyes.
Matthew 13: 14-15

Jesus teach using stories to convey such important information and risk having people not understand Him? Verse 34 of this chapter in Matthew explains that Jesus' use of parables fulfilled ancient prophecy. *Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world"* (Matthew 13:34-35 GNT).

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Bird Seed (Preparing our Hearts)

"Birds gotta eat too." This is true. Birds keep a sharp eye out for food. I noticed that when I am using the broad fork to loosen compacted, clay soil where I hope to replace sod with new plantings, birds will come close by to check out my work. The birds aren't gathering to watch me work, however. The birds can smell lunch. Worms living just below the sod in the moist

clay make a great meal.



Jesus talked about birds and lunch more than once but in

our text for this week Jesus used bird seed as a metaphor. A farmer spreads seed and some of the seed falls on the path. Compacted dirt that the farmer hadn't loosened and wasn't where the seed was intended to land. There were probably birds watching the farmer that day as well. Waiting for the farmer's seeds to land on their dinner plate. The path. And the seed did not become wheat. The seeds hoping to become grain instead became bird seed.

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Volume 19 Issue 30

June 30, 2019

Special points of interest:

>>> **Coming soon : Vacation Bible School—Summer Bible Camp at Asbury UMC. (see flyer in this newsletter)**

>>> **UMW will be meeting on Friday, July 5th at 1pm with a potluck lunch at Norma Natrass's house. Norma will be providing a wonderful ice cream sundae bar for dessert. Please call her at 235-1116 and let her know what you will be bringing.**

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Bird Seed (Preparing our hearts)...cont. from page 1

Later in this same part of Matthew Jesus explains that the farmer's seed is like the Word of God. The good news. And the soil in the pathway represents persons who miss the point of His parable. In their case, the seed of the message becomes bird seed rather than life changing seeds that plant inside of their hearts. The seed instead becomes lunch for another creature that can taste the good news. But instead of life changing the seed falls on some person's windshield as bird poop. Jesus didn't actually say this part about poop but He might have thought it.

The point is that while the Word of God never returns empty its impact misses a lot of folks who could benefit but who miss out. We can argue over whether the problem is timing or if it was God's will that the person not hear and understand but neither position changes the reality that a lot of us miss the point. Our mind and heart are like the compacted soil of a path where the seed is unable to penetrate the surface.

So there is a missed opportunity to be fruitful.

How can we become less like the compacted soil of a path and more like receptive soil where seeds can find a home? That is, how can we become more receptive to the Word of God so that God's Word can penetrate our outer layers and find a home in our hearts? Is there a kind of human "broad fork" that can loosen out outer layer?

I suspect that all of us have our moments when we are less receptive to God's Word. The point of this worship series is to explore some of the obstacles we face that can result in us miss-

Once there was a farmer who went out to sow grain. As the farmer scattered the seed in the field, some of it fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.
Matthew 13: 3b-4

ing out on this divine gift of understanding and insight. My prayer is that some of the points that are said, written and sung find an opening in one or more hearts. Loosening minds and hearts so that divine seed can find a place to grow roots. Worship is one of the many ways that this takes place.

This summer the Asbury Farms invested in a new broad fork. This particular broad fork is proving quite effective in our local soil which has a high concentration of clay. The tongs are made of strong steel that can break through the clay allowing air to get into the soil. And the soil loosens so that seeds can find a home below the surface. We anticipate higher yields in the beds where this tool is utilized. But this means that our farmers must be intentional. The broad fork has to find its way out of the tool trailer and into the hands of a person preparing the soil for seed.

Seeding... cont. from page 1

This prophetic statement is found in the Book of Isaiah. God spoke to Isaiah after the Prophet came to realize that God had some divine insight for him to hear. This story is found in Isaiah chapter six. The prophet believed that he has seen the glory of God first hand and it scared the crap out of him. He realized that he hadn't exactly been a model citizen. And the folks he hung around with were no better. And here he is about to hear directly from God. "I'm screwed," Isaiah said to himself.

But we learn from scripture that God isn't all that interested in the pettiness of our lives. God sees the bigger picture. The potential. Our potential. But God also knows about the pettiness in our lives. God knows all the drama and our propensity to be dramatic as a smokescreen for accountability. God knows us better than

we know ourselves. And Isaiah realizes this. No wonder Isaiah felt like he was about to get the business from God.

Instead of "smiting" Isaiah God didn't even bring up Isaiah's past. God wanted to focus on the business at hand. God has plans for Isaiah and it was time for Isaiah to step up to the plate and start doing it. Isaiah was right. He was hanging around with a lot of folks just like him and this was about to change but likely not without a lot of struggle. We simply don't face up to our screw-ups and move on with a different approach to life. We repeat the same mistakes over and over again expecting different results.





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
HOMEBOUNDED OR IN NURSING CARE

Mary Nations
Elaine Lamoreaux
Mary Russell

Coming up this week

July 1	Mon	5pm Youth Choir 6pm Worship Design 7pm Flint Jubilee
July 2	Tues	10am-2pm Water Distribution 6pm Community Gospel Choir 7-9:00pm Kearsley Park Neighborhood Assoc
July 3	Wed	12Noon Pastor Book Club 6pm Beginners Bible Study 6pm Youth Group
July 4	Thu	HAVE A HAPPY, SAFE 4TH!
 Happy 4th!		
July 5	Fri	10am-2pm Asbury Cafe Open 1:00pm UMW Potluck Luncheon (at Norma's house) 6:00pm Asbury Youth Group
July 6	Sat	10am-12N Japanese Jiu Jitsi
July 7	Sun	8am-10am Japanese Jiu Jitsi 9:30am Café Open 10:30am New Beginnings Contemporary Worship

Asbury Worship Series Grow “Seed the Future”

In the three synoptic Gospels Jesus tells a story about a farmer who goes out to seed his field. Farmers at that time scattered their seed by hand. A lot of us still seed this way for grass seed or cover crops. In Jesus’ story the farmer was planting seeds for grain.

This farmer’s field was not all fine loam. It was more like an urban farm with a variety

of soil conditions. A lot of clay and rocks. A lot of old driveway pieces and other items that don’t belong in a farmer’s field.



As the farmer scattered the seed in the field, Jesus noted, some of the seed fell

along the path. Soil that had been compressed by walking on it. While this was good for the birds that came and had a snack it wasn’t good for the farmer’s production. Like a couple of our fields some of the seed fell on rocky ground. In this case, the seeds sprouted but couldn’t find room for their roots to provide moisture. And without deep roots the young plants soon dried up in the hot sun.

Book Club News

Meet Nadia Bolz-Weber who is also the Rev Nadia Bolz-Weber. Nadia is a writer, a mother and a Lutheran pastor who founded



a church that is called The House for all Sinners and Saints. And Nadia has a calling that she takes own with a passion. Her calling is to take the good news to persons who have been sent to the

corners by the church left to believe that somehow God made a mistake when creating them. Her passion is to speak the truth to powerful, but misinformed church leaders and pastors who preach a gospel that isn’t good news for a large number of people.*

When Pastor Nadia speaks about her passion and her role as pastor she notes that “being a preacher is like having a not-very-interesting mental illness.” But she goes on to say that the biblical story offers a great deal of clarity when we manage to read it with fresh eyes and leaving our own garbage by the curb. Welcome to Nadia’s latest book, *Shame-less*.

Our book club began reading and discussing this book over the past couple of weeks. There are still copies available and there is one waiting for you to join us. *Shame-less* takes us into the corners where people have been left out of the circle drawn by churches and offers a more grace-filled way to interpret scripture. The purpose is not to change scripture to fit our preferences. Our purpose is to faithfully interpret scripture so that we are better able to fulfill God’s purposes for each of us.

Each generation of believers are called to read scripture and to faithfully seek the will of God. Scripture is not crystal clear. And the church has made numerous erroneous interpretations over the centuries. And we continue to do so. The question is whether we can learn to offer the grace and love that God has offered each of us. Whether we live in the center or in the corners.

The Amazon websites describes *Shame-less* this way:

Christians are obsessed with sex. But not in a good way. For generations countless people have suffered pain, guilt, and judgment as a result of this toxic fixation on sex, the body, and physical pleasure. In the follow-up to her celebrated New York Times bestseller *Accidental Saints*, Bolz-Weber unleashes her critical eye, her sharp pen, and her vulnerable but hopeful soul on the caustic, fear-riddled, and religiously inspired messages about sex that have fed our shame.

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

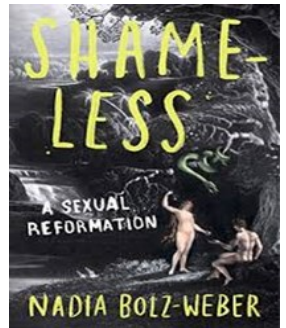
- Jim Craig: Leadership Chair
- Kevin Croom: Farm to Table
- Israel Unger: Business Operations

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
- Sylvia Pittman: Worship Arts



Asbury Worship Series— Grow “Seed the future”... Cont. from page 4

The Asbury Farmers deal with a wide variety of undesirable plants that we often refer to as weeds. And some of these weeds are quite aggressive. Some have very deep roots. Some are thorny like thistles and others send out vines that like to wrap around plants like tomatoes or strawberries. In our story some of the farmer's seed fell among undesirable plants which choked the farmer's newly seeded plants.

Fortunately, most of the time when our farmers put out seed it falls on nutrient-rich, fertile soil. And the seeds germinate into beautiful plants. And this happened in the story that Jesus told. Some of the farmer's seeds fell in good soil. And the farmer had a bountiful harvest as many of the plants produced large amounts of grain.

This story that Jesus told is not just a cute story about farming. Jesus told the story as a parable. This means that there are lessons to be learned. This story applies to other situations in life. There is a lot of symbolism. And Jesus taught that our insight into the meaning of His parables is a divine gift. The Holy Spirit helps us to apply the lessons that the parable teaches.

In this case, Jesus also offers an interpretation for His parable after first explaining why He uses parable at all. As a result of His explanation, there is little debate regarding the meaning of this particular parable. This can lead to the erroneous conclusion that there is nothing else to learn. Jesus says that parables confuse some persons and seem quite clear to others. Jesus said “they look, but do not see, and they listen, but do not hear or understand” (Matthew 13:13 GNT).

Insight is a divine gift that we receive out of our belief. We open our minds to the possibilities that God has in mind for us and surrender our bias to divine insight. A light bulb comes on. We come to realize something about God and our relationship with God that we hadn't understood before. We gain clarity. We experience insight. And we grow in our oneness with God.

On the other hand, Jesus explains that not everyone who hears one of His parables gains insight. Jesus says that this is “because their minds are dull, and they have stopped up their ears and have closed their eyes” (Matthew 13:15 GNT). Jesus is not calling those who miss the point stupid. They could be an absolute genius. A person who struggles to understand even the most basic subjects may get the point and the genius miss it. Insight is a divine gift that comes out of belief and not intellect. That is, faith that Jesus Christ is who scripture says He is.

This is puzzling for non-believers and for believers. This idea is not cut and dry. Just like the farmer seeding the field. While every seed has potential not every seed reaches its potential. Growth is a process that requires total commitment. A lot of crap happens along the way. Rocks, thorns, birds, well-worn paths, sun and rain. Things that we cannot control but may seek to control us.

How we respond to the world matters. Many responses are hurtful. Some responses are helpful. Left to our own we don't get it right often enough. Ask for divine help and some way, some how, things work themselves out. Like the musician playing jazz we come to feel the rhythm of the universe. The song that God has given creation. And beautiful music happens.

The further irony is that even after we taste the sweetness of divine insight our taste buds can become dull. We come to believe that we know what the scripture says. We make all of our decisions based on a static view of creation like we already know everything that we need to know. Our minds become dull and divine insight either ceases or is minimal. This happens to clergy in particular. We think “God hasn't changed. God is consistent.” But life is jazz. The rhythm is constantly changing. We need to keep us. We need to listen and feel the beat.

While it may be true that God hasn't changed it is also true that none of us know everything that can be known about God. Our minds can't grasp God's greatness. But when we read a parable that perhaps we have read hundreds of time before. Even after we have written reflections, papers and articles about the insight that we gained. There is still more. God has more to say to each of us. If we will only listen. This is how we grow.

We start our new worship series on June 23. The Asbury Farms are already bustling with growth. Blair and Matt are harvesting every week. And new seeds are going in the ground every week. This is how our farm does what it was intended to do. To grow. Likewise, we need to harvest that which is ready and plant new seeds every week. This is how we grow.

I pray that you will join us for our new worship series, *Grow*. Also, our Summer Bible Camp (VBS) is coming up the week of July 15. Our summer youth program starts on Monday. Be sure to pass the word and find out how you can help. I hope to see you each Sunday for worship at 10:30 am. Remember Bible study in the Asbury Café is before worship at 9:30 am.

Pastor Tommy

Book Club News.. Cont from page 4

I hope that you will join us for frank, but sensitive discussions about the topics of gender, sexual orientation and a way forward for the church to offering healing rather than harm to persons that don't fit traditional mold.

Our conversations come out of both our shared and our differing beliefs which often lead us into new insights about ourselves, our world and our God. I am grateful for all of the individuals who have made this an every week item on their schedule. Our current worship series, *Chosen*, will parallel our discussions in a number of ways.

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

* Bolz-Weber, Nadia. *Shameless - A Sexual Reformation*. New York: The Crown Publishing Group, 2019.

★ SUNDAY June 23 ★

9:30am Café Opens

10:30am New Beginnings

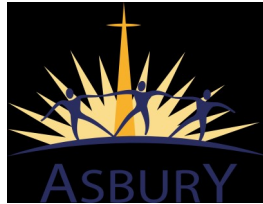
Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship

Attendance 26 Offering \$ 615

Vacation Bible School
Summer Bible Camp
at Asbury UMC

July 15th to 21th - Monday-Friday 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Saturday 11:00 am to 2:00 pm - Sunday 10:30 am to 11:30 am
Pre-school to 6th Grade



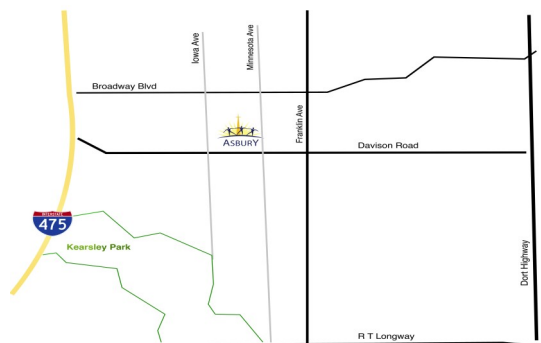
FlintAsbury.org

810-235-0016

info@FlintAsbury.org



1653 Davison Rd, Flint, MI 48506



Come create a musical with Ms. Sylvia Pittman—Vocal Teacher, Musician
and Producer

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

Once there was a farmer who went out to sow grain. As the farmer scattered the seed in the field, some of it fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

Matthew 13:3b-4

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Matthew 13:3b-4 this week’s article titled *Bird Seed*. What images come to mind? In Matthew 13:19 Jesus explains that the seed that fell on the path represents persons who hear Jesus but don’t understand. Have you had this experience — where you didn’t understand?
2. We do not always understand what Jesus is trying to say to us. This is not a reading comprehension problem. Persons who cannot read at all can understand Jesus at times. This is a heart condition. As we open ourselves up to allow the Word of God to find a place in our heart the Holy Spirit helps us to understand what we need to understand. But when we are not receptive the enemy snatches away the meaning before it can take root.
3. How can the members of your group help you this week and on-going to help you to be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God?

I think of worship music as a sort of spiritual broad fork. The various parts of the music are like the various parts of the broad fork working together to penetrate our hearts and allow God's Word to find space to take root. The beat of the drum, the rhythm of the lower, bass notes, the melody of the instruments all resonate within our bodies. And God's Word comes to us through the lyrics that are intended to make way for the divine seed to fall on fertile hearts and minds. We are all created with an innate desire to experience the presence of God. Music is one of the ways that we awaken this desire.

Our bodies respond initially to music out of stored memories. The beat. The rhythm. Where have we heard this sound before? Our body becomes a repository of memories. Stored feelings from a time before. If our mind finds comforting memories the music may evoke a feeling of comfort in us. If the rhythm connects us to a less pleasant memory we may tense up. But hang in there. The broad fork has to go into the soil more than once. The whole bed needs work.

Allow God's Word to be holy seed rather than bird seed.

This Sunday during our music don't let the first feelings that you have take hold for the entire song. Instead, let the rhythm wash over you. Move your body to the beat. Raise your hands. Sing the words.

Open yourself to the message behind the words. Anticipate that the Holy Spirit will find space. Feel the goose bumps as the Spirit moves you closer to God. You have become fertile rather than compacted soil. God's Word has an inviting space to land.



Every member of our worship band is there for worship themselves. They are not there to entertain. God has seen fit to have us lead others into worship by our own worship. Some vocalists say that when they sing they imagine their words to be a prayer. Others will say that they can imagine singing to God. All of us seek the Spirit of God in our midst. And our prayer is that you will too.

Do you ever find yourself annoyed when a chorus or bridge is repeated a few too many times? Repetition occurs both intentionally and in obedience to the Spirit. Allow the repetition to be a broad fork loosening all of the compact parts of your body, mind and soul. When repetition is done in obedience to following the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit there is an invitation to all present to engage with the Spirit of God. The Spirit is calling your name. Inviting you to participate. Hoping that the rhythm will become both soothing and inviting as the Holy Spirit moves.

One of our newer songs features a powerful bridge about the experience of the writer with Jesus. The first verse begins with "Before I spoke a word You were singing over me." God knit us in our mother's womb and was already singing to us. As we were formed the rhythm of the universe was singing lullabies. Before we ever speak a word God is singing over us.

The song's bridge is repeated intentionally at first but often repeated in obedience to the Spirit. It speaks of grace and protection. It tells of a God who never gives up on us.

There's no shadow You won't

Light up

Mountain You won't climb up

Coming after me

*There's no wall You won't
kick down*

Lie You won't tear down

Coming after me.

The writer has experienced grace upon grace. Found when he became lost. Finding light in darkness. Jesus overcame every obstacle that the enemy constructed. Just as Jesus has done for us. Just as Jesus does for us whenever we become compacted and unable to understand the Word of God. Let worship this Sunday be a spiritual broad fork for you. Open your heart to worship and be amazed by God.

I hope that you will join us. We worship each Sunday at 10:30 am. I lead a short Bible study in the Asbury Café at 9:30 am. You can find more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

Pastor Tommy

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.

Seeding...Anticipating a harvest ..cont. from page 2

This is where God tells Isaiah about taking in parables. This wasn't and isn't a trick on God's part. God knows that until we come to realize that God really expects obedience and those voices in our heads that tell us otherwise, whether they are coming from our best friend, a superhero or even from church-folk, cannot be right if they are keeping us from the presence of God. It's that simple.

So in the Gospel of Matthew we read that *"people will listen and listen, but not understand; they will look and look, but not see, because their minds are dull, and they have stopped up their ears and have closed their eyes"* (Matthew 13:14-15 GNT). This is not about IQ. This is not about how well you paid attention in school. This has nothing to do with whether you can read at all. This is about belief. When we actually believe what Jesus is telling us clarity begins. Not all at once, however.

So one of our main stories for this worship series is about planting seeds. Jesus tells a parable about a farmer planting seeds. A lot of folks listening

didn't get it. Or they really didn't want to get it because they didn't see the point in listening to Jesus. And the writer of Matthew goes on to tell us how Jesus explained the meaning to His followers and why he taught in parables. And we benefit from all of this dialogue and explanation. But this doesn't take the place of divine insight.

In order for us to harvest divine insight we don't have to do anything particularly special. Anything that we do that is consistent with the teachings of Jesus helps us to open our senses to the kingdom of God. To see God in our midst. To hear divine insight and to gain understanding. For now, let's call this *seeding*. We are planting these seeds, or allowing seeds to be planted, in us.

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Consider what seeds you can plant this week. What about attending Book Club or Bible Study? What about getting together with someone to talk about faith? What about praying? Consider asking God to reveal a seeding plan for you to help you get started. What about attending worship?

We worship each Sunday at 10:30 am. I lead a short Bible study in the Asbury Café at 9:30 am. You can find more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

What seeds can you plant this week?

Pastor Tommy