

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Who said that? (Change the present, change the future)

We begin our new worship series on Sunday, September 8. It's called *Back to the future*. But our new series is not so much about time travel as the focus. During our series, I plan to ask a lot of questions about the future that you are hoping will come true for you. Although our primary focus is on the here and now. The past, present, and future are connected, but our clarity is limited to the present. Our minds obscure the past, and we cannot know the future.

Our series will follow the story of a fictional

character named Christian. This story dates back to the 17th century, but I prefer the animated version that was released as a movie this year. It's called *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The



story begins with Christian reading a book and recognizing that he was carrying a burden that was becoming progressively heavier. We follow Christian on his

journey to find relief from his burden .

What is the burden that Christian is carrying? In the movie, Christian is carrying a backpack that is strapped in such a way that he cannot take it off. It's like the buckles are rusted and frozen. His burden must take him beyond the boundaries of the City of Destruction, where Christian lives with his family. Christian pleads with his family to go with him, but they don't understand why Christian is so burdened and apparently won't read the book that he has read, despite his urging.

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Back to the Future (Who do you say He is?)

The movie, *Back to the Future*, is about a 17 year old, Marty McFly, who experiences time travel in his friend's invention. Marty's trip illustrates a paradox. What if he does something that alters the future? In the movie's storyline, Marty has to find a way to make sure that his future parents get

together. Otherwise, Marty never existed in the future.



Have you ever wished that you could go back in

time and actually change what happened? A sort of "do-over" that erases a choice or an outcome that you regret? Of course, humankind, at this point, can only dream of time travel. Those of us who are hoping to experience time travel are hopeful that not all of the DeLorean cars

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Special points of interest:

>>> **Worship Design will meet on Monday, September 9th at 6pm in the Asbury Library.**

>>> **Leadership Team will meet on Monday, September 16th at 6pm in Asbury Library.**

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Back to the Future (Who do you say He is)...cont. from page 1

disappear before a real scientist discovers how to turn it into a plutonium-powered, time machine.

What is missing in our daydreaming about going back in time to change the future is the life-giving opportunity to share our story as it really happened. But what happened in the past is not necessarily what will happen in the future. But there is a vast difference. The future hasn't happened yet.

As we come to the end of our worship series, *Tell your story*, our focus turns to the point of our series, We are each called to tell our story so that others can make a more informed decision today, about what their future could become. This makes our story potentially life-giving.

Over the past few weeks, we talked about the power that stories have as a result of how our body is constructed so that we become emotionally invest-

ed. We were created to tell and hear each other's stories. We can't change the past. But we can definitely the future. And we can do this by just telling our story.

One of the stories found in the Gospel of Luke tells about a time when Jesus returned to Nazareth and attended the church where He grew up. Imagine that you are attending a high school reunion or some other event where you will spend time with people who knew you before you were an adult. Many knew about the capers you pulled. A few told your parents when they saw you in places where you didn't belong. They knew the "former" you.

Now you have an opportunity to be seen and heard by this hometown crowd. Maybe you are planning to run for public office. Perhaps you are starting a new business. You speak to

the people who saw you at your worst and at your best in the past. What will they be thinking when you talk about the future? Will your history be a good predictor of the future that you are hoping will unfold for you?

Jesus is given one of the sacred scrolls. It is the scroll that contains the Book of Isaiah. It is a book of prophecy. Isaiah is the name given to at least a couple of prophets who lived a long time ago. Jesus reads the prophecy about a future Messiah. *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people."*

Who said that? (Change the present, change the future) cont. from page 1

Pilgrim's Progress was written by a pastor, and the book includes references from scripture. The book is not a veiled attempt to write about God and our spiritual journey. Instead, the book is an "in your face" story about one man's spiritual journey. So let's cut to the chase. Christian has learned from reading scripture that he must change his life or face harsh judgment. This is his burden. Christian learns from the first person he meets as he begins his journey, a man named Evangelist, what he must do to be relieved of his burden. Christian

responds that he does not want to do the first and cannot do the second. Now what?

Some of us long to hear the voice of God in an obvious way, while others claim that they have daily conversations with God. What gives? Does God have a handful of friends, and the rest of us are simply acquaintances? Or does hearing God's voice require specialized training, or is there a particular recipe, like



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

Mary Nations	Mary Russell
Elaine Lamoreaux	

Coming up this week

Sept 9	Mon	5:00pm	Youth Choir
		6:00pm	Worship Design
		7:00pm	Flint Jubilee
Sept 10	Tues	10am-2pm	Water Distribution
		6:00pm	Community Gospel Choir
Sept 11	Wed	12Noon	Pastor Book Club
		6:00pm	Beginners Bible Study
		6:00pm	Youth Group
Sept 12	Thu	4:30-6pm	Gaming as Education
		6:00pm	Worship Band Practice
Sept 13	Fri	10am-2pm	Asbury Cafe Open
		6:00pm	Asbury Youth Group
Sept 14	Sat	10am-12N	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
Sept 15	Sun	8am-10am	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
		9:30am	Café Open
		10:30am	New Beginnings
			Contemporary Worship

★ ★

SUNDAY, September

1st

9:30am Café Opens

10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship

Asbury Worship Series Back to the Future “Pilgrim’s Progress”

We invited our community to watch the newly released movie, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, on August 29 in our newly equipped Asbury Empowerment Arts Center. The film was a big hit with both adults and children. Our next worship series will use the story from this movie as a backdrop.



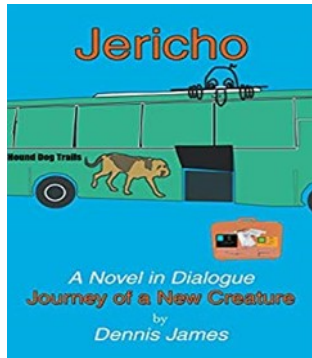
Back to the future, the title of another popular movie, is the headline that I chose for our new worship series be-

cause it offers an interesting paradox. How can we go back to a time that hasn’t happened yet? The answer in the movie is time travel, which is the invention that the movie asks us to imagine possible. Many of us have wondered what it would be like to be able to travel through time. Going back in time to experience what it was like back then and visiting the future to see how things unfold later.

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Book Club News

After reading and discussing the book *Shame-less* written by Nadia Bolz-Weber our group is taking a short break. On July 10 we hosted our youth who are working



with us for the summer and a youth choir from Omaha, Nebraska. A week after that we watched a video from the Nooma series by Rob Bell

titled *Sunday*. A great discussion followed the video on why we go to church. We concluded that we don’t get together out of a sense of duty, although these feelings are often felt. Ultimately, we go because we encounter God in our worship and in our time together.

Our next book was written by Dennis Sykes. Most of you have seen Dennis around Asbury at one point or another. Perhaps you would better recognize Dennis as the Roman Governor, Pilate, whom Dennis played in our Easter musical. Perhaps you remember Dennis in one of our concerts. He sings with our community gospel choirs. Dennis is a member of Ebenezer Ministries located a short distance from Asbury.

Our current book is titled *Jericho*. The book follows a man by the name of Jaymes Devans. As the novel begins, James is leaving Chicago, Illinois. He is going South to make a better life for the family he loves. However, Jaymes finds out that his plans and God’s plans are not the same. He becomes caught up in a world of murder, drug smuggling, crooked businessmen, politicians, secret agents, and a God with a plan.

Jericho will challenge our own knowledge of scripture as the people Jaymes meets challenges him to continue reading and studying God’s Word. Jaymes is amazed by how much people around him had changed for the better after coming to know Jesus Christ for themselves. And a long bus ride was just what Jaymes needed to spend some solid reading time.

Since this is novel is hot off the shelves and since we want to support Dennis in his first book publishing we ordered ten copies at just under \$20 each. A few of us have purchased our books directly from Dennis but it helps him even more when we buy his books from retailers. Dennis is with our group each week to answer questions and autograph books.

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.

* Dennis James (Dennis Sykes). *Jericho: a Novel in Dialogue: Journey of a New Creature*. Xlibris, 2018.

Leadership in Worship & Service

Welcome Team	Tony, Mirium
Ushers	Anthony, Jim
Production Team	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



Asbury Worship Series—Back to the Future (Pilgrim's Progress) ... Cont. from page 4

During our next worship series, I hope that you will be willing to do some time travel with me. It won't be that hard. We actually do it all the time. We read or hear about something that happened in the past when a person shares their story. A story, by its very nature, already happened. Unless, of course, the story is about the future. Unless the story is about what could happen.

The Pilgrim's progress from this world, to that which is to come, was initially written as a book. The book was written by John Bunyan in 1678. According to the information I found on Wikipedia, this book may have been the very first novel to be written in the English language. It has since been translated into 200 languages and is among the most influential books ever written. The book was written while the author was in prison for holding a church service outside of the Church of England. This is an extremely important connection for our Asbury community that will become clear during our worship series.

We have loads of expressions that reference the connections between what has happened and what will happen. We sometimes call this a trend when the past becomes a predictor of the future. We ate fruit loops for breakfast five days in a row. What are the chances that we will eat fruit loops tomorrow?

The answer in this case is that the only connection between tomorrow and yesterday is that we have fruit loops on the brain. Otherwise, if we are looking for things that happened in the past that could predict the future, then we are looking for "dependent" variables. Let me explain using an illustration.

I flip a coin and it comes up heads. I flip the coin a hundred times and I keep track of how many times it comes up heads and how often tails show up. My count show that heads came up 75 times. What are the odds that tails will come up on my next flip? The answer is fifty percent. The same odds that were present on my first flip of the coin. Each flip of the coin is independent of the one before. There are lots of examples where the past is not a reliable predictor of the future because there is no connection whatsoever.

Yet we have heard it said that if we ignore the past we are prone to repeat it. There are some things that can be predictors of the future. But there are no guarantees. The future hasn't happened yet. It might rain. It might not rain. And if rain is independent of the subject that we are trying to predict, it doesn't matter one way or another.

The Bible contains loads of stories about the past. The Bible also has a lot to say about predicting the future based on the past. The stories about the past can help us avoid some of the pitfalls that others have fallen into. They can help us recognize trends that are worth paying attention to and somethings that didn't work very well.

During this series I hope to draw a connection between some trends that are taking shape and the likely triggers that could give us a clue as to what to do to stop a particular trend that suggests a future we would rather not visit.

As our story moves from "Once upon a time" to the answer to the question of who we have found Christ to be in our own life, our story becomes a story of a faith journey. A story about a belief in something that we cannot see. Yet we know that our faith is itself a gift. And in our choosing life we can help others to choose life simply by sharing our story.

The Lord said to Abrams, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a land that I am going to show you."

Genesis 12:1

I pray that you will join us for our new worship series called *Back to the future*. 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

Who said that? (Change the present, change the future)...cont. from page 2

making the perfect pizza crust, that catches God's attention?

And a few of us would rather that God speaks to someone else. I find this position sad. Nevertheless, I understand. Consider Christian. He hears the voice of God through scripture, and God's voice feels to him like a burden for which he cannot find relief. Who needs that? But Christian is focused on the future after he realizes that the present is not what his heart desires.

I believe, like many others who have spent a lot of time with scripture, that God loves every one of us, whether or not we return God's love. For me, this begins with my belief that we are each created in God's image. We are a reflection of God. We are God's creation. A lot of scripture reads like a love story complete with the sort of drama that we all find in our lives when those we love disappoint us.

Sometimes we learn that we are disappointed because our expectations are unrealistic. Often, we come to realize that we didn't create the people we love. God created them. While our own children may look a lot like us, and have similar eyes and hair, they are not an image of us. And we don't get to control what others do regardless of whether our intentions are good or bad.

Somewhere along my own path from child to adolescent to adult, I picked up my own burden. It was a burden, not unlike Christian's burden

It was a burden, not unlike Christian's burden, but uniquely my own. At the time, I thought that my burden was a burning desire to become wealthy. It didn't start out this way. My journey began quite innocently. I wanted to attend college after high school. It turned out that my career choice had less to do with a burning passion for accomplishing something significant and more to do with being really good at something. And believe that when we are really good at something that enough people feel is important, we make a lot of money.

The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a land that I am going to show you."

Genesis 12:1

In many respects, there were parts of my thinking that many parents want for their children. I had the motivation, and I was willing to work hard. While I found school difficult, even high school, I managed to get through a very challenging curriculum while a lot of my classmates failed. And I discovered that businesses were willing to pay for my services. I dreamed of a future where I could go where I wanted to go, live where I wanted to live, and buy what I wanted to buy. The problem was that I completely missed the boat in actually knowing what my burden really was and how to remove the burden that I was carrying. And my burden was getting heavier.

Priorities. That was the issue for me. I thought that being successful in my career should be my priority. I eventually learned that my priorities were wrong. Pursuing a career is a good thing. Putting my career ahead of hearing the voice of God is destructive to me and eventually to everyone around me. I call this recognition that while I couldn't change the past, I could change my own future by changing my priority in the present, a blessing.

In the movie, Christian does not recognize his burden as a blessing. Nor does Christian fully understand how he came to be carrying such a burden. I can identify with Christian. Blessings seem to come disguised as hard choices and giving something up. This is confusing. We think of a blessing as an immediate and recognizable gift. And if a blessing is wrapped, we expect pretty paper and bows that can be unwrapped without the use of special tools.

In the Book of Genesis, we read that Abram was able to hear the voice of God. Scripture doesn't tell us a lot about the actual conversation, but we do learn what Abram believes he heard. Abram was to go on a trip that would require that he leave behind the comfortable and trust God that blessings will follow. God had a different future in mind for Abram.

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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

The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a land that I am going to show you."

Genesis 12:1 GNT

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Genesis 12:1. God tells Abram to pack up and leave his home. However, God is not very specific about where Abram is to go. Have you ever had a similar experience? Explain.
2. Read this week's article titled *Who said that?* In what ways is your story similar to Christian's story? Over the next few weeks we will learn more about Christian's journey to be relieved from his burden. What burden are you carrying?
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?

Jesus is not the first person to read this text. It has been read dozens of times in this very church in Nazareth. This text articulates the hopes of the people for a time when God will anoint a savior of the people. A person who will release the burdens of the people. Surely, this person, this messiah, will chase out the Roman soldiers and restore their country.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news...

Luke 4:18

Jesus reads the prophecy and hands the scroll back to the person who gave it to Him to read. The crowd's attention is on Jesus. Good job. You must have done well in school. You are all grown now, Jesus. We are glad You came back to visit. Jesus read well. The people are pleased.

But Jesus doesn't thank the crowds and take His seat. Jesus tells the crowd that this prophecy that the people have waited for centuries to come true is here now. Standing right in front of them. It is Jesus. He has come to bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty and give sight to the blind. He has the Spirit of the Lord within Him.

Can you imagine the reaction? "Isn't this Joseph's boy? How is His mother, Mary, handling this announcement?" The people, His people, try to throw Jesus off a cliff.

I don't really know how Jesus felt that day. I know that I would feel humiliated. I can't imagine myself making a claim on the scale that Jesus made, but I can definitely imagine being shut down by people who knew me when the earlier parts of my story were unfolding when I claim that my future is nothing like my past. Can't you?

Isn't this one of the reasons that so many of us are unwilling to share our story? Either we think that on one wants to hear our story, or worse, people will listen to our story and reject us. Rejection stings to the core. Rejection returns us to the shame that we felt when we came to realize that we didn't do the things we should have done or done things that we shouldn't have done.

But our stories are too important to be kept silent. Our voices are too essential to be kept silent. Because Jesus claimed His identity, accepted His destiny as God's son, and took on the burdens of all people, we are free to claim our identity. Not who others may think we are, however. We can claim the identity that God had in mind for us while we were still in our mother's womb.

Our past only informs our future. Our history doesn't create our future. While we cannot erase our past, we can choose to follow the One who can shape our future into a beautiful work of art that reflects our Creator.

On September 8th, we will begin our next series that we will also call Back to the future. Our series is based on the movie that was shown in the Asbury Empowerment Arts Center this past Thursday evening. Read the article on What's Coming up in Worship to learn more.

While we cannot erase our past we can choose to follow the One who can shape our future into a beautiful work of art that reflects our Creator.

Meanwhile, come join us as we accept a future designed by a loving God. Come and share your story and hear the stories of others. We worship each Sunday at 10:30AM. Come learn why it is important to tell your story and how to do so. I lead a short Bible study in the Asbury Café at 9:30am. You will 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.

Who said that? (Change the present, change the future) ...cont. from page 6

But Abram needed to make changes in the present so that his new future would be possible.

What about you? What does your future look like based on your past? Can you imagine a different future? Are you willing to allow for a different future that contains blessings disguised as hard decisions in the present?

I hope that you will join us as we follow Christian's journey towards the light where he is to find how to be relieved of his burden. More importantly, my prayer is that you will discover how to be relieved of your own burden.

We worship each Sunday at 10:30 am. Come learn why it is important to tell your story and how to do so. 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.

Are you willing to allow for a different future that contains blessings disguised as hard decisions in the present?

Pastor Tommy