



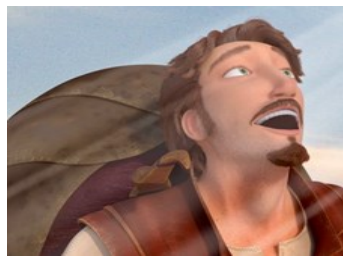
ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

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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Muddy Boots (Pliable and Obstinate)

This past week we have had a lot of rain. And when we walk on clay-rich soil that has been soaked with rain, our boots get heavier as the mud accumulates under our feet. It is a good idea to clean our boots before we track mud into places where mud isn't welcomed.

This sort of sticky mud is a great metaphor for something

that bogs us down and makes it more difficult for us to move forward. This is different than other obstacles that get in our way and



block our progress. Mud-like obstacles are more subtle. They stick to us, adding weight. They bog us down.

Can you think of feelings that remind you of the sort of mud that comes from rain and clay? How about worry, dread or regret?

In the movie and book, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the main character

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Volume 19 Issue 15
September 15, 2019

Special points of interest:

>>> **Worship Design will meet on Monday, September 23rd at 6pm in the Asbury Library.**

>>> **Free Concert! Michael Fletcher & The Michael Fletcher Chorale...see flyers in the Café area.**

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Muddy Boots (Pliable and Obstinate)...cont. from page 1

Christian, lives in a city with a name that contradicts the reality of its residents. The City of Not Cursed. The more accurate name for the city is the City of Destruction. It is a city that has lost its way.

Christian, after reading a book, is convinced that he needs to leave the City of Destruction before it's too late. The metaphor that the author chooses to use that illustrates Christian's need to leave behind what he knows, in order to pursue what the book describes, is a burden. In the movie, Christian is wearing a backpack that he cannot take off without help. The backpack represents Christian's burden.

As Christian leaves the city and realizes that he doesn't know where to go, he cries out to the Lord to be shown what he needs to do. As he stood frozen, a man named Evangelist speaks to him and Christian asks the man for help. Christian has read the Book that tells him

what to do, but he realizes that he is unwilling to do the first thing, and unable to do the second. Christian is stuck.

Evangelist directs Christian to walk towards a gate. Christian is unable to see the gate, so Evangelist directs him to walk towards a light shining in the horizon until he can see the gate. Evangelist instructs Christian that when he arrives at the gate he is to knock and will be told what to do next. So Christian heads toward the light in the distant horizon.

As Christian continues on his way, he is chased by two of his neighbors, Obstinate and Pliable. As their names imply, one is determined not to change and the other changes his mind when the resistance gets difficult. Of course, in the movie, their tendencies come out in their words and actions. Just as our tendencies show in our words and actions. Some of us are more like

Obstinate and some of us are more like Pliable.

Christian must decide whether he will listen to Obstinate or Pliable, just as each of us must find a balance between our obstinance and our pliability. If we are not willing to be molded into something different, if we are obstinate and unwilling to be pliable, it is difficult for us to make the choice of following the Way to the gate. Yet if we are too pliable, and therefore not willing to continue on the Way in the face of resistance, we are likely to change our mind and take what looks like an easier way.

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	

MARK YOUR CALENDARS...AND PLAN TO ATTEND THIS SPECIAL CONCERT!

LOCATION: 1379 West Louis Ave. Flint, MI 48505

OCTOBER 26, 2019

OPEN your **and SAY SOMETHING!**

DIVINE WORSHIP 11:00 AM
LIVE IN CONCERT 4:30 PM
Michael Fletcher & The Michael Fletcher Choral

⇩
Coming up this week
⇩

Sept 16	Mon	5:00pm	Youth Choir
		6:00pm	Leadership Team
		7:00pm	Flint Jubilee
Sept 17	Tues	10am-2pm	Water Distribution
		6:00pm	Community Gospel Choir
Sept 18	Wed	12Noon	Pastor Book Club
		6:00pm	Beginners Bible Study
		6:00pm	Youth Group
Sept 19	Thu	4:30-6pm	Gaming as Education
		6:00pm	Worship Band Practice
Sept 20	Fri	10am-2pm	Asbury Cafe Open
		6:00pm	Asbury Youth Group
Sept 21	Sat	10am-12N	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
Sept	Sun	8am-10am	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
		9:30am	Café Open
		10:30am	New Beginnings
			Contemporary Worship

★
SUNDAY, September 8th
★

9:30am Café Opens
 10:30am New Beginnings
 Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship
 Attendance 26 Offering \$ 776



**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.



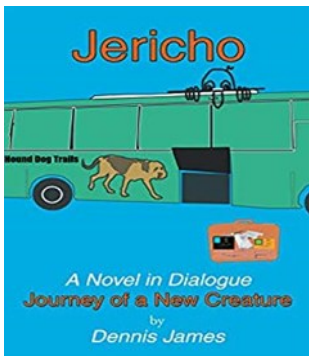
Back to the future, the title of another popular movie, is the headline that I chose for our new worship series be-

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.



Jericho. 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.

Pastor Tommy

Leadership in Worship & Service

Welcome Team	Tony, Mirium	Sylvia Pittman	Worship Arts
Ushers	Anthony, Jim	Jim Craig	Leadership Chair
Production Team	Jonathon	Kevin Croom	Farm to Table
Children	Patrice & Mirium	Israel Unger	Business Operations
Worship Leaders	Cyndi		
Café	Christine & Norma		

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

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

O Lord, how long must I call for help before you listen, before you save us from violence? Why do you make me see such trouble? How can you stand to look on such wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are all around me, and there is fighting and quarreling everywhere.

Habakkuk 1:2-3 GNT

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Habakkuk 1:2-3. Can you empathize with the prophet Habakkuk? Have you been feeling like the cries of the people who are discouraged by violence and trouble are being ignored by God?
2. Read this week's article titled *Muddy boots*. 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 "mud" is weighing you down? Do you feel more like Obstinate or Pliable?
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?



In our story, Pliable decides to go with Christian after hearing about the promises in the book. And, of course, Obstinate hurts a few insults at both of them and leaves. But shortly after Christian and Pliable continue on their way, they get stuck. We learn that the two of them walked right into the *Slough of Despond*, a place that is full of the stuff that sticks to us like mud sticks to our boots. The sort of clay enriched mud that we have around us after it rains.

In the book we learn that this mud is a metaphor for our fears, doubts, and discouraging apprehensions about our self.

Of course, these are the very emotions that can cause us to give up, turn away, and accept what may appear to be an easier way. Pliable, as expected, is quickly discouraged and lashes out at Christian for talking him into going along. Pliable vows to go back as soon as he gets out, which he does, without helping Christian, who is sinking further into the mud as a result of his burden. Pliable leaves without so much as a goodbye.

O Lord... Destruction and violence are all around me, and there is fighting and quarreling everywhere.

Habakkuk 1:2-3

The Prophet Habakkuk cried out for help when he was feeling that God seemed to be doing nothing about the destruction that he was seeing where he lived. This book in our Old Testament begins with Habakkuk's plea, "O Lord, how long." Sometimes we have so much mud stuck to our boots we feel like we can't move any further.

Sometimes we cry out, "Lord, how long will this go on." Sometimes we have so much mud stuck to our boots we cannot move forward.

Christian is determined to go on, but the muck is too much for him. Christian cries out, and soon a man comes to his aid. The man's name is Help, of course. "I came because you called me," Help tells Christian, who is now safely on firm ground. As Help dumps water on Christian to wash off the muck that covers him from head to toe, Help explains to Christian about the Slough of Despair. No wonder Pliable changed his mind about going with Christian.

As Christian continues on towards the distant gate he meets another stranger named Worldly Wiseman. After a conversation about where Christian is headed and why, Worldly Wiseman urges Christian to change direction. "Christian, instead of traveling to such a difficult place as the distant gate, go instead, to the Village of Morality, and meet with its Mayor, Legality, and his son, Civility. They are fine people," Worldly Wiseman argues.

Worldly Wiseman's argument read like an ad for a new subdivision located just outside the problems of the city. Instead of dangers, it offers safety, friendship, and contentment. The Village of Morality is conveniently located within a short distance of everything you need. And, Worldly Wiseman stresses, there are houses available and a living standard that, while a little more expensive, they are high quality. Even better, Christian would be in the company of neighbors who are financially secure and live a good life.

But, just as Christian gets close enough to see the village, he begins to notice how steep the hill is leading up to Legality's house.

Christian also notices fire coming out of the mountain in front of him. This way did not seem quite as easy as Worldly Wiseman claimed it would be.

Again, Christian stands frozen, unsure of what to do. Does he continue to climb the hill to meet Legality or turn back? Worldly Wiseman promised Christian that this would be a much easier way. But his promises didn't seem to match reality. Fortunately, someone who had told Christian how to find the gate came along. When Evangelist sees Christian staring at the hill to Legality's house, he reminds him to return to the Way that he was following before.

Unfortunately, the characters that we meet in our own lives do not have names that clearly state their intentions and bias. 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 when you find that you are so deep in the mud that you cannot move, that you will find the help that you need.

Sometimes we have so much mud stuck to our boots we feel like we can't move any further.

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.

Pastor Tommy

Welcome to the Asbury Community

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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.

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