

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

## Bird Hunting (A bird in the hand)

It is an ageless lesson. “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” It is the sort of wisdom that a grandparent shares with a child who sees a toy that they think they want rather than the toy that they are holding. It is the advice that a father gives his daughter when she talks about her idea of leaving home to find a better job in a distant town.

In the middle of writing this, I was feeling disturbed by another article that was in this morning’s New York Times. I wasn’t as surprised by the head-

lines as I would have been since the shock of this news was introduced in last night’s world news. Scientists discovered that the bird population in North America decreased by one third over the past 50 years. Perhaps this ancient wisdom of holding onto the birds that we have is more important than ever.



## 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



This news comes at a time when students that attend public schools in New York have permission to join a rally with other youth hoping to gain the attention of policymakers. Their message is even more pressing than our declining bird population. Our youth want us to believe that our planet is on fire. Our daily news programs offer tangible evidence with headlines of angry earth responding to our ever-increasing need to want more stuff. The effect on our climate already has catastrophic results. This time we need to learn our wisdom from our children. *Page 2*

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 22

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### *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.**

>>> **CROP Walk information, see page 3. If interested, please call Connie.**

>>> **The book club is to read chapters 23 to 26 for Wednesday’s discussion.**

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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 obstinacy 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.

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## Bird Hunting (A bird in the hand) cont. from page 1

This idea of a "bird in the hand" is a good one. Sometimes when you are holding onto a sure thing, you should be content with what you have, rather than give up what you have for whatever is behind door number two. There are game shows based on whether a person is willing to take such a risk when they cannot be sure what is hidden behind the door.

But there is another piece of wisdom that all grandparents are expected to share. This wisdom involves patience

and the willingness to be content with the present, but only for a while. In other words, not necessarily satisfied with the present, but willing to wait for a spell as the future unfolds. This second piece of ancient wisdom is sometimes known as "delayed gratification." It labels that feeling we get when we are sitting in a classroom wondering what our friend is doing who chose to skip class.

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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

Mary Nations                      Mary Russell  
Elaine Lamoreaux

## THE CROP HUNGER WALK NEEDS YOU!!



It's easy to register, just by calling Connie (810) 814-7985 or call the office at 235-0016 and I will get a packet to you. **MARK YOUR CALENDARS, THE WALK WILL BE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2019.** WE WILL MEET AT 1:30PM AT COURT STREET UMC AND WALK WILL BEGAN AT 2:00PM. ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE CALL ME.

## Coming up this week

Sept 23	Mon	5:00pm	Youth Choir
		6:00pm	Worship Design
		7:00pm	Flint Jubilee
Sept 24	Tues	10am-2pm	Water Distribution
		6:00pm	Community Gospel Choir
Sept 25	Wed	12Noon	Pastor Book Club
		6:00pm	Beginners Bible Study
		6:00pm	Youth Group
Sept 26	Thu	4:30-6pm	Gaming as Education
		6:00pm	Worship Band Practice
Sept 27	Fri	10am-2pm	Asbury Cafe Open
		6:00pm	Asbury Youth Group
Sept 28	Sat	10am-12N	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
Sept 29	Sun	8am-10am	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
		9:30am	Café Open
		10:30am	New Beginnings
			Contemporary Worship



## SUNDAY, September 15th

9:30am Café Opens

10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship

Attendance 28 Offering \$ 380

## 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.



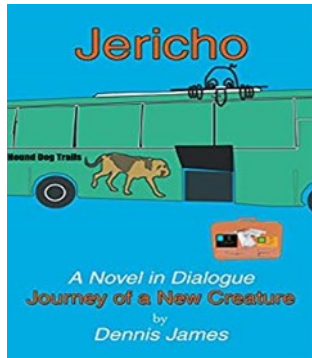
*Back to the future*, the title of another popular movie, is the headline that I chose for our new worship series be-

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 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
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

One of the best pieces of advice that I have received in my life came when my dad and I attended a new student orientation at the university where I was enrolled for the fall. The Dean of the college said to the large group of eager students and worried, but proud parents, "I have some advice for the students that I want the parents to hear."

The Dean's advice shaped my approach to a challenge that all students face when we realize that there is no one around to tell us to do our homework and to not stay out late on a "school night." I needed the Dean's advice. I knew that I was likely to find my courses challenging. I felt fortunate that this school was giving me a chance. It only accentuated my anxiety when I thought about how much it cost for me to be there and how many years it would take to pay back my student loans.

The advice was simple. Finish your homework before you go out to do whatever you do for fun and entertainment. Put school ahead of football games and parties. The Dean's advice came with a promise. There will be time for the fun stuff. I decided right then that I would commit to using this wisdom. And it worked for me. It also worked for my closest friends, including my roommate, Gary, who struggled even more than me to get through college.

But delayed gratification is the devil for those hoping that we make spontaneous decisions. If I am hosting a TV special where I want you to make a decision to buy the set of pots and pans that I'm selling, or a necklace, a new set of socket wrenches, or any other "must-have" items, I don't want you to delay your decision. Phrases such as "For the next 10 minutes" and a counter that shows how fast the items are disappearing are used to motivate me to set my homework aside and make a purchase.

**The Lord says, "I am making a new earth and new heavens. The events of the past will be completely forgotten. Be glad and rejoice forever in what I create.**

*Isaiah 65: 17-18a*

In the book by John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the main character, Christian, is at the house of the Interpreter. The Interpreter is Christian's version of the Dean of the college I attended. The Interpreter is expected to teach Christian what he needs to know before he continues on the straight and narrow path that leads to the place of deliverance.

Christian is anxious to have his burden removed. He has chosen to give up all that he has to find the Way that will lead him to the place described in a book that he has read.

The Interpreter offers Christian a few lessons. In one case, Christian observes two children. The older child is named Passion. The younger child's name is Patience. Christian notices that Patience seems content and at peace. Passion, on the other hand, seems unsettled.

The Interpreter explains that the children were promised a valuable gift that they would receive next year. Patience is content with waiting. She is at peace. Passion insisted on having his gift right away. But when Passion received his gift, he immediately used all of it and had nothing left.

Birds are essential to our planet. They feast on insects, such as mosquitoes, and assist with pollination in our orchards, farms, and gardens. God created birds for a divine purpose, and humankind was given the responsibility for making decisions that are good for our planet, including birds. Our need for more and our greed is destroying our planet. And we are called by our Creator God to take action.

But actions that heal a broken planet will not come out of wealthy, arrogant, and power-hungry people who will bully us into hurting each other for their benefit. Healing comes out of love for our neighbor,

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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 says, "I am making a new earth and new heavens. The events of the past will be completely forgotten. Be glad and rejoice forever in what I create..."*

Isaiah 65:17-18a GNT

### NOTES FROM WORSHIP

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### QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Isaiah 65:17-18a. What ideas and images come to mind for you? Does the idea of patience enter into your reflection? How about the question when?
2. Read this week's article titled *Bird hunting*. What do you think Christians learned from the Interpreter that might help you? Are you familiar with this idea of a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush? Is this always true? What does this mean for you in light of the scripture you read from Isaiah?
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](http://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.

## Bird Hunting (A bird in the hand ) ...cont. from page 6

that is only possible when we love God. We were created by a God willing to live among us and take on our shame so that our burdens can be relieved.

**Healing comes out of love for our neighbor that is only possible when we love God.**

Is it wise to let the bird in your hand go free so that you might go after the two that are caught in a bush? Would it be more sensible to hold onto the bird that you already have and not take the risk?

The answer is contextual. Is the risk worth the potential reward? You could end up with nothing.

Christian must continue on his journey towards deliverance on faith. He once thought that he had everything possible until he read a book that changed everything for him. Christian's new insight became a burden for him that he could not relinquish on his own power. But Christian would need patience. His relief will come sometime later. Meanwhile, he will likely face struggles and challenges as he moves toward deliverance.

This is the journey that people of faith must choose to continue every day. During our trip we will need patience, and we will also need passion. But our passion will be for

the reward of deliverance. We already have the most valuable gift of all. We know that our liberation is assured by the only One who can make such a promise.

We worship each Sunday at 10:30 am. I pray that you will join us. If on Sunday morning you have this feeling that you should be somewhere, it just may be that God is answering my prayer and calling you to Asbury. 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](http://FlintAsbury.org).

Pastor Tommy