

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.



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*

Land Deeds (Trusting God with our future)

Someday it will be necessary for me to retire. Like strawberry plants, fruit trees, and grapevines, we can produce fruit for many years, but there comes a time when our capacity begins to fade. Cyndi and I live in a parsonage. A parsonage is a house that belongs to a church. Retirement will mean finding another place to live. And given our love to grow fruits and vegeta-

bles we are considering buying land. But where?



Jeremiah was a prophet during a difficult time in Judah’s history. The neighborhoods had degraded, and lawlessness prevailed over peace and love. But God was up to something. The enemy, in their case, the Babylonians, would soon scatter the residents and occupy the community. Land values were sure to plummet even

Page 2

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September 29, 2019

Special points of interest:

>>> **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.**

Inside this issue:

Bird Hunting (A bird in the hand)	1
Land Deeds	1
In Our Prayers/Coming up this Week	3
Asbury Worship Series-Back to Future	4
Pastor’s Book Club	4
Leadership in Worship & Service	4
Asbury Worship Series	5
Bird Hunting	6
Asbury Farm to Table	7
Small Group Questions & Notes	8
Land Deeds	9
Bird Hunting	10

Land Deeds (Trusting God with our future)...cont. from page 1

further. Who wants to buy in a neighborhood on its way down?

But Jeremiah also believed that God would not destroy Judah. The doors would remain open for years to come. The neighborhood would be restored. And this would happen as the people turned to God as the source of their power, rather than put other gods, other priorities, ahead of the One True God. Jeremiah knew that there would come a time when he would want to own some of that very land, that for the foreseeable future, would be worth very little. Someday the land's value would return. God promised, and Jeremiah believed God.

So Jeremiah had an opportunity to buy the land of a deceased relative. Jeremiah could have declined. But the fact that God let Jeremiah know that this land offer was coming convinced him that God was behind this. God would not mislead Jeremiah. God had been faithful to Jeremiah, and Jeremiah was faithful to God.

It is a "Cinderella" story. A story of a comeback. A story that warms the heart and restores our faith in God. And it actually happened. God did restore the land, and the people returned and rebuilt the neighborhood. But it wasn't easy. There were a lot of good reasons to quit. Rebuilding is hard work and risky. We have to rely on one another. We have to rely on God. People let us down. But, God doesn't let us down.

I bought the field from Hanamel and weighed out the money to him...take these deeds...and place them in a clay jar, so that they may be preserved for years to come. The Lord Almighty...had said that houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.
Jeremiah 32:8-9, 14-15

The people of Judah had turned their back on God, and when this happens, the inevitable consequences is death and destruction. I don't believe that God comes across with a divine, economic hurricane, and smites the land and people. God doesn't need too. We smite each other and the planet we live on. People can be each other's worst enemies, but we can also be great neighbors to one another.

Scarcity is a breeding ground for violence. When we are lacking, and there is competition for resources, we organize into sides, or sometimes we decide to go it alone. When there is scarcity, we want to be first in line. We realize that there are only so many pallets of food and bottled water. If we want our share, we better be in line first when there isn't enough to go around. Our priorities are immediate. Which line do I jump into? Which god is likely to serve me best?

Page 9

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.

Page 6





In our Prayers

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

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 30	Mon	5:00pm	Youth Choir
		7:00pm	Flint Jubilee
Oct 1	Tues	10am-2pm	Water Distribution
		6:00pm	Community Gospel Choir
Oct 2	Wed	Early Church Conference	
		Reports due to Connie today	
		12Noon	Pastor Book Club
		6:00pm	Beginners Bible Study
		6:00pm	Youth Group
Oct 3	Thu	4:30-6pm	Gaming as Education
		6:00pm	Worship Band Practice
Oct 4	Fri	10am-2pm	Asbury Cafe Open
		6:00pm	Asbury Youth Group
Oct 5	Sat	10am-12N	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
Oct 6	Sun	8am-10am	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
		9:30am	Café Open
		10:30am	New Beginnings
			Contemporary Worship

★ ★

SUNDAY, September 22nd

9:30am Café Opens

10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship

Attendance 22 Offering \$ 876

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.



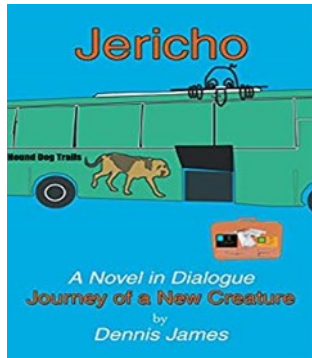
Back to the future, the title of another popular movie, is the headline that I chose for our new worship series be-

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.

Page 5

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

Jim Craig	Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Operations
Blair Neifert	Farm Manager
Israel Unger	Function to Funding

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts

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 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

Bird Hunting (A bird in her hand)...cont. from page 2

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,

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 12 Noon to 2pm &
Sundays 10am 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

"Like us on Facebook~ under Asbury Farms"



Life Group Questions & Notes

I bought the field from Hanamel and weighed out the money to him... take these deeds...place them in a clay jar, so that they may be preserved for years to come. The Lord Almighty...has said that houses, fields, and vineyards will again be bought in this land.

Jeremiah 32:8-9, 14-15 GNT

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Jeremiah 32:8-9, 14-15. What ideas and images come to mind for you? Does the idea of investing in a neighborhood in decline seem risky to you? Jeremiah seems convinced that God has big plans for the future.
2. Read this week's article titled *Land deeds*? In what ways does worshipping God make a difference in the vitality of a neighborhood? Why do so many people choose not to worship God in our neighborhood? What are some things that you can do to change this?
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?



But God is in this business of community building in the long run. Eventually, the power of the Holy Spirit prevails. It begins with a faithful few who gather in buildings and homes around the community to worship the God who will make a difference. Many were worshipping there when it all began. Some never stopped. Many joined later when they realized that God was calling them to be a part of the change that is to come.

And the numbers begin to grow. Slowly at first. Occasionally, a significant increase comes all at once, when the Holy Spirit is allowed to move unconstrained by fear and doubt. As the number of worshipers grows the hand of God is seen in numerous ways. Testimonies begin to spread. Witnesses come forward. More believers return to worship with others who see God at work in the community. The story goes viral.

Our Eastside community is lacking in many things. People have left certain scarcity, schools and churches have closed, and businesses have closed. Blighted buildings and vacant land, however, are abundant. Waiting for God to call more Jeremiahs to invest in the future.

The prudent investor weighs the risk with the potential reward, since rebuilding neighborhoods is a risky business. People make and break promises all the time, businesses fail every day, and people are slow to adapt. So we are understandably skeptical. We are skeptical. We have seen more failures than Cinderella stories coming true. The shoe often doesn't quite fit, or the shoes are stolen and discarded along with the hopes and promises.

But the worshipers still gather. The worshipers declare abundance in the midst of lacking and thank God for the blessings that are before us. We awoke this morning to a world that continues to spin around the sun. The air, so far, is still suitable for life. We will eat today, likely more than we need. And, hopefully, we will thank God for it all, and worship the One who we know gave His life that we can have life abundant.

And we will invite others to gather and to worship the God who can rebuild a neighborhood. While we may disappoint one another, when we rely on our own power alone, we worship a God who is the ultimate builder of neighborhoods, communities, and nations.

Worshippers declare abundance in the midst of lacking.

We worship each Sunday at 10:30 am. I suspect that God is calling you to join us. But joining a group that is betting on God to pull off a Cinderella story may seem risky. But if on some 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.

Pastor Tommy

Welcome to the Asbury Community

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CircuitRider@FlintAsbury.org

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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.

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