

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Whining (There is a God who listens)

Last Sunday, I asked you all to pray for clarity regarding your role in rebuilding our neighborhood. And to ask God for a sign of a next step that involves you. I also asked you to share what you discovered with others and to ask them to pray with you for clarity. Particularly, how you will respond to God's offer.



Here at Asbury Church, we designate the first Sunday of each month as *Next Step Sunday*. Your assignment for last week and this Sunday's theme are expected to converge. If you did indeed pray for clarity regarding your role in rebuilding our neighborhood, and if God did give you a sign that helped you to affirm this next step — then this Sunday can be like a commissioning — a sort of sending out.

I thought that we should begin this week's message with the opening

verses of a seldom-used book of the Bible called Lamentations. A "Lamentation" is a passionate plea of sorrow or regret — when I lament, I tend to call it whining. Lamenting is a very human thing. And there are times when we feel like whining.

In the Book of Lamentations, beginning with chapter one, verse one, we read — *How lonely lies Jerusalem, once so full of people! Once honored by the world, she is now like a widow;*

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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

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Special points of interest:

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

>>> **Worship Design will meet on Monday, October 7th at 6pm in the Asbury Library.**

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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?

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Whining (There is a God who listens) cont. from page 1

The noblest of cities has fallen into slavery. All night long she cries; tears run down her cheeks. Of all her former friends, not one is left to comfort her. Her allies have betrayed her and are all against her now.

WOW — that's heavy. This particular lament was written during a time when the people of Judah were in exile. Not all of the people were exiled, but enough were taken away by the Babylonians that the city seemed desolate. There were aban-

doned houses everywhere. Unemployment was high. The people who stayed in the neighborhoods were suffering.

Does any of this sound familiar to you? I don't mean scripturally familiar —many of you are familiar with the story of the exile of the people of Judah. I mean sound familiar like when you walk around (or drive around) this neighborhood? I don't know about you, but in my mind, I substitute Flint for Jerusalem

when I read this.

I was never in Flint during the « glory » years when there were over 200,000 people. I've heard that back then, most people had jobs, and there were schools in this neighborhood that our children could walk to. I wasn't in Flint back then, but I have heard countless stories about what it was like.

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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	

Coming up this week

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



SUNDAY, September 29th

9:30am Café Opens

10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship

Attendance 30 Offering \$ 440

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.



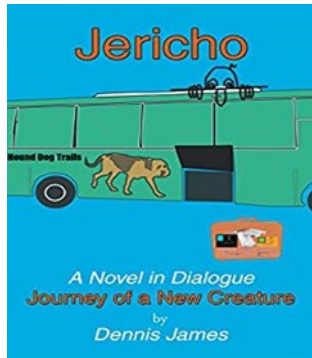
Back to the future, the title of another popular movie, is the headline that I chose for our new worship series be-

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

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

Whining (There is a God who listens)...cont. from page 2

Asbury Church, at one time, would be full every Sunday. And the parking lot was added later. Jim Craig shared how he sometimes parked several blocks away and walk. The parking lot over at Browns Funeral Home, one of the many casualties of Flint's exile, provided nearby parking as more people started attending from further away.

When we lament, we cry out to the air around us. How sad it is for anyone who is crying out and does not believe that there is a God who is listening and whose heart breaks for us when we are suffering. What a horrible sense of hopelessness they must feel.

Last year, we counted almost 30 Thousand visits to Asbury for 12 months. Each Tuesday, when our Community Help Center is open, the line of cars on Minnesota stretches for several blocks. Every Tuesday, people wait in line for hours for free bottled water and food.

But on Sundays, on the day when our community should gather to give thanks to the God who makes free bottled water and food possible, the vast majority of people are absent. On the day when we gather to worship the God who does listen to our laments and whose heart breaks when we suffer, only a few who up. When it comes to thanking and praising God, where

are the long lines?

Would any of you who are fathers give your son a stone when he asks for bread? ...As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:9-117

A friend told me about attending the last City Council meeting. He is dismayed by the lack of civility among our elected officials. It is understandable to see such childish behavior as a failure of government. I see too few of our residents turning to God rather than depending on their own power. We are failing. Verbal skirmishes at City Council meetings are just one consequence of a failure of our city to turn to God for the source of power.

In last week's message at our Sunday morning worship service, I made a statement that people who are not a part of the several small communities who do gather for worship would find controversial. I said that our neighborhood has no hope of revival unless the majority of people gather for worship. If you know scripture, you know that this statement is well supported. We can try all we want to make a comeback, but this has been going on for decades

with little progress. And our futile attempts will continue to be futile until we, as a community, recognize that we are not capable on our own power.

Once we come to realize that the God who created this community, and everything else, is the only One who has the power and wisdom to rebuild our community, we will see tremendous progress. Gathering to clean up blight, meeting to talk about a neighborhood watch, and volunteering to give away bottled water and food are all good things to do. But they are insufficient.

You want to help your neighborhood? Gather each week for worship. Go to whichever gathering place you feel is most compatible with who you are at this point, and worship. Begin by thanking God that you can still do this. And thank God for what is about to come. God is always active.

You want to help your neighborhood? Gather each week for worship.

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

Would any of you who are fathers give your son a stone when he asks for bread? Or would you give him a snake when he asks for a fish? As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:9-11 GNT

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Matthew 7:9-11. What ideas and images come to mind for you? While we do not all have earthly fathers who are ideal, we do all have a heavenly father who is for us, what we would want our father to be. What are the characteristics of a good father?
2. Read this week's article titled *Whining?* Do you ever complain with such passion that yourself crying? Do you have a lot to complain about? Do you see a relationship between worship and the success or failure of communities and cities? What can you do to encourage your neighbors to worship each week?
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 build-ings and homes around the com-munity 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, howev-er, 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 gath-er 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, communi-ties, 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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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.

Whining (There is a God who listens) ...cont. from page 6

And once we gather regularly, in sufficient numbers, our community will return to vibrancy. Until then, it isn't happening people.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus reminds us that God listens to our whining and God's heart breaks when we suffer. But God does more than listen. Jesus reminds us that the reason that we often use the idea of a Father when we talk about God is that God is the good Father. "Would any of you who are fathers give your son a stone when he asks for bread?" Jesus said, "As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who

ask him!"

But are you only asking God for a list of things in the privacy of your own home? Do you believe that God is just waiting for your wish list? And when what you need doesn't show up, do you reckon that God just isn't listening or doesn't really care? Prayer without worship is empty, and worship without justice is empty. Pray at home, but worship with others in your community.

Of course, I would love for you to worship with us at Asbury Church. But Asbury is not for everybody. We accept all people, just you are. Not everyone agrees with us. Whether you are straight or queer,

bi-sexual or heterosexual, you are welcomed at Asbury Church. We don't build walls — we build bridges. And our focus is on worshiping God, and not on tearing each other down.

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