

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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Tool Belts (work & pray for the city)

God, speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, tells the people of Judah, who are in exile in Babylon, to hang in there, but don't be idle. Instead, "Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat what you grow in them." Building for the future, when you feel like all hope is lost, requires a belief in the unknown and a trust that God and you have similar ideas.



I looked up a quote from a retired Episcopal Priest whose books I have enjoyed reading through

the years. Barbara Brown Taylor shares one of her most intimate encounters with God that was life-changing for her. On the fire escape of an abandoned building that was once home to the Culinary Institute of America, Pastor Barbara realized that she had heard the voice of God.

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Volume 19 Issue 13
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Special points of interest:

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

>>> **Leadership Team will meet on Monday, October 14th at 6pm in the Asbury Library.**

>>> **Church Conference is next Sunday...please get your forms in to me as soon as you can, as I will need to round up people for signatures and put packets together. Thank you!!!**

>>> ***Page 3 should say CROP HUNGER WALK...not hungry!!**

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Tool Belts (work & pray for the city) ...cont. from page 1

It was not an audible voice that the priestess heard, however. The voice came to her within her own head. But it was a thought that could not have been her own. It was a statement of direction for her life that she had never considered. Barbara shares that she was earnestly willing to do anything that God asked of her, whether it was continuing with her education and teach college or traveling to places no one else wanted to go, and cleaning restrooms. But neither option came up in her conversation with God on that fire escape.

Instead, Barbara heard, "Do whatever pleases you, and belong to me." When I first read this story I struggled to imagine God being so easy-going. I can identify with Barbara's feelings of complete surrender. Before I had ever heard of Barbara Brown Taylor I too had committed to God that I would go anywhere and do anything that God wanted me to do. "Just tell me what You want, Lord," was a common prayer request coming from me.

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-

It would take several years before I would be able to make sense out of the words that Barbara heard that day. And now, I sometimes share her story with persons asking me how to hear God's voice, and to be certain that they are doing that which God wants them to do. "Do what pleases you," sounds like an invitation that would come from the enemy rather than from God.

Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and cut what you grow in them.

Jeremiah 29:5

But whatever Barbara chose to do was to be done, not by her own power and authority, but by the power of God's Spirit. The "and" that God's voice added makes all the difference. "And belong to me" is an invitation of intimate connection. At

any point, God might decide on a different direction, or a different purpose and Barbara committed herself to obedient listening.

Barbara counted ten different jobs since her encounter with God on the fire escape when she was in her twenties. I have a lot of experience with changing jobs and careers. This is more like the life of a nomad than a lifelong resident.

A "nomad" is someone who doesn't stay in one place very long. A person without a permanent home. Nomadic life is hard. There is a concept in social psychology and in horticulture known as "root shock." When a plant is uprooted and planted in different soil, the plant experiences a post-traumatic reaction. A form of shock. It takes some time for the plant to recover and flourish. Each transplant comes with a risk that the plant will not recover.

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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.

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	

CROP HUNGER WALK 2019



My walking partner, Carolyn! ...AND more walkers!



Thank you to Court Street UMC for hosting this year's CROP WALK—and for the goodies afterwards!

Also, a BIG thank you to those that donated for this years CROP WALK: Connie Portillo, Gloria Rendon, Christine Heck and Carolyn Aldrich. \$135.00 was collected!!

Coming up this week

Oct 14	Mon	5:00pm	Youth Choir
		6:00pm	Leadership Team
		7:00pm	Flint Jubilee
Oct 15	Tues	10am-2pm	Water Distribution
		6:00pm	Community Gospel Choir
Oct 16	Wed	12Noon	Pastor Book Club
		6:00pm	Beginners Bible Study
		6:00pm	Youth Group
Oct 17	Thu	4:30-6pm	Gaming as Education
		4:30-7:00pm	City of Flint Planning
		6:00pm	Worship Band Practice
Oct 18	Fri	10am-2pm	Asbury Cafe Open
		6:00pm	Asbury Youth Group
Oct 19	Sat	10am-12N	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
Oct 20	Sun	8am-10am	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
		9:30am	Café Open
		10:30am	New Beginnings
			Contemporary Worship



SUNDAY, October 6th

9:30am Café Opens

10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship

Attendance 25 Offering \$ 533

Asbury Worship Series Food as Medicine "Beginning on October 20th"

The expression "Food as medicine" is catching on. I'm hoping that it catches on even more. Food is medicine. Some foods are bad medicine and perhaps shouldn't be called food. Some food is great medicine and could even be called, well, medicine.



The healthcare industry is booming. Notably, the prescription drug industry. So much so that aggressive entrepreneurs, with questionable morals, are seizing control of drug companies that

manufacture "must-have" drugs. The prices of life-saving prescriptions, such as EpiPens, are increased by large amounts to driving profits higher. Pure capitalists may applaud such efforts. After all, according to their playbook, it is supply and demand that should determine outcomes, and saving lives only count to the extent that saving lives will increase profits.

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Book Club News

We finished Jericho, written by Dennis Sykes. For the next couple of weeks, until we decide



on our next book, we are reading and discussing current events. Last Wednesday, we

read an article from the New York Times about the rebuilding of the Island of St Martin. This tiny, Caribbean island was devastated by Hurricane Irma two years ago. There has been a lot of progress,

but many of the island's poorer residents are in a standoff. Our group discussed the complexities of rebuilding a community and the trade-offs facing community leaders.

We also read an article about a rebuilding effort that took place in Battle Creek, Michigan, in the 1950's. In this case, an area of the city that was flooded was rebuilt. The residents, who were mostly poor, were forced to leave their homes and be relocated to another part of the city. Most of the residents chose to move to the Washington Heights neighborhood. This community is served

by the local United Methodist Church, which has operated as a hub in a neighborhood that is much like ours.

Each week, Pastor Tommy, with input from regular attendees, will select one or two articles that are about subjects that have implications for Asbury and our community. Our focus is on considering what scripture might have to say about these subjects.

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.

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 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
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts



Asbury Worship Series—Food as Medicine ... *Cont. from page 4*

Healthcare professionals are finding that food is a competitor to prescription drugs. Sometimes eliminating the need altogether for a particular prescription. Frequently preventing the need to write prescriptions altogether. So food as medicine is a proposal for doctors to be able to write prescriptions for healthier food. This would require that health insurance cover most of the cost, in the same way that prescription insurance covers a particular drug. But the payback is actually better health which would in turn increase profits.

Radical? You bet. Effective? Research suggests that food as medicine could reduce healthcare costs in this country. For example, providing a 20 percent incentive for fruit and vegetable purchases to Medicaid and Medicare beneficiaries is estimated to prevent 1.95 million cardiovascular disease events and to save \$40.9 billion in healthcare costs.



This is a big enough number to create a stir. And it has. A threat to the profits of prescription drug companies is a threat that will be met with political opposition. The drug companies are making large campaign contributions to help politicians who are willing to support them win elections. And, they expect help in fighting against ideas that could reduce their profits.

Food, both physical and spiritual, is medicine. And both are necessary for life. Doctors should also be writing prescriptions for

spiritual food as medicine.

Healthcare professionals know that our spiritual lives affect our physical health. Some doctors have learned this from Jesus, but most professionals rely on medical journals that are more likely to quote research rather than scripture. I will leave the scientific research to the professionals and focus on the scriptural research.

The 2018 Farm Bill allocated money for prescription produce programs that encourage physicians and medical institutions to make food a formal part of treatment, rather than relying solely on medications. But this money is for actual, physical food, and not prescriptions to join a local church. But this was a start, albeit a small start, with only \$4 Million total allocated to such programs nationwide. Perhaps future legislation can move a little further away from supporting the pharmaceutical industry and allocate some of that money for both physical and spiritual food as medicine.

The idea of spiritual food as medicine is found in scripture. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus quotes ancient scripture in response to the enemy's suggestion that Jesus change stone into bread when He was hungry from fasting. "You must not depend on bread alone to sustain you, but on everything that the Lord says" (Deuteronomy 8:3 GNT).

This first temptation of Jesus by the enemy is a classic strategy that most of us have heard levied at us. "If you are really _____?" the enemy challenges us, "then you would _____." The blanks depend on the person. The temptation is often to shift our focus away from what matters most to God and towards satisfying our immediate desire. The impulse buy. The fast food ad.

Jesus seemed to be referencing His need to put God's will ahead of His own. Not to mention that making that first decision to give in to the temptation to put something else first, ahead of God, in our lives, is a slippery slope. Like that quick stop at McDonald's when you can smell the fries cooking a block away. It doesn't take long before McDonald's is one of your frequent stops. Turn this into a habit long enough, and the cardiologist will also be a frequent destination for you.

If you have followed our recent worship series, *Back to the future*, you have heard me talk about the criticality of worship in rebuilding our neighborhood. The work that we do, no matter how helpful, will fall short without worship. Likewise, the work that we do for ourselves will fall short without worship. We are a hot mess of spirit and flesh. And we are created by, and in the image of, a God who demands our attention.

Our next worship series is scheduled to begin on Sunday, October 20. I'm calling it *Food as medicine*. It may be a great time to start that diet that you have been putting off. It may also be a great time to begin that spiritual practice or join that Bible study group that you have been thinking about doing. There is a great synergy between spiritual practices and what we choose to put into our bodies. Food as medicine is a great idea on multiple levels.

Be here each Sunday and invite your friends and neighbors. 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

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

The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says “Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat what you grow in them. Marry and have children. Then let your children get married, so that they also may have children. You must increase in numbers and not decrease. Work for the good of the cities where I have made you go as prisoners. Pray to me on their behalf, because if they are prosperous, you will be prosperous too.

Jeremiah 29:4-7 GNT

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Jeremiah 29:4-7. What ideas and images come to mind for you? Are you a Flint native (Flint Stone)? If not, share with your group about the places you have lived. If so, share some stories about what it was like growing up in Flint.
2. Read this week’s article titled *Tool belts*. Do you have hope that Flint is making a comeback? Why or why not? What is one thing that you either are doing or would like to do to help our neighborhood make a comeback?
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?



There are a lot of people living in Flint who move around a lot. Most stay in and around Flint, but in different apartments or houses, and often after only a few weeks or months. But their stability comes out of their connections to Flint people and resources. Nomadic living creates more anxiety when the distances are greater. In these cases, connections are usually lost, and new connections are made, only to be lost again with the next move.

I am nomadic. I began my nomadic lifestyle while in my mother's womb. My family had moved to Memphis. I was born in Arkansas. Soon after my birth, my mom and I rejoined our family in Memphis. My first move happened before my first birthday. There would be many more moves in my future, with each move being to a different city and occasionally a different state. There is something unsettling about a nomadic life.

The first consequence that comes to mind is the future. I have planted trees that I did not see bear fruit. I don't know if they are still bearing fruit. I have lived in homes that I haven't seen since. I have left behind friends, family, homes, jobs, cities, and more. Sometimes I felt as though I was in exile, and I sometimes dreamed of a time when I would return home. But where was home?

This is the paradox of the nomad. Home is where I am most recently transplanted. Like the strawberry plants that we transplanted on Hamilton Avenue, a nomad bears fruit where ever they are planted. And I am planted here on the Eastside of Flint.

What about you? Are you nomadic or have you lived wherever you now live for most of your life? Either way, how does God's message to the exiled people of Judah strike you? How does building for the future affect you? Have you strapped on your tool belt and started to work on building homes and planting gardens?

Their prosperity would come as a result of their combined efforts

The truth is that our home is with God. Where ever we are planted during the handful of decades that we live on this earth, we are nomads. We are planted here and there during a lifetime that is a blink of an eye as compared to eternity. Nevertheless, the seconds, days, weeks, and years seem like a long time while we are in the midst of life. And what we do during this time matters a great deal to God.

Whether, like Barbara, God chooses to green-light whatever pleases us, or provide specific instructions on place, time, and activity, we are to build houses and plant gardens. God would eventually return the exiled people back home. It would be a generation of waiting. Meanwhile, God instructed the people to work for the prosperity of the city where they were transplanted.

What about you? What work is God calling you to do to work for the prosperity of Flint? God did not say to the exiled people that they should concentrate on their own prosperity. Rather, they were to put their community and city first. Their prosperity would come as a result of their combined efforts.

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 guide our neighborhood and our city to prosperity 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

1653 Davison Rd
Flint, MI 48506



Phone: 810-235-0016
Fax: 810-235-0016 (call first when faxing)
E-mail: FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com
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.

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