

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Unloaded (Take a load off)

A standard app comes with an Apple watch that leads the person wearing the device through a deep breathing exercise. The app begins with instructions to relax and concentrate on your breathing. The watch vibrates in a way that signals taking air into your lungs and then changes to signal that it's time to exhale. It is a straightforward exercise that only takes a minute unless you signal that you want to extend your time.

With several decades of experience behind us, many of us catch ourselves looking back to a time when life was less stressful. But the pandemic is taking a toll on us. We are stressed out! Every one of

us. Some are coping better than others.



Many of us are suffering from panic attacks, depression, poor diet, and a lack of human touch. The pandemic, the ongoing protests against racial injustice, foreign governments messing with our elections, promises that turn out to be fiction, and more. We can't get no relief, or so it seems.

A report released by the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in August cited elevated levels of substance abuse and suicidal thoughts, particularly among young adults and racial/ethnic minorities, essential workers, and unpaid adult caregivers. The report noted a 31% increase in anxiety and depression symptoms among adults in the United States. I'm guessing that none of this surprises anyone reading this article. ¹

The researchers from the CDC who conducted an online survey of around

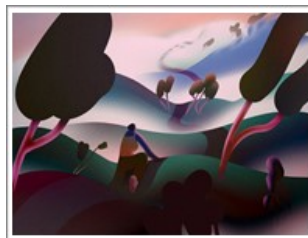
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Satisfied (No Strings Attached)

Many of us are desperate to find solutions to an ongoing, nagging feeling that life may never be the way it once was. This feeling of uncertainty causes distress for all of us, and panic attacks for a lot of us. We all find a routine that offers a level of predictability in our lives. And the pandemic has changed everything.

In my search for suggestions that I can share with

you all, I usually start with articles written for most of us. Admittedly, the New York



Times is my favorite source. Their professionalism is admirable. But I also click on the links included in their online

articles that frequently take me to their sources. These sources validate the conclusions offered by the journalist.

In her article, *How to Cope When Every Thing is Changing*, Cindy Lamothe tried to answer the question, "How do you make plans when it's impossible to make plans?" Her article began with the recognition that the

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Volume 20 Issue 13

September 13, 2020



You must wear a mask while in the area and to enter church office. If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you.

Thank you & Stay safe Everyone!



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Satisfied (No Strings Attached)

ground is shifting so quickly that planning even a week ahead can seem futile.¹ One Trump rally can cause a sudden spike in new coronavirus cases for a city. New cases spiked for the State of South Dakota a couple weeks after a parade of mask-less motorcycle riders cruised up and down the streets of Sturgis.

This leaves a trip to the grocery store a potential risk for everyone we meet for the two weeks following our adventure. Eating at a restaurant still raises my anxiety level enough that carry-out seems to be the only sensible choice. While the crew at Fox News tries to explain away why hundreds of thousands of our friends and neighbors died to keep stock prices high, most of our near-term plans go on hold for another year.

After reading Cindy Lamothe's article, I did a deep dive into a concept called "Temporal Distancing."² I couldn't resist the use of a Time Machine metaphor by Dr. Nick Tasler. The time machine is one way to cope with the panic and disappointment that many of us are experiencing.

Unloaded (Take a load off)

5,400 people discovered that the prevalence of anxiety symptoms was three times high and depression symptoms were four times as high as a similar survey found a year earlier.

The age group most affected, according to the survey, are young adults, 18 to 24 years old. A group that is substantially less likely to suffer illness from the virus. Yet, 63% of the respondents in this age group reported symptoms of anxiety or depression. One possible explanation that interested researchers are

This happens when change interrupts our daily routines to the point that they require a complete overhaul. His solution to coping with our anxiety is to dial in ten years from now and ask yourself how you hope to tell the story of how you responded to this crisis. Sounds exciting. But what if our time machine is broken?

Nevertheless, many psychologists suggest that focusing on the future rather than the past helps us cope. Not the near-term future, however. One thing that both psychologists and scripture agree on is that fear all but disables our cognitive abilities. This may help explain why the president is doubling down on fear as his party's primary strategy for the upcoming election. Perhaps if enough of us quit thinking, we may reelect the leaders who failed to lead when this crisis started.

Another approach to coping is accepting that we really never knew what we thought we knew. This stretches our mental flexibility to the max. Margie Warrell argues in her book, *You've Got This*, that rehashing our losses only undermines our confidence. Rather

whether tolerance levels for uncertainty contribute to more adverse symptoms.²

But what can we do? The answer to this problem carried out by large numbers is finding a local bar where hundreds of others feel the same way. The next day's hangover seems like a small price to pay. Testing positive for the coronavirus after infecting several other people is the price that others pay for this one night of relief that they missed out on.

Before beginning work on this

than holding on to canceled plans, we look forward to new possibilities that would otherwise be missed.

If neither your time machine nor imagining new possibilities work, Dr. Tassler recommends doing something so simple that it sounds almost comical. Do something that you know you can do.

I remember a time years ago when I hit a rough patch. Feeling like my world was not only crumbling, I could not shake the voices in my head telling me that I was to blame for everything bad that was happening to me. My solution at the time was to find something easy to do. No matter how silly or trivial. I reasoned that if I could succeed at something, anything, then I might gain the confidence to try something else. I eventually recovered.

I've put more invitations on the table in a few paragraphs than any of us can accept. And most invitations

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article, I found myself reflecting on my own anxiety. As I replayed my week's highlights, the number of different activities that I participated in felt overwhelming. I concluded that it wasn't the number of activities as much as a fear that my abilities were insufficient that fed my anxiety.

Since I was recording my observations in my prayer journal, I naturally considered what sort of reaction Jesus might have to my assessments. I imagined sitting around an open fire with other followers listening in. I responded to His question, "How was your week?"

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In Our Prayers

Lisa Bohnsack Mirium Watson

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
 Shirley Craig Norma Buzzard
 Mary Nations

★ The COVID-19 pandemic is serious and the numbers of new cases in Genesee County is rising again. If this continues we will suspend our in-person meetings again.

Masks are a requirement while not eating or drinking. If your health conditions prevent wearing a mask plan to stay away for now for your protection and the well-being of others.

We are meeting in person at 12Noon in the upstairs Library conference room. If our numbers increase enough to prevent adequate social distancing we will move downstairs. For now, you must bring your own lunch. We are not having a potluck lunch due to health concerns.

Pastor Tommy

Coming up this week

- Sept 14 Mon
- Sept 15 Tues 10am-2pm
Water / Food Distribution
- Sept 16 Wed Pastor Book Club
(in the Library Conference Room)
- Sept 17 Thu
- Sept 18 Fri
- Sept 19 Sat
- Sept 13 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings
Contemporary Worship

Join worship online

Sunday, September 20th -10:30am

Facebook Live
or Webinar



Join by Phone
+1 929 436 2866

Meeting ID: 324 841 204

Join online

[HTTPS://ZOOM.US/J/324841204](https://zoom.us/j/324841204)

Asbury Worship Series Invited

Some invitations seem too good to be true. Healthy skepticism helps to protect us from scammers trying to fool us into falling prey to their schemes. The extensive usage of cell phones, email, and a simple mailbox puts

us on the guest list for a wide range of best ignored and discarded invitations.



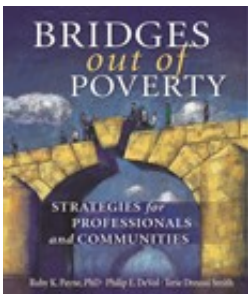
But who does not want a good return on investment? What is wrong with receiving a lot of benefits for a little effort? Someone is going to win the next mega-lottery. Why not me?

I remember when I was a child, the Christmas edition of the Sears Catalogue was a must

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Book Club News

A few of us meet in person each Wednesday in the upstairs library for lunch and conversation.



Check with Pastor Tommy if you plan to attend in person so we can assure social distancing. We're also online for those who cannot

meet in person, are not ready to meet in person, or who do not want to wear a face mask.

Unfortunately, the virus is still a threat and in-person gatherings quickly become super-spreaders if

precautions are ignored. Bring your own lunch or coordinate with others to purchase carryout. Pot-lucks are suspended for now.

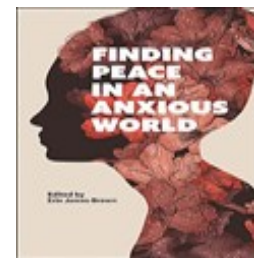
Our current book is titled *Bridges Out of Poverty*. The authors compare and contrast the hidden rules and attitudes of three economic classes: poverty, middle-class, and wealthy. But the focus is on understanding how persons facing economic poverty survive despite a lack of support systems.

The goal we had in mind for this study is to better equip us to work side-by-side with our neighbors struggling economically. Some of our participants have first hand experience with poverty

themselves and are teaching those of us with less insight. Whether you come from wealth, middle-class, or poverty, your presence is welcomed.

I encourage you to join us either in person or online for our Wednesday gatherings. You can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others are saying by calling (929) 436-2866, and entering the meeting ID, 482458815#.

We are a diverse group and we are delighted when new persons join us. I hope that you will join in our discussion.



Our next book is titled, *Finding Peace in an Anxious*

World. Our study of this book coincides with our October worship series. Be sure to reserve a copy now. The cost is \$10 but don't let cost deter your participation. We will make sure each person gets a book.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — FlintAsbury.org.

Leadership in Worship & Service

Welcome Team	Tony, Mirium
Ushers	Anthony, Jim
Production Team	Jonathon, Terrance
Children	Miriam
Worship Leaders	Cyndi
Café	Christine & Norma

Kevin Croom	Dir. Operations
Blair Neifert	Farm Manager
Matt Dee	Farm Operations
Israel Unger	Function to Funding
Kim Sims	Connections
Karl Collyer	Production
Katelin Maylum	Production

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Leadership Chair

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.

Invited*...Cont. from page 4*

read. Thumbing through the pages of games and toys carried me to a place where each day is filled with fun and entertainment. All that stood between me and paradise was convincing my parents that they should vouch for me with the big guy – Santa. But why stop there? Undoubtedly one of my older siblings could handle the price tag for some accessories.

There are many sayings born out of an experience that guides us away from chasing dreams that ultimately aren't good for us. How about "All good things come with a price." Another favorite is "If it seems to good to be true, it probably isn't."

Today's version of the Sears Christmas Catalogue for me comes from Northern Tool Company or Johnny's. There's a catalogue for every person in need of something with an invitation to buy. Who does not love a bargain?

God wants us to be happy – right?

Throughout a lifetime, most of us receive invitations to parties, weddings, baby showers,

dinner, lunch, Quinceañeras, bar mitzvahs, baptisms, and more. Whether we accept and attend or toss the invitation in the recycling bin depends on several factors. A common determinant is competing invitations. We can't really be in two places at once. While Zoom and Facetime help, we usually have to choose.

We place a value on each invitation we receive in determining how we respond. An invitation to spend time with one person may not seem as inviting as a similar invitation from a different person. How we choose to respond to an invitation reflects our values.

The apostle Paul reminds the folks in Corinth that our values change as we mature. "When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child; now that I am an adult, I have no more use for childish ways" (1 Corinthians 13:11). I don't want to press this too far, however. Child's play is healthy at all ages, and there is a lot we can learn from children. I switched to the Northern Tool catalog because their products suit me better than the latest

electronic game suits me. My values changed, but I still love electronic games. Just not as much as a tool that makes a job easier.

In addition to our values, reputation also affects whether we accept an invitation. I used Northern Tool Company as an example because my experiences with ordering from them are mostly good. When one of our children invites Cyndi and me to visit, we place a high priority on their invitation. When I receive an email inviting me to donate to a particular political candidate, I can't hit the delete button fast enough. I'm not interested in some invitations.

One of the most potent invitations found in scripture comes from God, speaking through the Prophet Isaiah. God's angle in this invitation is one of comparison and drawing on shared experiences. "Why spend money on what does not satisfy?" (Isaiah 55:2). Great argument. Who has not wasted money on something that disappointed us? God's invitation offers

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I knew that it was useless to gloss over the times that I felt anxious and inadequate. After all, scripture reminds us that Jesus already knows the answer. He likely wanted to help me become aware. "I'm feeling overwhelmed," I responded in my reflections. "Why do you think that you are feeling overwhelmed," Jesus asked.

I had to dig a little deeper before I responded. "Why?" is a hard question under any circumstances. This question uncovers motive and intrudes into our most profound insecurities. "Do you trust me," Jesus asked to break the silence. Busted!

I have confessed many times that I'm often in over my head. I've wondered many times why God sent me to Flint. Why this neighborhood? The problems are beyond my ability to solve. There has to be a lot of pastors more qualified than me. I frequently feel as though the load that God has asked me to carry is too heavy.

And then the pandemic hit. And week after week, there is news of law enforcement killing persons of color. The numbers make it clear. Racism is also a pandemic. COVID helped to bring what people of color already knew to the public consciousness. Wasn't the water catastrophe enough? Isn't the economic devastation leftover from General Motors abandoning Flint enough?

One of my favorite stories found in the gospels is about a time when Jesus was in a boat with several friends during a storm. Panic was setting in as the storm raged. Meanwhile, Jesus was sound asleep. Finally, they wake Jesus up. "We are about to die," they complain.

I thought about this story, as I reflected. After Jesus calmed the storm, He asked His followers, "Where is your faith?" Busted!

When the storm rages, it can be difficult to calmly say to the thunder and the winds, "I'm not afraid because I have faith." Likewise, when uncertainty abounds, and our load feels too heavy to carry, we look for someone to offer a hand rather than claim our faith as the solution.

Jesus often spoke about the power of faith to overcome difficulties. In chapter 11 of Matthew, He says, "Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest." This sounds like a great invitation. Cyndi and I just got back from a week's vacation, and I already need rest.

At the base of the Statue of Liberty, there are words written by Emma Lazarus in 1883. Emma was a poet known for helping refugees arriving in the United States. The inscription ends with "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" Another great invitation. A promise that helped shape and defines our country.

Fortunately, what humans cannot honestly give, God offers each of us without qualification. Rest from our burdens. God does not promise that there will be no more storms, or pandemics, or prejudice, or systems that oppress, but a promise that we don't need to do it all on our own.

**Come to me, all of you who
are tired from carrying heavy
loads, and I will give you rest.**

Matthew 11:28

Let's reenact the breathing exercise app on the Apple watch. First, take a deep breath. Second, remember and believe what Jesus said about rest from heavy loads. Now, commit yourself to accept God's invitation to trust that God is in control. Now imagine yourself letting go of your worries, if even for a moment. This is the rest that each of us is promised. Jesus is always in the boat with us.

Coming up

This month, our series is called *Invited*. You can read about our series in our [newsletter](#) or [online](#). I pray that you will join us online or in person. Be aware that we follow social distancing practices without exception. Free face masks are available and must be worn in our building.

You can join us online via [webinar](#), through [Facebook](#) live, or you can call (929) 436-2866 and enter the meeting number — 324 841 204. We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).

A reminder that we publish this newsletter that we call the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to info@FlintAsbury.org or let us know when you send a message through our [website](#). We post an archive of past editions on our website under the tab, Connect - choose [Newsletters](#).

Pastor Tommy

¹ Mark E. Czeisler et al. "Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic—United States, June 24–30, 2020." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. August 14, 2020.

compelling evidence. Almost too good to be true.

Why spend money on what does not satisfy?

Isaiah 55:2

Yet, millions of people accept God's invitation and discover that this offer, that sounded too good to be true, delivers just what was promised. A lot depends on the reputation of who sends out the invitation. For those who have felt disappointment targeted toward God, this invitation may go straight to the junk-mailbox.

This is where those of us who found God's invitation truthful come into the conversation. We are the torchbearers singing praises of thanksgiving. We offer the testimony that makes an offer believable that otherwise sounds too good to be true.

But sometimes we decline an invitation because we're already committed. We sent an RSVP for Stan and Dave's wedding. Meanwhile, an invitation arrives from Sally and Joan to help them celebrate their anniversary. We choose between two great options. Based in large part on our values.

Jesus tells this story about a big party as an illustration of how God's love works. In His

telling Jesus explains that many of the invited guests started making excuses as to why they could not come to the party. And since it was a big party and all the deposits were non-refundable, the guest list was expanded to include anybody willing to show up.

Jesus explained that this is how God's love works. We can make excuses all we want about why we're too busy to show up. But this does not negate our invitation. It just delays our joy until we're not so busy.

Meanwhile, everyone is invited to the Lord's party. There is an abundance of everything good. Most of all, there is plenty of love to go around. No one is left out or left behind. So go tell everyone you see that God is waiting on them to show up.

We call our new series *Invited*. The topic is motivated by the traditional return to school. But this year is different.

The pandemic continues to wreak havoc with our plans to return to some version of normalcy. Some families welcome this opportunity for in-person school, while others choose to decline. The invitation and the RSVP are complicated.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30am. We plan to be live via webinar, through [Facebook](#) live, or you can call (929) 436-2866 and enter the meeting number – 324 841 204. We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us on our [website](#) at [FlintAsbury.org](#).

Pastor Tommy

Life groups question & notes

Why spend money on what does not satisfy. Why spend your wages and still be hungry?

Listen to me and do what I say, and you will enjoy the best food of all. "Listen now, my people, and come to me; come to me, and you will have life!"

Isaiah 55:2-3

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Isaiah 55:1-3. How does this offer sound to you? Too good to be true? Naive? Why do you suppose God wanted Isaiah to give us this message?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Satisfied*. Are you feeling satisfied or are you stressed out over the pandemic? Have you tried any of the ideas for coping from the article? Did they work? Are you tempted to try most anything to alleviate some of your anxiety? Referring back to your answers to question 1, how might these words from Isaiah help you at this time?
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? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.



Teaija Robinson, from Teen Quest

Stop in and see Teaija...she will be happy to help you out!



**ASBURY FARMS
PRODUCE MARKET WILL
BE OPEN ALL WEEK!**

If you haven't had a chance to stop by to check out our produce from our Asbury Farms

Market, please do so!

Hours that we are open are Monday through Friday from 10am-2pm

in the parking lot of

Asbury Church. If you

have any questions,

call us at 235-0016.



Just a few of our produce...



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

Satisfied (No Strings Attached)

that come our way have strings attached that we may not recognize until it's too late. We're tempted to hop on whichever bandwagon has the loudest bells. At least we're doing something. Right? Invitations that promise comfort and certainty are tempting.

One of the most famous temptation stories on record involves Jesus alone in the wilderness. As the story goes, Satan tries three times to convince Jesus to set aside His convictions and give in to satisfying His desires. And if you remember the story, satan began with a relatively innocent invitation before going for the grand one.

First, I want to deal with this notion of satan, also called the devil in some circles. Admittedly, I'm not fond of humanizing evil. Doing so turns some folks away and trivializes a complicated subject. But it does help to make the story more interesting. And it's important to realize that we humans possess all of the negative tendencies attributed to the devil. Most temptations are about keeping our demonic nature from taking over.

Jesus was hungry and thirsty from fasting—going without food and water for days. It is hard enough for me to miss breakfast. I know from experience that fasting takes a tremendous amount of will power. The devil apparently knew that Jesus was vulnerable and invites Jesus to turn a stone into bread. This invitation

does not mean as much to you and me since we don't possess this power. So substitute a power you do have, like a 2nd doughnut when you know that a salad would be better for you.

Jesus turns down the invitation. And what Jesus says is as powerful as it is confusing. Something about not living on bread alone. But hold that thought. Instead, Jesus reminds the devil that it is God's Word that brings life. Maybe so, but when I'm hungry, and bread is all there is — I'm just saying.

The Prophet Isaiah offers another response for propositions that come with unlikely promises and hidden costs. "Why spend money on what does not satisfy." Instead, Isaiah points to God's ultimate solution to our anxiety. Come to me, and you will have life!

Coming up

This month's series is called *Invited*. We're looking at some invitations that are helpful during this time of extreme anxiety. If you're feeling stressed from the pandemic or for any other reason, this series is for you. You can read about our series in our [newsletter](#) or [online](#). I pray that you will join us online or in person. Be aware that we follow social distancing practices without exception. Free face masks are available and must be worn in our building.

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Pastor Tommy

¹ Cindy Lamothe. "How to Cope When Every Thing is Changing." © NY Times Sept 7, 2020.

² Emma Bruehlman-Senecal and Ozlem Ayduk University of California, Berkeley. "This Too Shall Pass: Temporal Distance and the Regulation of Emotional Distress," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology © 2015 American Psychological Association 2015, Vol. 108, No. 2.