



ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

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September 11, 2022

Mustard (Travel light)



My mom was known for her greens and cornbread. But my dad set the precedence for kicking them up a notch at the table. I still remember dad using a paring

knife to cut up white onion on top of the greens on his plate, along with hot peppers. Not all of my siblings follow his practice, but I do. And we all apply generous amounts of vinegar infused with hot peppers.

But if I wanted a taste of my mom's greens in between visits, I had to learn how to cook them myself. One secret my mom shared with me was variety. While she liked the taste of mustard greens, she preferred adding collards or turnip greens to neutralize some of the peppery taste. I also learned to cut up a turnip in my greens for texture.

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our physical characteristics as we age. For example, we start to lose height as we age, which becomes most noticeable after age 70.

In addition, our posture changes, and many of us will notice a distinct curvature of our spine. This is because our skeletal structure often changes as we lose bone density.

Page 2

Untied (Forward seeing)



What happened to me? According to the roster of my high school basketball team, I'm 5' 11" tall. But nowadays, I'm barely 5' 10".

According to an article on the Medical University of South Carolina website, every one of us experiences numerous changes in



*Everyone
enjoy your
week and stay
safe!!*



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The primary factor contributing to spinal curvature is the hardening of the intervertebral discs. Between each vertebra, there is gelatin-like cartilage that separates the vertebra. With age, these discs harden and lose flexibility with the inevitable result of a compressed total length of the spine and a forward tilt called kyphosis.

These aging changes are called senile kyphosis and are a normal part of aging.

However, a curvature of the spine can begin earlier. According to an article by the Mayo Clinic medical staff, Scoliosis, a sideways curvature of the spine, is most often diagnosed in adolescents. The cause of most childhood scoliosis is unknown.

The writer of Luke tells a story about a synagogue somewhere in the region of Galilee. The synagogue was more crowded than usual as word got out that Jesus and his closest followers were in town. The synagogue leader knew that keeping order would be more difficult than expected. He had heard rumors that this well-known Rabbi from Nazareth could be disruptive.

"Please, it's time for us to begin," the Synagogue leader announces, "it's going to be crowded, so make room. Save the choice seats for those whose status warrants them, so we don't have to ask you to move."

As the people entered the synagogue, they found their usual seats with the men on one side and the women on the other. It was noisy as those who had never seen Jesus whispered among themselves about the stories they had heard.

Barely noticed, a woman shuffles in. She is hunched over as she walks, focusing on a few steps in front of her. She entered on the women's side just as she always did.

It had been 18 years since an illness had left her in this position. She had long grown accustomed to the inconvenience and lived a life of isolation on the margins of society. Many wondered why she chose to come at all. Couldn't she see that God had dealt harshly with her for whatever she had done in her past? Why parade in here among those whom God is clearly pleased with coming together to learn and worship? The nerve!

Jesus notices the woman as she searches for her seat. "Woman, come up here," Jesus shouts. But the woman didn't know that she was who Jesus was speaking to. "He's talking to you," her friend says as she settles in the seat next to her. "Me?" the woman responds.

The woman slowly gets up from her chair and walks toward Jesus, who encourages her in a voice loud enough for her to easily find Him. The noise of the crowd dies down to whispers, and every eye is glued to the unfolding scene.

As the woman gets close enough to see the feet of Jesus, He puts His hands on her shoulders and says in a voice that creates goosebumps for all who heard Him. "Woman, you are free from whatever is holding you down."

Should not this woman be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?
Luke 13:6

With Jesus's hands still on her shoulders, the woman's eyes move toward to see the figure in front of her. As her eyes met the eyes of Jesus, she realized that she could now stand up straight.



In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom
 Sylvia Pittman
 Shirley Craig

Richard Oram
 Chris Freeman



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

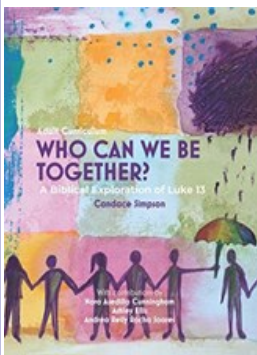
Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard

PASTOR BOOK CLUB NEWS

Pastor Book Club is still meeting via Zoom, but we are also gathering in the Asbury Library Conference Room at 12Noon every Wednesday, unless otherwise noted.

Please call the Church Office for more information, as things could change (810-235-0016).

This month's book series is called, *Who Can We Be Together?* authored by Candace Simpson with help from Nora Asedillo Cunningham, Ashley Ellis, and Andrea Reilly Rocha Soares.



Thank you and everyone continue to stay safe!

**COMING UP THIS WEEK
 SEPTEMBER 12 – 18**

- Sept 12 Mon 6:00pm Worship Team Meeting
- Sept 13 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm
 Food/Water Distribution
- Sept 14 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club
 11am-12Noon Food Giveaway at
 South Flint Soup Kitchen (no appts needed)
- Sept 15 Thu
- Sept 16 Fri
- Sept 17 Sat 12Noon Flint Food Not Bombs
- Sept 18 Sun 10:30am
 New Beginnings
 Contemporary Worship

(We are live on [Facebook](#) and our newly launched [YouTube channel](#). You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).)

Asbury Worship Series "Masterpiece"

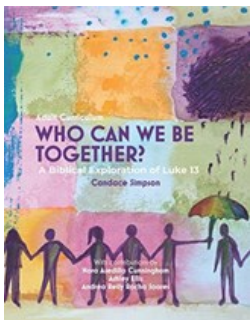


It's tempting to declare that we're beginning a new series on the first Sunday in July. It's tempting for many reasons, so why not just call our next several Sundays by a catchy title and announce a "new" topic? And I love new beginnings.

Instead, welcome to Parts three and four of a series we began the Sunday after Easter called

Book Club News

As our 4-part series called Masterpiece comes to an end



our new series calls for us to utilize our new discoveries for the benefit of the greater good.

Getting along with each other is challenging at times. Hopefully, each of us left our study of the book *I Think You're Wrong (But I'm Listening)*

with a few ideas on how to cooperate in the midst of disagreement.

Between the intense levels of isolation brought on by the pandemic and the use of divisive tactics by candidates running for political office, the pressure to dismiss and disregard is greater than ever. Nevertheless, I'm hopeful that we can learn from Jesus how to cope while working for the common good.

books really are the "peas and carrots" of conventional wisdom.

For September our Book Club focus is on parables told by Jesus in the 13 chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Our study is informed and guided by the book *Who Can We Be Together?* authored by Candace Simpson with help from Nora Asedillo Cunningham, Ashley Ellis, and Andrea Reilly Rocha Soares.

Our book is written as a study guide and represents a response by its author and contributors to the purpose of an organization founded and run by women of the United Methodist Church. Over the past year this group voted to rename their organization as United Women in Faith. The vision of this group is "Turning faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children and youth around the world."

Asbury Staff

- Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor & Exec Dir
- Connie Portillo Office Manager
- Sylvia Pittman Empowerment Arts
- Jim Craig Board & Leadership Chair
- Kevin Croom Exec Chef & Dir Opers
- Matt DePalma Farms Manager
- Chris Freeman South Campus Bldg Mgr
- Israel Unger Finance Director
- Kim Sims Connections Suprv
- Terrance Williams Arts Center Mgr
- Katelin Maylum Sr Prog Mgr Local Foods
- South Flint Soup Kitchen

Leadership in Worship & Service

- Tony, Mirium Welcome Team
- Anthony, Jim Ushers
- Jonathon, Terrance Production Team
- Miriam Children
- Cyndi Worship Leader
- Christine & Norma Cafe

Asbury Worship Series - Masterpiece ...cont from pg 4

Masterpiece. The reason for not creating a more robust line of demarcation between then and now is that we're not finished.

Now that we've begun the work on ourselves that leads to better emotional and mental health, we deserve to feast on the benefits right away. Our rewards begin with taking our newly discovered truths about ourselves on the campaign trail. After all, it's summer, and COVID is finally becoming more of a bad memory than a current threat. In-person gatherings are returning so let's get together and debate the issues.

In parts three and four we continue exploring the masterpiece God is forming in us, assisted by two friends with differing political views but somehow manage to stay good friends. How is this even possible? After all, isn't the world intentionally divided into blue and red?

In our book club article, we learn that the book that parts two and three of our series is based on was written by two working moms from opposite ends of the political spectrum. And our hope is that we can learn that politics don't have to divide us. Instead, we can put what Jesus teaches us into practice in our debates about policy.

I promise that the next several weeks will be challenging. Even if for no one else other than your pastor. I'm a somewhat reluctant participant in this notion of finding agreement with the other side. I've spent most of my life competing in races for which there can be only one winner.

Nevertheless, I also long for a time when debate doesn't bring out the worst in people. So I'm all in for this next leg of our trip. And I hope you are as well.

We'll follow the outline of the book our series is based on. *I Think You're Wrong (but I'm Listening)* brings politics into the front door of the church. But not as a way to influence who you vote for. But, I hope you'll make sure you vote with the confidence that you know where you stand on the issues that matter most to you.

Our theme scripture for this next chapter comes out of John's Gospel. In chapter three we read the story of a Jewish leader named Nicodemus. The chapter begins by providing political context. Nicodemus belonged to the party of the Pharisees. And Jesus was more of an independent who understood both sides of the argument and loved even those with whom He disagreed.

Imagine that!

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes on our [YouTube channel](#). We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website](#) at FlintAsbury.org.

Pastor Tommy

Sarah Stewart Holland and Beth A. Silvers. I Think You're Wrong (But I'm Listening): A Guide to Grace-Filled Political Conversations. Nashville: Nelson Books, 2019.

Mustard greens are easy to grow. The hardest part for me is handling the tiny seeds. Some are barely a millimeter (.04 inches) in diameter. While they're not the smallest of the vegetable seeds, they're in the running. But they germinate in just over a week.

The plant grows into a shrub if mustard greens are left to their own desires. As a result, there are mustard shrubs almost ten feet high. According to her website *SimpleStead.com*, Tasha Greer harvests brown mustard seeds when the plants are 5 to 6 feet tall, and the seed pods are ready to split open.

You get the familiar yellow mustard condiment if you add vinegar to crushed white mustard seeds. Recipes call for additional spices such as garlic powder, salt, and turmeric. Add brown mustard seeds to get the familiar darker color of specialty mustards. Use black mustard seeds to add flavor to curry dishes.

Let's set the mustard aside for the time being.

This Sunday marks the 21st anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, commonly known as 9/11.

A Pew Research conducted in the months following the Sept. 11 attack found that 78% of those surveyed believed that the prominence of religion in the United States was growing. This was a considerable increase from the 38% who believed this only eight months earlier. It had been 40 years since religion held such a position in the minds of ordinary people.

Nevertheless, this shift was not matched by a sustained increase in attendance at religious services. Nor was there evidence that religion played a more prominent role in Americans' personal lives.

The same study also validated a president's impact on their political party. A call by President George Bush for tolerance toward Muslims paved the way for nearly two-thirds of conservative Republicans to respond favorably toward Muslims in this country. This number was up 29 percentage points from a survey conducted earlier that year. However, only one-third of those surveyed saw any commonality between their religious beliefs and those of Muslims.

American confidence in government and President Bush, in particular, climbed to unprecedented heights after 9/11. Only to fall a short time later as the shock waned and concern over daily realities returned. The approval ratings of President George W. Bush reached new lows along with Americans' confidence in the government with rising gas prices and concern over the war in Iraq. In addition, the administration's mishandling of disaster relief following the Hurricane Katrina disaster in 2005 resulted in further decline.

All of this is to say that public opinion swings from peaks to valleys as we individually react to events while influencing each other's opinions and attitudes. Like mustard seeds, public opinion is easily scattered and germinates quickly.

The three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, each offer a comparison that Jesus made between mustard seeds and the Kingdom of God. In His telling, Jesus focused on the size of the seed compared to the benefits of the shrub that

She looks into Jesus' eyes and begins singing: "Praise the Lord - Praise God - let all the people praise Your Holy Name. You are mighty and loving - Your grace and mercy are unending."

The Synagogue Leader, fearing that the crowd would join in, shouts, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath! This is not right! The Sabbath is holy!"

You could feel the shift in the air. The crowd's attitude moved from awe and approval to anger and disapproval. Jesus felt it also.

The Synagogue Leader wasn't wrong. In fact, his understanding of the laws handed down since the time of Moses is evident in this respect. And the creation story in Genesis ends with God resting. The Sabbath was intended to be a day when work stopped, and everyone took a knee.

Well, sort of.

Jesus responds to the situation with this retort. "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water?"

Well, of course, we do. I make sure that our dog Duke gets fed and has fresh water every day of the week. And wasn't the Synagogue Leader working that day in his role of leading the people in worship? As a pastor, I work every Sunday. I suspect that we all do at least some work on the Sabbath.

Jesus continued, "Then should not this woman be set free on the

Sabbath day from what bound her?" Of course.

"Hunched over" is a powerfully visible metaphor. When hunched over, we can't see what lies ahead beyond our restricted view. As a result, we may miss out on a lot. In our story, the woman is physically crippled, but she is healed by Jesus. However, healing on the Sabbath was considered work. Medical clinics were closed so doctors could celebrate Sabbath. Jesus broke the rules, setting a bad example in the opinion of the other synagogue leader.

The stooped woman symbolizes all of us. As do the Synagogue Leader and the crowd.

First, whenever our field of vision is limited. We struggle to see the whole picture, whether by a physical limitation or by a weakening of the Spirit that affects our lives and attitudes. The woman's physical limitations are symbolic of the blindness we all have in varying amounts. Fortunately, like the woman in Jesus' story, we all are children of God and loved by our Creator.

The Synagogue Leader knew the rules and tried to live out his beliefs faithfully each day. The crowd was there because worship took priority for them over all other activities that ordinarily had their attention.

Jesus calls us to the front. Not to be humiliated but to be recognized. To be recognized for the beauty in us that was created on purpose and for a particular purpose.

Imagine what we can do

together if we each accept Christ's offer of releasing us from whatever is holding us back. Imagine what we can accomplish when we look forward rather than backward or down. Heaven on earth is possible when we work together for the common good.

Jesus didn't just heal the woman. Instead, the crowd in the synagogue witnessed compassion and justice taking precedence over a tradition that created nearsightedness. So, likewise, our church is a place of healing where all are welcomed to experience the healing Spirit of God.

Come, let us worship God together.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website's](#) homepage - [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to our [YouTube channel](#). You can find 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 connect@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

Content for this series is based in part on: Candace Simpson. *Who Can We Be Together? A Biblical Exploration of Luke 13*. New York: United Methodist Women, 2022.

Mayo Clinic Staff. "Scoliosis." © Mayo Clinic, 2022. Retrieved from: [link](#)

"Posture Change With Age." © Medical University of South Carolina, 2022. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Life Group Questions & Notes:

What is the Kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it with? It is like this. A man takes a mustard seed and plants it in his field. The plant grows and becomes a tree, and the birds make their nests in its branches.

Luke 13:18-19 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS


1. Read the Parable of the Fig Tree found in Luke 13:18-19. What do you make of this comparison offered by Jesus? Have you ever seen a mustard bush in bloom? In what ways might the Kingdom of Heaven resemble a tiny seed becoming a safe haven?
2. Read this week's article titled Mustard? Were you born before September 11, 2001? If so, were you old enough to remember where you were when you heard the news? Either way, what are some of the effects that this event has on your life? How does the comparison Jesus makes between a mustard seed and the Kingdom of God effect your reaction to 9/11 if at all? In what ways is your testimony of faith resemble a mustard seed?
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.

“Feed Flint”



“Feed Flint”

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A meal goes a long way for a senior living alone, a family struggling to make ends meet, or a child fearful of empty shelves at home. But for the residents of Flint who carry the effects of lead-tainted water, nutrition is critical. Feed Flint provides locally grown, chemical-free, fresh produce to residents living in and around Flint. And we're hoping that you can help us provide 10,000 meals this summer.

Feed Flint includes takeout meals, produce boxes with recipes, and home deliveries as part of our work to guide and support families in moving to sustainable abundance. The reality is that Michigan's food insecurity levels got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this summer's recovery is leaving behind those at the most risk of having to miss meals.

Flint families continue to struggle with the ongoing effects of the water crisis.

We're bringing together the resources of the Asbury Community Development Corporation. This includes Asbury Farms, the South Flint Soup Kitchen, the Asbury Community Help Center, multiple food pantries, and our Sizzling Culture Mobile Food Trailer. Our plan is to care for our neighbors when they need it most. We accept all people as they are, and our doors are always open to anyone.

Asbury Farms provides locally grown produce used to create fabulous and nutritious meals. Our seed-to-table approach is community-based. This not only helps families make it through emergencies and crises. We help move families towards sustainable abundance.

Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated abundance.

Our work is also about food and justice. Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into active citizens. And all residents can enjoy safety, good health, and a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives. This summer, help us address food insecurity and strengthen Flint's budding local food system by supporting the Feed Flint campaign. Thank you for taking the time to see what we're doing and considering how you can help.

Donate to our Feed Flint Campaign by visiting:
flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate

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*** CONVENIENT PICKUP AT ASBURY OR AT THE SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN ***

The Spot

by Cyndi McDoniel

As I was crossing the street the other day, a man was coming down the middle of a One-Way in a wheelchair. As I noticed why he was in the wheelchair, I contemplated whether or not I would ask him how he's doing. I decided to do my usual and greet him w/a smile as I said, "Hi! How are you today?" He didn't smile back, but his voice was friendly. He immediately proceeded to tell me he would be learning to walk again because he didn't use his prosthesis, and he was going to give it another try. I waited for him to continue, as I was uncomfortable talking about something so personal w/someone I didn't know yet. He told me how his artificial leg attaches above the knee and hinges below and looks like a regular leg when he sits down. His voice started to waver down as he said he "just didn't want to go through that again," and I decided it would be okay to interject. Cautiously, knowing my next statement could backfire on me, I told him how glad for him I was that he had a prosthesis, because so many are unable to get one (this is something I at least weekly going to and from work). Then I said, "And you are young—you can do it!" He added that he wasn't young—after all he was getting old—he was 44.... but he thought he could probably do it. I let him know I was beyond him in years, and I knew I wasn't old, so he definitely couldn't be old!

By this time, we were sharing the sidewalk and he had broken into laughter. We had just parted ways and I said, "What is your name? I'm going to pray for you." He smiled again and said, "My name's Deandre—and thank you." I told him I wanted him to look me up when he completed therapy, as "that is going to be a really good day!" What really got me was after I turned around a second time, he yelled out his name again and added his last name. I turned to look at him and he was still smiling. I got into the building and all I could think was, "He doesn't know Jesus already knows who he is—I don't need to tell Jesus his last name."

All afternoon that day I kept thinking I didn't do enough: yes, I was on a mission. By then, I had to be back in my office in less than 5 or 6 minutes for an appointment. Why didn't I go out that gate and offer prayer right then and there? I am tremendously blessed to work in a place where you don't get in trouble for praying w/someone publicly. I'm sure my next client would have understood if I was a couple minutes late. I missed an opportunity to introduce him to Jesus...

The thing is, I was so incredibly blessed by that holy conversation and getting down on myself "for not doing more" was basically a moot point.....Deandre` wasn't crying in his beer—he was just stating the facts. He was living w/life and had decided to attack what he once thought was an impossible feat again. And here I am—complaining about how much my feet hurt when I walk--and other bones on a good day. I left that exchange being reminded how fortunate I am (it happens so often!) to be able to walk across the street swiftly---or not so swiftly some days. Why in the world do I forget some mornings to thank God for giving me the breath of life once again....and the ability to walk, and the ability to go to the store on a regular basis, and the ability to use gifts so freely given to me, and.....

How amazingly wonderful it is to know when we go to our Lord in prayer, we don't have to announce who we are. And we certainly don't need to give our last name.

Thank you, Jesus, for knowing who we are.

But as Candace Simpson writes, “It’s not easy to build and sustain communities, especially when there are forces that drain us, exhaust us, and even push us to act uncharacteristically.” Scripture in general, and the parables shared by Jesus in particular, offer opportunities for each of us to respond to this challenge of building community.

The purpose of United Women in Faith is found in the opening pages of our study guide:

The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away, I encourage you to join us via Zoom for our Wednesday gatherings. Alternatively, you can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others say by calling (929) 436-2866 -- enter the meeting ID, 282 039 5568#.

We are a diverse group, delighted when new people join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion.

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

Pastor Tommy

Candace Simpson. Who Can We Be Together? A Biblical Exploration of Luke 13. New York: United Methodist Women, 2022.

Sarah Stewart Holland and Beth A. Silvers. I Think You're Wrong (But I'm Listening): A Guide to Grace -Filled Political Conversations. Nashville: Nelson Books, 2019.

**Providing a HOT MEAL and/or local, organic
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SATURDAYS starting around 12NOON

Asbury United Methodist Church

1653 Davison Rd, Flint (810) 235-0016

Flint Food Not Bombs is a loose-knit group of independent collectives, sharing free vegan and vegetarian food with others. **Flint Food Not Bombs** believes that access of food among other necessities of life-should be viewed as a right, not a privilege. Yet in a nation with a military budget many times that of other nations, people continue to go hungry. This is immoral and unjust.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

Facebook.com/flintfoodnotbombs

Twitter.com/flintfub

Email: flintfub@protonmail.com

Website: foodnotbombsflint.wordpress.com



**We're currently looking for volunteers so we can expand. If interested,
send us a message! Solidarity!**

**A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense
than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.—MLK**



Summer is getting into full swing at the farm!!!

Coming soon, the farm's new twist on a
CSA Food Box!!!!

Bring home only the veggies you love!

First Pick-Up Date: Saturday, July 16th, 11am-1pm and until further notice. We will post if anything changes.



Want more information??
Email: kelly.jewett@outlook.com

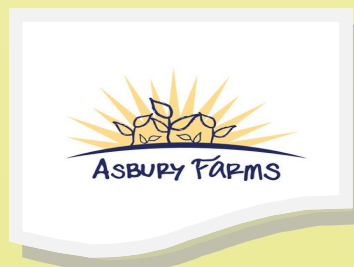


We were stoked to be kicking off our very first Asbury Farms Sliding Scale Food Box Program last week! Get the most local, organic, delicious produce!! Grown on the East Side!

Pick what veggies you want, how much you want and pay what you can between \$12.00 — \$24.00.

Every Saturday from 11:00am to 1:00pm
1601 Jane Ave Flint MI

Look for the big banner that says "SALE" ...



grows from the seed. "A man takes a mustard seed and plants it in his field," says Jesus. "And the plant grows large enough that birds make their nests in its branches" (Luke 13:18-19).

My family and commercial growers, including Asbury Farms, harvest greens while they're only a few inches high. At this stage, the leaves are still tender. But the Kingdom of God features mature plants bearing tiny seeds that easily travel.

Why do you suppose that public opinion towards the prominence of religion in the U.S. soared after 9/11? Was it that churches led the response and recovery? Of course not. Public figures with the power to organize a response and allocate resources had to step up and lead the way.

What is the Kingdom of God like? The tiny mustard seed grows and birds make nests in the branches.

Luke 13:18-19

But there was something about the hope represented by churches that brought comfort amid fear and uncertainty. And church attendance spiked for a few weeks before returning to the slow, downward trend that began several decades ago.

Duke Professor Mark Chaves noted that while there was a spike in church attendance in the weeks following 9/11, this event did not have a lasting effect on Americans' attitudes toward attending church.

So what might have an effect on public opinion towards church attendance? First, the gospel is a story about God choosing salvation over destruction. Second, God chose love over hate, offering divine grace and reconciliation by living among us and leaving us with instructions for an abundant life.

But this truth needs to travel light and be easily carried. The gospel must stick to our clothes and feet to take root wherever we travel.

Elsewhere Jesus says that the burden He brings to us isn't heavy. Instead, those who follow Him find joy and abundance amid chaos and conflict.

If you're already a believer, share your testimony wherever you go. Not as a burden you try to place on others, but as an invitation to abundant life.

And if you have doubts, you owe it to yourself to dig deeper into the source of your disbelief.

The Kingdom of God is like planting a tiny seed that grows to provide a safe haven while producing even more seeds and more abundance.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website's](#) homepage - [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to our [YouTube channel](#). You can find 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 connect@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

Content for this series is based in part on: Candace Simpson. *Who Can We Be Together? A Biblical Exploration of Luke 13*. New York: United Methodist Women, 2022.

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