## ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 6

## Thriving (Sanctified, Send and One)



There is an idea in the study of human nature known as a tipping point. My computer's built-in dictionary defines a tipping point as small changes resulting in larger, more significant dif-

Partners (Guarded, Guided and Unified)

ferences. But, unfortunately, definitions fail to adequately convey the feeling it gives us.

By the way, we can reach a tipping point in either direction. In other words, small changes can make things much worse or better. So it depends on which way the momentum is headed. In this article, I'm focused on the good kind of tipping point.

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## *November* 6, 2022



EVERYONE HAVE A
WONDERFUL ANDSAFE WEEK!



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Jacopo Tintoretto, The Last Supper, 1594

Depending on several factors, I introduce Cyndi using one or more titles. Occasionally, I'll use "partners" to describe our connection. Partner is a word loaded with layers and implications. From lab partners to business partners and from committed relationships to spouses, saying we are partners results in a multitude of expectations.

However, a few conclusions are consistently presumed. The first is that our connection is more than casual. And if I further qualify our connection as wife or spouse, I've added a formal qualification that is both legal and spiritual.

Second, there is an expectation of mutuality. In other words, partners imply that each of us cares about the other and contributes towards keeping our connection near the top of what's essential.

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There is only one higher priority, but it is one where Cyndi and I agree. God comes first for us, and we often pray that our connection with Jesus Christ is protected.

Mutuality suggests common goals. However, partners don't always see eye-to-eye on how to get there. So some process of maintaining unity amid disagreement helps our partnership flourish.

One of the more confusing ideas in Christianity is that God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are distinct and the same. In early Christian tradition, this idea was codified by church leaders as "of the same substance." Each person of the Trinity exists independently, yet they are indistinguishable. This means that when we pray to the One True God, we're praying to God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus and God are One and, thus, are of the same mind and substance. Christ was not created. Instead, we know that the One True God created all that there is. Jesus is also distinct and chose to live with the limitations of humanism and accepted the peculiarities of each person He met without controlling the outcome.

As Jesus faced His impending arrest and execution, He chose to share His last meal with His closest followers. In actuality, we don't know who was there. Nearly all paintings of the Last Supper present the twelve disciples; however, Jacopo Tintoretto's version depicts additional persons (Circa 1594). So we don't really know how big the party was, but we know that Jesus knew how to feed a crowd.

Keep them safe by the power of your name...so that they may be one just as you and I are one.

John 17:11

John's Gospel leaves us with a prayer said by Jesus at some point during their last evening together. The prayer comes after Jesus explained what was about to happen to Him and warned His followers that they would initially be scattered and uncertain about what to do next. Jesus explained that trouble and hardship don't disappear because they know Him.

Jesus began His prayer by acknowledging His special connection with God. They are partners in the most intimate sense of the word. But what would come of His followers once He was no longer with them physically in a world with no Zoom or FaceTime? How would the partnership continue without their Leader holding them all together?

Robert Morris, Jr., in his book, Pray Like Jesus, identifies six prayer requests spoken by Jesus. In the first three, Jesus prays that His followers be guarded, guided, and unified. These are the building blocks of any partnership. Mainly when there are so many pressures to let our guard down, go in different directions, and split up. Staying in a relationship of mutuality as equal partners requires divine assistance.

Jesus knew this and walked in the places His followers walked, facing even greater temptations. But His unity with God and the Holy Spirit sustained Him in His humanity as Jesus overcame the world and defeated death. God was in charge all along but chose to illustrate what life can look like, leaving us with a model to follow.

To be guarded is to be held close when we falter. Partnerships among us offer support systems in the form of life groups that read and discuss scripture together, pray together, and share challenges with one another. Whether a couple, a few, or a large gathering, we're better able to face a world offering a plethora of alternatives when we stay grounded in the teachings of Christ.

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## 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

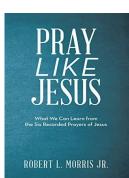
Norma Buzzard

## 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 book series is called.



Pray like Jesus, written by Robert L. Morris, Jr. What We Can Learn From the Six Recorded Prayers of Jesus.

Thank you and everyone continue to stay safe!

## COMING UP THIS WEEK November 7- November 13

Nov 7

Nov 8 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm

Food/Water Distribution

Nov 9 Angel Closet (appts required) at Wed

South Flint Soup Kitchen

12 Noon Pastor Book Club

Nov 10 Thu

Nov 11 Fri

Nov 12 Sat

Nov 13 Sun 10:30am

New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

(We are live on <u>Facebook</u> and our newly launched YouTube channel. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at *FlintAsbury.org*.)

## Upcoming Worship Series "Pray"



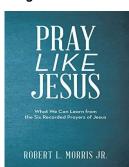
"Will you pray for me," the man asked his friend. "Of course," came the response. What else could his friend say? Prayer is so easy. It doesn't even have to be verbal. And prayer is so personal that no one knows if it even takes place.

But to whom will his friend pray and how will his friend go about praying? After all, nationally, we are a diverse group demographically and politically, and our religious beliefs vary.

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## Book Club News

Our worship series beginning in October focuses on



prayer and our book club selection that accompanies our series is titled *Pray Like Jesus*. This book.

written by Robert L. Morris, Jr., examines six prayers of Jesus, found in the Gospels, to help us

ic oospeis,

## **Asbury Staff**

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor & Exec Dir Connie Portillo Office Manager Sulvia 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 Supry Terrance Williams Arts Center Mgr Katelin Maylum Sr Prog Mgr Local Foods South Flint Soup Kitchen become more consistent prayers.

Prayer is probably the most talked-about subject in churches. However, not enough of us actually pray regularly. Rev. Morris believes that this is because we don't know enough about how to pray. The six prayers of Jesus can teach us how to grow our prayer life deeper and wider than ever before.

According to Amazon's description of our book selection:

Pray like Jesus is intended to be a simple

## Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony, Mirium Anthony, Jim Jonathon, Terrance Mirium Cyndi Christine & Norma Welcome Team Ushers Production Team Children Worship Leader Cafe spiritual how-tomanual for those who do not have a vital prayer life but seek one. It is one intended to be an academic book as much as it is an epistle from a fellow believer who may have learned a few things in forty-one years of ministry. Author Robert L. Morris Jr. invites you to join him and look at six prayers of Jesus, but vou will intentionally not examine the Lord's Prayer in depth. The reason is simple: the Lord's Prayer contains valuable information on how disciples should pray, but this book is about how **Jesus** personally prayed.

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## Upcoming Worship Series - "Pray" ...cont from pg 4

As Christians, we believe that there is one God and we're likely to presume that praying means taking our petitions there. Yet we also believe that God lived among humanity and that we know God through Jesus Christ. And that God is ever-present through the Holy Spirit.

But according to a 2021 Pew Research Study, just under one-third of the U.S. population do not claim an affiliation with a particular religious group. Instead, they identify as atheist, agnostic, or simply respond "nothing in particular" when asked about their religious identify. And while the majority of U.S. resident self-identify as Christian, this percentage dropped 11 points over the past decade from 3/4 to less than a third.

Does this mean that prayer is a dying trend? The news is disturbing.

According to an article published in the *Christian Post based on the Pew Study, less than half of Americans pray daily. This is quite a contrast to the prayer habits of Jesus. As a Jew it's likely that Jesus prayed at least three times each day.* 

Doesn't it make sense that, as Christians, our prayer life would resemble that of our Savior, Jesus Christ? Of course.

Our new series, *Pray, examines the prayer life of Jesus by looking at each of the six actual prayers that we find in the Gospels. While there are numerous references of Jesus praying there are only six actual prayers preserved for our benefit.* 

Come learn how Eat, Pray, Love gets lived out when we try to emulate the prayer habits of Jesus.

Our series is based on a book written by the Reverend Dr. Robert L. Morris, Jr., a Presbyterian pastor for over 45 years. Our series will utilize his book titled *Pray Like Jesus as a guide. Be sure to get your copy before or after Sunday worship, or find a copy at your local library or favorite source for books. And join us at Book Club each Wednesday at Noon for further discussions on each Sunday's message.* 

Everyone is invited to submit prayer requests for each worship. Each prayer request will be dedicated during worship and be included in our prayers. Prayers requests can be submitted through the homepage of our website or filling out a prayer request form.

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** 

Robert L. Morris, Jr.. Pray Like Jesus: What We Can Learn From the Six Recorded Prayers of Jesus.. Bloomington, IL: Westbow Press, 2019.

How do we know when we've reached a tipping point?

Imagine you're climbing. You've headed up a steep incline where each step requires more and more energy. Finally, you reach a point where each step takes more energy than you feel you have. But about the time exhaustion has you convinced it's best to turn around, you feel a change in the amount of effort it takes for each step.

Suddenly you're not climbing. Instead, each step is effortless in comparison to your earlier experience. So you're not climbing, but you're also not coasting. And you're progressing at a faster pace than before. It feels like you're running, yet it's taking less energy.

What's different? Your bank account balance is the same or less. The challenges keeping you up at night are still there. So why aren't you worried? The nightly news describes a dangerous and violently divided world. So why aren't you panicked?

I'll tell you what's happening. You're no longer just surviving. You're thriving!

This week we continue with a prayer by Jesus on the night of His arrest. Last week we learned that Jesus prayed that His followers are guarded, guided, and unified. As His prayer continues, Jesus asks that His followers are sanctified, sent, and One with God. Finally, Jesus prays for His followers to thrive.

I call "sanctified" a fiftycent word. I say this because it isn't used in ordinary language and doesn't roll off the tongue. But sanctified is also one of those words where it's hard to find a substitute.

To be sanctified is to move towards a tipping point of eternal goodness and joy. Different translations choose other words for this process. For example, the Good News Translation uses "dedicated" instead. However, I'm not sure this makes it any easier to comprehend.

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 as you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

John 17:17-18

The New Living Translation version translates this part of Jesus' prayer request as making us holy. While holy may be a more common word, it still leaves us wondering what this looks like when the process is complete.

What will life be like if we are sanctified, dedicated, and holy? Will we all be

wearing white robes and strumming harps? Or will we simply be a little more pleasant to be around?

In Christian theology, sanctification is an example of divine grace. Which means that we don't earn sanctification. Because it is a free gift from a God who wants the very best for us, sanctification is available to everyone. We simply need to accept it, take it in, and allow it to do what is required to move us to the holy tipping point where everything changes. That place where each step is easier than before.

One way to think of divine grace is to break it down into three types. First, before sanctification begins, we know God as a result of prevenient grace. Think of it as God reaching out to us. But less like a telemarketer or spam and more like a wake-up call for something we don't want to miss. We may initially feel annoyed if we're sound asleep, but we're grateful that we won't miss out.

Wait! What I wrote doesn't do justice to prevenient grace. Remember, the God who created everything thinks enough about you and your well-being to reach out. Let that sink in for a moment.

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Lile	Group	Ques	uons	$\alpha$ $\Gamma$	votes:

Make them holy by Your truth by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world... And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

NOTES FROM WORSHIP	John 17:17-25 (NLT

## **QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS**

- 1. Read the 2nd half of Jesus' prayer said at the Last Supper in John 17:17-25. What are some things that you noticed about this prayer? How do you fit into this prayer? How do the people connected with you fit in? What parts of this prayer gives you hope?
- 2. Read this week's article titled Thriving. Share an experience you've had with divine grace? Where are you on your spiritual journey? Is every step spiritually for you hard or easy? What does sanctification mean to you? In what ways is God sanctifying you through grace? What makes letting go of trying to control others so difficult? How does love fit in?
- 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.





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



**NOVEMBER 2ND & 16TH** (THANKSGIVING FOOD **GIVEAWAY 16TH), 11AM-NOON** 

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED FOR **FOOD EVER!** 

**ANGEL CLOSET:** 

**NOVEMBER 9TH. 23RD. AND 30TH** 

APPOINTMENT REQUIRED!



3410 FENTON ROAD **3 BLOCKS NORTH OF ATHERTON ROAD** FLINT. MI 48507 CALL 810-239-3427 FOR AN ANGEL CLOSET **APPOINTMENT OR QUESTIONS** 



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

The Reverend Dr. Robert L. Morris Jr. has served in various ministerial positions for more than forty-five years. This includes serving as senior minister at First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, Florida, for over seventeen years. Rev. Morris has since returned to Young Life staff, where his ministry began.

He is on the board of the Salvation Army and an organizing board member of First Ministries, a nonprofit serving the poor and homeless in Jacksonville. Rev. Morris is also a former board member of Habitat for Humanity in both Jacksonville and North Carolina.

I invite you to join us each Sunday for worship as we explore the six prayers of Jesus and consider how to improve our prayer life. Each Wednesday, we'll dig deeper into the wisdom offered by our book selection. You can pickup a copy of the book when you attend worship.

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** 

Robert L. Morris, Jr.. Pray Like Jesus: What We Can Learn From the Six Recorded Prayers of Jesus.. Bloomington, IL: Westbow Press, 2019.

## Partners (Guarded, Guided and Unified) ...cont from page 2

To be guided is to follow a path that leads to joy, abundance, and eternal life. Who doesn't want these? Hope knows that there is a path through the desert to places blossoming with possibility. Sadly, broken relationships create hopelessness.

To be unified is to hold tight to our mutuality. We're unified when we work in partnership toward the common good. Of course, we may disagree on the best way to reach our shared goals. Still, we agree to find sufficient commonality to stay engaged and face challenges together.

Jesus prayed that His followers would stay unified. I don't believe that this meant one church any more than He suggested that we all live in the same city. We share the same planet even as some of us hope to find an escape to someplace else in our universe.

And isn't it interesting when we discover that not a single drop of water has been created since the beginning of our planet? We can remove impurities from water, add chemicals, and add poisons to water, but we can't make new water. So unity should at least mean that we agree to treat water as a lifegiving gift.

The City of Flint has faced numerous challenges over the past several decades. While the pandemic affected everyone, the catastrophe that resulted in poisoned water hasn't happened in most cities. Likewise, while

most cities gain and lose businesses, few have felt the impact and survived the losses experienced by Flint.

The carnage is everywhere. Abandoned houses, businesses, and long lines for commodities to support basic needs. We can't save all of the structures since substantially fewer of us live here. But we can make decisions and work together for the common good.

But such unity begins with guarding our souls and discerning divine guidance individually and collectively.

I'm reminded that our next election is only a couple weeks away. Our nation chose a model of unity that utilizes a democratic process to make significant decisions together. Each and every vote matters. So I encourage all to cast our votes as equal partners working together for the common good. Don't let anyone discourage or intimidate you enough to miss out on casting your vote.

Some say that our democracy is under attack. It sounds like a few of us would rather have a king than a democracy. But I believe we already have a King more powerful and more benevolent than any human king could ever be. So, instead, I count among my many blessings that my vote matters. And even if a different outcome emerges from our elections than I hoped for, I know that my voice matters. And so does yours.

The Creator of all that exists prays that you are guarded, guided, and unified. The mere idea takes my breath away. But this idea also gives me hope.

May God guard, guide, and unify you in your relationships and may we build and maintain the community that we hope for together.

Each Sunday during our series, *Pray*, we're collecting prayer requests. You can submit a request online from our website home page. In addition, prayer request forms are located around the church and during water and food giveaways.

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**

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Leslie Livingston. "20 Last Supper Paintings from Renaissance Italy," © The Geographical Cure, November 3, 2021. *Link*.



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

ASBURY FARMS

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

The second stage of grace comes after we notice God wants us to know God better. Perhaps we make a point of attending church. Some of us may even join a Bible study group while others simply spend more time talking to God. There are as many ways to get to this next step as there are people. And speaking of people, someone else almost always says or does something that seems to trigger our awareness.

And if we stay tuned in to God's nudging, we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior through justifying grace. This idea comes out of scripture and can be confusing. Remember that holiness is a destination we move towards, but God accepts us just as we are. God put justifying grace on display by living among humans in the person of Jesus Christ to make sure that we seriously consider God's offer of grace.

The impact of prevenient and justifying grace is often described as repentance or as a change of direction. Decades ago, I wrote a poem about my own experience. Here's what it was like for me:

What do you feel when you hear Church bells?

Is it a sound that signals hope?

Like the lost seaman hearing the lighthouse horn, it sings comfort to my soul.

But an alarm also

But an alarm also sounded, time to change course before my journey ends.

But why? Why in the world and beyond would God put so much effort into

saving folks like me who don't show any indication that they want or need saving? In a word, love.

Who hasn't seen the reminder? It appears on bill-boards, tattoos, and stadium jumbotrons. According to John 3:16, God loved the world enough to save us. And God's love is so complete that we're given a choice as to whether to return God's love.

If you think about this seriously, this idea will resonate with you. There is love, and there is the degree of love that offers freedom to the beloved as to whether they choose to return our love. Humans didn't invent love. We each discover love through divine grace.

And this is where we begin to change. At least, this is what it looks like to observers. The truth is that we're not really changing as much as we're shedding layers of baggage that we've accumulated. As a result, we start becoming the person God created us to be rather than the person the world shaped us into.

Can you see now how sanctifying grace can seem like work for a while, but as we discard unnecessary weight, our steps eventually get easier?

Divine grace is inseparable from divine patience. Even the most faithful followers wander to and fro instead of staying tuned into the Holy Spirit.

Robert Morris writes, "That's where the disciples were at this time in their lives; they were connected to Christ—but not altered." So we know that some of His followers were saying the right words, but they still held onto human ideas about God's love.

The world uses conflict to sway opinion. Whether through negative comments on social media, harsh words in conversations, or worse. We allow anger to bubble up and out. And frankly, it often looks like the most offensive get the gold. But their rewards are both temporary and unsatisfying. We never find peace in unkindness and aggression.

Each Sunday during our series, *Pray*, we're collecting prayer requests. You can submit a request online from our website **home page**. In addition, prayer request forms are located around the church and during water and food giveaways.

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