THE ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Christmas Eve Service

Please join us Saturday, December 24th for Asbury’s Christmas Eve Service at 6:00pm.

YOU ARE ALL INVITED!

Volunteer Spotlight Corner

Joan Kirby is a tireless worker, afraid of no one and certainly not afraid of hard work. From her work with the Asbury Food Pantry and water giveaways to preparation for Communion during worship, Joan approaches her work as a volunteer with the energy of a much younger person. A shout-out to Joan who is in our volunteer spotlight for this edition of the Circuit Rider.

United Methodist Women Annual Christmas Celebration

Peace to those God Favors

He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands.

Luke 1:53

No one that I know likes being called a Scrooge. This label suggests a level of selfishness that is callous. But this understanding of the label Scrooge ignores how this well known Christmas tale ends. Our worship series for Advent and Christmas is titled God Bless Us Everyone. Our series is based on the classic story by Charles Dickens about a character named Ebenezer Scrooge. The idea for our series comes from Dr. Marcia McFey of Worship Design Studio who based her ideas for this series on a recent book titled The Redemption of Scrooge. The setting for A Christmas Carol is 19th Century England and the story accentuates the great divide between the few with wealth and privilege and the masses scraping to get by. This divide is more than economic.
Neighborhood Connection
Every week truckloads of food and water are delivered to Asbury for distribution. Asbury serves thousands of families each month in our parking lot, but hundreds of families are unable to come to us so we go to them. If you know of a family in need, or have any questions, you may call Reggie at 810-308-8648.

Asbury Food Pantry...
Every week individuals and families turn to Asbury to help them supplement their food supply. Asbury is a partner with the Genesee County Food Bank where we can purchase at a big discount. WE NEED YOUR HELP with food items, including meats, and diapers. We also need your financial contributions.

FlintAsbury.org
Join in on the conversation taking place on our blog. Pastor Tommy posts his reflections during the week along with other special guests. Let us know if you have information or other content that you wish to share.

UMW Cookie Walk
Mark your calendar for Sunday, December 18th for our United Methodist Women Cookie Walk. The Cookie Walk will be right after each Worship Service in the Parlor.

So what does scripture have to say about this divide? In Luke, Mary sings a song that makes the claim that the poor are blessed and the rich go away empty in the kingdom ushered in by her Son that she carried in her womb (Luke 1:53). This theme is persistent throughout scripture. So, when the angels announce to the nearby shepherds that peace will come to those God favors, what are we to make of this (Luke 2:14)? Who does God favor? Well, we read how God came to the rescue of the Hebrew slaves when they were being oppressed by the wealthier and more powerful Egyptians. Elsewhere, we read that God speaking through the prophet Isaiah had a lot to say about how those who have are expected to share what they have with the have-nots. There is a definite pattern that emerges which suggests that God has a special sense of favor towards the poor.

One story that haunted me as I pursued wealth in my younger years is found in Matthew. This story is about a well-off young man who pushed Jesus enough to get the bottomline that he did not want to hear. "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" the young man asked Jesus (Matthew 19:16-22). But unsatisfied that Jesus had told him straight and perhaps suspicious that Jesus was not taking his question serious (my interpretation), the young man responded that he had kept the commandments that Jesus recited but wanted to know if this made it a done deal. So Jesus gave him the bad news. "You must rid yourself of all the distractions in your life that keep you from worshiping me alone, which in your case is wealth." Ouch! Jesus' statement puts our culture's infatuation with getting ahead, pursuing the "good life" through better economics, in a most uncomfortable place. Not a place that scripture suggests would be "favored" by God.

James Cone in his classic book, *God of the Oppressed*, writes that the poor have little to lose and everything to gain in Jesus Christ's presence in history. In contrast the rich have little to gain and everything to lose if gain and loss are measured values of this earthly sphere (p. 87). Alas, Ebenezer Scrooge, in the classic, *A Christmas Carol*, seems to exemplify this paradox. Miserable in his wealth, Ebenezer seems beyond redemption, yet there is something about the spirit and joy of Christmas which leaves no one beyond redemption. And as the story of our historical symbol of greed unfolds we discover that Scrooge is redeemed. This offers great hope for the rest of us and for the world in which we live. Could the label Scrooge suggest a redeemed person who once was selfish, allowing their material possessions to get in the way of finding joy, who now has seen the light of Christmas?
May this Christmas bring redeeming change for each of us that allows us to give up whatever hinders us from receiving the joy that is found only in the One who came to save us. God bless us, everyone.

Pastor Tommy


**Asbury as a Place of Hospitality**

As Asbury’s pastor I am particularly proud of the role that our faith community plays in our neighborhood and beyond. From food giveaways to special events our building is an asset in our community that exists for the benefit of all who care to receive the benefits offered. While pride itself is not considered to be a state that we Christians are to pursue, hospitality is certainly a state of Christianity that scripture lifts up as an important goal to pursue. Perhaps the Book of Hebrews puts it best:

*Don’t forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!*

Hebrews 13:2

Last month Asbury hosted a press conference for United Way in our parking lot. This prestigious nonprofit felt that Asbury portrayed the very heart of volunteerism and we already had a food distribution planned for the same day. Presidential appointed CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service and Chief Volunteer Officer for the United States of America Wendy Spencer joined United Way and other government officials for this announcement.

The United Methodist Women of Asbury host a number of events from fund raisers to celebrations. Our cover photo for this issue is from the annual Christmas celebration. People come from other communities to participate in this fun-filled event. Last month the UMW hosted a luncheon after worship to raise both awareness and money to support missions both in Flint and elsewhere. Food and hospitality go hand-in-hand.

December began with Asbury hosting the Crossroads District Annual Christmas party. Over 115 people from churches in Flint an around mid-Michigan were hosted for a great dinner catered by Masonic Temple and
We continue with Part 3 of our study, *Trusting the Covenant* through the rest of 2016. The prophets are rich in Biblical tradition and Lamentations are too often ignored. It is always the right time to join in. Your insights and questions are welcomed.

Our goal is to continue to widen our circle and so we hope that you will join in on our discussion. We meet each Tuesday 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. We are always on the lookout for our next book, video lesson or topic. Your participation and suggestions are greatly appreciated.

Dec 13  Ezekiel 34-37  
Dec 20  Isaiah 40-43, 49-55:13  
Dec 27  Vacation  
Jan  3  Isaiah 56, 58-61, 63-66  

Isaiah offers a lot to cover so we will see how far we get in our first session and adjust our schedule if needed.

*Ways to get involved...*  

**Worship** helps us to connect with God through music, scripture, biblical teaching, prayer, reflection, adoration and fellowship.  

**Community Gardening** The Asbury Center for Nutrition has several gardens, orchards and a hoop house that need your attention.  

**Neighborhood Connect** is a ministry that assesses individual gifts and passions and looks for ways to bring people together in ways that improve relationships and our community.  

**Food & Water Giveaway** Join us on Thursdays at 8:30 AM to help give away food and bottled water.  

**Pantry** - We need food items, including meats, paper products; personal items diapers, and financial support.  

**Social Media** allows us to tell others about the work that God is doing. All of us can help enhance our presence in the social media by posting on our Facebook and utilizing our website for blogging.  

**Student Housing** - the Asbury House offers local college students a way to use their gifts and passions together with their faith in building a better neighborhood.  

**Women’s Circles** - The women of Asbury meet regularly in small groups.  

**Pastor’s Book Club** meets each Tuesday at 12 for fellowship, food and learning.
Dec 4 Notes & Reflections – Hope From Heart Break

The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. For those who live in a land of deep darkness, a light will shine. For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders.

Isaiah 9:2, 6a

God has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. Luke 1:53

In our worship series for Advent and Christmas we will take a look at how living in God’s economy of grace and justice is the complete opposite of the life-threatening addiction to money, success, exclusion and looking out for ourselves. The chimes of the clock-tower bells in Dickens’ classic A Christmas Carol provide a wake-up call for Ebenezer Scrooge. Before the night is over his night-mare turns into an inspiring dream that helps to take him on a journey from resentment, fear and isolation to a new life based on grace, hope, love and joy. Just as God’s presence was born anew into this world, we too can be born anew, awakened and redeemed into renewed life, joy, passion, generosity, humility and love.
Coming up this week - December

Dec 12 Mon  
Dec 13 Tues  12Noon Pastor Book Club  
12:30pm Lois Circle  
Dec 14 Wed  10:00am Food Giveaway  
4:00pm Youth Recreation  
6:00pm Elizabeth Circle (Debô)  
Dec 15 Thurs  10:00 am Water Delivery  
10:00am Nutrition Truck Delivery  
6:00pm Asbury Christmas Concert  
Dec 16 Fri  
Dec 17 Sat  12Noon Youth Recreation  
Dec 18 Sun  10:00am Bible Study  
10:00am Traditional Worship  
11:00am Coffee Break  
11:30 am New Beginnings Worship  
Dec 18 Sun  UMW Cookie Walk following each Worship Service

Look for announcements scrolling on our screen prior to the start of worship. Email announcements by the Friday before to FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com

In our worship service

Greeter Christine  
Children’s Time Rev Tommy  
Candle Lighting Karen  
Usher Jim, Anthony, JoAn  
Sound System Jim  
Nursery Carolyn  
Coffee Break Cydi  
Worship Leader Catherine  10:00am

Last Week for Worship  
Attendance 50  Offering $6,068

Coffee Break
Plan to meet outside the sanctuary each Sunday after the first service for coffee, tea, snacks, conversation and so on. The music will start when it is time to wrap up and head in for New Beginnings.

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDaniell Pastor  
Jim Craig Church Council Chair  
Asbury CDC Board Chair  
Connie Portillo Office Secretary  
Kathy Howe Choir Director  
Rebekah Britton Organist  
Phone/Fax 810-235-0016 (call first when faxing)

WELCOME! - Beinvenidos!
We are happy you are here to worship with us today. Please fill out an information card and place it in the offering plate in order that we may be able to serve you further.

OUR VISION – Nuestro Vision
We envision a community in love with God, one another and our neighbors, evidenced through the transformation of ourselves and our neighborhood

WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS!

2017 Asbury Schedules for: Liturgist, Children’s Time, Greeters, Ushers, Sound and Coffee Hour are due before the end of December. Please try to get them to Connie by December 23rd.

2017 Annual Local Church Report: I will be downloading the forms by December 1st, so those of you that have forms coming to you to fill out, please look for them in your mailbox or in your mail. Keep in mind the report has to be submitted by January 31st but I need your reports by January 23rd in order for me to enter all data in the computer. If you have any questions, please call the office 235-0016.

Christmas Food Boxes: We will be handing out food boxes for Christmas on December 20th from 10am-1pm. Boxes will be put together on December 19th starting at 10am. Please see JoAn if you wish to volunteer.

No Pastor Book Club: Please note, there will not be any Book Club on Tuesday, December 27th. Mark your calendar!

Please put your cell phone on stun!  
Por favor poner el teléfono en silencio!

In order that we may be fully present in worship, please set your cell phone to silent mode. Tweets & Facebook posts are encouraged if they are relevant to our worship.
# Asbury UMC Monthly Planner

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<td>4 Communion Sunday</td>
<td>Bible Study 10am</td>
<td>Traditional Worship 10am</td>
<td>Distress Truck delivery 10am</td>
<td>Water Delivery 10am</td>
<td>Crossroads District Christmas Party 5-8:00pm</td>
<td>3 UMW Christmas Tea 11:30am</td>
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<td>Traditional Worship 10am</td>
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<td>UMW Cookie Walk following Worship Service</td>
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<td>Christmas Concert 6 pm</td>
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<td>25 MERRYCHRISTMAS!</td>
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<td>Prepare Christmas Baskets 10am</td>
<td>Pick up Christmas Baskets 10am-1pm</td>
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FlintAsbury.org  
1653 Davison Rd, Flint, MI 48506, 810-235-0016  
FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com
Church Staff:

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel
Connie Portillo, Office Secretary
Kathryn Howe, Choir Director
Rebekah Britton, Organist

Church Office Hours:
Monday and Wednesday - 9:00am to 3:00pm
Friday - 10:00am to 1:00pm
Phone: (810) 235-0016
Fax: (810) 235-0016 (Call first before faxing)

Worship Sunday:
Bible Study 10:00am
Traditional Worship 10:00am
Coffee Break 11:00am
New Beginnings Worship 11:30am

Pastor Book Club: Tuesday 12:00 Noon
FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com
www.FlintAsburyUMC.org

PRAYER
is not a substitute for ACTION
It is an Action for which there is no substitute