

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Welcome to the Asbury Community!

Inside Edition

To be honest I'm reluctant to bring it up. In our scripture for worship this week we skip down towards the end of Matthew chapter 23 where Jesus is dressing down the religious leaders and we get to a point that likely hits home with all of us — or at least it should. I'm reluctant to bring it up because I meet too many people who are already feeling like they need to do a lot of work before they even show up for worship. If you feel this way I don't want to do anything that will add fuel to the fire that you are feeling. Instead, I want to help put out the flame by first assuring you that you

need do nothing more than show up.

This doesn't mean that this week's scripture



is not relevant. The truth is that it is as relevant for us as it was for the religious leaders that Jesus was speaking to. One thing that is clear about scripture is that it is never about "them" or "those people" any more than it is about us. We are "those people" and Je-

sus is singling out a particular person or group as an illustration that is intended to help us all with our relationship with Him.

Has anyone ever handed you a dirty glass when you asked for a drink? Have you ever been given a water glass or a coffee cup with someone else's lipstick, dirty finger prints or something floating on top? Its disgusting.

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flesh and the intellect while relationship appeals to the heart and the spirit.

The Garden of Eden was the place of God's presence. After God created the world He formed humankind from the dust with His hand. Why did God make humans? Scriptures suggests fellowship, communion and intimacy. In Eden there was no religion but there was clearly relationship.

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Volume 18 Issue 29

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Special points of interest:

> **Asbury Café is now**

Open!

Stop in on Fridays from 10:00am-1:00pm outside the Worship Center on the main floor.



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From Religion to Relationship

The word "religion" has multiple definitions including a belief in God or gods, the worship of God or gods, or a particular system of religious beliefs and worship. Sylvia defines religion as a "demon inspired, human assisted institution established to

keep people ignorant, immature and impotent!" This definition warrants further exploration.

First, we should not confuse religion with relationship. Relationship is a person connected to another by blood, marriage or friendship. Religion appeals to the



From Religion to Relationship ...cont. from Page 1

We are warned in 2 Timothy that “They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!” (2 Timothy 3:5 NLT). The enemy wants us to be religious. To pursue a form of godliness on our own power that denies the power of the One True God.



As the story of creation continues we are offered an illustration of the difference between a relationship with God and religion in two brothers, Cain and Abel. Cain’s sacrifice was one of ritual while Abel sought a relationship with God. Cain’s lack of a relationship with God led to the murder of his brother Abel out of jealousy. Religion does not have the power to intervene in the face of our human weakness. Only a rela-

tionship with God can keep us from horrific acts.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus we are offered another, even more compelling illustration that differentiates between relationship and religion. Saul was a “religious man” following the rituals and laws of religion with pride and intensity. In his pursuit of religious rigor Saul persecuted Christ followers until one day his life changed forever. Saul became Paul as he accepted a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything changed for Paul and as a result, we have his testimony as a guide for our own relationship with Jesus Christ.

What can we learn from Paul’s story. When Paul’s focus was religion he condemned, criticized and even murdered in the name of religion. Scripture testifies that religion can use God’s Word to wound and destroy. A personal relationship with Christ uses God’s Word to enlighten, encourage and edify others. Relationships bring healing and build up the Body of Christ.

It was religion, after all, that judged God’s only Son, found Him guilty and sent him up Golgotha’s hill carrying a cross. Religion crucified God’s Son. Why? What was Jesus guilty of that crated such a consequence: relationship! Religion despises relationship because it is relationship that empowers God’s people.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the orchard at the breezy time of the day and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the orchard. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”
Genesis 3: 8-9 NET

We gather each week for worship, not out of duty or ritual, but out of relationship. We belong to each other just as we belong to God. Worship can become confused with ritual through repetition but they are not the same. We gather each week for worship because of our relationship with Jesus Christ. How could we not?

We visit with those whom we have a personal relationship with because we want to be with each other. We come together and we visit with Christ through song, prayer, hearing God’s Word spoken in love and truth and we allow the Holy Spirit to visit with us. Church can and does happen anywhere but it must happen somewhere so that our relationship with Christ can be nurtured. We need to worship in the same way that we need nutrition for our bodies.

Don’t let religion stand in the way of your relationship with Jesus Christ. Join us each Sunday for worship. You belong here. Sylvia Pittman,

Inside Edition ... continued from page 1

Our worry frankly has more to do with how dirty the glass is on the inside than what we see on the outside. “Is what we see an indication of what we don’t see?” we wonder. So we call the waiter over and send it back or we leave to go elsewhere.

First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean too.
Matthew 23:26b NLT

Or have you ever met someone who just seems so put together that it makes you wonder who their trying to impress? Doesn’t it make you wonder

if there is something their hiding beneath the designer-label clothes and pretense? We expect a few wrinkles perhaps a sign of breakfast in a hurry or at least dust on their shoes. Are they really this put together on the inside?

It is amazing that God doesn’t do the same thing with us and most of us worry that He does. So too many of us don’t show up at all.

This is the only glass we have and we know that as far as holiness goes we are not clean on the outside or the inside.

Inside Edition ... *continued from page 2*

We are the dirty glass that we set before the Lord hoping that he doesn't reject us or send us back or send us to a place we do not want to go to. And even if we dress up for church we have this nagging feeling that God sees right through us. So we wait until we can get our stuff a bit more together to encounter Jesus.

There is good news. Jesus knows that we only need to focus on the inside. And, even better, we are not the dishwasher. We are the waiter or waitress who brings the glass (we are also the glass so hang in there). The Holy

Spirit is the One who cleans our inside. We just have to submit ourselves to being cleaned.

But we can't do this if we don't come to the table to begin with because we think that we can't possibly be worthy of God's attention — at least not God's positive attention. My advice: come any way. Some of the most powerful testimonies are from those of us who were dirty on the inside and someone convinced us to show up. We found out the real truth. God loves us despite our dirtiness. God loves us

even while we are sinners. Jesus wants a personal relationship with us dirt and all.

Jesus lived homeless and jobless. Do you think that He always looked put together? The artistic versions of Jesus with the perfect hair and spotless clothing show us images of perfection that we know to be true of Jesus on the inside. We really don't know what Jesus looked like on the outside. Like one of us I suppose. So whichever image of Jesus makes you the most likely to show up and to worship Him works great.

Pastor Tommy

FREE SUMMER MEALS

Asbury UMC - 1653 Davison Rd Flint MI (810-235-0016)

“Meet Up and Eat Up”

Free Healthy Meals * Fun and Games * All Youths ages 18 & under are welcome

(MONDAY – FRIDAY)

Breakfast served from 8:00am-9:30am * Lunch from 11am-1:00pm

For more information visit the website at
www.fbem.org/programs/summer-food-service

Food Bank of Eastern Michigan - Michigan Department of Education - USDA

FOOD THAT'S IN, WHEN SCHOOL IS OUT!

In Our Prayers

Curtis Young	Shirley Craig
Rachel Bastine	Christopher Lewis
Norma Buzzard	Sarah Tanner
Virginia Bigger	Elizabeth Wright
Barbara McIvor	Judy Tanner
Jonathon Misner	Mary Lyons
Nancy Auger	Brenda
Austin & Mary Suffle	

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Sharon George	Mary Nations
Elaine Lamoreaux	Carmen Misner
Mary Russell	



Prayer is at the heart of our beliefs

Asbury Worship Series God has a plan...but FIRST

On behalf of our worship design team I am excited to announce a new worship series trilogy beginning Sunday, July 8. This is a 3-part "series-series" based on the idea that God has a plan that does more than just affect us. To be "affected" suggests that some how we are passive and the results of actions not involving us have an "affect" on us in some way. This is different. We are each a part of the plan. We each have a role.

Our first series is titled, *Relationship not religion*. In this series we will focus on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Are you "spiritual" but not religious. Come on in. You belong here. Stay tuned for more exciting news as our trilogy unfolds according to God's plan for Asbury and the community we serve.

In God's plan there are no stars, co-stars, stand-ins, extras, stunt men or women, or any other roles that set one of us a part from the rest in a way that puts one of us in competition with another. Nor can we be someone who we are not. It is not an act. It is reality.

While we seem to naturally anticipate this in anything spectacular this does not seem to be God's way. At least not the God we know in Jesus Christ. In God's Kingdom there are no left-outs or even left behinds, contrary to what some people may think.

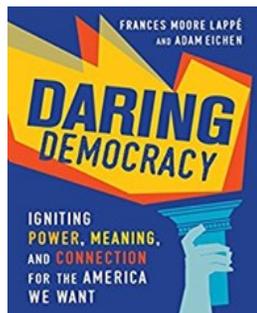
Our trilogy series is derived from prayerful discernment of God's words through the prophet Jeremiah where God puts a stake in the ground regarding the divine game plan. "They are plans for good" is the key message, which means that God is planning on a future for our community that will give us hope.

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Book Club News

NOTE - WE ARE NOW MEETING ON WEDNESDAYS AT 12 NOON.

As the people of the Exodus grew in numbers Moses could not longer handle all



of their disputes so he had each of the 12 tribes choose a leader from among their group and a form of representative democracy was born. It was in the wilderness that God worked through Moses

and the other leaders to help the people emerge as a new nation.

be like other nations. They wanted a king to rule over them. God reminded Samuel that it was their God the people were rejecting. So a monarchy emerged among God's people. Despite God's warnings and despite a few periods of political and economic success the consequences that God warned the people about happened. Kings exploited the people taking the best for themselves and the people's voice was silenced. Is this happening again in our country? Are we being exploited by the rich and powerful?

Authors Frances Moore Lappe and Adam Eichen argue that "Democracy is not a choice. Creating democracies truly accountable to their citizens is essential to our very survival—to the flourishing of societies supporting human life, and now, because of climate change, to the survival of the Earth..." Do we have a democracy in our country? Does our government represent the hopes and dreams of the people that they represent?

Fast forward a bit and young Samuel, the prophet, becomes older Samuel and the people are grumbling that they want to

The separation between the very wealthy and the rest of us has never been

greater and the influence of the very wealthy, and other countries, on our elections has never been greater. In our own beloved Flint, our governor was able to circumvent democracy with the stroke of a pen. The result: economics prevailed over people and we continue to suffer. We have a president who boasts that he is among the super rich and whose decisions favor their economics over ours. How does this happen? Is the voice of the people being heard or are voters and elections manipulated behind the scenes?

This is not about conspiracy theories. Certainly, we do not all agree on who and how policy and laws should come about. But an increasing number of us are ashamed of our country's policies and embarrassed by our choices to represent us. But what can we do? We can dare to make a difference by standing together and by using both our voice and our vote.

We encourage you to come to our Wednesday gatherings. Our small group hopes to widen our circle and so we hope that you will join in on our discussion. We meet each Wednesday at Noon. Come join us for a light lunch, fellowship and discussion. Our food selections have been fantastic and we always have plenty to share. And we are always on the lookout for our next book, video lesson or topic. Your participation and suggestions are greatly appreciated.

Pastor Tommy

Leadership in Worship & Service

Welcome Team	Tony, Mirium, Christine
Children's Time	Rev Tommy
Ushers	Anthony, Jim
Production Team	Jim
Nursery	Norma
Worship Leaders	Cyndi
Coffee Hour	

Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Kevin Croom	Farm to Table
Israel Unger	Business Development

Asbury Café

Plan to meet outside the sanctuary each Sunday before worship for coffee, tea, snacks, conversation and so on. The music will start when it is time to wrap up and head in for worship.

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Mark Vorenkamp	Children & Youth
Jim Craig	Leadership Chair

* Frances Moore Lappe and Adam Eichen. *Daring Democracy: Igniting Power, Meaning, and Connection for the America We Want*. (p. 4). Beacon Press, 2017.

God has a plan ... but **FIRST** *continued from page 4*

If there is a catch it is this message it is “We are invited but God is not insisting.” That is, each of us are invited to participate in God’s plan but God’s love is so strong and so certain that each of us are given choice to decide if we will participate or go our own way. Nevertheless, God’s plan is the only plan that will prevail.

God’s plan is comprehensive. God’s plan includes more than you and I, more than our neighborhood. It goes beyond Flint’s master plan and includes other towns and other cities. God’s plan includes our nation and other nations. It includes our planet and other planets. Our solar system and the rest of the universe. God is the God of all creation. All that there is or ever was. Now where do you fit?

When lead was discovered in the water that comes out of the faucets in our homes we realized

that we were “affected” by what was in our water that wasn’t there before. The higher concentrations of lead and other impurities have been found to result in certain consequences. We did not participate in the decision to change our water source. We are not the chemists who decided how to treat the water. We are not the testers who watch out for the public good. Yet we are affected. Even if we never drank the water. Even if we don’t live in Flint. We are affected because we are connected.

Let’s presume that you didn’t vote for our current governor who appointed the emergency manager who decided to switch our water supply to save money. Does this make you innocent? So in your world the innocent are punished? The innocent are simply affected while the guilty are the actors in the play that captures your life? This is over simplified. But unless you are you are totally dependent on others, without

influence on their choices, you make decisions about whether you install a faucet filter. You decide whether you will drink filtered water. You decide whether you only drink bottled water. You decide how long it will be before you trust our water source and those who have a part in its quality.

We all have a part in God’s plan and our part begins with acceptance. First, we accept that God has a plan, even if our acceptance is mostly based on hope. Next, we decide that we want to be an active player in God’s plan. We want to be one of the players whose actions result in positive change in the world around us. We want the “good” that God promised through the prophet Jeremiah.

Which means we will do that which God’s plan calls for us to do. But you likely realize that you can’t do this on your own. Even knowing what your role is proves to be beyond your ability. Yes you are human — one of God’s creatures. And you now realize that you are not God. But you also realize that you want to know God better than you do now.

For all the apparent rigidity in the laws that we read about in the first five books of the Bible when we read all the way through we gather a more open-minded God. Don’t let first impressions be your last Bible lesson. For example, by studying the prophets whom God uses to speak to the people you should notice that the words we read that God spoke through them are not hard and fast details of a plan. They are words like good, hope, love and joy, when we follow God’s plan, and words like darkness, anger, violence, sickness, blindness, oppression and death, when we go our own way. The details are left to unfold day to day as we choose to stay connected to God’s plan or not. The Bible is the only manuscript we are given. All of the commentary available are our various attempts at interpreting this manuscript.

When asked about the most important of the laws, Jesus lifted two which He offered as the key to all the rest. Love God and love each other. So simple. So complete. So hard to do it seems. Impossible, when we try and do it on our own.

Coming up this week

- Jul 30 Mon** 4:30pm StandUp Education Prog
- Jul 31 Tues**
- Aug 1 Wed** 12Noon Pastor Book Club
- Aug 2 Thu** 1:00pm Cooking Classes
- Aug 3 Fri** 10am-1pm Asbury Cafe Open
4:30pm StandUp Education Prog
- Aug 4 Sat** 1-4:pm StandUp Education Prog

- Aug 5 Sunday**
9:30am Café Opens
10:30am New Beginnings
Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship Attendance 32 Offering \$ 774

Look for announcements scrolling on the our screen prior to the start of worship.

Email announcements by the Friday before to:

FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com

Ways to Connect

Donate –You can give online at FlintAsbury.org/donate

Music Ministry –We are looking for vocalists and musicians.

Community Gardening – The Asbury Farm needs volunteers.

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.

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 12Noon for fellowship, food and learning.



THE FLINT FARMING PROJECT



Welcome to the Asbury Community

1653 Davison Rd
Flint, MI 48506



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
FLINT, MICHIGAN
PERMIT #151

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

Neighborhood Connection



We envision a community in love with God, each other, and our neighbors evidenced by the transformation of ourselves and our neighborhood. We are a center for worship & spiritual growth, a center for connections and a center for health & wellness.

Our goal is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into citizens who contribute to building and maintaining a vibrant neighborhood, and all residents are able to enjoy safety, good health, a culture that fosters life long learning and satisfying lives.

We believe that such an ambitious goal can never be attained without God's grace and abundance and Christ calls each of us to be disciples willing to share our witness through words and acts.

God has a plan...but **FIRST** *continued from page 5*

These two, most important expectations that God has for all creation depend upon each other. To love God is to love each other is to love God. So while our help comes from God this help is delivered through each other. We help each other which helps God help others and helps God to help us. Its all connected. Dependent. We are free to choose but we are not free to escape the consequences of our choices. Nor are our neighbors.

Our series trilogy which naturally suggests the divine trilogy of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, will take us on a journey of discovery. Together we will discover new pieces of God's plan for each of us and collectively. The more of "us" who participate the more we can discern within our community of participators.

Who will you invite to go on this journey with us? Don't just consider friends and family. You already know a lot about them. Consider strangers who are "strange" because, from what you can tell, you have nothing in common with them. But since we know that they too are a part of God's plan they can help us discover parts of God's plan that we otherwise may miss.

**For I know the plans I have for you." says the Lord.
"They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."**

Jeremiah 29: 11 (NLT)

Who are you certain to disagree with because their lifestyle is not your lifestyle? Invite them. Who are you certain that you don't

understand because they don't fit what you understand? Invite them.

Perhaps their idea of a life-partner goes against what you know and believe. Perhaps their idea of color, dress, food, musical taste and most other subjects you know are different than yours. Invite them.

In this way, our journey will be rich with diversity and new discoveries about ourselves and about God. Each of us will grow closer to God, more in love with God. Each of us will grow closer to each other, more in love with each other. Each of us will grow closer to our neighbor, who hasn't been with us on our journey and yes, more in love with our neighbor. Each of us will grow closer to creation and more in love with creation. And in this process, each of us will know more about ourselves, and learn to love this creature that God placed here for a reason — each of us perfected in our own unique way.

Pastor Tommy