ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 30

Authentic Worship (Keep it real)



"It's a pleasure meeting you." Yeah, I said it, but I didn't really mean it.

We've all been there. We offer a platitude rather than say what's really on our minds. After all, didn't mother tell us more

than once, "if you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all?"

I'm not going to tell you any different. I've tried it both ways, offering brutal honesty and stretching the truth. And honestly, I think it's okay to be kind even when the voice in your head is telling you that you don't really mean it. And besides, beauty and truth are often found in the eyes of the beholder. So who's to say whether our vision is simply blurred regarding a particular person or matter?

Page 6

Partners (Guarded, Guided and Unified)



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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October 30, 2022



EVERYONE HAVE A

WONDERFUL AND-SAFE WEEK!



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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 Craiq

Richard Oram
Chris Freeman



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Nancy Elston

Elaine Lamoreaux

Norma Buzzard

CHARGE CONFERENCE REPORTS

Please I need your reports NOW ...

Thank you! Connie



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).

COMING UP THIS WEEK OCTOBER 31 – NOVEMBER 6

Oct 31 Mon 4:30pm-6:30pm Halo-Ween Party
1600 Block of Jane Street (see flyer pq 17)

Nov 1 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm

Food/Water Distribution

Nov 2 Wed 11am-12N Food Giveaway at

South Flint Soup Kitchen (no appts needed)

12Noon Pastor Book Club

Nov 3 Thu 1:00pm United Women in Faith meeting in Asbury Conference Room

Nov 4 Fri

Nov 5 Sat

Nov 6 Sun 10:30am

New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

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

Upcoming Worship Series "Pray"



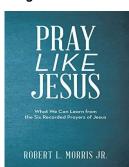
"Will you pray for me," the man asked his friend. "Of course," came the response. What else could his friend say? Prayer is so easy. It doesn't even have to be verbal. And prayer is so personal that no one knows if it even takes place.

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.

On the other hand, what if inauthenticity becomes a habit or, worse, an addiction? What if we discover that we crave the positive response we get when we tell someone how great they are, even when we know we don't believe it? Where does it all end when we ride a makebelieve train as far as it takes us?

Have you ever noticed that when someone is telling you how wonderful it is to be with you, their body language is often more honest than their words? Experts in communication remind us we communicate with more than words. The inflections we use as we speak, the phrases accompanying our gestures, body positions, and facial expressions add to our listener's understanding of what we're saying.

Does this mean that we better pay attention to our body language when we compliment someone? While this is one approach, it isn't very effective. The better approach is to be honest with yourself and others and be authentic. The more you believe what you're saying, the more your body language supports your statements.

Frequent liars learn to convince themselves that their lies are true by repeating them. Of course, repeating a lie doesn't make it true, no matter how many times it gets repeated. So I'm not talking about how to get gullible persons to believe you. That's more of a skill for someone with a life-time pass on the makebelieve train.

Michael Formica writes in a 2014 article in Psychology Today that "One of our more enduring social fallacies is the idea that what others think of us actually matters." There is something quite profound about this statement. While one voice in my head tells me it's true, another voice tells me that what others think about me matters a lot.

Formica spells out why this other voice is so loud by explaining that a primal survival instinct evolved into a social imperative. And how this shift is now an obstacle to selfacceptance. Too often, "our thoughts and behavior become means for eliciting a response, rather than an expression of self-value." This happens when our external self, molded by social context, overshadows our internal self. formed by subjective experience.

Let's break this down and look at how this idea connects to the third prayer said by Jesus.

First, when we care too much about what others think about us, we carry this handicap into worship. When this happens, our attention is divided between God and the people who may be watching us. And too often, our attention is primarily on what others think about us.

This can be particularly challenging when we're leading worship. Cyndi, our worship leader, bristles when one of us uses words like performance or show. She knows that our role is to lead worship, not perform worship. The difference is subtle but powerful.

Cyndi and I are big fans of a show called The Voice. The coaches on the show begin each season with blind auditions followed by the battle round. The show's central theme is competition, and the winner of a battle continues while the other singer goes home. And the battle rounds are rightfully described as competitions.

However, a recurring piece of advice from every coach is for the singers to feel the song's emotion, which invites the onlookers to experience their feelings. A breakthrough happens when a singer makes the song their own, and their authentic emotions are felt by the audience. Their song no longer feels like a performance as their authentic inner-self emerges.

When I hear the coach's instructions, I think about Cyndi's guidance to our worship team members. "Worship God with everything you have," she says, "and others will join vou. Worship is never a performance."

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Questions & Note	es:			
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NOTE	S FRON	<u> 1 WORSH</u>		hn 17:1-16 (GNT)
	y the power of Your na	are one	y the power of Your name, the name you gav are one	y the power of Your name, the name you gave me, so the

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

- 1. Read the beginning of Jesus' prayer said at the Last Supper in John 17:1-16. 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 *Partners*. Who are some of your partner(s) in life? What are some of the ideals that you have in common with your partner(s)? What makes a good partner relationship for you? What does it mean for you to be guarded by the Holy Spirit? What does it mean for you to be guided? What are some examples of how you've felt guided by the Holy Spirit in the past? In what ways might God be nudging you now?
- 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**



ASBURY FARM FRESH - TRY OUR WEEKLY VEGGIE BOX FOR \$10.00 -

SIGN UP FOR A FREE ASBURY FARMS ACCOUNT TODAY

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Select what goes in your box from each week's harvest. Get \$5 off your next order when you fill your box with \$15 of produce.

WANT US TO DECIDE FOR YOU?

Choose Veggie Box Subscription and we will fill your order with a variety of each week's harvest. Pay when you pick up your box. A \$15 VALUE FOR \$10.

* 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

Content for this series is based in part on: Robert L. Morris, Jr.. Pray Like Jesus: What We Can Learn From the Six Recorded Prayers of Jesus. Bloomington, IL: Westbow Press, 2019.

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" ...

Authentic Worship (Keep it real) ...cont from pg 6

I sincerely believe that the best musicians, artists, crafters, builders, and all of us, move from okay to outstanding when we forget what people think. When, instead of performing, we express our inner selves through our divine gifts. And God is glorified in our doing that which God created us to do.

Therefore, worship should never be a performance, and neither should prayer. Jesus amplifies the importance of authentic prayer, warning followers, "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites! This group loves to stand up and pray in the houses of worship and on the street corners so that everyone will see them" (Matthew 6:5).

I've noticed that when I use polite platitudes in prayer, rather than telling it like I see it, I'm left feeling empty and unsatisfied. Of course, none of us would be the first to lie to God about our real feelings. However, God knows the truth, so our attempts at fake flattery won't land any points, even if God does keep score.

In the third prayer of Jesus, we gain insight into what it means to be authentically in awe of God. We find His prayer in the 12th chapter of John's Gospel. Jesus is facing certain death if He continues doing what God sent Him to accomplish. Meanwhile, Jesus knows that the people misunderstand the role of the Messiah.

Jesus prays, "Now my heart is troubled—and what shall I say? Shall I say, 'Father, do not let this hour come upon me? But that is why I came—so that I might go through this hour of suffering. Father, bring glory to Your name!" (John 12:27-28).

Father, bring glory to your name! I have brought glory to it, and I will do so again.

John 12:27-28

After praying so that He could be heard, Jesus told the crowd that His prayer was for their benefit. And His prayer helps you and me to better understand why His death was necessary. Salvation is never the result of performing. Instead, salvation comes when God is glorified through our faithfully following Jesus Christ. And when we authentically pray and worship, we glorify God.

We read that after Jesus said His prayer, a voice spoke from heaven was heard by the crowd saying, "I have brought glory to it, and I will do so again" (John 12:28).

I suspect that it's rare when God's voice is heard audibly. More often, the voice of God is a whisper felt within the interior of ourselves. We feel God's voice within our inner authentic selves when we're not distracted by worrying if anyone is watching.

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.

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Michael J. Formica. Reviewed by Ekua Hagan. "Why We Care About What Other People Think of Us." Psychology Today, Posted December 31, 2014. © 2014 Michael J. Formica, All Rights Reserved. Retrieved from: link







