



The Pastor's Flame

A Pastoral Message from Rev. Natalie Gray

Dear Asbury Family,

First, I want to take a moment to express heartfelt gratitude to someone who helped make this dream a reality. For quite some time, I have envisioned a church newsletter that would help keep our congregation informed, encouraged, connected, and inspired in our walk with Christ. Today, that vision becomes a reality because of the hard work, dedication, creativity, and servants heart of our church administrative assistant, Vickey Baxley. Creating this newsletter took hours of planning, organizing, editing, designing, and attention to detail. Please join me in thanking our administrative assistant for turning this pastors dream into reality. Thank you, Vickey, and congratulations Asbury staff, and church family on the launch of the very first edition of The Asbury Flame!

Welcome to the very first edition of The Asbury Flame! You might wonder why we are launching a new monthly newsletter, and why we chose this specific name. Our goal is simple: to strengthen our connection as a church family. In a busy world, this newsletter will keep us united in prayer, informed of Gods work among us, and aligned in our shared mission. The name The Asbury Flame is deeply rooted in Holy Scripture. Throughout the Bible, fire is a powerful symbol of God's holy presence, His divine guidance, and the movement of the Holy Spirit. We remember God speaking to Moses from the burning bush, and the pillar of fire that guided the Israelites through the dark wilderness. Most importantly, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended as tongues of fire, igniting the very first Christian church. By calling this newsletter The Asbury Flame, we pray that the Holy Spirit will fan the flames of faith in our own hearts, making our congregation a bright, warming light for our entire community. Special thank you to Vickey for creating this template and logo for us, and her creativity in seeing one of my hopes for Asbury come true. August is a beautiful season for this spark of new life. While the warmth of summer still lingers, the horizon is bright with new beginnings. In just a few short weeks, our hallways will echo with laughter as our Preschool opens its doors, and our community's students, teachers, and administrators, will head back to school. We surround them all with our prayers for wisdom and safety. As we navigate these busy weeks of shifting schedules, I encourage you to anchor your hearts in our current Sunday sermon series, The Parables of the Kingdom. Jesus' stories teach us that the kingdom of God starts small—like a tiny mustard seed or a hidden spark—but grows into something magnificent. The significance of our newsletters name reminds me of a beautiful story behind one of the most beloved hymns in the United Methodist Hymnal, "Pass It On". Written in 1969 by composer Kurt Kaiser, the hymn opens with the famous line, "It only takes a spark to get a fire going, and soon all those around can warm up in its glowing." Kaiser later shared that he wrote those words on a quiet Sunday evening while sitting by the fireplace in his den. As he watched the small, dying remnants of the fire, a single spark suddenly caught, grew, and filled the entire room with warmth and light. At that moment, he realized that this is exactly how Gods love works. It starts as a tiny, quiet spark in one persons heart, but when it is shared, it has the power to warm an entire community. Kaiser originally wrote the song to help young people find their place in the church and express their faith. Decades later, that simple "spark" has circled the globe, comforting and inspiring millions of believers May the light of Christ guide your steps this month, and may His Spirit burn brightly in our midst.

Grace and Peace, Pastor Natalie Gray

As our students, teachers, staff, and preschool families return to the classroom we will have our Blessing of the Backpacks on Sunday August 9 during worship, please join me in praying this blessing over them:

Heavenly Father, We thank You for the gift of new beginnings. As a new school year starts, we lift up our students, teachers, administrators, and our precious preschool ministry. Grant them minds that are ready to learn, hearts that are quick to show kindness, and spirits that feel Your protective presence every day. Protect them in their classrooms, on their travels, and in their sports and activities. Give our educators wisdom, endless patience, and joy in their calling. May our students shine brightly as lights of Your love in their schools. We place this school year into Your hands, trusting in Your faithful care. Amen.





Did you know???

Studies have shown that when people sing, endorphins and oxytocin are released by the brain which in turn lowers stress and anxiety levels! Also, immediately after singing, studies have shown that singers had higher levels of the protein Immunoglobulin A, an antibody known to benefit the immune system!

What this means for you... Joining the Asbury choir, or even just volunteering for a few Sundays, is good for your health! For the month of August we will meet on Wednesday nights at 6:00 pm and Sunday mornings at 9:30, but feel free to sing with us any time. Talk to Kathryn or any choir member if you'd like to give it a try!

Hymn Spotlight: "Shall We Gather at the River", *submitted by Kathryn Rulapaugh*

In the summer of 1864, in the midst of the civil war, Brooklyn, New York, was plagued by severe heat and disease. As the pastor of Hanson Place Baptist Church, Dr. Robert Lowry was weary and deeply saddened by the loss of loved ones among his parishioners. He wrote the hymn "Shall We Gather at the River", in July 1864 while dealing with the grief and anxiety of the Civil War.

Inspired by the river of life in Revelation 22:1, he created the comforting song to reassure his congregation of a heavenly reunion. As he sat at his parlor organ, he began to ask himself a pressing question of Christian faith: "Shall we meet again? We are parting at the river of death; shall we meet at the river of life?"

Out of this question emerged the famous chorus, structured as both an inquiry and an answer: "Yes, we'll gather at the river, / The beautiful, the beautiful river; / Gather with the saints at the river / That flows by the throne of God". Lyrics and music seemed to flow to him simultaneously as if by divine inspiration. He later published the hymn in 1865, and its comforting theme cemented its place in camp meetings, baptisms, and memorials.



Music is the Prayer, the Heart Sings

Young at Heart Day Trips – More Than Just a Bus Ride!



One of the greatest blessings of church life is spending time together, and our Young at Heart day trips are a wonderful way to do just that! Throughout the year, we plan a variety of fun and meaningful day trips to places of interest, local attractions, restaurants, seasonal events, and other exciting destinations. Whether you've attended every trip or are thinking about joining us for the first time, we would love to have you come along. These outings are about much more than simply seeing new places.

They are opportunities to:

- Build lasting friendships within our church family.
- Encourage one another through conversation and laughter.
- Welcome new faces and help everyone feel connected.
- Enjoy God's creation and the many blessings He has given us.
- Create memories that strengthen our church community.

You don't have to travel far to experience joy and fellowship. Sometimes the best part of the day is the conversation shared on the ride there, the meal around the table, or the laughter on the way home. Watch upcoming bulletins, newsletters, Facebook posts, and church announcements for details on our scheduled trips. Invite a friend, neighbor, or family member to come along—everyone is welcome!

August 24 - We are going to Tiger World leaving church at 9AM. There are still spots left. Call or come by the office to sign up. Cost is \$10 and you will need money for lunch. Come Explore God's Amazing Creation! Join the Young at Heart group for an exciting day trip to Tiger World, Rockwell, NC- where we'll experience the beauty, diversity, and wonder of some of God's most incredible creatures. From majestic tigers and playful primates to fascinating birds and other wildlife, we'll have the opportunity to marvel at the handiwork of our Creator. This trip is about more than seeing animals—it's an opportunity to enjoy Christian fellowship, build friendships, share laughter, and appreciate the wonders of God's creation together. Whether you're coming for the animals, the fellowship, or simply a fun day away, we hope you'll join us!

UPCOMING TRIPS THAT STILL HAVE SPACE:

Thursday September 17- Reynolda House & Village

Thursday October 22- Smoky Mountain Railroad trip is FULL.

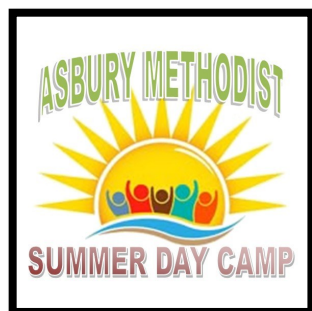
Wednesday November 18- Fruitcake Factory and lunch.

Thursday December 17- Christmas at the Billy Graham Library



Hello from Ann! Hope you are having a great summer. It won't be long till we will start **BACK TO PRESCHOOL**. As of right now there are 52 children currently enrolled. There are a few spots open for our 3 and 4 year old classes in the 3 day program. We will have orientation in August which will allow our preschoolers and their parents to meet their teachers. Our first day of school is August 31st

I'm looking forward to this new school year!



Son-Shine & Summer Fun!

Our summer camp started off a bit rocky with the local drought and the sudden closure of the Lincolnton pool—but let me tell you about God! He already knew what we would need and perfectly provided a game room for us. God truly blessed us before we even realized how big of a blessing it would be, and the kids have been enjoying it!

We have 17 wonderful campers this year. Excitingly, many of them have been asking deep questions about salvation, and they are even going home to talk to their parents about what they are learning during devotions.

Beyond our regular days, we have had a blast visiting different splash pads, going skating, bowling, attending local shows and cooling down with delicious Pelican's Snoballs!

We have also enjoyed fantastic activities right here at the church, including a special class on Christian symbols led by Pastor Natalie, accompanied by Janice on the piano. Vacation Bible School was a big success as well; the kids simply didn't want it to end! Another highlight was our wonderful time of fellowship with the methodist men doing our hot dog luncheon.

Operating this summer day camp is a true blessing to our community, our campers, and our staff. Thank you all so much for making this ministry possible, and for your vital part in sharing how great our God is through your time, love, and support!



After a short break in July, Paint and Praise will be back in August! Our August theme is "catching up." We will have canvases from previous paint and praise events available if you missed one or wanted to do two of the pictures from one of the previous months. Join us on August 18th at 6:00 pm for fun and fellowship!

Save the Date! Sunday, November 8 at 5:30 pm: **Operation Christmas Child Shoebox Packing Party!**



Thrivent Financial has approved \$250 seed money for this event, but in today's economy we will need your help. Begin looking for bargains to include in our boxes. This month is a great time to purchase school supplies such as pencils, sharpeners, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, etc. For August focus on personal care items such as toothbrushes (no toothpaste or soap), combs, nail clippers and files, etc. Look for sales on small toys such as balls, yo-yo, toy cars, small stuffed animals, etc. There will be baskets at each side entrance for your on-going contributions. Hope you will be part of this exciting event!

Together Let's Keep the Flame of Faith Buring Bright!



Spark of the Month

At Asbury Methodist Church, ministry happens because faithful people answer God's call to serve. Some serve from the pulpit, some teach classes, serve in office administration, some serve behind the scenes, and others quietly keep the ministries of our church moving forward each day. Each month, The Asbury Flame will recognize a staff member or volunteer or group who has gone above and beyond in service to Christ and His church. We call this recognition "Spark of the Month" because just as a small spark can ignite a great flame, faithful acts of service help keep the fire of ministry burning brightly at Asbury.

We are going to start with our staff introductions and bios and then lead on into other members and ministries of our congregation. This month's Spark of the Month is Vickey Baxley, Asbury's Financial Administrative Assistant.

Hi to all. Meet me, Vickey, and my two sons, Chris (bearded one), Jarod (the other guy, lol). Jarod is married to McKayla my beautiful daughter in law! All three of these "babies" have been or are in the military! Jarod and McKayla live in Colorado Springs for now (pretty sure grand babies are in my future) and Chris lives in Denver NC (he has provided a 100 lb. grand dog named Blu! He and I have a small pet service called "Fuzzy Faces". I do the in-home overnight stays and he helps me make sure the drop in walk and feeds are handled.



I like to find the creative side of myself whenever possible and dabble in photography, cardmaking, and of late a little painting. I love to see the beauty in the every day things that sometimes we take for granted. I love people and their stories, movies (favorite to date: "Time Travelers Wife"), books (favorite to date: Elenor Oliphant is Perfectly Fine"), slow bluesy jazz, and boat rides on the water! Bucket list International Trip is Italy! Bucket List Trip US is Maine! Favorite Food: Vanilla Soft Serve Ice Cream. (Sounds like a singles add—By the way, I'm single—LOL!)

You may not know I can, on occasion, sing. My very 1st job (other than baby sitting) was a Children's Music Director, Protestant Chapel Hickam AFB, Honolulu Hawaii. My favorite worship song is an oldie, "In the Presence of Jehovah", and my favorite passage in the Bible is the name announcement of "El Roi", the God who sees! That is why my heart's desire is to have a "Ministry of Presence" to whoever God puts in my path, so they can know, He sees you and YOU MATTER! Guess what! Asbury is in my path and it is my joy to serve you and be part of your lives! Thank you so much!

Thank you, Vickey, for your dedication, servant leadership, and commitment to helping Asbury Methodist Church fulfill its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ.
 "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." — Matthew 5:16

"IT ONLY TAKES A SPARK TO GET A FIRE GOING AND SOON ALL THOSE AROUND WILL WARM UP IN IT'S GLOWING"

UPCOMING EVENTS

AUGUST

- Sat 8/1/2026 9:00 AM - 2:30 PM—Shopping Day @ ARC
- Sun 8/2/2026—Blessings of the Backpack—Morning Worship
- Wed 8/5/2026 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM Choir Practice—Please note Change of Day
Choir Practice will now be WEDNESDAYS @ 6:00PM
- Sun 8/9/2026 11:00 AM 11:30 AM—Blessing of the Backpacks
- Tue 8/11/2026 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM—Leadership Team Mtg.
- Wed 8/12/2026 9:00 AM - 2:30 PM—Shopping Day @ ARC
- Thu 8/13/2026 8:30 AM - 9:30 AM—Methodist Men Mtg.
- Tue 8/18/2026 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM—Paint N Praise
- Fri 8/21/2026—Newsletter Info Must be In
- Mon 8/24/2026 (All day) - YAH - Trip to Tiger World
- Mon 8/24/2026 10:00am—11:00AM—Crafty Ladies
- Wed 8/26/2026 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM - Preschool Orientation
- Mon 8/31/2026 - 1st Day of Preschool

SEPTEMBER

- Scout BBQ Fundraiser - Sat 9/12/2026
- Youth/Children Family Day - Bowling - Sat 9/12/2026 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM
- Host North Lincoln High School Football Team - Fri 9/18/2026 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM
- Game Night – BINGO - Sat 9/19/2026 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM
- Card Making Class - Gifts for our Shut Ins! - Tue 9/22/2026 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM
- Thursday, September 24, 2026 - YAH - Reynolda House Trip

OCTOBER

- Youth/Children Family Night - Corn Maze – Sat 10/17/2026 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
- Homecoming w/Covered Dish Luncheon - Sun 10/18/2026
- YAH Smoking Mtn. RR Trip - Thu 10/22/2026
- Trunk N Treat w/Hotdog Meal - Sat 10/31/2026

Birthdays

Woodward, Michelle 8-1
Hudspeth, Robbie 8-7
Hull, Janice 8-11
Chance, Don 8-13
Freeman, Nancy 8-15
Setzer, Danny 8-19
Bailey, Judy 8-20
Christopher, Jeannie 8-20
Smith, Eddie 8-21
Vaughn, David 8-21
Bodman, Sue 8-23
Dellinger, Jean 8-27
Davis, Rhonda 8-28
Salzman, Ryne 8-29
Abernathy, Diane 8-30
Wise, Howard 8-31

WORSHIP WITH US SUNDAYS @ 11AM

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Kindled by Grace. Connected in Faith. Sent to Serve.