

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Loose Threads (Holding together during panic)

All norms are now abnormal when it comes to worship. No greeters standing at the door. At least not physically. Hmm? Should we have greeters for a webinar? Greeters for the Facebook live portion? Someone to say, "Hi. Welcome. My name is ..." when folks join the session?



There are not many folks around that were even born during the Great

Depression that ended in 1933. But plenty has heard the stories about rationing critical supplies. This crisis is totally different. But I suspect a lot of the feelings are similar. A soup combined of portions of panic, despair, optimism, denial and more, all stirred up and served throughout the day and night. A 24x7 buffet of emotions waiting to spill out.

This week we come to the end of Part II of our series, *Woven*. I'm more anxious than ever to get to the end. But I'm not expecting Easter to be normal. It may feel a bit awkward talking about all is right in the

the world, if it is not. Even if the numbers of new cases are trending down, and medical personnel is getting some much-deserved rest, the after-shock will still be all around us. Will we actually feel woven? Will we feel at least somewhat normal?

Last week I speculated that many of us are feeling like the world around us is unraveling. And some of us treat the symptoms of unraveling with distractions. But all of us, when our activity stops long enough for us to reflect, we can feel the threads of who we think we are, begin to fall away. And we soon

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Volume 20 Issue 5

April 5, 2020

Special points of interest:

*** [All meetings have been cancelled until further notice.](#)

*** [A note from Connie on page 10 ...](#)

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Holy Water (Woven by water and spirit)

What makes water holy? Some believe that words from an ancient ritual in preparation for baptism said by clergy cause water to be holy. Some say that water is holy when it is infused with God's Spirit. When I wash my hands several times each day to avoid spreading or catching the virus, I am grateful that I

have such easy access to water. Water is saving lives every day. Does saving lives make water holy?



Poet Joel McKerrow, in his book, *Woven*, writes about a holy experience he had in the Murrindindi River, that runs through the backcountry of Victoria, Australia. Joel traveled there sometime after a fire had reduced the entire valley to black ash. McKerrow writes:

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Holy Water (Woven by water and spirit) ...cont from page 1

I floated in her waters and she told me of the day the fires came. She spoke of how she had been here through it all. As the smoke drifted in on the wind. As the flames crept over the edge of the valley. As the trees raged with fire. As the world around was scorched and burnt and left for dead. She was here in the barren ash of a world that was no more. She carried life deep in her bosom in this place that had been so stripped bare. In her the pain of the earth met its re-birth.¹

On his way to the river, which was not much more than a creek at the time, Joel noticed signs of new life. Green plants rising up out of the ashes. Allowing the waters to rush over his body, the ash he collected on his way to the river was washed away.

depths of your soul. Listen to the promise of renewal. Listen to the birthing pangs of creation, giving birth to new life within you. Listen to the Holy water that touched your skin and your innermost being at your baptism.

McKerrow claims that the river spoke to him that day. Assuring him not just that life would soon return to this valley of ashes, but also to him. The river promised Joel that, like the valley of ashes, the barrenness that he felt would soon be replaced by an assuredness that God is also present in the fire. And that God's Spirit is present in the water.

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Listen. Listen to the voice of the Spirit. Allow the Holy water to find its way into the

Loose Threads (Holding together during panic)...cont. from page 1

feel naked and vulnerable with nothing to shield us from the eyes of God. We unravel.

This time between the parties of Mardi Gras and Easter holds special meaning in the traditions of the Christian church. It is a time of deep reflection. It is a time of unraveling spiritually. A time when we can feel the collision of all is well with the reality of all is not well. We sometimes can sense that death is immi-

nent even as life calls us to keep moving.

But let's not rush to the end and miss out on experiencing the journey.

In one of my favorite stories found in the Gospel of John, we again can observe a variety of responses to divine intervention. The story begins as an example of healing but quickly expands to shed light on the full range of human reactions.

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In our Prayers

Curtis Young	Miriam Watson
Rachel Bastine	Shirley Craig
Norma Buzzard	Christopher Lewis
Mary Lyons	Sarah Tanner
Barbara McIvor	Elizabeth Wright
Austin & Mary Suffle	Judy Tanner

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Elaine Lamoreaux
Mary Nations

Coming up this week

- April 6 Mon
- April 7 Tues 10am-2pm Water Distribution
- April 8 Wed **No Pastor Book Club Until further notice**
- April 9 Thu
- April 10 Fri
- April 11 Sat
- April 12 Sun



JOIN WORSHIP ONLINE
SUNDAY, APRIL 5TH, 10:30 AM

FACEBOOK LIVE ([FLINT ASBURY](#))

OR

WEBINAR



JOIN BY PHONE

+1 929 436 2866

MEETING ID: 324 841 204

JOIN ONLINE

[HTTPS://ZOOM.US/J/324841204](https://zoom.us/j/324841204)

Asbury Worship Series Woven

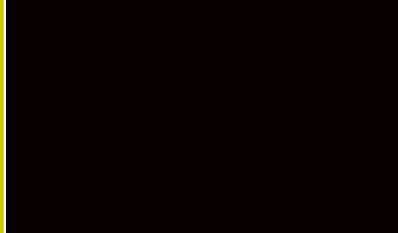
The Season of Lent, which begins February 26, is seven weeks long. Including the partial week that starts on a Wednesday, we count forty days until Easter. That is when we don't count Sundays.

These forty days are symbolic of the time that Jesus spent in the wilder-

ness following His baptism. We believe that this time is steeped in Holy mystery. But our traditions can reduce the Holy Mystery that we claim for it when viewed by those just outside the fence that separates traditional believers from everyone else.

We design worship at Asbury, based on what little we know about the people that God plans to send to worship with us. This goal leads us to set aside our customary language.

Instead of "Lent," we choose Easter preparations or some other phrase using more familiar words. Words that are more secular because they have multiple meanings in everyday use.



Wall Street, Seung Hoon Park Susan Spiritus Gallery 2

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Book Club News

We decided to suspend our study of our latest book, *God and the Gay Christian*, by Matthew Vines. This book is too important to exclude members of our group that have been unable to join our online discussion.



Meanwhile, with so much talk going around about the virus as a sign of the end-times, our group chose to study the Book of Revelations. Last week, several of us got

online using Zoom to begin our discussions. This coming Wednesday, and until further notice, we will continue our discussions, a few chapters at a time.

While we still won't know whether there is a connection between the COVID-19 pandemic and John's dream revelation, we are certain to be a bit more knowledgeable about what is found in this mysterious, apocalyptic book.

Written somewhere near the end of the first century, the Book of Revelations was written during a time of persecution of Christians. The Roman Empire, led by Domitian, incarcerated, exiled, or executed persons unwilling to declare the Roman ruler as god. Jews and

Christians living within the boundaries of the empire knew better.

One of the many things about Revelations that makes it such a mysterious book is that the language uses symbols and codes, instead of naming people, places, and nations directly. As readers, we are left to marvel at the poetry, speculate on the imagery, and hypothesize on the meaning for the present time.

I encourage you to join us online for our Wednesday gatherings. We chose not to go on Facebook live since this is intended to be an interactive discussion. You can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others are saying by calling (929) 436-2866, and entering the meeting ID, 482458815#.

We are a diverse group and we are delighted when new persons join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion. We usually meet each Wednesday at Noon, but during the COVID-19 crisis we are meeting online at 12:30 pm.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — FlintAsbury.org.

Leadership in Worship & Service

Welcome Team	Tony, Mirium
Ushers	Anthony, Jim
Production Team	Jonathon, Terrance
Children	Patrice & Mirium
Worship Leaders	Cyndi
Café	Christine & Norma

Jim Craig	Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Dir. Operations
Blair Neifert	Farm Manager
Matt Dee	Farm Operations
Israel Unger	Function to Funding
Kim Sims	Connections

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
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts

Woven ...Cont. from page 4

Woven, is what we call our worship series that begins on March 1. The first month that we associate with Spring. And our series concludes on Easter Sunday.

For this next series, we reference a book, titled *Woven*, as a thematic outline.¹ *Woven* is about a spiritual awakening. The writer identifies three modes, phases, stages, or otherwise, poetic labels for his spiritual journey. The invitation is for us to determine how his journey relates to our own. And to be changed. He identifies these segmentations as sculpted, unraveled, and woven.

These milestones or places can be thought of as phases. The first place is our starting point. The place where our journey begins. We start here in our series by first celebrating together in the spirit of *Mardi Gras*. Fat Tuesday. We dance to the music, only partially aware that in doing so, our bodies are moving. One of the five critical foundations prescribed by the Daniel Plan. Some of us will indulge in a *paczki*, or two. After all, it is a party.

The next day is Ash Wednesday. This year we join with our friends in Flushing as we kick off the Season of Lent with worship. We haven't left home. We are still our sculpted selves. We still live within both visible and invisible fences that keep us safely separated from the other. And in some frightening ways, separated from God.

The first day of March. The month of Spring. We begin our process of unraveling by first meeting ourselves. We meet ourselves from a distance. As though we are strangers who encounter ourselves for the first time. Who are we? Am I meeting the person I expected to meet? We begin with the community that shaped our views. How we see the world.

By March 15, we hope to transition from the safety of our fenced-in world to a place where our sculpted self crumbles. We are in the wilderness with Jesus. We see, hear, and experience ideas that seem foreign to us. We try to imagine life outside the fence. We meet our unraveled self along the path we walk.

By the first Sunday in April, our attention turns towards new possibilities. Can we imagine resurrection? The place we are headed towards becomes more visible. We find a new weave by taking the deconstructed strands of our past beliefs and discover a new way of being and doing. A place where the inside and outside come together. We meet our woven selves.

I pray that you will plan to journey with us.

Here is the plan for March and the first two Sundays in April.

***Fat Tuesday Celebration - February 25, 2020***

Sometimes we just have to be bad to remind us that being bad is not worth it. Join us for a *paczki* and music at 6 pm in the Asbury Event Center in the lower level. While your here be sure to sign up for Daniel Plan 2.0 and take home a personal journal to help guide you through the Season of Lent.

Ash Wednesday - February 26, 2020

Treat your *paczki* hang-over with a worship service to kick-off your participation in *Life raft*. We join with other communities at Flushing UMC for a worship service at 7 pm.

March 1 & 8, 2020***Sculpted******March 15, 22 & 29, 2020******Unraveled******April 5 & 12, 2020******Woven***

Pastor Tommy

¹ Joel McKerrow, *Woven - a faith for the dissatisfied*. Sydney, Australia: Acom Press, 2019.

² Seung Hoon Park, an artist from Seoul, S. Korea, is creating the most unusual images with the use of an 8×10" camera and threading the film to mimic the look of woven textiles. He uses both 8mm and 16mm films to create his work, each with a different outcome.

Once upon a time, there was a blind man who was born blind. When Jesus and His followers encountered the man, one of Jesus' followers asked whether the man's blindness was punishment for something he or his parents had done wrong.

Teacher, whose sin caused him to be born blind? Was it his own or his parents' sin?

This is a very human response, isn't it? How many of us wonder whether this pandemic is punishment for something that someone did wrong. Several folks have asked me if this pandemic is a sign of the end? Is punishment just around the corner?

Our responses are, for the most part, insights into the beliefs that shaped us. The tone of the follower's question made it clear that the sculpting of the questioner was that bad things happen when we are inadequate. That there is a cause and effect when it comes to getting what we deserve. If the man was born blind, perhaps his parents did something to make God angry.

You will be happy to know that Jesus rejected this argument. The man's blindness was neither the result of something he did wrong nor was his blindness punishment for something his parents did. But His response is also puzzling. Jesus explains that the man's blindness provides an opportunity for the healing power of God to be seen. The blind man is healed with spit and mud.

This story clearly is not a promise that everyone who is physically blind will gain physical sight. Nor does it contain a recipe for curing physical blindness. But there is a lot of great news for all of us at this time. And an opportunity for us to unravel a bit further by reflecting where we fit into this story.

The story continues with a cast of characters representing varieties of sculpting. There are the antagonists of Jesus who want to protect their positions. The parents who distance themselves from what has happened. The crowds who aren't sure what to believe. And the formerly blind man caught in the middle.

One thing I do know: I was blind and now I see.

But the story ends with a message of woven-ness. I was blind, and now I see. Simple and straightforward. The understanding of the formerly blind man that his blindness would persist unravels. And the result is light instead of darkness. Unraveling is worth the journey.

For those who can stay home and catch up on a few spiritual activities, what a great opportunity to reflect and grow in your faith. For those of us whom God has put us in places where we are at risk, we need to know that God is at work alongside us and stay tuned to God's voice, who is letting us know when danger is close by.

For all of us, it is healthy to shed, to let go, of those threads of our identity that keep us from experiencing God's grace and power. This is an excellent opportunity to unravel gracefully.

A reminder that we publish a weekly newsletter called the *Circuit Rider*. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to info@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](#).

I invite you to join us for Sunday worship through [Facebook](#) live at 10:30 am. As more options become available, we will keep you informed. You can find more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).

Pastor Tommy

THE **D**+ANIEL PLAN

GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR YOUR HEALTH

SIGN UP ...YOU WILL BE GLAD YOU DID! Why the Daniel Plan is so important ...

I have never met Pastor Steve Willis. But there is something that he said that is haunting me. And I hope that it will haunt you too. Pastor Steve's call to action is powerful, timely, and the shoe surely fits our community. We were poisoned by our public water system. But we can recover. Our children can recover. But the problem, at this point, is not someone else's problem. It is our problem. We have the solution and Pastor Steve's challenge is a call to step up and do something about our health.

The fight for good nutrition was never more real to me than when I watched my kindergarten-aged son struggle with adapting to his physician-prescribed, mind-altering drugs. Lucas had been having discipline problems in school, would frequently struggle with the ability to focus on tasks at hand, and found himself well below grade level in many academic areas...This is more than a health issue; it is a social justice issue. Millions of our children are not reaching their God-given potential because we, as adults, won't take the steps necessary to get them the nutrition they need. For the church, this problem has to be seen as a moral issue. For the sake of our children and our nation's future, we have to do better.¹

I agree. We have to do better. Teachers, healthcare professionals, counselors, clergy, and others are anticipating the first part of Pastor Steve's story to be a common story. Children with higher concentrations of lead in their bodies are prone to exhibiting behaviors that are not conducive to learning, including lower cognition. The only known solution is available to us. But not in a drive-through or at a liquor store.

But how is a community that sits in the middle of one of the least healthy counties in Michigan going to be able to regroup and move forward with the necessary changes to help ourselves and our children?

First, we are going to admit that we are incapable. We are going to stop making excuses for ourselves. We are going to quit pointing to some other power, whether it is the force, the ineffective excuse, "I'm spiritual, but I don't go to church" and the hundreds of other absurd claims that I hear every year as to why I don't see people on Sunday mornings. We are going to repent — that is, we are going to change. Our lives matter. Our children's lives matter.

The Daniel Plan
Faith, Friends, Fitness, Food and Focus

I found myself making a declaration this past week that I have declared before. I wrote and said that responding to God's will for our lives is a human right. And as a human right, we need to treat this right in the same way that we protect other human rights. But it is very difficult to respond to God's purpose for us when our health is less than it needs to be. The Daniel Plan is not the solution on its own, but it is a roadmap that points to and can help us pursue the solution. But the solution begins with God. Without God's power any plan is a non-starter.

By the way, Pastor Steve's son, Lucas, soon was off the drugs and today he is an A student. This story is not a one-of-a-kind, never to be repeated miracle. It is the sort of miracle that God offers every one of us. It is the miracle of making better choices. It is the miracle of taking care of ourselves and each other.

We will begin on Sunday, December 29, by writing down a resolution for 2020. For most of us, our resolution will begin in the same way. "In 2020 I will make my health and well-being a priority by participating in the Daniel Plan." And then we will write down a goal for each of the five areas: faith, food, friends, fitness, and focus. During the first five weeks of 2020, we will learn about each of the pillars of success, possibly modify our goals, and meet regularly with others who have made this same New Year's Resolution.

Make a New Year's Resolution for 2020 to commit to The Daniel Plan.

Join us each Sunday and invite your friends and neighbors. I lead a short Bible study in the Asbury Café at 9:30 am. *Dusty 2.0*, the musical, will be performed on Christmas Eve at 6 pm. We are praying for a big turnout, and that most of our visitors will return to participate in the Daniel Plan.

Pastor Tommy

¹ Warren, Rick. *The Daniel Plan*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan;

Life Group Questions & Notes

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he came up out of the water. Then heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and lighting on him.

Matthew 3:16 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Matthew 3:13-17. Do you remember your baptism? Do you remember the baptism of someone else? What are some of the emotions that you felt as you observed a baptism or that you felt if you can remember your own?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Holy water*. What are some of the emotions that you are feeling during this time? Are you feeling panic, worry, fear, doubt, isolated, alone, or other emotions? What are you learning about yourself during this time? What makes water Holy for you?
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.

This is the living water that Jesus spoke about to the woman at the well in Sychar. This is the Holy water that Jesus spat upon the ground to make mud and heal the man blind since birth. This is the water that the good neighbor shared with the man left beaten to die alone. This is the water that God sang into existence at the beginning of creation.

This is water that washes away a virus. This is the water that washes away the ashes from the fire. This is the water that washes away sin, and regret, and shame. This is Holy water.

Listen to the Holy Water that touched your skin and your innermost being at your baptism.

This Sunday, we begin Part three of our series, *Woven*. After three weeks of unraveling from our sculpted selves, we consider what happens when we are woven. When we realize that holiness is also found in the mundane. Holiness is found in the chaotic and in the ordered. It is found in the changing of diapers, and in the goodbyes.

This Sunday, we won't be together in the same building, waving palm branches in celebration of the time when Jesus rode a donkey into the city to confront injustice and oppression. Nor can I say ancient words over a water container in the anticipation that God will bless the water that we sprinkle on the head of the newly baptized. But we will be together

online. This is us who choose to do so.

But before you click on the link that takes you to our webinar. Before you join our live broadcast on Facebook. Before you pick up your phone to call the number that lets you listen in when you don't have internet or smartphone. Grab some water.

Grab a bottle of water, a glass of water, or a bowl of water. An old mason jar may help connect you to whoever left it for you. You don't need a lot of water. Just enough to feel it on your skin.

This Sunday, we celebrate baptism. We celebrate that God makes water Holy. We celebrate that God washes away all the dirt and ashes and virus that infects us. The water you choose, whether it is full of nutrients or void of all but hydrogen and oxygen molecules that make it water. It is Holy because God is with us.

If you have never been baptized, I hope that you will plan to join us after this stay-at-home order is rescinded, and it is safe for us to be together in person. If possible, your baptism should be among friends who can hug you after your experience.

For now, imagine the water you feel with your fingers is the same water that flows in the river in Australia, that ushered in a new life after the fire. Imagine that the water you lift up with our fingers is the same water this Jesus felt in the Jordan River. The water that John the Baptizer shared with Jesus as he did the unthinkable. He dared to baptize the Son of God. And the water was Holy. And the moment was Holy.

I invite you to join us this Sunday. We plan to be live via [webinar](#), through [Facebook](#) live, or you can call (929) 436-2866 and enter the meeting number — 324 841 204. We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).

As soon as Jesus was baptized he came up out of the water. Then heaven was opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and lighting on him.

Matthew 3:16

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Pastor Tommy

Recommended books and citations

¹ McKerrow, Joel. *Woven: A Faith for the Dissatisfied*. Sydney, Australia: Acorn Press, 2019.

Welcome to the Asbury Community

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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.

A note from Connie ...

Hope everyone is staying safe and only going out when absolutely have to. I will be stopping in the office here and there during the week to check messages and emails, but will be in on Fridays, should you need to call me for anything.

if anyone has any questions, please send us an email or call the church office 235-0016, but PLEASE don't come out or stop in the office if you don't have to. You are only jeopardizing yourself and others.

STAY AT HOME!! And EVERYONE BE SAFE!!