

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER



Fake News (The Woven Eternal Truth)

Planning for Easter Sunday this year is a lot different. Like plans for celebrating birthdays and other milestone events, in-person gatherings are a terrible idea. I suspect a lot of pastors worry that Easter may come and go unnoticed.



I struggled in my articulation of this week's message. I struggled with writing down the connection that I'm feeling between that first Easter morning and this coming Easter morning. But when I read the gospel story, I hear

echoes of daily news stories captured in the story of that first Easter.

We all know the story. But like all stories, there are the stories behind the headlines. And in the case of the first Easter, the caption, EMPTY TOMB, isn't the whole story. As miraculous as this story is, headlines fade away. But some stories change the course of history. Like the story, you and I are living right now.

Two Thousand years ago, we didn't have the NY Times or CNN, and we didn't have iPhones to record the action as it happened. Lies and cover-ups about what really happened may have ruled the day, were it not for a handful of faithful, ordinary people. Witnesses willing to share what they knew to be true. Those protecting

their interest, who were responsible for Jesus' death, saw the truth differently. So did their co-conspirators.

After the execution of Jesus, the local authorities went to the person in charge of ruling Palestine to convince him that a conspiracy was underway. The chief priests and the Pharisees met with Pilate. They said, "Sir, we remember that while that liar was still alive, he said, 'I will be raised to life three days later.' Give orders to guard his tomb until the third day. So that his disciples will not be able to go and steal the body, and then tell the people that he was raised from death. This last lie would be even worse than the first one" (Matthew 27:62-64).

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Volume 20 Issue 12

April 12, 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

Fake News (The Woven Eternal Truth)....cont. from page 1

Attacking the character of an antagonist is as old as Cain's denial of what happened to his brother Abel. Claiming that a lie is true is a modern-day tactic to try and write the narrative and sway public opinion. Calling any news source that disagrees with what you want to be heard as truth, fake news is today's way of influencing popular opinion away from reality.

Death has a way of uncovering raw truth. As families, hospitals, states, and countries compete for supplies to fight COVID-19, the truth about how the world still works today unfolds in real-time. But if not for dedicated news journalists digging past prepared statements and rhetoric, the story behind the story gets covered up.

a score that reflects the distribution of income. The score uses fractions on a scale of zero to one, where zero means that everyone earns exactly the same income. A score of one means the wealthiest person receives all of the income. The Gini Coefficient for the United States is higher than nearly all other countries.

The vast separation between access to resources by people of privilege and the lack of access by people that are not privileged is enormous. The primary way of evaluating income inequality is called the Gini Coefficient. This measure calculates

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I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has been raised, just as he said.

Matthew 28: 5-6



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 13 Mon
- April 14 Tues 10am-2pm Water / Food Distribution
- April 15 Wed **No Pastor Book Club Until further notice**
- April 16 Thu
- April 17 Fri
- April 18 Sat
- April 19 Sun



JOIN WORSHIP ONLINE

SUNDAY, APRIL 12TH, 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
Risen (Coming April 19th)**

Easter is over. I can usually tell by the clearance sales on Easter candy the Monday after. Was there Easter candy on the shelves this year? My avoidance of shopping during the pandemic kept me from impulse buying Easter candy. A small blessing in the midst of so much bad news.

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 Revela-



Governor Whitmer announced in an online town hall meeting, the formation of a task force that will guide emergency response and influence future policy. The justifi-

tions. 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 hypothesis on the meaning for the present time.

The headline for an article in the New York Times reads: *As Coronavirus Deepens Inequality, Inequality Worsens Its Spread*¹.

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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.

Pastor Tommy

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

Risen (Coming April 19th ...Cont. from page 4

The article argued that the spread of the coronavirus brought to light the connection between severity of impact and economic inequity. And the reality is that those of us nearer the bottom of the economic ladder are more likely to catch the disease, and also likelier to die from it.

And those who manage to remain healthy are likelier to suffer loss of income or healthy care as a result of quarantines and other measures. But the bad news spills over economic boundaries. Past research on influenza found that in an epidemic, poverty and inequality can exacerbate rates of transmission and mortality for everyone.

Our reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic certainly sheds light on the diversity of human nature. Our fall back labels, characterizations, presumptions, and the like, shatter under such stress. Instead, those characteristics which determine heroism and effective leadership become clearer. Rhetoric gets exposed for just what it is—thin layers of misrepresentation of facts.

Cowardliness and incompetence also share the spotlight. Along with years of allowing greed to determine policy. The competition for supplies is exposing systemic inequalities all over the world. Families, cities, states, hospitals, and countries are competing for life saving supplies. Money and influence uses power to competitive advantage. We all lose.

In our next series, *Risen*, we dig deeper into the inequalities that the COVID-19 pandemic is uncovering, and challenge ourselves to be among the ordinary, faithful people that keep the truth alive. How do our beliefs translate into actions? What difference can a few, faithful, but ordinary witnesses make?

It appears that most, if not all, of our time on *Risen* will be online. I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30am. 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 10:30am. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

Pastor Tommy

The income and wealth gap between rich and poor is as old as trade itself. And it was a frequent topic for Jesus during His public ministry. Jesus chose to live among the poor and challenge the systemic policies and people that created and perpetuated inequality. And His insistence on justice led to His arrest and execution.

The news that some groups of people can escape the threat of this deadly virus due to privilege is "in your face" evident. So much that even the repetition of carefully worded slogans cannot stop the truth from coming through. Nor can denigrating antagonists by calling them names. The truth will prevail, provided a handful of faithful, ordinary people are willing to share what they know to be true.

Joel McKerrow, in his book *Woven*, shares how his spiritual journey from sculpted to unraveled to woven, helped him to see his own hypocrisy.

¹ His own unraveling began when he realized the hypocrisy buried in his religious beliefs. His re-weaving started when he realized that his privilege blinded him from the raw truth that Jesus stood in the gap between privilege and lack of privilege was deadly.

Last week, our message focused on how our stories are woven together with the larger story of salvation. In this week's message, we focus on how being woven together from pieces of our own stories with a greater story, reveals the truth even amid lies and cover-ups. We know why the tomb was empty. And we know that divine justice gets revealed through our testimony.

Jesus was silenced by people in power with a vested interest in keeping His story from becoming headlines. But the story of Jesus was no ordinary story. If God chose to live among people today, there would be daily news stories tracking every statement. But what if once again God chose to stand in the gap between rich and poor? What if God chose to fight for closing the gap between privilege and the lack of privilege?

What if God chose to bless the frontline workers that help us check out at the grocery store, pick up our trash, or hand us our carryout order? What if God made sure the needs of the healthcare workers were met, making safety equipment out of ordinary materials, and delivering protective masks to friends who had none? What if God spoke out against the abuse of power that sets privilege against poverty?

Jesus was silenced by people in power with a vested interest in keeping His story from becoming headlines.

Would God's story have a similar ending as it did that first Easter? Would our Lord be hauled before the Federal Courts for disloyalty to government and executed for insurrection? And would the powerful try to cover-up the naked truth that God sides with the disenfranchised and opposes the use of wealth to divide us?

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](#).

Next Sunday, April 19, we launch our new series, *Risen*. In this series, we continue to dig deeper into the inequalities that the COVID-19 pandemic is uncovering, and challenge ourselves to be among the ordinary, faithful people that keep the truth alive.

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 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](#).

Pastor Tommy

Recommended books and citations

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

THE DANIEL 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?

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

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.

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.

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

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.

Life Group Questions & Notes

The chief priests met with the elders and made their plan; they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers and said, "You are to say that his disciples came during the night and stole his body while you were asleep."

Matthew 27: 62-28:15 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Matthew 27:62-28:15. Given the plans by the people in power to cover-up the story of why the tomb was empty, how do you suppose the truth story lived on? How did a story known to a rather small number of faithful followers overcome the efforts of the powerful to control the narrative?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, Fake News. Do you see parallels between what happened on the first Easter and what is happening to day during COVID-19 pandemic? What can you do to raise awareness that systemic injustice exposed racial disparities in health care that exists in our state and nation?
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.

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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!!