

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 19

April 19, 2020

Special points of interest:

*** All meetings have been cancelled until further notice.

*** A note from Connie on page 10 ...

Togetherness (Whose side are you on?)

There is a lot of togetherness going on as we all try our best to stay home and stay with whoever is under the same roof. Each day we gain a little more experience with the limitations of FaceTime and online meeting technology.

Meanwhile, political posturing and soundbites continue to pollute the air-

waves, but with some new twists.



I feel blessed that the persons living in the same house as me mostly agree. And that we try to respect each other's viewpoint on the issues that could divide us. But each day brings its own challenges, its own rumors, and a lot of the same as yesterday.

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Togetherness (Whose side are you on?) ...cont from page 1

Pastor Jeremy of Court Street Church plans to carry on a conversation with his faith community about grace. Not the grace that describes how people move, but the grace that causes us to cut some slack, even for people who don't deserve it. As I read his reflections on this topic, I was amazed by the relevance of the subject matter to our new series. Grace is a condition that needs to be on every table for every meal. And in every household.

In fact, grace is an essential ingredient for all human endeavors. Grace is particularly crucial when it comes to determining policy that affects a large number of people. We expect leaders to be superheroes, or at least we hope they can be. But this may be more true if the leader is someone we admire. Yet we all should hope that God extends grace to us.

Jesus has His hands full when it comes to teaching followers a

new way to see other people. On one occasion, John, one of His first followers, was bragging about shutting down a group that was helping others. The problem, according to John, wasn't the good they were doing, but the use of Jesus' name as a source of authority. "He's not one of us," John added.

I'm guessing that John anticipated that Jesus would thank him for his outspokenness. But instead, Jesus told John that what he did was wrong. "Don't try to stop him," Jesus responded, "whoever is not against you is for you." An interesting choice of words with several options for interpretation. This is where the subject of grace is helpful.

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

Grace is not something we earn. It is more like the opposite. We give and receive without merit. Whether the other person clearly deserves the slack, we offer them, or they clearly don't. We extend grace either way. Earning grace is not a part of the conversation. It just comes with the way we respond to the world. And if we aren't sure we want to offer grace, we remember the grace that we receive from God.

We begin our new series this Sunday, *Risen*. And our series is not about grace per se. Our plan is to promote conversations about inequality. Particularly, disparities highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Conversations that can divide us, if grace isn't present at all times. So this Sunday, we begin by talking about grace, and about what it means to work together.

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.

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

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.

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 20 Mon
- April 21 Tues 10am-2pm Water / Food Distribution
- April 22 Wed **No Pastor Book Club Until further notice**
- April 23 Thu
- April 24 Fri
- April 25 Sat
- April 26 Sun



JOIN WORSHIP ONLINE
SUNDAY, APRIL 19TH, 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.

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#.

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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 Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts

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.

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

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 **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

John spoke up, "Master, we saw a man driving out demons in your name, and we told him to stop, because he doesn't belong to our group." "Do not try to stop him," Jesus said to him and to the other disciples, "because whoever is not against you is for you."

Luke 9:49-50 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Luke 9:49-50. What do you take away from this story? Can you see examples in your own life where this story applies? Can you identify with John and understand why he thought that it was a good idea to put an end to what he discovered?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Togetherness*. Where are some areas that you need grace from others? Are there individuals that you need to extend grace to? Are there topics that are coming to your attention as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that you want to talk about? Learn more about?
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.

I have my own political views that come out of my sculpting and experiences. And my sculpting influences how I see the world. The same is true for each of you. Some say that politics shouldn't come into the church. I see their point. But I also realize that politics goes wherever people go. So if I want you all to get involved in church, I can't ask you to leave your politics at the door. Particularly during a time when you aren't coming through a door. A couple of clicks, or dial a number, and you're in church.

And I presume that we are all clinging to whatever helpful news we can find that may help us get through this crisis. And the news about inequities based on race and economics is heart-breaking. On the other hand, the polluted air that usually hangs over Los Angeles is dispersed. A reminder of what is possible for our planet. If we can work together.

Politics go wherever people go...

My hope is that each week we can hear from individuals who took the time to research topics that matter to them. Perhaps policy influencers and people personally affected by inequity. I'm looking for you all to do the recommending and inviting.

We are all in this together, even when we aren't actually together — physically or ideologically. But we can work together making our community and our world a better place. Don't let political posturing keep you from offering and receiving the grace that God offers every one of us. And if the news is causing you heartburn, turn it off for a while.

I invited several persons to respond to a survey on potential topics. A few responded already. If you didn't get your invite please go to [RisenSurvey](#) now and take our survey. This will really help us figure out which topics are important to our participants and who is willing to do and share their research.

For more information this series, *Risen*, see the article, [Coming up in worship](#).



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Pastor Tommy

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 ...

I 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.

We are going into the 3rd week of our stay at home quarantine. Lets continue doing what we been doing so we can all get back to normal.....normal life!

If anyone has any questions, please send us an email at FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com or call the church office 235-0016, and I will follow up with your concerns when in the office.

STAY AT HOME!! and EVERYONE BE SAFE!!