

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Speak (When silence is betrayal)

Emotions are running high across the world. Here in Michigan, life is searching for normality as the number of new cases of COVID-19 reached safer levels. And a couple of weeks ago, our conversations focused on our hopes for a new normal where systemic equities are at last the primary focus of our debates over policy and candidates. Our pleas insist on electing leaders who consider this to be a top priority and voting the rest out of office altogether.

But the brutal murder of George Floyd by a killer authorized by the very systems that we count on for protection moved millions

Empathy (Our Sons & Daughters)

Is there a shortage of empathy today? According to Kaitlin Luna, host of Speaking of Psychology, this is precisely what is going on. In a 2019 podcast, Ms. Luna stated that "Concern and care for others' feelings are virtues we seek to instill in our children." But research indicates that these attributes are sorely lacking in many adult Americans today.¹

According to Psychology Today, empathy is the ability to recognize, understand, and



The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King at Riverside Church, New York, 1967. Credit: John C. Goodwin

of us from the safety of our homes to the streets. The intensity of topics around systemic inequality is boiling over. Despite attempts to divide us, the senseless killing of our brothers and sisters by misguided law enforcement officers united us. The time is now for action that results in the firing of any leaders holding onto

share the thoughts and feelings of another person, animal, or fictional character. Developing empathy is crucial for establishing relationships and behaving compassionately.²



the old normal.

A classroom assignment offered by the non-profit, RethinkingSchools.org, caught my attention: Write the speech that Martin Luther King might deliver today if he were alive. Background for this assignment includes King's references to the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism. And asks the students to consider how these giant triplets are at work in today's crisis? This is an excellent assignment for all of us needing inspiration for our particular role in bringing about a new normal.

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Empathy involves experiencing another person's point of view, rather than just one's own — and empathy makes it possible for us to help others because we want to help. Rather than helping others because of some other pressure. Yet, according to a study conducted by Professor Sara Konrath, as a nation, we are becoming less empathetic.

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Volume 20 Issue 7

June 7, 2020

Special points of interest:

*** All meetings have been cancelled until further notice

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

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Empathy (Our Sons & Daughters) ...cont from page 1

As we begin our new series, Live, where our conversations focus on the new normal, we need empathy in large doses. But where and how do we draw upon this critical ingredient for creating a compassionate community?

Empathy involves experiencing another person's point of view rather than just one's own. And empathy makes it possible for us to help others because we want to help. Rather than helping others because of some other pressure. According to a study conducted by Professor Sara Konrath, we are becoming less empathetic as a nation.

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Bridget Quinn lives in a northern suburb of Detroit. In a New York Times article, she noted that "Empathy can feel really rare and hard to come by because everyone is so isolated and atomized." Ms. Quinn teamed up with two other young adults in the area, hoping to create a way for people to help each other get

through the COVID-19 pandemic. Their Facebook Group grew within days to include thousands of participants.³ An encouraging sign that empathy can be found in abundance when we look for it.

In her interview on empathy, Dr. Sara Konrath argued that people either show the presence or lack of empathy when they go online. And people are generally who they are, whether online or not. In the case of the Facebook Group created by Bridget Quinn and her colleagues, empathy is expressed in persons using Facebook to connect in helpful ways.

Perhaps empathy can be awakened within each of us. After all, a complete lack of empathy is a strong indication of a more severe problem. A psychopath is incapable of feeling empathy. A condition requiring professional intervention.

In a reflection about the story of the first church, Eric Law writes that "We live in a world dominated by the voices of the powerful and rich, who use their power and money to influence our media and spread divisive information."⁴ Intentional divisiveness is the antithesis of empathy.

Social media giants, like Facebook and Twitter, are caught up in this battle. How far should they go to police content? Twitter, in particular, is under attack by the president. His threats are in response to Twitter's decision to expose the president's blatant mistruths by adding a pointer for readers who want to know the truth.

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I am encouraged by the courage of the people around me. Particularly, those whose nature is to quietly serve and keep their own suffering a private matter.

Connie Portillo is one of those who quietly serve others. But in a conversation, I was privileged to have with Connie, she shared some of the pain inflicted by racial injustice that parades as acceptable. Moving to the U.S. as a child immigrant, her brownness, together with learning a new language, exposed her vulnerability to racism. Connie's story is far too familiar.

Kevin Croom grew up in Beecher. In a conversation, Kevin shared how blessed he feels that he lives and serves a community of racial diversity. As a darker-skinned black man with an athletic build, Kevin handles racial profiling in the same way he serves the public. Kevin speaks softly and allows the love of God to show through him. But I cannot do justice to speaking for Kevin. Nor do I need to.

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Speak (When silence is betrayal)cont. from page 1

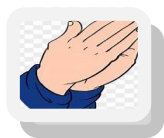
Our country struggles with systemic racism. And our claims to greatness are as empty as the thousands of mistruths that come out as late-night rants on twitter, as long as racism continues. The difficulty of making the changes necessary to move us substantially closer to the ideals we claim is complicated by the other two parts of the triplet: materialism and militarism.

In 1967, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke to a group of clergy. The topic of his speech was concern over the role of the United

States in Vietnam. As he began, he played back the group's theme: "A time comes when silence is betrayal." Reverend King shared his own struggles with speaking out against this country's interference in Southeast Asia. As he dug within his own convictions, he realized that as a child of God, he had no other choice.²

Friends, we have no other choice. I am encouraged by so many people speaking out. It is time for us to speak. To speak out against policies and people that call for a return to the old normal.





In our Prayers

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

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Elaine Lamoreaux Mary Nations



A prayer for cooperation

Free us, Lord, from our obsession with ourselves long enough to care for others; to be so concerned about the well-being of the human community that we don't have to worry about our place, our church, our class, our values, our vested interests. Help us to know the joy and freedom of putting all our trust in you. Amen. ¹

¹ Walter Brueggemann. Five Talents' Response to the Coronavirus. © March 26, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://fivetalents.org/blog/2020/3/26/five-talents-response-to-the-coronavirus>

Coming up this week

June 8	Mon	
June 9	Tues	10am-2pm Water / Food Distribution
June 10	Wed	No Pastor Book Club Until further notice
June 11	Thu	
June 12	Fri	
June 13	Sat	
June 14	Sun	



JOIN WORSHIP ONLINE

SUNDAY, JUNE 7TH, 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 Live

What does life look like in the new normal? Forgetting for a moment that life is a constant sea of change and doesn't go backward, will we ever feel like life is back to normal again?

We come to the end of our series, *Risen*, on May 24, and begin a new

Book Club News

If you are staying away from Asbury's Book Club because of zoom fatigue or you don't like participating without video, I hope you will get over it. While we are anxious to return to our building, we may find social distancing to be just as cumbersome as online meetings. Meanwhile, don't miss out on our conversations.

We finished our study of Revelations. Our conversations moved towards gaining a better idea of how the beliefs of people in other communities of faith differ from our own. If you suspect that your beliefs differ from ours, or you know someone who may be willing to share their beliefs, invite them to our conversation. None of us should attempt to represent the

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

Asbury Staff

- Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor
- Connie Portillo Office Secretary
- Sylvia Pittman Empowerment Arts
- Jim Craig Leadership Chair

series titled simply, *Live*. Our pronunciation and emphasis differ depending on whether you read this title as a verb or an adjective. It's both in this case.



beliefs of other faiths. We each should speak for ourselves.



With so much division over the basics in life, like getting our hair cut or going to a restaurant, public attention moved away from how others view God. Differences among religions seem less important when both groups want to know when tickets for Tiger's games will be available.

- Kevin Croom Dir. Operations
- Blair Neifert Farm Manager
- Matt Dee Farm Operations
- Israel Unger Function to Funding
- Kim Sims Connections
- Karl Collyer Production
- Katelin Maylum Production

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.

Will simple "open" signs become a nostalgic memory that we share with our grandchildren? "I remember when there was a time that people greeted each other with a hug." "Really," granddad, "Weren't they afraid of getting sick?"

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Yet, even in the midst of protests over whether the church should invite the public to get cozy together in the same space, our existential questions remain. Where is God in all of this? Where do you see God showing up? How do you know? Is God going to save us? How? When?

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

Live ...Cont. from page 4

For most of us, there was always an idea of personal space around us. Persons coming too close crossed a line that set off alarms of an invasion of this space. Has this buffer zone increased to at least six feet, except for persons living under the same roof? Is this life in the new normal?

And then there is the protest. Persons standing up for individual freedoms using firearms to intimidate onlookers. Are they really suggesting that they will take another person's life over a disagreement on how far away I want them to stand? How about a million miles? Otherwise, my individual freedom to feel safe is under attack.

God sent me to the Gospel of Matthew for our theme where Jesus described what it means to live in the kingdom of God. Answering what the kingdom of heaven is like, Jesus tells a story. Didn't He always tell a story to answer our questions?



Detroit Free Press. Photo by Paul Sancya, AP.

What if we rephrase the question of how to reopen our country, our bars, and our shopping malls with a different question? What is it like to live in the kingdom of heaven? What should the new normal look like? How do we get there?

If you miss signing on for our conversation on Sunday, May 24, be sure to check out the video on our Facebook page. We end our series, titled *Risen*, with this story told by Jesus to answer this question. What is it like to live in the kingdom of heaven?

While we are working on answering the question of reopening, why not include the new normal that Jesus shared with His followers. Leave the weapons at home. While you are invited you have the freedom to choose not to come.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. 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](#).

Pastor Tommy

Sylvia also graduated from Beecher High School. Despite the many gifts that Sylvia unselfishly shares with the world and her gentle nature, not everyone returns her love in kind. As a brown woman, Sylvia knows the sting and ugliness of discrimination. God also blessed Sylvia with an ability to love through the pain.

The writer of the Gospel of John and the 1st letter of John uses words translated as "love" more than any other New Testament book. Several times more than most of the other books. Words from the letter known as 1 John, is often quoted when it's time to speak love to a hurting world. God living among people was evidence that God loves creation.

The writer of 1 John pleads with us to love one another because love comes from God. "Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love (1 John 4:7-8).

Whoever does not love does not know God; for God is love.

1 John 4:8

The events of the past several days offer us numerous illustrations that contrast the love expected from people who know God with the alternative. For example, compare the images of uniformed police officers kneeling, without a weapon in their hand, with the use of military force against protesters. Consider the images of thousands of demonstrators representing the diversity of humanity coming together to demand equality for all against a photo-op that disgraces a house of worship.

We don't have to look far at all to find the contrasts, but many of us must

dig deeper into our own vulnerabilities than ever before we can find the words that must be said. And even deeper before we can take the steps that must be walked.

I know that I am in good company when I turn to some of the speeches of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. for inspiration. You see, I also must dig deeper into my own vulnerabilities, examine my own privilege, and find the courage to speak. And I was inspired by reading a transcript where Reverend King shared his struggles with speaking out against U.S. military actions in Vietnam.

Try as I do to speak and write in a way that moves people to action, I run the risk of falling silent from awe at the beauty and power of Reverend King's words. But I take comfort in knowing that the same Spirit that filled the most influential communicators among us also powers you and me. But we must dig deep enough within our own soul and empty ourselves of whatever barriers hold us back.

In the assignment to consider what Reverend King might say today, I first read what he had to say in 1967. I am also bothered by the scenes of contrast between love and hate played out in the streets of our nation. And I am disturbed by crowds destroying communities by breaking into businesses, looting, and setting fires. Yet, I don't have words for young men and women who are tired and frustrated by policies that treat them differently because of their skin color.

Reverend King spoke out against the use of power, resources, and people in Vietnam. In his speech, he repeated the warning from former President John F. Kennedy. "Those who make

peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."

May God give us the words, the courage, the resolve, the intellect, and the ability to love our neighbor in sufficient quantities that violent revolution is unnecessary.

For more information our series, [Live](#), see the article, [Coming up in worship](#) on our [website](#).

I invite you to join us this Sunday and hear from Connie, Kevin, and Sylvia in their own words. 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](#).

Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.

John F. Kennedy

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

¹ Rethinking Schools began as a local effort to address problems such as basal readers, standardized testing, and textbook-dominated curriculum. Go to RethinkingSchools.org

² Martin Luther King, Jr., "Beyond Vietnam -- A Time to Break Silence." Delivered April 4, 1967, Riverside Church, New York.

Risen

Join in on the conversation

Indebtedness is as much an economic issue in scripture as it is about forgiveness. Jesus lived among and advocated for the poor and marginalized. In this series, we explore current examples of indebtedness, and our role as followers of Jesus’ teachings. What issues matter most to you.

For example, one member of our community noted that a person with a gender identity that differs from their biological identity are often marginalized. And it is not enough to avoid persons unwilling to consider that God created them with their identity. Some have been denied essential services during the Covid pandemic.

The pandemic is also shining a bright light on systemic racism. African Americans are disproportionately affected, exposing systemic racism. We serve a diverse community and a God that delights in diversity. What experiences or insights do you have that the rest of us need to hear about?

The people in jobs that help keep the rest of us safe are among the lowest paid. The pandemic is also shining a light on the inequalities of our economic and political systems. The economic separation between the small number of people with most of the wealth and those keeping us safe is large in the U.S. than it is in the rest of the world.

The pandemic is exposing the inadequacies in our healthcare system. Often touted as “world class” healthcare access and quality in the United States is based on economics. Yet fighting a pandemic effectively requires access to healthcare for everyone. Is this an issue that stirs your passion?

Minimum wage and compensation equity	Human dignity
Climate change	Voting
Incarceration	Clean and healthy water
Access to healthcare	LGBTQ
Quality and access to education	Other

Be sure to take a couple minutes to complete our [survey](#). You can find a link on our website’s [home page](#). The first question asked which topics are of interest that you are willing to research. This is the list of potential topics:

Several have already responded. If you haven’t completed our survey go to [Risen Survey](#) 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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Life groups question & notes

Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 And God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him.

1 John 4:7-9 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read 1 John 4:7-9. What do these words mean for you? Given the events of the past few months, and particularly the past several days, how might these words affect how you respond?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Speak*. If you are a person of color, share some of your story with others. Also, share some of your experiences with racial profiling and discrimination. If you are not a person of color, listen to others who are tell their stories. Do you believe that God is calling you to speak out at this time?
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.

Law goes on to argue that we can feel defenseless against such overwhelming odds. Yet, this Sunday, we celebrate the beginning of the church. A day when a handful of diverse people, faithfully following Jesus Christ, gathered for prayer and worship. And God took action on that day, filling all present with a divine Spirit that gave them power beyond anything possible on this earth. They remained ordinary people, but with superhero powers.

Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message; your young men will see visions; and your old men will have dreams.

Acts 2:17

Their first leader was the colorful Peter, who often surprised on-lookers with his enthusiasm and lack of fear. On that day, Peter spoke words of truth that each listener heard in their own way. Peter reminded the crowd of God's promise that "Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message; your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams."

The Spirit opened the eyes and ears of everyone who chose to investigate the commotion that begged for attention. And this same Spirit is present today, orchestrating, empowering, and surprising anyone who dares to be courageous enough to believe that God is not done with us. Offering superhero power to ordinary people.

I thought a lot about this time in church history when ordinary persons began a movement that is so prevalent today. There are daily stories covering news about church activities as part of the conversation about life in a post-pandemic world. At Asbury, we are busy implementing changes in our worship center complete with disposable masks and hand sanitizer, in preparation for the new normal.

I thought about the first churchgoers accepting God's gift of empowerment and how their new normal emphasized the need to share resources and struggles. Their community was characterized by empathy. And I wondered how you and I can learn from their experiences as we move ahead into a new normal.

I wondered how these three individuals living a short distance from us feel about the prospects of a new normal built on empathy. After experiencing an overwhelming response to their request for people to help each other was a great success. People with resources to share are connecting with people in need of support.

How far is the distance from a Facebook Group that facilitates sharing from a community where every person has access to healthcare? How much empathy do we need to build a community where inequality is no more? Can you and I utilize divine superpowers to build a community that resembles the kingdom of God?

Let's be clear. The power comes not from within each person, but from the Spirit of God. The limitation of such power is that God's will determines how and when the power manifest itself. What if accessing superpowers begins with empathy?

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Pastor Tommy

¹ "Speaking of Psychology: The Decline of Empathy and the Rise of Narcissism," © Psychology Today, Retrieved from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/empathy>.

² "Empathy," © Psychology Today, Retrieved from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/empathy>.

³ Jennifer Medina. "Where Coronavirus Help on Facebook Is 'Inherently Political' ", © NY Times, May 28, 2020, Retrieved from :<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/28/us/politics/michigan-coronavirus-help.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

⁴ Eric H. F. Law. "Spirit and Breath of Power," *The Upper Room Disciplines 2020: A book of daily devotions*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books. © 2019 by Upper Room

Welcome to the Asbury Community

1653 Davison Rd
Flint, MI 48506



NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
FLINT, MICHIGAN
PERMIT #151

Phone: 810-235-0016
Fax: 810-235-0016 (call first when faxing)
E-mail: FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com
CircuitRider@FlintAsbury.org

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 15th week of our stay at home quarantine, and it looks like our Governor has decided **to open up various businesses on June 15th**. Please keep wearing your masks/gloves when around the public, and when coming into the building/church office.

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.

EVERYONE STAY SAFE!!