

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Tight (As close as underwear)

As we continue our study of the Book of Jeremiah, this week's lesson challenges us with a couple of powerful metaphors — pottery and underwear. Jeremiah has his hands full. His job is to warn the people that they need to make some profound and challenging changes in policies, practices, and personal lives.

And all of this amid growing instability. So God helps Jeremiah to break it down into messages that we can all understand.

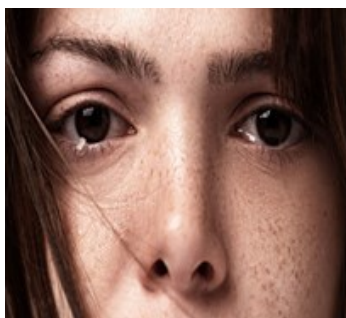


First, there is the idea that God is like a potter shaping a piece of art, such as a pitcher or a coffee cup. The Potter works with the clay until a shape emerges. Sometimes the piece of art is brilliant, and the Potter is proud to put their name on the work of their hands. Other times, not so much.

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Leftovers (Vaccines for the heart)

According to an article provided by the Cleveland Clinic on their website, tears are an essential part of a healthy life. Dr. Michael Roizen, a wellness expert at the clinic, reminds us that tears help us see clearly, wash away debris, and alert others to our emotional feelings.



While physiologically, tears are not a direct result of activity within our heart, metaphorically, we connect heart conditions to emotional tears.

One of the causes behind emotional tears is feeling empathy, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology. We see others suffering, and even though we aren't experiencing what they're experiencing, we are moved by their plight.

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Volume 20 Issue 24

January 24, 2021



You must wear a mask while in the area and to enter church office. If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you.

**Thank you & Stay safe
Everyone!**

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Leftovers (Vaccines for the heart)..cont from page 1

We form an affinity with them by sharing some of the feelings they may be feeling. And we're moved to tears.

The other day, our nation crossed another horrible threshold as more than 400 thousand people have died due to COVID infections. It is difficult to feel empathy towards a number — even a huge number. Feeling compassion towards a family member, a friend, or even a stranger, when we recognize the pain they're feeling from their loss, comes with being human. And most of us show a strong alliance with pain through tears unless there is some other physiological problem preventing what is otherwise a sign of normality.

Our world is full of suffering and reasons for tears. And the pandemic is unique only in its global effect. In Rwanda, hundreds of thousands were murdered within weeks by soldiers and militias from a rival ethnic group in 1994. Instead of stopping the slaughter, the United States, along with much of the world, stood by. A psychologist named Paul Slovic decided to investigate the apparent apathy of so many. And his conclusion was troubling. ²

For example, when his researchers showed people a picture of a 7-year-old girl dying of starvation, they responded positively. He repeated the experiment with larger and larger groups of children. While it seems logical that the more children pictured, the greater the response, Dr. Slovic discovered that this wasn't the case. In some cases, the response was less empathetic.

"In fact, the more who die, sometimes the less we care," Slovic said in an interview. As the numbers increase, it seems that death becomes impersonal, causing increased hopelessness that our actions can have any effect.

Dr. Slovic offered this worrisome observation — "Statistics are human beings with tears dried off. And that's dangerous because we need tears to motivate us." We need tears to motivate us, but numbers, as they increase, become a drying agent for tears. How do we maintain a balance of empathy and sanity as we unite to overcome the deadly forces that threaten us?



★ Coming up this week ★

In Our Prayers
 Richard Oram
 Kevin Croom
 Sylvia Pittman



**FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES
 WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR
 IN NURSING CARE**

Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
 Shirley Craig Norma Buzzard

(Pastor Book Club will be via Zoom until further notice—call the church office for more info 235-0016)

The COVID-19 pandemic is still serious and the number of new cases in Genesee County continues to rise.

PLEASE CONTINUE TO WEAR YOUR MASKS WHEN COMING INTO THE ASBURY BUILDING.

Pastor Tommy

Jan 25	Mon	
Jan 26	Tues	10am-2pm Water / Food Distribution
Jan 27	Wed	Pastor Book Club <i>(Via Zoom until further notice)</i> South Flint Soup Kitchen - Food Giveaway— 11am -12Noon
Jan 28	Thu	
Jan 29	Fri	
Jan 30	Sat	
Jan 31	Sun	10:30am New Beginnings Contemporary Worship

Join worship online
 Sunday, January 24th -10:30am

Facebook Live 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 Hope in an Unstable World

There are many ways of characterizing the year 2020, but the word stability doesn't belong in the final cut. The words uncertainty and unstable are more accurate choices.



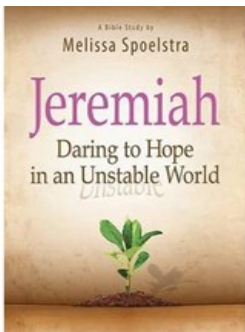
Another word that kept try-

ing to emerge, like the sun peeking through a cloudy and rainy day, was hope. As the coronavirus spread last spring, we all hoped that our precautions would help us recover quickly. And they did — or at least they did in the places where safeguards were implemented.

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Book Club News

We complete our discussion of the book and videos by Adam



Hamilton, *Incarnation*. Our group utilized the study group videos available on a new resource that is available

to all of us called Amplify. This library of study materials is accessible online. More information will be coming if you want to start your own study group or do some learning on your own.

This month our attention turns to Hope. But we realize that hope can be harder to hold onto when there is so much turmoil. The availability of a vaccine offers hope that life will eventually return to some form of normal. But there continues to be a lot of reasons to feel dismayed.

In January our group will take a deeper dive into the Book of Jeremiah. We plan to use a book written by the wife of an Ohio pastor, Melissa Spoelstra. The title of her book is *Daring to Hope in an Unstable World*.

Each week we watch a video featuring the author as she takes us through Jeremiah, not page by page, but theme by theme. Join our meeting via Zoom if possible so that you are able to watch the video. If you call in by phone, you should be able to hear the audio well enough to participate in the discussion that follows.

I encourage you to join online for our Wednesday gatherings. Alternatively, you can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others are saying by calling (929) 436-2866, and entering the meeting ID, 282 039 5568#.

Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony, Mirium	Welcome Team
Anthony, Jim	Ushers
Jonathon, Terrance	Production Team
Miriam	Children
Cyndi	Worship Leader
Christine & Norma	Cafe

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDaniel	Pastor
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Dir. Operations

Matt DePalma	Farm Manager
Kevin Croom	Farm Operations
Israel Unger	Function to Funding
Kim Sims	Connections
Karl Collyer	Production
Katelin Maylum	
South Flint Soup Kitchen/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.

We are a diverse group and we are delighted when new persons join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion.

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

Pastor Tommy

Hope in an Unstable World... Asbury Worship Series

But by the fall, just in time for Thanksgiving, the numbers began to surge, just as healthcare experts warned they would without cooperation lead by stable, consistent, and competent leadership. By Christmas, my hope focused on what it means when I tell people that Jesus saves, in light of so much instability.

On January 20, our country will witness the swearing in of our 46th President. His administration faces the daunting task of reuniting our divided nation together. Yet tens of millions of voters are worried that their aspirations for our country will fall by the wayside. And depending on the outcome of Senate races in Georgia, we could see a prolonged stalemate in congress.

So how do we find hope in an unstable world? For me, I look for stories in scripture that reflect the issues of our present time. My experience is that I can find assurances that God isn't sitting on the sidelines, waiting to see what happens in any particular election. I believe that God continues to move us toward reconciliation with each other and with God, regardless of who we elect. The question is whether we are open to divine guidance or want to go it on our own. Talk about instability.

As we move into 2021, we begin the New Year with a series that opens our minds to the ideas found in the Book of the Prophet, Jeremiah. This book tells about God's urging the people of his time to have hope amid instability. Jeremiah was known as the "weeping prophet" because of his role in sharing God's divine warnings to a people distracted by materialism, economic crisis, and politics. Yet, we find great hope in God's love for humankind.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We plan to be live on both Facebook and YouTube. We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website](http://www.FlintAsbury.org) at [FlintAsbury.org](http://www.FlintAsbury.org). And especially, I look forward to being with you, wherever you are, on Christmas Eve at 6 pm.

Pastor Tommy

¹Melissa Spoelstra. *Jeremiah: Daring to Hope in an Unstable World*. © 2014. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Tight (as close as underwear) ... *cont. from pg 1*

The Potter may take the emerging piece and completely redo it. The emerging art isn't coming out as intended.

The Potter is in complete control. The clay is not in control. If God is the Potter, we are the clay that God shapes into the person that God intended us to become. Our primary role is to be pliable and not resist the capable shaping hands of the Potter.

Let's be good clay. But we're not really clay, so how do we learn to be good clay so that God shapes us as intended? How do we emerge as the beautiful work of art that God intended us to become?

This is where underwear comes in as our second metaphor. Underwear is personal. Most of us don't intentionally allow our underwear to show. And underwear is as close as a piece of clothing can get to us. We become good clay by being good underwear. We belong as close to God as our underwear is to us. Our nakedness is exposed, and there is nothing or no one closer to us than we are to God.

And underwear is an everyday thing, just as our closeness to God is an everyday thing. This is how we learn to become good clay.

But it gets confusing. For example, a recent article in the New York Times offered a glimpse into the religious beliefs of some of the persons who attacked our Capital building. They threatened to hang the Vice President because he didn't overturn our election to keep their preferred candidate in office.

During the assault on our capital, five people died. The insurgents were heard chanting hang Mike Pence. A symbolic noose was constructed in front of the capitol building. This same group knelt in prayer on their way to the capitol building.

According to the New York Times article, this group prayed with the confidence that their plans were of divine origin. Their candidate was God's choice, and so he was their choice as well. And they were willing to kill and be killed in pursuit of their divine mission.

Some may claim that they heard directly from God. But most, if not all, heard what they chose to believe from other sources. Their sources included Twitter feeds, Facebook posts, and pastors, who claimed to be speaking on behalf of God. Like the prophet Jeremiah did centuries before, they claimed divine endorsement. However, Jeremiah didn't claim that God wanted people to harm others.

Jeremiah's message was that God wanted people to turn to God. To be as tight with God as underwear. Jeremiah's message was a love song with chords of harmony and words of empathy and grace. Violence is most often the consequence of turning away from God and not the will of God.



Asbury Farms offers fresh produce every week!

Go to our website, FlintAsbury.org to place your order for a Veggie Box, or sign up for a subscription. You can also call our office at 810-235-0016 to place your order. We accept EBT and Double-up Bucks for a limited time only!!!

Call By Noon on Wednesday for Thursday delivery.

Life groups question & notes

“But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days,” says the Lord. “I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Jeremiah 31:33 (NLT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Jeremiah 31:33. What does this prophecy from Jeremiah say to you? In what ways does this prophecy remind you of the ministry of Jesus? What does it mean for God’s instructions to be written on our hearts?
2. Read the article in this week’s Circuit Rider, *Leftovers*. What cause you to cry? Have you noticed any difference in your empathy for the families losing loved ones to COVID as the numbers have risen? What is the condition of your spiritual heart? What spiritual practices do you practice that brings you closer to God? What spiritual practices are you considering that you’re putting off?
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.

**JANUARY FOOD GIVEAWAY
SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN**

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Dates: January 27, 2021

Times: 11am—12Noon



**SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN WILL BE HOSTING THEIR
FOOD GIVEAWAY ON JANUARY 27TH, FROM
11AM-12NOON. NO NEED TO SIGN UP, JUST COME TO
THE VERMILY A SIDE OF THE BUILDING WHERE
LUNCHESES ARE HANDED OUT AND SAY YOU WOULD LIKE
SOME FOOD FROM THE PANTRY!**

AS ALWAYS, ALL ARE WELCOME!

**WE CAN MAKE A
DIFFERENCE ONE PERSON
AT A TIME, AND ONE MEAL
AT A TIME.**

SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN

**3410 Fenton Road
Flint, MI 48507
810-239-3427**

(3 blocks North of Atherton)

southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

God is well aware that some will claim divine insight while proclaiming a doctrine of exclusion, hate, and violence. So God warned the people through Jeremiah about false prophets. Preachers, priests, and pastors, along with tweets, posts, and mentally unstable leaders who claim to speak for God but with messages that are inconsistent with God's love song.

The key to discernment is to stay as close to God as your underwear is close to you.

Just as shorts fit rightly around the waist, so I intended all the people of Israel and Judah to hold tightly to me.

Jeremiah 13:11

I pray that you will join us each Sunday at 10:30 am as we learn together from the successes and mistakes of Jeremiah's community. Invite your friends to join us online or in-person.

We have a new button on the homepage of our **website** - **Click here to watch**. This button takes you to a viewer to allow you to join live or watch later in the week. We're also live on **Facebook** and our newly launched **YouTube channel**. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at **FlintAsbury.org**.

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

[Come of the content for our series comes from Melissa Spoelstra. Jeremiah: Daring to Hope in an Unstable World.](#) © 2014. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

I often think about a claim that I found buried in the preface of one of the many books I used for research several years ago. In his book, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, the late Dr. Dallas Willard argued that the church has, in our possession, the only solution to what underlies most of the world's problems. If this is true, and I believe that it is true, how do we distribute this potent vaccine to a hurting world? How do we convince people that this vaccine is safe and effective without the rigor that usually accompanies new vaccines?



Asking people to simply trust God isn't working

so well. Retired chaplain, David Fetterman, asks the question that complicates acceptance. "Why should we trust God when we see so much hatred, violence, and anxiety daily? How can we be expected to believe in good news when we're barraged daily with bad news?"

Fetterman reminds us that Jesus doesn't really answer these questions directly. Instead, Jesus offers us the hope of faith.³

This is the new covenant I will make with the people... I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people.

Jeremiah 31:33

This past week most of us witnessed the celebration of a transfer of power of the U.S. presidency. Among the numerous guests offering words through music, statements, and poetry was a

young, African American woman -- the daughter of a single mother living in Los Angeles. Her poem, inspired by the magnitude of the tragic events she has witnessed over the past few years, moved from naming our human condition to claiming hope.

Amanda Gorman begins her poem with this question — "Where can we find light in this never-ending shade?" But she ends her poem with this challenge — "The new dawn blooms as we free it. For there is always light if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it."

As the virus violates millions of bodies, racism violates justice, and greed violates our planet. The mounting numbers dry our tears and leave us numb. Empathy is erased, and hope hides in the shadows unless we look beyond the numbers and see the tears on the faces of front-line workers and grieving families.

This logistical problem cannot be solved by simply finding more efficient ways of putting a vaccine in the arms of larger numbers of people. Yet, the solution is incredibly simple while frustratingly evasive.

We must dare to repeat and live into Jeremiah's prophecy as he shared the Word of God with a people hungry for words of hope. God said, "This is the new covenant I will make with the people ...I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they be my people." (Jeremiah 31:33)

The vaccines promise to eradicate the threat of the COVID virus. However, the issues that divide us remain. The new normal must not be a repetition of failed attempts to ignore our neighbors' grievances or our planet. What remains is a heart condition.

And the church has the proven antidote that can move us from complacency to profound courage. But this heart condition is both physiological and spiritual. Our human condition leans toward self-preservation and self-promotion. We simply, cannot on our own, eradicate the virus that degrades the human heart and reduces our empathies to statistics.

The solution begins with humbly accepting our own incompetence. We confess that we're incapable, by our own power, to cure the disease infecting our metaphorical heart. We acknowledge that we are ready to accept God's cure for our apathy. And we invest our time and resources in a new way that puts God ahead of all else.

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Pastor Tommy

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² William Wan and Brittany Shammass, "Why Americans are numb to the staggering coronavirus death toll." © Washington Post, December 21, 2020.

³ David Fetterman, "Hope Beyond Today." *The Upper Room Disciplines 2021: A Book of Daily Devotions.* © Upper Room Books, 2020, pp. 37).