

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

## A Love Story<sup>1</sup> (Pride and Prejudice)

Valentines Day is both a strange and a familiar day of celebration. Although not an official holiday, at least one greeting card company doesn't mind if we call it a "Hallmark Holiday." A reminder that some of us check the trademark on the card's back to determine if the sender cares enough. For the record, I'm not one of those.

An expert in the history of the Christian church, Professor Lisa Bitel of USC Dornsife College, writes that Valentine's Day began as a celebration of an individual, beheaded for his beliefs. This happened during the time of Roman persecution. There are actually two stories, according to Professor Bitel,

of individuals with the transliterated name St. Valentine that came to the same dreadful end. Individuals are declared Saints



Relics of St. Valentine of Terni at the basilica of Saint Mary in Cosmedin...by Dnalor\_01, Wikimedia Commons, CC-BY-SA 3.0)

after a careful validation of historical evidence of holy miracles.<sup>2</sup>

But my favorite explanation of how Valentine's Day came to be about love comes from the Roman celebration of Lupercalia that took place in mid-February. This celebration, involving the sacrifice of goats and dogs, became a sort of urban carnival. It was known for the half-naked young men who ran through Rome's streets wearing thongs cut from the skins of newly killed goats. Legends surfaced that there was a connection between this ritual and the birth of healthy babies.

Page 6

Volume 2 Issue 21

February 21, 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!

## Memories (The Lies of Assimilation)



"That's not how we do things here," the man says quietly to his wife, while loud enough for the people around them to hear. Meanwhile, the sound of the

drums intensified in rhythm as the young men and women kept perfect time. Even the skeptical found themselves mesmerized by the vibrations.

As the drum moved from simple time to more complicated rhythms, drawing the more timid into the music, leaving us speechless, grateful, and in awe.

Page 2

## Inside this issue:

A Love Story <sup>1</sup>	1
Memories	1
In Our Prayers/Coming up this Week	3
Asbury Worship Series	4
Pastor's Book Club	4
Leadership in Worship & Service	4
Asbury Worship Series/Bridges	5
A Love Story <sup>1</sup>	6
Asbury Veggie Boxes	7
Small Group Questions & Notes	8
February Food Giveaways/SFSK	9
A Love Story <sup>1</sup>	10
Memories	11
Collecting Bibles	12

## Memories (The Lies of Assimilation) ..cont from page 1

It was February, and this team of drummers was a cross-section of the community where they lived. A kaleidoscope of skin tones and viewpoints. The techniques they demonstrated represented a little of the homeland of their instructor. Much different than the organ and piano ordinarily heard on Sunday mornings at this church in the suburbs of Flint, Michigan.

Our dictionary definition of "cultural assimilation" is the process by which a person or a group's language and/or culture come to resemble those of another group. In most cases, those experiencing assimilation give up their language, the way they dress, food preferences, and more as they blend into their new environment. But blending is rather difficult when the person's physical attributes are much different from the people of the dominant group.

Some churches consider the process of catechism to be a form of assimilation. Most call the process by a different name. It might be a new believers class or youth confirmation, or new members classes. In all cases, the subject-matter matters to the group expecting that newcomers will quickly blend into the batter mix that they call church.

In his classic work, *I and Thou*, Martin Buber offers a profound revelation that turns the traditional notion of assimilation on its head. When we experience the other, Martin argues, they become objects. Mostly beneath consciousness, we collect data that we analyze, classify, and theorize about. The object, a person, that we experience becomes a thing to be utilized, known, or put to some purpose. And our anticipation is that we remain the same after the experience.

But when we leave ourselves open to encounter the other as we must encounter God, we are changed. Buber argues that to create a more perfect union, city, community, neighborhood, church, we shouldn't strive for assimilation. Instead, we encounter each other with the love that allows for constant transformation.

Rather than new persons assimilating into the existing culture, they add their unique flavor to the mixture. First of all, the idea that we always do things a certain way is a lie. We are not machines programmed to repeat the same algorithm over and over again. We are each an ever-changing, ever-growing and dying, creature which reflects the image of God.

★ Coming up this week ★

**In Our Prayers**

Kevin Croom  
 Sylvia Pittman  
 Shirley Craig  
 JoAn Kirby



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

Nancy Elston      Elaine Lamoreaux  
 Norma Buzzard      Mary Nations

**WELCOME PASTOR JEREMY PETERS!**

Pastor Jeremy Peters is one of the pastors currently serving Court Street UMC. He grew up in the Upper Peninsula, went to school at Albion College and Duke Divinity School, and is in his sixth year at Court Street. His wife, Jennifer, is the executive director of the Troy Historic Village. He has two teenaged children who are his heroes for making it through this topsy-turvy year.

In his message, Pastor Jeremy plans to share his thoughts on Wesley's teaching about the assurance of the Spirit/the spirit of adoption. He will share a few moments of his life when he experienced a sense of peace and assurance around a decision or a particular path, including the story of the moment when he knew he was called to pastoral ministry.

Feb 22	Mon	
Feb 23	Tues	10am-12:30pm Water / Food Distribution
Feb 24	Wed	12Noon Pastor Book Club (via Zoom until further notice)  11am-12Noon Food Giveaway at South Flint Soup Kitchen (See page 9 for more info)
Feb 25	Thu	
Feb 26	Fri	
Feb 27	Sat	
Feb 28	Sun	10:30am New Beginnings Contemporary Worship

(We are 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](http://FlintAsbury.org).)

## Asbury Worship Series Bridges

The image should be familiar. It's the same one from our January series, *Daring to Hope in an unstable world*.

The image stays with us because a lot of us accepted the

the challenge. We're daring to hope despite the anxiety we're feeling from the threats that surround us.

The Speaker of the House recently named the source of at least one of the threats as coming from within. In the case of Congress, the Speaker was referring to members of Congress threatening other legislatures.



Page 5

## Book Club News

We finished our study of the book and videos by Melissa Spoelstra, *Jeremiah:*



*Daring to Hope in an Unstable World*. This often misunderstood book of the bible offered important lessons applicable to our lives together. We learned just how much we

have in common with the people of Jeremiah's time. And this insight can help us make better decisions to help us avoid the exile that they experienced as a result of their turning away from God.

From now until after Easter our attention turns to building bridges. The fact

that the church perpetuated slavery, segregation, and racism is no longer a family secret. Even high school history classes, known for teaching a version of our history that tries to put our past in the best possible light, are beginning to share bits and pieces of truth. There is a rumbling in our core that the universe is demanding change now.

Even though the church is not a very credible witness when it comes to racial reconciliation, we believe that our past doesn't have to determine our future. We can take actions now that will help to change the world. This is the nature of God. To never give up on overcoming darkness with light. And to learn new ways to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. A gospel of reconciliation.

Beginning on February 17, our Book Club participants take a 9-week journey together under the tutorage of Latisha Morrison. Her book, *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation*, will be our guide. Our plan is to complete one chapter each week. Our study promises to be challenging and fulfilling.

A few of us meet in person each week as long as the number of new coronavirus cases remain in the lower range. We each make our own arrangements for lunch at this point. We look forward to a return to pot-luck lunches at some point in the future.

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away, 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#

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](http://FlintAsbury.org).

## 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 McDoniel	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.

Pastor Tommy

*Bridges ... Asbury Worship Series*

But the threat from within also includes the church that we hold dear. The domestic terrorists that stormed the U.S. Capital did so, they claim, because the violence they perpetrated was God's will. They claim a version of the truth offered to them by false prophets claiming biblical authority. But their truth contradicts the trajectory of the biblical narrative. The threat is from within.

*Bridges* is a series about "pursuing God's heart for racial reconciliation." But let's be clear. Race is a human construct created for the purpose of creating a social, economic, and even religious hierarchy. Reconciliation begins with recognizing the raw truth that humans are fond of creating our own sense of the truth.<sup>1</sup>

Our current series is based on the prophecies of Jeremiah. By January 31 our message reaches a startling conclusion. We are the people of Judah. Our denial and blaming others for our own failings is coming to a predictable conclusion. God is confronting our nation. Surrender to exile by giving up privilege and power. Share our resources with our neighbors. Rebuild systems that perpetrate injustice. Take care of God's planet.

God is merciful. The stories found in scripture offer testimony that God insists on love. God demands love first and foremost towards the One True God and no others. But loving God requires that we love one another, our planet, and ourselves. So reconciliation is a process that frees us in all four directions.

Our book club concludes our study of Melissa Spoelstra's book, *Jeremiah: Daring to Hope in an Unstable World*, in a couple of weeks.<sup>2</sup> We plan to read and study Latasha Morrison's book as part of our celebration of the Easter Season that we sometimes call Lent. It is a time of reflection, repentance, and reconciliation. Plan to join us each Wednesday at 12 Noon either in the main meeting room (Library) or online.

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

<sup>1</sup> Latasha Morrison, *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation*. Yates & Yates and Penguin Random House, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Melissa Spoelstra. *Jeremiah: Daring to Hope in an Unstable World*. © 2014. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

## A Love Story<sup>1</sup> (Pride and Prejudice) ... *cont. from pg 1*

More directly connected to our version of Valentine's Day comes out of English folklore. It was reported that certain birds choose their mate and lay eggs during February. And when author Geoffrey Chaucer compared the February feast of St. Valentinus to birds' mating, this struck a chord with people. February became a popular month for writing love letters. Similarly, Ophelia called herself Hamlet's valentine in Shakespeare's famous play.

Entrepreneurs smelled a market opportunity to commercialize our need to love and be loved. An estimated 190 million valentine's day cards are purchased each year to allow us to express our love to others who are special in our lives. Whether a teacher, the cute guy or girl that sits next to us in class, our partner, or a good friend.

Love is very much the business of the church. The bible is not only a historical account of salvation; the bible is a love story. There are stories describing God's love for creation found throughout scripture. The bible is God's valentine for humanity.

This helps us to realize the tremendous humility that love requires. Without humility, love is superficial. God chose to live among humans as an expression of love. And Jesus did not live like a king with power and authority. Instead, God lived among the impoverished without a bank account or any form of financial security. God's humility makes it clear that God's love is sincere.

Jesus expects His followers to love others with the same degree of humility that defined divine love. A humility that sees another person as loved by God without condition. We are called to see past our own biases and expectations for each other and see the other as God sees them. God calls us by our name and not by our mistakes.



We are God's beloved children. We are Mary, Jim, Bobby, Latasha — we are the persons God created with love and attention to detail. We are not liars, cheats, whores, addicts, prostitutes — we are not the mistakes we make no more than we are the good things we accomplish.

There is a story about Jesus told by the author of Luke's Gospel about love. Like many love stories, this one is a bit edgy (Luke 7: 36-50).

Jesus is having dinner with a local authority named Simon when a woman invites herself and sits behind Jesus. Apparently, this woman had a rather, let's call it, a reputation. We really don't know anything about her. Even her name is left out. What we know is the opinions of the man Jesus was visiting and the narrator of the story.

The woman brought a jar of perfume and stood behind Jesus, crying and wetting his feet with her tears. And then she dries his feet with her hair, kisses his feet, and then she poured some perfume on them.

So the homeowner is somewhat annoyed by the whole scene, or perhaps a bit envious. He says under his breath, "If this man really were a prophet, he would know who this woman is who is touching him; he would know what kind of sinful life she lives!"

I suspect Simon was intentionally loud enough for his other guests and Jesus to hear what he said. And Jesus didn't miss the sarcasm of his host. But Jesus didn't confront his host with a snappy comeback. Instead, he asks his host if it would be alright to tell a story.

*Two men owed money to a money-lender. One owed him five hundred silver coins, and the other owed him fifty. Neither of them could pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Which one, then, will love him more?*

Simon answers with reasonable logic. "I suppose," answered Simon, "that it would be the one who was forgiven more." "You are right," said Jesus.



Asbury Farms offers fresh produce every week!

Go to our website, [FlintAsbury.org](http://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*

*you free...*

*You will know the truth, and the truth will set*

John 8:32 (NLT)

**NOTES FROM WORSHIP**

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**QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS**

1. Read John 8:32. The truth can be elusive, it can be difficult to hear, and yet Jesus says that the truth sets us free. What is the truth that Jesus is talking about? Are there more concrete examples of truth that we prefer to ignore that can set us free?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Memories*. We all have memories in varying capacities. Some are good memories and some are not. What are your most vivid memories that you hold onto? In what ways do you hold onto your memories? How does your holding on affect others around you? In what ways can recognizing the truth of the past help set us free?
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.



FEBRUARY—FOOD GIVEAWAY  
SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN

Page 9

South Flint Soup Kitchen will be having their Food Giveaway on **February 24th** from **11am to 12Noon**. No need to sign up! Stop at the Vermilya Avenue side of the building and say you want food from our Pantry. **ALL ARE WELCOME, BUT PLEASE WEAR YOUR MASKS!**



**FOOD GIVEAWAY**

3410 Fenton Road

Flint MI 48507

3 Blocks North of Atherton Road

Phone: 810-239-3427

Email:

[southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com](mailto:southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com)

Jesus then turns toward the woman but says to Simon and his other guests, "Do you see this woman?" The truthful answer is no. Simon didn't see the woman. It's unlikely that any of his guests saw the woman. What Simon saw was the woman's reputation. She was named by the mistake that Simon believed she made. Simon saw a problem and not an act of humility, love, and faith.

The truth is that millions of people have heard this story and didn't see the woman. And millions see a person but don't see who they are. Instead, they see what they choose to believe. Sometimes it's the way they wear their hair, the hoodie that's covering their head, their posture, or a myriad of other clues that hide who they are from view.

The truth be told, in our culture, it is their skin tone that speaks the loudest. This clue is so woven into our history and culture that it was lost to our consciousness generations ago. Most of us claim that we do not act on prejudice as a result of skin tone, but this is a lie. Consciously, we may desire to be unbiased, but subconsciously, race became a part of the lens through which we see the world.

Ironically, Simon wasn't much of a host. Jesus reminded Simon that he was not given water to wash his feet when he came into Simon's home. An essential custom of the time. Nor did Simon greet Jesus with the affection that a good host shows to a person they're hosting. Simon did not show the humility that a good host shows their guests.

But the woman that Simon did not see was a holy illustration of humility. She recognized that it is customary to make sure that your guest can wash their feet. She washed the feet of Jesus herself. With her own tears.

Nor did the woman simply offer Jesus a cordial handshake or superficial hug. While Simon did neither, she offered intimacy that comes from humility that can be found only within the depths of our spirit.

After helping Simon realize that his impression of the woman was mistaken, Jesus turns to the woman and says, "Your sins are forgiven."

With this powerful statement of revelation, Jesus opens Pandora's box. According to the writer, Simon's other guests offered their own commentary. "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" they asked.

I can't help but compare their reaction to the sort of blowback I hear when someone offers us a lesson in our own cultural blindness. We often respond with a, "Who do you think you are?" statement of denial. It takes a lot of humility to show love to someone—a level of humility that doesn't come naturally.

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.

**Do you see this woman?**

**Luke 7:44**

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](mailto: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

<sup>1</sup> [Most of the content for our series comes from Latasha Morrison, \*Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation\*. Yates & Yates and Penguin Random House, 2019.](#)

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Bitel. "The 'real' St. Valentine was no patron of love." © The Conversation, February 13, 2018.

In her book, *Be the Bridge*, Latasha Morrison shares her experiences as part of a white church in the suburbs of Austin, Texas. Working as a youth pastor, it was apparent to Latasha that the parents of the youth in her program experienced her presence as the other. But what kind of other, they wondered.

Latasha writes that the parents were "trying to determine what type of Black person I was. That's right. What type of Black person." In other words, was Latasha sufficiently assimilated into whiteness that they could trust her not to be the stereotyped, fictional character that they carried in their heads.

Latasha calls for truth-telling and embracing the realities found in the holy scriptures. She writes:

*The truth is that each ethnicity reflects a unique aspect of God's image. No one tribe or group of people can adequately display the fullness of God. The truth is that it takes every tribe, tongue, and nation to reflect the image of God in his fullness. The truth is that race is a social construct, one that has divided and set one group over the other from the earliest days of humanity.*<sup>1</sup>

*You will know the truth,  
and the truth will set you  
free.*

John 8:32

The truth is that we constantly change. We are each in motion, living in a world in motion, dancing to a rhythm led by a God of persistent love. The beat of the drum resonates within our bodies in a way that mere words cannot do.

In this week's *Book Club* we are discussing chapter two of Latasha's book. And as we continue our celebration of black history, we are in episode two of our trilogy series, *Bridges*.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday at 10:30 am and that you will invite friends and family to join us online or in-person. This Sunday we have a special guest, the Rev Jeremy Peters, Sr. Pastor at Court Street United Methodist Church located in downtown Flint, Michigan. Pastor Jeremy is a gifted storyteller will share a few of his experiences with finding peace in the midst of chaos.

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](http://FlintAsbury.org).

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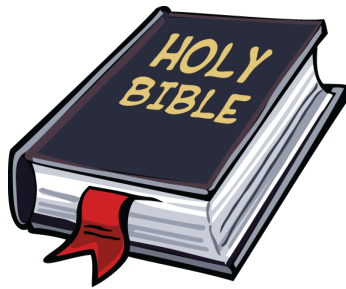
Pastor Tommy

<sup>1</sup> [Most of the content for our series comes from Latasha Morrison, Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation.](#) Yates & Yates and Penguin Random House, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Lisa Bitel. "The 'real' St. Valentine was no patron of love." © The Conversation, February 13, 2018.

**Asbury United Methodist Church**  
**Christian Resources International**

*COLLECTING BIBLES OR DEVOTION BOOKS*



*Please help fill the empty boxes that are up front by the Platform! Christian Resources International is asking for our help in donating older or unused Bibles and devotion and faith-based Christian books. This agency was started in Fowlerville, MI in 2000 and they gather books to provide 72 different countries in learning more about their new-found Christian faith. We ask if you could go through your book collections to see if you devotion books to send don't have the luxury like we do.*



*Thank you for sharing in this ministry. For any questions, please contact Michele Weston (810) 624-1184.*

