

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Empathy (Borrowed Shoes)



It was one of my dad's favorite pearls of wisdom concerning how to get along with others. "Never judge a man when you haven't walked a mile in his shoes," my dad would say to me. Like all meta-

phors, borrowing shoes has its limitations. But there is a lesson in this wisdom that connects us to empathy.

What happens when we discover that our borrowed shoes, instead of taking us home to Kansas,

We walk into a past that we would rather not uncover? Empathy happens when we take time to learn the history of how our brothers and sisters of color have been treated. One thing is for sure, wearing

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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 them-

selves 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.

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Volume 2 Issue 28

February 28, 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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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

Mar 1	Mon	
Mar 2	Tues	10am-12:30pm Water / Food Distribution
Mar 3	Wed	12Noon Pastor Book Club
Mar 4	Thu	
Mar 5	Fri	
Mar 6	Sat	
Mar 7	Sun	10:30am New Beginnings Contemporary Worship

Pastor Book Club will still be via Zoom until further notice—but will slowly start to meet in person, depending on how the next few weeks/month will go. Please call the Church Office for more info 810-235-0016.

Please continue to wear your masks when coming into the Asbury building and use hand sanitizer that is placed throughout the building.

Thank you and everyone stay safe!

(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.)

Asbury Worship Series
Bridges
 Coming February 14—April 18



We began our trilogy, *Bridges*, on Valentine's Day with our first episode, *A love story*. Each series in our trilogy takes us on a journey towards reconciliation. In this way, our entire journey is a love story. Each episode is an opportunity to grow closer to God, each other, closer to ourselves, and closer to the planet we call home.

While we won't be where we hope to be by the end of this particular journey, we expect to be much closer to a day when we can celebrate diversity. A time when justice does not depend on skin tone. It is a destination where we respect and enjoy each other's differences—a time when we experience heaven on earth.

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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.



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.

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

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.

Pastor Tommy

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.

Bridges (Coming February 14-April 18) ... Asbury Worship Series

Episode two focused on the freedom that comes from truth. However painful it might be to face the truth, it can set us free. While history is essential to knowing ourselves and knowing what is broken, truth transcends time. For followers of Jesus Christ, we know that God already knows the truth, and so should we.

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 religious hierarchy. Reconciliation begins with recognizing the raw truth that humans are fond of creating our own sense of the truth.¹

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.

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. And especially, I look forward to being with you, wherever you are, on Christmas Eve at 6 pm.

Pastor Tommy

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

Empathy (Borrowed Shoes) ... cont. from pg 1

their shoes makes us uncomfortable.

Slavery is one of the most vicious and harmful acts of violence that humans can do to one another. The institution is so destructive that the harm perpetrated lasts for generations. Healing from the wounds of slavery is challenging but worth the journey.

Our country's history is tarnished by an extended period of slavery that so damaged our spirit that 156 years later, we continue to prefer denial over restoration and healing. The damage was so extensive that the brokenness continues to hold our nation back from reaching the dreams God instills in every creature. A vision of life, liberty, and the pursuit of joy and satisfaction.

When political pundits shout soundbites that there is an America that we should want to go back to, they refer to a fictitious tale that ignores the violence perpetrated by unjust systems that privileged one group of people over all others.

While empathy begins with borrowing another's shoes for a stroll through their specific challenges and opportunities, the power of empathy comes after the mile is finished. In this case,

it comes after we immerse ourselves into the truth about the laws we passed, the damage we perpetrated, and the prejudices we inherited. This is where hope is found.

Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin.

Psalm 51:2

King David is recognized as the greatest king in the history of Israel. The least son of a family who was descendants of a tribe known as Judah. Under David's leadership, Israel became a global power, a nation of abundance. And a nation whose identity was tied to the God of their ancestor Abraham and the covenant God made with them that was to last for all time.

Yet, David is also known for his affair with Bathsheba, the wife of a loyal soldier. David made sure that Bathsheba's husband did not survive in battle. How these two seemingly contradictory assessments of the same man are possible comes, in part, from David's reaction to his own guilt.

David is credited with authoring the fifty-first Psalm, which begins with, "Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins." David came to grips with his own failure. And so must we.

I suspect that David's affair with Bathsheba was not the worst of his indiscretions. This is the one that was caught on camera, metaphorically speaking. But his willingness to admit to and take responsibility for his own guilt is rare enough among humanity that David's legacy is mostly untarnished. After losing their first child, Bathsheba gave birth to Solomon, who replaced his father as king.

When it comes to systemic racism, we are all complicit. We are all guilty. Even though we did not write the laws -- even though some of the worst laws were repealed or replaced -- damage remains.

This can be our legacy. David, in his Psalm, cried out to God. "Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin."



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

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin.

Psalm 51:1-2 (NLT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Psalm 51:1-2. What images or thoughts come to mind as you read this text? Is it difficult for you to imagine that God will blot out the stain of any sin you committed? Has God washed you clean from all guilt? Discuss your feelings with your group. You don't have to be specific about sins you may have committed — rather focus on what you're feeling.
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Empathy*. Is this article or Latasha's book the first time you have heard the story about Greenwood? Why do you suppose this is the case? Are there other stories about atrocities committed against people of color that you have learned about? Discuss how what you are learning about racist laws helps you to have empathy for people of color.
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.

MARCH DATES FOR SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN



“Our vision is to feed a healthy meal to anyone who is hungry and to act as a resource center to direct people to the agency that can help them”

ANGEL CLOSET FOOD GIVEAWAYS

Questions? 810-239-3427

Our mission is to create a collaborative relationship with other churches, organizations and individuals who will help fulfill the vision.

*Food Giveaway dates for March will be on March 10th and 24th
from 11am-noon.*

Angel Closet Walk-ins will be accepted March 17th 11am-12noon.

- *Please bring a mask (if you don't have one, one will be provided for you).*
- *All clients must submit to a temperature check before entering.*
- *We are only allowing one person at a time into the Angel Closet.*

South Flint Soup Kitchen

3410 Fenton Road
Flint, MI 48507
810-239-3427
southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com



*Clients who did not get to enter the Angel Closet on
our last Walk-In day will have first priority. If you are
unable to make this date, please email
southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com or call 810-239-3427
to schedule an appointment.*

Healing begins only after we sufficiently understand the offense committed. Denial is not a balm. Denial is a pain-killer that soon wears off, requiring larger and larger doses. Denial is addictive, and we are addicted to a sanitized version of our history.

Latasha Morrison notes that “American culture teaches us not to sit in sadness and despair. Pretending that everything is okay, though, requires that we mask our true feelings.” Sometimes our true feelings are buried deep within layers of pretense. But if we walk far enough in the shoes of those harmed by our past, the layers of indifference eventually unravel.

Latasha reminds us that “God does not want our masks; he wants all of us, all our emotions, even our sorrow, our despair, and our grief.”

The story of the Greenwood, Oklahoma massacre is one story among the numerous stories hidden under the rug of denial. A suburb of Tulsa, African-Americans moved to this area for jobs. Since people of color were prohibited from moving into Tulsa neighborhoods by racist laws, they settled outside the city.

Greenwood quickly grew into a “sophisticated, highly educated, and prosperous Black community” that led to envy and violent responses from nearby white communities. Tensions exploded after a 19 year old shoe shiner was accused of assaulting a white woman while riding in a

downtown elevator. Members of the black community guarded the courthouse to prevent a mob from lynching the young black man.

After shots were fired, the group guarding the courthouse fled back to Greenwood. The next morning a mob entered the Greenwood community, looting homes, buildings, and lynching black men. Airplanes flew over Greenwood dropping firebombs. It was an all-out assault with the intent of violence, destruction, and murder. Supported by institutions charged with protecting the public.

When the National Guard arrived, six thousand black residents were arrested, but not a single white person was arrested. By some accounts, ten thousand African Americans were homeless as a result of the attack. A thriving, peaceful community was left in shambles by the combined forces of lawless white supremacists, police, the National Guard, and other agencies of State and local government.

This massacre took place in 1921. Ninety-two years later, in 2013, Tulsa Chief of Police, Chuck Jordan, offered a formal apology for the Tulsa police department. An apology is far short of justice. Nevertheless, a shameful story finally resurfaced that had been intentionally buried and dismissed as untrue for nearly a century.

Recognizing the atrocities committed with the full support of elected government officials and

public opinion is critical. We must realize that none of us are exempt from doing great harm to others. But our past is not who God created us to be. Each of us is a reflection of a God of love.

This is Episode 3 of our three-part series, *Bridges*. Be sure to read chapter three this week of Latasha Morrison’s book, *Be the Bridge*. And join us each Wednesday at Noon for conversation.¹

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

¹ [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.](#)

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.*¹

*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.

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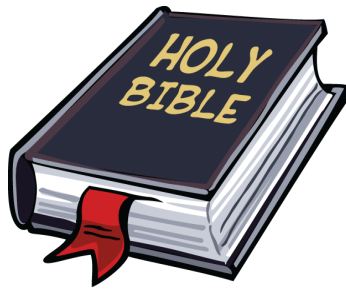
Pastor Tommy

¹ [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.

² 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 could spare some Bibles or devotion books to send on to those people that just don't have the luxury of reading about Jesus Christ like we do.



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

