

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

Page 6

Roadblocks (A Community's Shame)



As Cyndi and I watched the first episode of the ABC News documentary, *Soul of a Nation*, I knew that an old friend would be there with us. I can't remember

I can't remember the first time that I met Shame. Likely, after being discovered climbing on the kitchen counter to reach the shelf where mom put the cookies. The tempta-

tion of sugar was a greater temptation than my mom's instructions, "No cookies before dinner."

Page 2

Volume 2 Issue 7

March 7, 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!

Inside this issue:

Empathy	1
Roadblocks	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
Empathy	6
Asbury Veggie Boxes	7
Small Group Questions & Notes	8
March Dates for SFSK	9
Empathy	10
Roadblocks	11
Collecting Bibles	12

Roadblocks (A Community's Shame) ..cont from page 1

Shame also shows up near the beginning of scripture. According to the story in Genesis, soon after God created the universe, the first humans had access to the kitchen cabinets. God found them hiding after they did the one thing God told them not to do. The sweetness was too tempting for them to ignore.

We read that "At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame" (Genesis 3:7). They met that same friend who likes to sit with me when I'm reminded of times I did something I shouldn't do. And Shame wanted to watch this documentary with me the other night, despite my objections.

I feel blessed that my parents modeled for me a counter-culture attitude towards people of color. As a child, I knew not to make comments that disparaged a person because of their skin tone — or frankly, for any reason. I wrote about this last week but raised it here as a reminder that I am not innocent despite this blessing. And Shame got comfortable in the same seat I was sitting in with a big grin and an "I told you so" already loaded and ready to fire.

To the best of my knowledge, none of my ancestors ever owned slaves. Yet, my most shameful memories waited until high school history class. My family moved from the south to Ohio, where I completed high school. It was clear that, according to my history teacher and classmates, the south was totally responsible for slavery and all of the ugliness that followed. These were my people, and I am guilty by association.

Our faces are covered with shame.

Daniel 9:7

I would later learn that America's original sin was much more than a couple of consenting adults in the Garden of Eden munching on fruit before supper. We were all in on it. There are no innocent bystanders. We own this, and Shame is waiting for each one of us to experience our own realization.

In her book, *Be the Bridge*, Latasha Morrison shares a story about her visit to the Whitney Plantation in Wallace, Louisiana. Expecting to find yet another white-washed version of the truth about slavery, Latasha shares that she was stunned by the honest portrayal of life on a plantation for her ancestors. She writes, "Many of us can easily find the names of our ancestors listed on asset ledgers next to livestock and equipment."¹

If your a woman you may already know a little about how this feels. During most of world history, women have been treated like livestock and equipment. This insight is critical when interpreting scripture. Contrasting the inclusionary attitude of Jesus against the backdrop of human failure can help us to recognize our own shortcomings. I think God planned it this way.

In an interview with ABC News "Chief Justice Correspondent, Pierre Thomas, Capital Police Officer Harry Dunn shares his experiences protecting the U.S. Capital during the recent insurrection by domestic terrorists. As I watched

★ Coming up this week ★

In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom
 Sylvia Pittman
 Shirley Craig
 JoAn Kirby



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

Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard Mary Nations

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/months 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!

- Mar 8 Mon
- Mar 9 Tues 10am-12:30pm
 Water / Food Distribution
- Mar 10 Wed 12Noon
 Pastor Book Club
 11am-12Noon Food Giveaway at
 South Flint Soup Kitchen (See page 9)
- Mar 11 Thu
- Mar 12 Fri
- Mar 13 Sat
- Mar 14 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](#).)

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.

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.



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](http://www.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

○ Lord, we and our kings, princes, and ancestors are covered with shame because we have sinned against you.

Daniel 9:8 (NLT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Daniel 9:8. This text comes out of Daniel learning how his ancestors had sinned against God and his realization that he, along with his entire community, were also guilty. How do you feel when you realize that the U.S. Capital was attacked by white supremacists, claiming to be patriots, while shouting racial slurs at black police officers? Think of ways that our collective shame might help us to find new ways to build bridges towards racial reconciliation?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Roadblocks*. What are some of your roadblocks that keep you from recognizing our collective sin? This week try to uncover a few facts about your community's history of racism. Remember that collective sin is not about what you personally did or didn't do, although each of us carry our accountability. Pray for our nation that we can repent of our racist past and discover how we can build bridges to a better future.
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.*

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.](#)

the interview, I wondered if any of the individuals involved in storming the capital building felt any shame afterwards. More importantly, are the political leaders who instigated this assault feeling any shame? Is our former president feeling any shame? Are his supporters feeling any shame?



CAPITAL POLICE OFFICER HARRY DUNN

I am afraid that my suspicion that the answer is no is accurate. So why am I feeling shame? I was not there, and I'm willing to condemn the attack and, in particular, the blatant racism that fueled the attack. I've made more than one person who believes the lies told by the former president and his supporters angry with my opinion. But no sign of shame so far.

The story in Genesis about the first humans is much more than a simple story about original sin. This story transcends thousands of generations because there is so much packed into its telling. We do not find that one felt shame while the other did not.

When shame first made friends with humanity, it was with every person. This is called collective shame.

The Prophet Daniel, when he realized how his people had come to the point where they found themselves, expressed shame. His shame was not just for his ancestors, nor was shame his to carry alone. Daniel cries out to God that, "We and our kings, princes, and ancestors are covered with shame because we have sinned against you" (Daniel 9:8). The "we" of shame is the shame that I feel about the attack on our nation's capital. And about my role in keeping systemic racism alive.

In her book, Latasha Morrison makes this declaration of reality — "To build bridges of racial reconciliation, we'll need to confront the guilt and shame of our collective past." Otherwise, we allow denial to create roadblocks that keep us hiding in the bushes. We need to face shame and let him have his say so that we can lament, repent, and begin reparations of the damage done by all of us.

As Officer Harry Dunn described how the terrorists shouted racial slurs at him while declaring themselves "patriots", my friend Shame nestled comfortably in my lap. I anticipated feelings of anger and rage coming over me as the interview progressed. Instead,

shame kept anger away, allowing my tears to flow and empathy to hold me in its spell.

In episode four of our series, *Bridges*, we come face-to-face with the brutal reality of our shared past. We learn that there is no innocence. Our sin is communal, and God knows where we are hiding in the hope of not being found out. It is hard to claim innocence when we're caught with our hand in the box of cookies while standing on the kitchen counter.

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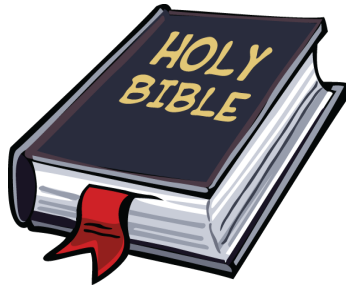
A reminder that we publish this newsletter that we call the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to info@FlintAsbury.org or let us know when you send a message through our [website](#). We post an archive of past editions on our website under the tab, Connect - choose [Newsletters](#).

Pastor Tommy

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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.

