

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Guilty (Confessing our bias towards color¹)



According to their "Voting Laws Roundup" as of February, The Brennan Center for Justice makes this observation concerning potential changes to voting laws across the country — "In a backlash to

historic voter turnout in the 2020 general election, and grounded in a rash of baseless and racist allegations of voter fraud and election irregularities, legislators have introduced well over four times the number of bills

to restrict voting access as compared to roughly this time last year."

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Volume 2 Issue 14

March 14, 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!

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."

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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 15 Mon
- Mar 16 Tues 10am-12:30pm
 Water / Food Distribution
- Mar 17 Wed 12Noon
 Pastor Book Club
 11am-12Noon Angel Closet Walk ins
 South Flint Soup Kitchen (See page 9)
- Mar 18 Thu
- Mar 19 Fri
- Mar 20 Sat
- Mar 21 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings
 Contemporary Worship



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO MY
 MOTHER, CIRILA RENDON,
 WHO IS GOING TO BE (91)
 YEARS OLD ON THURSDAY,
 MARCH 18th!**

CONNIE

(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.



Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation. Our study promises to be challenging and fulfilling.

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.

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.

Guilty (Confessing our bias towards color¹)... cont. from pg 1

Why not? Our country has an ugly history of taking away the voice and vote of persons who disagree with those holding power. This attitude disproportionately affects persons of color. We continue to have large numbers of white supremacists in our midst. Many of them are elected officials, trying to take us back to the time of The Naturalization Act of 1790, which limited U.S. citizenship to whites only. While various naturalization acts and laws followed the original one, it was 1965 before both men and women of color could vote. But legal authority often doesn't translate into practical authority.

The landslide victory of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris was a wake-up call for white supremacists. It's abundantly clear that allowing all Americans to vote will make it more difficult for the U.S. to go back to a time when white privilege was protected by law. You wonder why so many otherwise intelligent politicians continue to lie about our last election's integrity? To answer this question, you can look no further than lawmakers' actions in our own state.

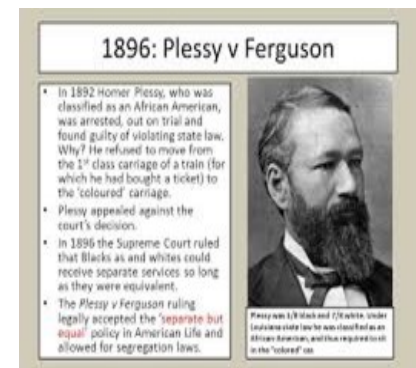
You and I struggle to deal with a deadly pandemic, recovery from poisoned water, high unemployment, food insecurity, and more. Meanwhile, many of our state legislators are spending their time finding creative ways to take away the vote of persons that don't benefit from privilege.

In her book, *Be the Bridge*, Latasha Morrison writes about a mixed-race man, one-eighth Black, named Homer Plessy. Mr. Plessy was publicly humiliated by a railroad employee after buying a first-class ticket in the Whites-only section of a passenger train in New Orleans. Apparently, aware of Mr. Plessy's lineage, the conductor instructed him to give up his seat. When he refused, he was arrested.¹

Though Mr. Plessy's skin tone was light enough that he appeared to be White, the judge cited the one-drop rule: anyone with at least one drop of non-White blood was automatically classified as "colored" under the law. Even though Mr. Plessy argued that the judgment violated the Fourteenth Amendment, which guaranteed equal protection

(and treatment) under the law, the Supreme Court upheld the lower court's decision. In 1896, Louisiana's separate-car law was upheld, allowing segregation under the "separate but equal" doctrine.

Latasha reminds us that "Colorism in the United States was long promoted by the White community as a way to divide and conquer African Americans," citing a few notorious examples.



One example, is a theologian named Samuel Stanhope Smith (President of the College of New Jersey, now known as Princeton University) argued that having lighter skin, straighter hair, and slimmer noses and lips was representative of "civilized society."



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

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

James 5:16 (NLT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read James 5:16. What are some of the reasons that it is difficult, at least for most of us, to confess our sins? What are some of the conditions that make confession more likely to happen?
2. Read the article in this week’s Circuit Rider, *Guilty*. Do you regularly vote in elections? If so, what keeps you from voting? If you do, what are the obstacles that you need to overcome to vote? What makes voting either easy or hard for you? In what ways does colorism affect you personally? What are some ways that we can overcome colorism?
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

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"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 date for March will be on March 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.

Another prominent individual that promoted colorism was a sociologist named Edward Byron Reuter. He published *The Superiority of the Mulatto*, where he argued that significant achievements in literature, medicine, and business, within the Black community, were accomplished by biracial, light-skinned people. Latasha's obvious conclusion, "What is colorism if not a form of white supremacy?"

In *Be the Bridge*, Latasha reminds us that "Confession requires awareness of our sin, acknowledgment of it, and the desire to move past the shame and guilt." But Latasha also points out that, "Confession also requires great humility and deep vulnerability."

We can add to Latasha's observations constructively. For example, confession, particularly confession that we did harm to another person, requires great courage. Perhaps more courageous is to admit that privilege gives us an advantage. It's intimidating to wonder whether, without privilege, we wouldn't have what we want to believe we earned.

The writer of the letter called James offers this advice, "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). Healing from generations of discrimination against persons of color is one of the primary goals of our series, *Bridges*. But for healing to be possible, we must name our sickness. This week, our collective sin that comes into focus is colorism. That is, our tendency to equate physical attributes to predictable outcomes resulting from centuries of inherited bias reinforced by systems, laws, and culture.

Latasha notes that "One of the major fears about confession is wondering what others will think of us." I suspect this is true for most of us. God already knows everything that we've ever thought or done and loves us anyway. We confess so we can get well and live abundantly.

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](#).

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

James 5:16

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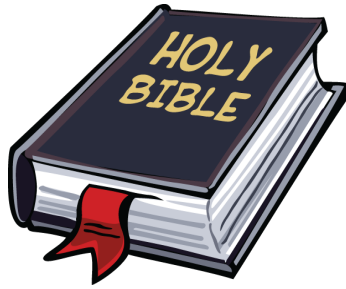
A reminder that we publish this newsletter that we call the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to info@FlintAsbury.org or let us know when you send a message through our [website](#). We post an archive of past editions on our website under the tab, Connect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

Pastor Tommy

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.

**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.

