

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 21

March 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!

Medicine (The balm of forgiveness¹)



Welcome to Episode five of our trilogy, *Bridges*, where we continue to address the often difficult subject of racial reconciliation.

June 17, 2015, was an ordinary day in Charleston,

South Carolina. It was Wednesday, and a weekly meeting of a prayer group was underway at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. And like every other Wednesday, Sr. Pastor Clementa Pinckney participated in this weekly event.

It was the evening after a hot summer day with temperatures in the high 90's.

But this day was different than most other weeks. This week a young

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Medicine (The balm of forgiveness¹) ..cont from page 1

white adult man introduced himself as Dylann came through the door to join them. Dylann was welcomed by the others. They were excited that he chose to join them. Pastor Pinckney pulled out a chair for Dylann. But as the group bowed their heads and closed their eyes in prayer, Dylann took a handgun out of his fanny-pack and started shooting, killing nine of them.

He used a Glock handgun he purchased with money his father gave him as a 21st birthday gift. Dylann had no problem buying a handgun despite a prior conviction that should have prevented him from purchasing firearms.

Dylann Roof would later say that he had no regret. He needed to kill them because black people were "raping our women and taking over our country." Which isn't true. But outrageous lies are more commonplace than ever before, it seems. Conspiracy theories are circulated using other lies as evidence and repeated by news reporters and politicians when they support their policy positions.

How did we get to this point? How did our nation evolve to such division that a young person, with no personal experience to collaborate what he thought to be true, take such extreme measures? It's complicated. And yet it's not².

Journalist Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah was in the courtroom the day that Dylann's mother fainted. She and a reporter from ABC News called for help. While Rachel cared for Amelia Roof, she suddenly felt

the irony of the moment. Rachel realized that she found herself "inside of a history of caretaking and comforting for fainting white women when the real victims were seated across the aisle, still crying."³

Rachael's article, "A Most American Terrorist: The Making of Dylann Roof," is long but worth the read. Her description of the victims is a fitting tribute that reads like poetry.

But most of her essay dives into the background of this young man's journey to becoming the first American in history to be sentenced to die for a federal hate crime. This is what kept Rachael up at night, she shares. The sound of Dylann's silence during his trial, as though he answered to no one, was like a ringing in her ears.

Rachael concluded that "Roof was safeguarded by his knowledge that white American terrorism is never water boarded for answers, it is never twisted out for meaning, we never identify its' handlers,' and we could not force him to do a thing."

Domestic terrorism is considered a greater threat to our peace and security than foreign enemies, would-be foreign terrorists, or the gathering of unaccompanied minors at our southern border. Yet, we continue to hear declarations from political leaders like "there are good people on both sides." Statements that embolden white supremacists groups who are armed, dangerous, and looking for an opportunity to terrorize innocent persons of color.



The other day I read an Instagram message from Yehrin Park, the head of brand operations at a company selling cookware called Our Place. Ms. Park was loading her luggage into the trunk of her Uber ride to the airport when a woman abruptly asked her if she was "going back to China." Yehrin, who graduated from high school in California, politely explained that she was headed to New York on business. The woman told her she should instead go back to China. How ignorant can a person be?

More importantly, when did it become acceptable for our political leaders to put the lives of the innocent at risk to deflect their own incompetence and failures? The answer is easy from a moral perspective — it's not. But the answer gets complicated whenever humans look for quick ways to deflect attention from their own failures.

It gets more complicated as well when Christians look for justification in scripture to support a particular bias. Last week, I reflected on Paul's letter to the

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



MAY YOUR DAY BEGIN WITH A SMILE ON YOUR FACE, LOVE IN YOUR HEART AND PEACE IN YOUR SOUL..

HAVE A SAFE, FUN AND HAPPY WEEKEND!



Coming up this week



- Mar 22 Mon
- Mar 23 Tues 10am-12:30pm
 Water / Food Distribution
- Mar 24 Wed 12Noon
 Pastor Book Club
 11am-12Noon
 Food Giveaway at the South Flint
 Soup Kitchen (see pg 9 for more info)
- Mar 25 Thu 11am-12Noon (Appointments only)
 Angel Closet/South Flint Soup Kitchen
- Mar 26 Fri
- Mar 27 Sat
- Mar 28 Sun Palm Sunday
 10:30am New Beginnings
 Contemporary Worship
- Mar 29 Mon 11am-12Noon (Walk-ins)
 Angel Easter Closet /South Flint Soup Kitchen

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!

(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.

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 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.

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.

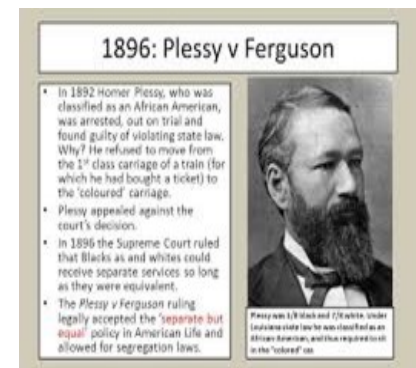
You and I struggle to deal with a deadly pandemic, recovery from poisoned water, high unemployment, food insecurity, and more. Meanwhile, many of our state legislators are spending their time finding creative ways to take away the vote of persons that don't benefit from privilege.

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

Create in me a clean heart, O God...

Psalm 51:10 (NLT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Psalm 51:9-11. Is there one of more things that you have done that you regret and need forgiveness? In what ways is God creating a clean heart in you? What does a clean heart look like for you?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Medicine*. Are you familiar with the massacre that took place in Charleston, SC in June 2015? What are some of your feelings about this event? Are you a victim of a crime or have you ever find yourself feeling like a victim? Have you made space for anger and named the harm? Can you imagine yourself finding a path to forgiveness? What might this path look like for you? What is a step that you can take when you're ready?
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 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](#).

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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.](#)

church in Rome after seeing a reference to a popular verse in Latasha's book, *Be the Bridge*.¹ Paul writes that everyone commits sin, and so we all fall short of God's expectation for us.

This is absolutely true. But the distance between recognizing that we all fall short to justifying greater and greater acts of violence is shorter than it should be. Dylann Roof's shooting rampage, or the woman in California's insult, or the recent shootings in Atlanta of people of Asian descent, are in a different category altogether. There are good people on both sides, but clear boundaries are being crossed that inflict great harm and suffering. There is a distinction to be made.

Rachael noted in her article a few of the unsupported stories that circulated about the circumstances that led Dylann Roof to commit such a heinous crime. Whatever the lethal combination of lies that Dylann chose to believe that convinced him that he was the real victim, the sin he committed is inexcusable. And his conclusion that the common trait among the persons responsible was the color of their skin sounds too much like yesterday's political soundbites.

Much has been made of some of the family members of the victims publicly stating words of forgiveness to Dylann in the courtroom. I can't imagine how hard that must have

been. Forgiveness is the balm that helps us to heal, however.

Create in me a clean heart,
O God.

Psalm 51:10

Nadine Collier, whose mother was one of the nine church members killed, was one of the family members who said, "I forgive you," to Dylann Roof that day. She also said to Dylann, "Give your life to the one who matters the most, Christ, so he can change your ways no matter what happens to you."

But forgiveness is too often a cry from the white majority to relieve our own shame. Latasha Morrison shares in *Be the Bridge* how the presiding judge opened the arraignment hearing by reminding those present that there were also victims in Dylann's family. Latasha said what so many must have felt, writing that "It felt like one more example of how majority culture calls for forgiveness in the midst of Black pain."

Latasha reminds us that it may be impossible for us to get rid of rage until we take the time to feel it? Or to get rid of anger unless we make space to recognize it? Indeed we must first name and claim the wrong and hurtful actions we're releasing the perpetrator(s) from? And this is uncomfortable for us.

But as comfortable as it is for those of us who are white, listening is our role in this crime. Just as

Dylann's mother listened to the families of those who were slain, perhaps feeling an overwhelming shame that she somehow shared in her son's guilt. And she does. And so do we.

Nevertheless, forgiveness is the medicine that we all need when we feel victimized. Forgiveness is like a healing balm. Latasha reminds us that forgiveness is "the way to freedom, the way to peace." and that forgiveness is "the way to build lasting bridges."

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Pastor Tommy

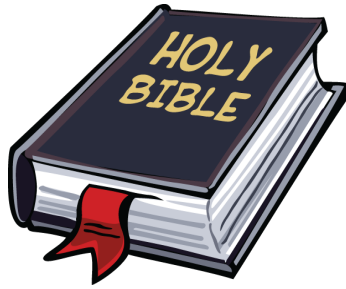
¹ Most of the content for our series comes from [Latasha Morrison, Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation](#). Yates & Yates and Penguin Random House, 2019.

² Matt Zapotosky . "Charleston church shooter: 'I would like to make it crystal clear, I do not regret what I did.'" © Washington Post, January 4, 2017.

³ Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah. "A Most American Terrorist: The Making of Dylann Roof," © GQ Magazine, August 21, 2017.

**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.



could spare some Bibles or on to those people that just of reading about Jesus Christ

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

