ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

The Turnaround (Time to change direction¹)



According to an ABC News article from October, Genesee County is studying 3,600 intersections to determine if they are good candidates to become roundabouts. Rowe Professional Services recently constructed Genesee County's first roundabout on Elms Road. According to Michigan officials, roundabouts reduce accidents and save lives.

I'm ambivalent when it comes to roundabouts. I like saving lives and reducing traffic congestion, but roundabouts take some getting used to. Years ago, I got completely turned around while returning to London from Oxford University. I swear there was a roundabout every half-mile or so. I eventually lost my sense of direction and ended up in Wales.

In episode seven of our trilogy, Bridges, we take a look at turning around from decades of denying the existence of racism in this country. Since efforts so far to end systemic racism feels more like

taking a wrong turn out of a roundabout than completing a turnaround. We have work to do as bridgebuilders.

For example, bridgebuilders call out our political and religious leaders to hold us accountable when racist statements or actions are said or done.

The Prophet Isaiah was called by God to be a bridge-builder. As a bridgebuilder, Isaiah became a mouthpiece for God in calling people out.

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Volume 2 Issue 28

March 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!

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

Rachel'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

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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



HAPPY ARE THOSE WHO
TAKE LIFE DAY BY DAY, AND
ARE THANKFUL FOR THE
LITTLE THINGS.

HAVE A SAFE, FUN WEEKEND!!



In case some of you were not aware, our long time member of Asbury, Virginia Bigger lost her son, Steve Bigger last week, who

was also a member. Please keep her and her family in your prayers.

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!



🚩 Coming up this week



Mar 29 Mon 11am-12Noon (Walk-ins)

Angel Easter Closet /South Flint Soup Kitchen

Mar 30 Tues 10am-12:30pm

Water / Food Distribution

Mar 31 Wed 12 Noon

Pastor Book Club

Apr 1 Thu

Apr 2 Fri

Apr 3 Sat

Apr 4 Sun HAPPY EASTER SUNDAY

10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

(We are live on <u>Facebook</u> and our newly launched <u>YouTube channel</u>. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at <u>FlintAsbury.org</u>.)

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.

Welcome Team

Production Team

Worship Leader

Ushers

Cafe

Children

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

Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony, Mirium

Anthony, Jim

Mirium

Cundi

Jonathon, Terrance

Christine & Norma

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.

Matt DePalma Farm Manager
Kevin Croom Farm Operations
Israel Unger Function to Funding
Kim Sims Connections
Karl Collyer Production
Katelin Maylum

Asburu Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor
Connie Portillo Office Secretary
Sylvia Pittman Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom Dir. Operations

Asbury Café

South Flint Soup Kitchen/Production

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.

Beginning on February 17, our Book Club participants take a 9-week journey together under the tutorship 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.

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.

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

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The Turnaround (Time to change direction¹) ... cont. from pg 1

The Book of Isaiah begins with statements that could just as quickly be credited to many spokespersons throughout history that called out leaders and ordinary people. According to Isaiah, God lays it out without sugarcoating. "I hate your celebrations," God says through Isaiah, "I will not listen, for your hands are covered with the blood of innocent victims" (Isaiah 1:15).

Liberation for the oppressed is arguably the most persistent statement about God's expectation for you and me found in scripture. Jesus states this goal for Himself in His opening remarks in front of a hometown crowd. And to end systemic racism is to liberate tens of millions of victimized persons of color.

But it is difficult for us to liberate people when we are the ones holding them hostage but denying our part in their bondage. Freedom for the oppressed begins with repentance from their oppressors. Beware that God offers a stern warning that the alternative to repentance is never good for the guilty. Sometimes I can hear God saying, "Don't make me come down there!"

God doesn't make empty threats nor false accusations. However, divine charges do come with an offer of grace — undeserved mercy for all who truly repent. But, reconciliation with each other and with God can only happen once we take the turnaround.

A turnaround offers space for a traveler to safely navigate towards the opposite direction. But often, a turnaround is more like a roundabout. It's easy to turn too soon towards a more enticing direction. When this happens, we may go in a different direction, but not the direction God intended.

The abolition of slavery in this country looked like a turnaround, except that oppression continued in different forms, such as the formation of the KKK and the implementation of Jim Crow

laws. Like the Civil Rights Acts, more recent developments put into law in the 1960s looked like a turnaround was finally here, but sadly oppression continued. Often in more subtle ways.

I hear God saying to us the same message Isaiah shared centuries ago. "Give up your evil ways... Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows" (Isaiah 1:16.17). But with more specifics that speak to issues of racism.

Latasha Morrison in *Be the Bridge* writes that "True reconciliation requires that we change our behavior, that we set a new trajectory. This change of trajectory, this about-face, is what we call repentance...This is what repentance looks like... changing course and committing to walking in a new direction."

Jesus didn't sugarcoat His condemnation of oppression when He called out the leaders of Jerusalem. Jesus said, "You are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matthew 23:17-28).

I'm reminded of these words when I remember that the KKK was founded by protestant Christians. I hear these words from Jesus as I listen to politicians' soundbites making racist statements as though they were defending the oppressed and seeking justice. I hear these words as I listen to conservative Christian leaders defend their support of racist political leaders.

Latasha Morrison shared her story when she visited Stone Mountain Park in Georgia. On this site, the KKK had its rebirth after losing momentum. This park continues today as a monument to the memory of confederate leaders. And as a constant reminder for African-Americans of an era of even more intense discrimination. Made possible by legislative action.

You are like whitewashed tombsbeautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones.

Matthew 23:17

We are each called by God to end oppression — to be bridge-builders. I hope that you will join us each week as we continue our trilogy, *Bridges*. Be sure to invite your friends and neighbors to join either in-person or online.

We have a new button on the homepage of our <u>website</u> - <u>Click</u> <u>here to watch</u>. This button takes you to a viewer to allow you to join live or watch later in the week. We're also live on <u>Facebook</u> and our newly launched <u>YouTube channel</u>. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at <u>FlintAsbury.org</u>.

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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,



Asbury Farms offers fresh produce every week!

Go to our website, <u>FlintAsbury.org</u> 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.

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Life groups question & notes

You are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness...

Matthew 23:23-28 (NLT)

N	NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

- 1. Read Matthew 23:23-28. Can you picture Jesus saying these words to the Pharisees? Can you imagine Jesus saying these words to political and religious leaders today? Can you imagine saying these words yourself? Can you imagine these words being said to you, by Jesus? Now what?
- 2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *The turnabout*. If you drive, what is your experiences with roundabouts? Love them, hate them, or no strong opinion? What does it mean for you to turnaround in your opinion, words, or actions? Do you have past or present thoughts, words, or actions that discriminate against others because of the color of their skin?
- 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.

Connecting with New Neighbors and Maintaining Bonds: How Immigrants can do both

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Moving to a new country can be an exciting and potential-filled time in life. However, it can also be terribly lonely. When you're in a whole new place, culture, and environment, it takes a very long time to feel like you're at home. Moreover, you're far away from the people you know and love — and tasked with finding a new community while also continuing to nurture bonds with the family you've left behind.



Fortunately, there are some great ways to manage both. <u>Asbury</u> is proud to offer a welcoming place where you can connect with your neighbors and find a community that cares. Here's how you can foster connections here and with your loved ones back home:

Offering Financial Support

Many immigrants move in order to find better career prospects, then send money back home to support their loved ones in their home country. When sending money back home, make sure you're using a safe and reliable funds transfer service. For example, if you're sending money to loved ones in The Philippines, remotely allows you to transfer funds quickly for a small fee <u>using your debit card</u>. This way you know, with confidence, that your money will reach loved ones in a timely manner without a ton of fees or hassle.

If you still have funds to spare, you may also want to consider donating to support local efforts in your new area. For example, Asbury runs several <u>community betterment</u> projects that can always use financial support. This is far from the only way to help us reach our goals (more on this in a moment), but if you're able to donate, we deeply appreciate it.

Volunteering

If donating isn't feasible for you, volunteering is a great way to both support community efforts and get to know people. This can be especially <u>valuable for seniors</u> who aren't working. Volunteering gives you something productive to do that you can be proud of and allows you to meet your neighbors along the way.

You can also look into organizing a fundraiser or goods drive to support your loved ones back home. In addition to the direct impact this will make on your friends and family, it can also help raise global and cultural awareness in your new town. This can make your space more welcoming and understanding for future immigrants and help establish a global mindset.

Staying in Touch

Once you start to build bonds in your new area, focus on nurturing them and turning them into strong, sustainable relationships. Although this is a bit more challenging during the pandemic, it's still possible to do this in a way that keeps you and your new community safe. For example, you can look into outdoor, socially-distanced community gatherings. You can also gather with vaccinated individuals while following the new CDC guidelines.

There are several good ways to stay in touch with people back home, as well. Technology has made us more connected than ever before, and you can use video chat software like **Zoom** or Skype, message apps, and even online gaming to interact with your loved ones in real-time. This makes moving across the world at least a touch less lonely, for you and for them.

However, you might also want to consider <u>sending letters</u>. Pen palling with friends back home — even if you also communicate online — can give you a way to send one another small gifts, stories about your day, and even printed photos. This can be especially useful if you or your loved ones back home aren't tech-savvy.

Moving to a new country is a massive transition, but finding a community will be a monumental help when it comes to adjusting. We hope this article helps you come up with ways to forge new bonds with your neighbors while still honoring the relationships you already have.

Looking for a faith-based community? Visit us at <u>Sunday service</u>, and stick around for fellowship afterward: We'd love to get to know you!

Photo Credit: Pexels

(Written by Jason Lewis, who is a personal trainer specializing in senior fitness. If you would like to reach out to Jason, you may go on **Strongwell.org**)

FLINT FOOD NOT BOMBS

Providing a HOT MEAL and/or local, organic
PRODUCE weekly.

SATURDAYS starting around 12NOON
Asbury United Methodist Church
1653 Davison Rd, Flint (810) 235-0016

Food Not Bombs is a loose-knit collectives, sharing free vegan others. **Flint Food Not Bombs** among other necessities of life-



group of independent and vegetarian food with believes that access of food—should be viewed as a right,



not a privilege. Yet in a nation with a military buget many times that of other nations, people continue to go hungry. This is immoral and unjust.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

Facebook.com/flintfoodnotbombs

Twitter.com/flintfnb

Email: flintfnb@protonmail.com

Website: foodnotbombsflint.wordpress.com

We're currently looking for volunteers so we can expand. If interested, send us a message! Solidarity!

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.—MLK 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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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 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.



** LAST DAY TO COLLECT BIBLES WILL BE EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 4TH.