

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Sunbeams (Life is a symphony¹)



Sunbeams are amazing. For some reason, I can remember countless times, from my early childhood, noticing sunbeams seeming to dance in the air as they reflected off particles

in the air. But have you ever tried to catch a sunbeam? Cats can tell you that sunbeams are elusive.

The sunbeam that we see is an illusion, yet rays of light coming from the sun

are as real as you and me. We are just not set up to catch them. And neither are cats,

Page 6

Next Steps (Heaven on Earth¹)



It was 2006. Summer was underway with longer days and temperatures. A typical summer — except that this summer would be different. A few months earlier, I signed up to be an adult volunteer to help

our youth ministry leaders with a trip to West Virginia.

That morning we left just as the sun was just starting to rise in the East. The weather was cooperating. And so were the two dozen

very sleepy teenagers piled into the two large vans we rented for the trip.

For me, this trip was several years in the making. My oldest daughter, Nicole, made four trips like this one with the youth of our church. Each of her four summers of high school featured a week in the Appalachians, where she worked alongside her friends, repairing houses.

Page 2

Volume 2 Issue 25

April 25, 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:

Sunbeams	1
Next Steps (Heaven on Earth ¹)	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/Living Water	5
Sunbeams	6
Asbury Veggie Boxes	7
Small Group Questions & Notes	8
Sunbeams	9
SFSK April Dates	10
Next Steps (Heaven on Earth ¹)	11
	12

Next Steps (Heaven on Earth¹) ..cont from page 1

Each time I heard a story about the joy that helping others brought to the giver, I longed to feel that same joy.

At the end of Matthew’s Gospel, we find instructions left by Jesus for all who choose to follow His way of life. These instructions are often referred to as the Great Commission. This label is insider speak for answering the question now what

Now what, Jesus?” we ask. Now that we know God lived among people. Now that Jesus shared the mind and heart of God with us, what do we do now?

Now that you know that God has big plans for you. Now that you know God’s plans for you are for your prosperity, for your joy, and for your need to feel loved, what do you do with this knowledge?

Go and make disciples of all the nations...teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you.

Matthew 28: 19-20

Here at Asbury, we refer to the answer to this now-what question as our next step. What is the next step you are willing to take now that you know that God loves you so much?

The answer to this question often eludes even the most faithful followers of Christ. This happens for a lot of reasons. My late father

might refer to most of this well-thought-out, carefully crafted, perfectly logical reasons as excuses.

Jesus left us with two primary tasks that are to occupy us for the rest of our lives. The first is to share the good news that God loves every one of us. This one should be easy. Most of us love to talk about ourselves, our worries, our problems, and how wrong the world has treated us. So talk.

As you talk, keep in mind that each sentence that comes from your lips is accompanied by breaths of air traveling into your lungs and providing oxygen to your body. Without this simple process of breathing, you would not be able to speak.

If you can’t imagine any other way in which God has blessed you, then remember that you are still breathing.

Meanwhile, every minute you’re telling others about your struggle, your heart pumps blood to every part of your body. How blessed are you feeling now?

Granted that these are blessings that every living person and animal receives, so you may not feel unique enough with just these two blessings. If this describes you, then how about this — what is your superpower? We each have a superpower or two. Special abilities that we do a bit better than most others.

Don’t know your superpower? Ask your friends and do the listening while they speak, and you eventually learn why they’re willing to hang out with you.

Share what you learn about the ways that God blesses you. This is the story that is uniquely yours to tell. This is how the world learns about Jesus Christ — from your stories.

The second instruction Jesus gives us in this part of Matthew’s Gospel is to teach others about Him. This one sounds harder to most of us? “But I’m not a teacher?” we exclaim. “Oh, but you are,” Jesus rebuts our excuse.



Whenever we use our superpowers to help others, we are teaching them about Jesus Christ. While it is more effective to give Jesus credit rather than claim it for ourselves, keep on doing, and the words will soon follow.

So what does this have to do with building and being a bridge for racial reconciliation?

In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom
 Sylvia Pittman
 Shirley Craig



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard Mary Nations



Coming up this week



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!

- | | | | |
|--------|------|---|---|
| Apr 26 | Mon | |  |
| Apr 27 | Tues | 10am-12:30pm | |
| | | Water / Food Distribution | |
| Apr 28 | Wed | 12Noon | Pastor Book Club |
| | | 11am-12Noon | Food Giveaway and |
| | | Angel Closet Walk ins at South Flint Soup Kitchen | |
| | | (See page 10) | |
| Apr 29 | Thu | | |
| Apr 30 | Fri | | |
| May 1 | Sat | | |
| May 2 | 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

Living Water

April 25th-May 30th



Book Club News

We finished our study of *Be the Bridge* by Latasha Morrison and completed our worship series, *Bridges*.



Racial reconciliation is a work in progress that comes with a great sense of urgency for Asbury. Our community superpower is diversity. But equity takes intentional effort, as does reconciliation. My prayer is that each of us continues the work of bridge-building that God called us to do.

Our next book offers us a glimpse into reconciliation with the earth that sustains us. The creation stories in Genesis offer humanity the blessing of earth stewardship. Again, our community is blessed beyond measure. Asbury Farms is within walking distance from our main campus on Davison Road. This offers all of us insight and opportunities to experience the presence of God in new and more profound ways.

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 McDaniel	Pastor
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Dir. Operations

Joel Salatin, in his book, *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs*, compares eggs from Polyface Farm with a typical egg purchased at the local supermarket and coming from a factory farm. The most notable difference was the measure of folate present in the comparison. Approximately 1,200 mcg for eggs from free-range hens and 47 mcg for the factory eggs. So what?

According to the Mayo Clinic, folate (vitamin B-9) is essential in red blood cell formation and healthy cell growth and function, crucial during early pregnancy to reduce the

risk of birth defects. Folate (folic acid) is also listed as an essential vitamin for excreting lead from our bodies.

This is not the first time I've come across science that reminds us that healthy bodies are not manufactured in factories. God created us within a complex system of connectedness. And scripture offers insight into how this connectedness brings abundant living when we live out a faith-based on honoring God's plan for creation.

Joel Salatin is a self-proclaimed member of the Christian community that we more progressive thinkers struggle to cozy up to — the conservative Christian right. Yet Joel writes that when visitors come to his farm that he has the “uncanny ability to irritate both the conservative and the liberal.” How? Let's discover this together.

The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs challenges us to put belief into action.¹ Racial inequality, global climate change, food insecurity, and a lot of diseases are human-engineered. We too often use our ingenuity and energy in ways that harm our earth which ultimately harms you and me. The solution is to live out our faith rather than just declare our faith. Put our actions in sync with our words.

In his book Joel challenges the pursuit of increased profits by farms that confine pigs in cramped, dark pens, injecting them with antibiotics, and feeding herbicide-saturated food. According to Joel's interpretation, such practices do not respect pigs as a creation of God. By not allowing pigs to express their *pigness* as God intended, we choose profits and convenience over our claims of faithfulness to God.

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.

In his book, we discover some overlooked ethical instructions found in scripture that should guide how we eat, shop, think about how we work together to end food insecurity. Stewardship of God's creation rather than exploitation offers proven solutions that work.

Joel's personality comes through in his writing. His warmth and humor help deliver what can be received as piercing criticism of our current food systems. I pray that you join us on this fascinating journey from seed to table.

A few of us meet in person each week. With new cases of the coronavirus raging in Michigan I encourage diligence. Most of our regular attenders are vaccinated. However, each person has an obligation to practice safety to protect others.

We each make our own arrangements for lunch at this point. We look forward to a return to pot-luck lunches, hopefully by this summer.

Suppose you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away. In that case, I encourage you to join us 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.

¹ Joel Salatin. *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs: Respecting and Caring for All God's Creation*. New York: FaithWords, a Division of Hachette Book Group, 2016.

Living Water (April 25th-May 30) ... Asbury Worship Series

We are each connected to each other, to our own identity, to the earth, and we are connected to God. The world is an interwoven tapestry. The pandemic illustrated for us that we suffer when we cannot depend on each other.

Our next series, *Living water*, begins April 25. Our series is based, in large part, on Joel Salatin's book about the connection between scripture and organic farming. Each episode explores topics that make a difference in our lives. God's plan is for you and me to live healthy, happy lives. But we're often misled by profit motives and false promises.

Lest you leave this article thinking that our entire focus is on free-range chickens or enhanced bottled water, allow me to share a little more insight into this 6-episode series.

In John's Gospel, Jesus used grapevines as a metaphor for our connectedness. In His explanation, Jesus emphasized the importance of connectedness and pruning. His analogy is multipurpose and powerful. And grapevines can help us to understand the difference between living water and cheap imitations.

God chose to live among humanity. It's foolish for me to think that I know for certain God's motivation for doing this, but my role as a pastor invites me to speculate. I'll start with the obvious, but in no way do I believe that I know the mind of God.

God is not a distant and symbolic deity far removed from the messiness of everyday life. Jesus was born in a feeding trough for livestock. He walked on country roads and city streets. He felt hunger pangs, cooked fish over a fire, drank from streams and wells, and cried real tears. Yes, Jesus prayed and led a spiritual life. But the concreteness of His faith was evident in what He did.

Jesus called the acts that offer evidence of what we believe our fruit. The fruit of our labor speaks volumes about what we believe to be true about ourselves, about others, and about the world around us. More importantly, what we do tells the story of what we genuinely believe about God.

Living water comes from another metaphor that describes the connection between God and us. We say that Jesus is "living water" based on the story of a conversation at a local well. A woman coming to the well to draw water during the heat of the day discovers that her thirst can only be partially and temporarily satisfied by the water she draws from the well.

Jesus offers us Living Water.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes 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://FlintAsbury.org) at FlintAsbury.org.

Pastor Tommy

¹ Joel Salatin. *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs: Respecting and Caring for All God's Creation*. New York: FaithWords, a Division of Hachette Book Group, 2016.

Sunbeams (Life is a symphome¹)... *cont. from pg 1*

Sunbeams contain energy. When they strike our body, we feel heat as the energy contained in the sunbeam converts into heat. The technical details of what happens to sunbeams are beyond our scope here. But sunbeams matter a great deal to you and me.

Scientists have discovered that the physical world is amazingly complex. The interactions of a sunbeam, for example, involve a symphony of interactions between molecules that make up the physical world as we experience it. Life is often described as a symphony with countless sources of vibration, each with its own sound and contribution to the whole.

Do you know who can catch a sunbeam? Plants are uniquely designed to catch sunbeams.

In the creation story found in the first chapter of Genesis, we read that God declared that the land sprout with vegetation. This included every sort of seed-bearing plant and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. And that the seeds coming from these plants will, in turn, produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came (Genesis 1:11). And the plants God created are sunbeam catchers.

But God did not end there. God also made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind (Genesis 1:25).

And like a master craftsman proud of their work, God declared that it was good with each part of the material world God created.

While animals don't catch sunbeams any better than humans, they play an essential supporting role to plants.

But God did not stop with plants and animals. God created humankind as caretakers for creation. Not just one human, however. God provided the first human with a workmate — a partner to help care for creation. And in the living world, babies are born, people die, and the cycle of life, death, and new life continue for as long as there is sustenance available to sustain life.

In explaining the significance of His impending death, Jesus used a grain of wheat as a metaphor. He said that a grain remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains (John 12:24). This is the cycle of life. This is the carbon cycle. And all living things participate in this cycle whether or not we acknowledge our role — even when we try to ignore our own impending death.

A grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains.

John 12:24

And because we lived, life continues whether we participated in birthing children. Whether or not we plant a garden. Life comes out of death which never has the last word. This is the promise made by Jesus Christ.

Humans have a special place in the carbon cycle. While our physical bodies eventually return to the stardust we're made from — our spirit never dies. Jesus promised that all who follow Him will be with God forever. This is the afterlife. And Jesus died to make this the truth and the reality.

Life takes work. These are the rules. Any head of household can tell you that sustenance takes work. Whether you're putting together a family meal or waiting in line at your favorite drive-through, a lot of our time is taken up in assuring that our bodies receive nourishment.

The *Theology of Work Bible Commentary* refers to work as a divine calling.² But what does it mean that work is a sacred calling? For one, it means that a farmer does not work simply to earn a living. Instead, a farmer carefully prepares the soil, places the seeds, and waters the plants because this is part of the farmer's identity. This is who she is in large part.



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

A grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains.

John 12:24 (NLT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read John 12:24. What does this text say about Jesus? What does it say about the created world? What does it say about you and me?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Sunbeams*. Have you ever tried to catch a sunbeam or watched a cat try? What is your favorite food? Where do the ingredients come from? Does this matter to you? Why does it matter where our food comes from and how it gets from the ground to our table?
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.

Likewise, animals have a divine calling. But there is the elephant in the room that lawyers suggest we don't name. Since I don't have a lawyer to advise me, I will just blurt it out — Animals have a purpose other than a role in cheap HAPPY MEALS!® There! — I said it. Notice the "R in a circle?" I included this for legal reasons. Someone owns this label. I will get back to meals that make us happy later.

All vocations are divine callings in one way or another. This is why many of the jobs we accept are not fulfilling. The job is just a paycheck and nothing more. Yet, because God created work for us to do and created us to do work, even the most mundane, thankless job is a form of worship that glorifies God.

Work, such as farming, brings us in direct contact with the physical world. We can feel, taste, and smell the soil. A prick from a thorn leaves a mark. God created the physical world and put us in charge of its well-being. The material world provides the air, food, and water that we need for survival. The material world also provides opportunities for expression and abundance that are much more than sustenance.

Joel Salatin, in his book, *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs*, invites us to consider whether what we claim to believe matches our choices for food. What goes into our

selection of whether we offer a salad or a Happy Meal® to our children? Can scripture help us make decisions that are more in line with what we believe God expects from us?

One of my most difficult struggles is using food for comfort. I eat when I'm anxious. And I'm anxious a lot. As a result, I am in a constant state of being overweight, despite my extensive collection of diet books. My doctor told me to write down everything I eat along with the caloric content. And when I reach the number of calories my body requires, stop eating.

But what if my body already has energy stored in the pantry? Then I need to ingest fewer calories for a while so my body can use up the reserve. This is called a diet. A 4-letter word that makes me cringe but may also allow me to live years longer than otherwise.

But our series, *Living water*, is not about dieting. In many ways, our primary topics are the opposite of dieting. Over the next six weeks, we explore God's abundance and our role in its equitable use and distribution. Using God's rules for justice and not rules we make up as we go that benefit a few at the sacrifice of the rest of us.

We begin our new series this Sunday. Our primary subject matter is food. How we grow it, where we get our food and how we treat



creation in the process. Be sure to request your copy of Joel Salatin's book.² And join us each Wednesday at Noon for Book Club and each Sunday at 10:30 am for New Beginnings.

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: Joel Salatin. *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs: Respecting and Caring for All God's Creation*. New York: FaithWords, a Division of Hachette Book Group, 2016.

² *Theology of Work Bible Commentary*. © 2015, 2016 Theology of Work Project. Peabody, MA: Henderson Publishers, 2020.



**SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN
IMPORTANT APRIL DATES**

Food Giveaways and Angel Closet Dates!

All are welcome! Mask required, if you don't have one, one will be provided for you. Temperature checks taken upon arrival. One person allowed inside at a time.

**APRIL 7TH & 28TH FOOD
GIVEAWAYS • 11 AM -12 PM**

**APRIL 14TH & 28TH ANGEL CLOSET
WALK-INS • 11 AM -12 PM**

**QUESTIONS??? 810-239-3427
SOUTHFLINTSOUPKITCHEN@
GMAIL.COM**

**3410 Fenton Road Flint, MI 48507
3 Blocks North of Atherton Road**

Tell your story. Perhaps the story you tell is about what you have learned over these past ten weeks about bridge-building. Perhaps your story is how ashamed you felt when you realized how humans were captured and forced to help build this nation but denied the benefits of their labor.

How did the story of George Floyd's death under the knee of a police officer affect you personally? How did you feel when you learned that people of color are substantially more likely to be stopped by police, arrested, and lose their lives in the process? How did you feel when you finally realized that the common denominator was skin color?

The next step for a few of us may be bold and brilliant. One or more of us may start or join a Be-the-Bridge group. One or more of us may advocate for equitable justice and reparations. Most of us may simply be better informed and tell others what we learned. And some of them may become bridges for racial reconciliation.

There is a constant and persistent dialogue taking place around us. God's Spirit whispers and nudges, coax and encourages each of us to go and do things that we otherwise would not do. Yet, when we start paying attention, and more importantly, when we take that next step, we discover an otherwise elusive joy. So why does it take us so long?

Latisha Morrison, in her book, *Be the Bridge*, writes that "So many of us hide little flickers of hope inside our hearts, and we ignore the small nudges from God, nudges pushing us to change the direction of our lives." And therein lies the problem.

Latasha reminds us that "when we don't engage God...we end up carrying on in the status quo, even if it is not the right thing, the most just thing." In other words, "it's easy to mistake being still with complacency, to mistake waiting with hiding." Change is hard enough, but when the pathway to change involves guilt, shame, and regret, it's hard to take any step in that direction. Even if it's the right direction to go.

The trial of former Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd is nearing its conclusion. Meanwhile, a white police officer killed Daunte Wright, claiming she mistakenly pulled out her gun as she reached for her Taser. Perhaps this is what happened. Unfortunately, the track record of law enforcement across the country sheds doubt on her claim.

Would the police officer take the same action without regard to the color of Daunte's skin?

Sadly, we know that history suggests an answer based on prejudice and a precedent of injustice. Skepticism is justified.

There is bridge-building work to be done. Bridges that allow others to cross the voids that divide us. Bridges that we build through truth-telling, lamenting, and remorse. Bridges help us push through the guilt and shame of our history of racial injustice. Bridges that lead us to confession and repentance.

Along with others who dare to step onto the bridges of reconciliation, we can work together to make reparations. Together we can right the wrongs perpetrated by those who came before us — and continued by our own willingness to accept ongoing, systemic inequities.

Perhaps one of you is called to help others become bridges of reconciliation. As we reach the end of our journey together that we called **Bridges**, my challenge is to make this a new beginning to a journey towards wholeness—a journey towards reconciliation.

Next week, we begin a new series we are calling **Living water**. Our primary subject matter is food. How we grow it, where we get our food, and how we treat creation in the process. Be sure to request your copy of Joel Salatin's book, *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs*. And join us each Wednesday at Noon for Book Club and each Sunday at 10:30 am for New Beginnings.

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.](#)

