

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Dance Lessons (Reclaiming God's Identity)



Tom Hanks, in the movie, *A League of Their Own*, said what men coaching teams of young boys and girls have said far too many times. "There's no crying in baseball!" The line in the script was not referring to an understanding found in a

book of rules memorized by coaches and umpires. This line was intended to draw laughs and connections with our own sense of what it means to be masculine. Real men don't cry.

Satisfied (Give God's plan a try)



Piglets are crowded in a nursery at Greg Boerboom's farm in Marshall, Minn. Credit Jenn Ackerman for The New York Times

According to research published in the *National Academy of Sciences Proceedings*, more than 17,000 deaths a year are attributable to pollution from farms across the United States. Granted,

17,000 casualties seem like a relatively small number when we consider that COVID-19 was attributed to almost 600,000 deaths.²

In a recent interview, Anand Giridharadas, author of *Winners Take All*, shared that society is "teaching men that the only way to have dignity is not be a woman." Anand adds that to be a man is to "not be weak, not be gay, always hit first and never present yourself as vulnerable or in need."³

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Volume 2 Issue 6

June 6, 2021



You may still wear a mask while in the area if you are more comfortable. If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you



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Satisfied (Give God's plan a try) ..cont from page 1

And this happens a lot with humans.¹

We become very proficient at doing the wrong thing. We discover a mineral that we can use to make more robust tools, so we decide to supersize our tool making. This results in opening massive craters in the earth to extract as much of this mineral as possible. And once the mineral is depleted in one area, we move on, leaving the ground wounded.

We discover that pork tickles our taste buds when cured and smoked. But this requires a time-consuming process. So we improve on what nature has to offer by industrializing the raising, slaughter, and processing of pigs. We add bacon to our cheeseburgers and pizzas, increasing the profits of the wealthy and our waistlines.

Global climate change is as real as the rains that soak the thirsty ground. It's as real as the winds that tore through homes and businesses in several states this past week. We succeed at going against God's plan for how we are to care for the earth and for each other — and we reap the consequences.

Yes, my friends who deny climate change is real, storms are as old as the dirt they soak. But the intensity and frequency of devastating storms continue to increase. And this affects every one of us.

Journalist Christopher Flavelle covered a report released by the Environmental Protection Agency in a recent *New York Times* article. A report kept from public view by the previous administration.³

In his article, Chris reports that "Climate change is already happening ...And in many cases, that change is speeding up."

Citing the apparent consequences of global warming, he notes that "Wildfires are bigger, and starting earlier in the year. Heatwaves are more frequent. Seas are warmer, and flooding is more common. The air is getting hotter. Even ragweed pollen season is beginning sooner."

When it comes to caring for God's creation, humanity's report card shows a failing grade.

There is hope. According to a *Washington Post* article, Exxon-Mobile was recently forced to pay attention to the damage inflicted on our planet in search of profits for its shareholders. A similar reckoning took place at Chevron. Major energy companies are being forced to pay attention to the damage their companies do to the environment.⁴

And it's time for food producers to be held accountable for their damage to creation.

Granted the taking care of our planet gets complicated. Balancing how to address the needs of humanity with earth care isn't easy. And the quest for wealth motivates humans to succeed at something God sees as evil.

I realize that I can't convince you to stop visiting McDonald's if you believe that you can't live without their fries. Perhaps I can appeal to your desire for safety from the storms

made more dangerous and destructive by global warming. Environment destruction is caused in significant part by the consequences of our choice of food.

One of the Old Testament practices that we look at as outdated and irrelevant is sacrifice. The idea that God expects us to slaughter an animal and burn it on an altar to show how much we care about what God thinks is definitely primitive.

But the idea of sacrificing our time and money is quite contemporary. Charitable giving continues to be a conversation at tax time for the well-off. And passing offering plates predates the church. Scripture uses the word "tithe" to describe contributions that God expects from each one of us.

In the Book of Malachi's prophecies, we read about God's expectations regarding our tithes (see Malachi 3:10). A tithe is each person's contribution — we each have an obligation to contribute to the well-being of the whole. No one gets a pass who has something to give.

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, but will slowly start meeting in the Wesley Room depending on the size of our group. Please call the Church Office for more info 810-235-0016.

You may still wear your mask, if you feel more comfortable wearing it, when coming into the Asbury building and use hand sanitizer that is placed throughout the building.

Thank you and everyone stay safe!

- Jun 7 Mon
- Jun 8 Tues 10am-12:30pm
 Food/Water Distribution
- Jun 9 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club
 11am-12Noon Angel Closet
 (Walk-ins only) at South Flint Soup Kitchen
- Jun 10 Thu
- Jun 11 Fri 3pm Multicultural Family Night
 (see flyer on page 7)
- Jun 12 Sat 12Noon Food Not Bombs
- Jun 13 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.)

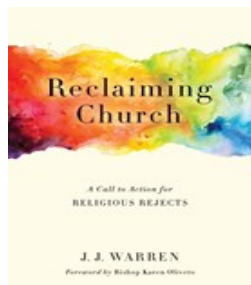
Asbury Worship Series

Coming Out

June 6 to July 25



Book Club News



We finished our study of *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs* by Joel Salatin and completed our worship series, *Living Water*. We learned how connected we are to each other, to our own identity, to the earth, and to God.

The world is an interwoven tapestry, and Joel Salatin's book brought to life the connection between scripture and organic farming. God's plan is for you and me to live healthy, happy lives, but we're often misled by profit motives and false promises.

Our book for June was written by seminary student J. J. Warren. J. J. is a speaker, preacher, and advocate for LGBTQ+ rights in the church. He is a graduate of New York's Sarah Lawrence College and is currently attending Boston University School of Theology.

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 & Exec Dir
Connie Portillo	Office Manager
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Exec Chef & Dir Opers

The Center for Disease Control issued new guidelines for wearing face masks on May 13 that offer great hope for more of us coming out into the open. After a year and a couple of months of isolation from seeing smiles and frowns, many of us are excited to rejoin the show in progress. A production that was interrupted when a deadly virus spiraled out of control.

The guidance mandates the wearing of face masks for the unvaccinated. This affects a much smaller

As a certified candidate for ordination in The United Methodist Church, J. J. faces a process that traditionally disqualified openly gay candidates. However, the UMC is in the midst of a historical argument that makes way for J. J. and hundreds of other candidates to respond to God's call on their lives. While able to live as the persons God created them to be.

J. J.'s visibility increased quickly after an impassioned plea for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons at a special meeting of the UMC's top lawmaking assembly in 2019. After his speech went viral, J. J. was later interviewed by HuffPost, NBC, and WXXI Radio.

In his book, *Reclaiming Church*, J. J. Warren calls for his generation to come together in transforming the contemporary church from an exclusionary club to a movement that is open to all people. A church that not only welcomes the LGBTQ+ community but offers leadership and ordination regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Matt DePalma	Farms Manager
Chris Freeman	South Campus Bldg Mgr
Israel Unger	Finance Director
Kim Sims	Connections Suprv
Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
Katelin Maylum	Sr Mgr Local Food
Jose Trejo	<i>Enlace de Idioma Español</i>

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.

group than one might think since persons refusing to get vaccinated are often the same group refusing to wear a face mask. "It's about freedom" is one retort I've grown weary of hearing. Fortunately, businesses still have the option of requiring a face mask to be worn along with healthcare facilities and public transportation. The pandemic isn't over — it's just less of a threat.

A few of us meet in person each week, and we invite you to join us for our conversation about J. J.'s book. New cases of the coronavirus are at their lowest levels in a year in Michigan. However, we continue to encourage diligence.

While our regular attenders are vaccinated, we realize that there remains a large number of persons that are not vaccinated. Therefore, we require masks in our building for all persons when not eating or drinking. We strongly urge all persons to get vaccinated as soon as practical unless advised not to by your doctor.

We each make our own arrangements for lunch at this point. We look forward to returning to pot-luck lunches later this summer if the national targets for vaccinations are met. The CDC relaxes recommendations for wearing face masks.

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away I encourage you to [join us online](#) for our Wednesday gatherings. Alternatively, you can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others say by calling (929) 436-2866 -- enter 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

¹ Warren, J. J. *Reclaiming church: a call to action for religious rejects*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020.

Coming Out (June 6 to July 25) ... Asbury Worship Series

Coming out is easy for a lot of us and not so easy for most of us. "Is it really safe?" we ask. "Is it really safe to reveal our vulnerabilities to one another?"

Part one of our new series coincides with the celebration of Pride Month. An annual tribute to the victims of a police raid in 1969 of the Stonewall Inn — a place where persons could gather whose gender identity or sexual orientation differed from their gender at birth. Coming out for persons coming to terms with their actual identity is substantially more terrifying than choosing to leave my face mask at home.

Fortunately, activist Brenda Howard, often referred to as the Mother of Pride, organized a way to keep the subject on the minds of a growing number of people. Including people with friends and family struggling with fears of coming out before being found out. And Pride Month took root and grew into a national time of recognition.

That these two life-giving opportunities share the calendar looked like a problem at first glance. Standing in solidarity with people made to feel abnormal for being who God created them to be, is crucial to the Asbury community. After all, we claim to be an inclusive community that puts the teachings of Jesus Christ into action. And as our spiritual leader, I don't want to take away from celebrating the coming out of any who risk relationships and hurt to be who they are wherever they go.

Yet, I realize that the losses created by our response to the pandemic are painful. Everyone was affected because so many of us were infected. And some of the same brokenness that is the human condition led to the needless loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. It's time to come out again and face a new normal. And we need to talk about it now.

Stay tuned. Meanwhile, share your thoughts, prayers, and creative gifts with our community. Testimonies are powerful. What you feel and believe matters a great deal. Let's plan to celebrate together.

I would be remiss if I did not emphasize that vaccinations are essential for everyone. Understandably a few have medical conditions where vaccination could be inadvisable. But the rest of us can protect our more vulnerable community members by ensuring that we aren't able to spread the virus. It's time to come out of whatever fears or biases keep you from being a part of the solution. Get vaccinated.

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

Pastor Tommy

Dance Lessons (Reclaiming God's Identity).. *cont. from pg 1*

Masculinity is alive and toxic in our nation and in our community. Harmful views on what it means to be masculine were exposed in dying color during the pandemic. Amy Morin, in her article defines "toxic masculinity" as "cultural pressures for men to behave in a certain way" that is harmful for themselves and others.²

Alisha Haridasani Gupta, in her article, made reference to comments made by the Fox News host Tomi Lahren regarding a Twitter video of candidate Biden wearing a mask. Lahren commented that Joe Biden should "carry a purse with that."³

Research conducted by the Los Alamos National Laboratory and other studies showed men to be less likely than women to adopt behaviors that could prevent the spread of diseases like COVID. Men were less likely than women to wash their hands, observe social distancing, and wear masks. This makes society's idea of masculinity sound suspiciously like stupidity.

Perhaps crying belongs in baseball, just as taking precautions that help prevent the spread of deadly diseases is a sign of strength and intelligence.

Annabelle Bernard Fournier, in her article, "What Does Gender Nonconforming Mean?" writes that "Gender roles, despite existing wherever humans live together, can be oppressive and even harmful." Gender roles are societal norms or expectations.⁴

In support of her assertion, Annabelle argues that "Gender roles limit what any person can do and reduce a person's life to what they "should" do. It forces people to perform what is expected of them, rather than live authentically as who they feel they are."

In her article, Annabelle argues that even the idea of referring to a person's decision to not follow societal norms as "non-conformity" is problematic. Conformity suggests that it is better to be consistent with societal expectations than

to not conform.

On the topic of coming out for persons claiming a different gender than the norm, Annabelle writes that "When someone breaks out of the box, they are met with ridicule, disdain, and violence, with the ultimate goal of forcing them to conform."

Our new series, *Coming out*, is not just about non-conformity. Although non-conformity is a big part of following the teachings of Jesus, our conversations include our struggles to simply do what we want to do. Part one of our series focuses on the church's response to non-conformity in regards to gender identity.

J. J. Warren, in his book, *Reclaiming Church*, addresses his own struggles as a gay man to claim his identity. He chose to come out despite the negative ramifications of his decision on his future role in the church. While J. J. discovered that he was not alone, he also found out that his experiences growing up differed significantly from the experiences of most others sharing his struggle.¹

His book is an invitation for any who has felt rejected by the church to reclaim the very church that rejected you. In particular, J. J.'s focus is on persons rejected as a result of gender non-conformity. But the first step in reclaiming the church is to first reclaim our perceptions of God. And our view of God's will determines our view of God.

At the moment their eyes were opened and they suddenly fell shame at their nakedness.

Genesis 3:7

Scripture wrestles with humanity's struggle with God's will from the very beginning. And J. J. describes this struggle as dancing with God. The creation

story includes a scene where the first humans discover their nakedness and hide from God because they were ashamed.

How often do we feel ashamed when we face our true identity?

Welcome to episode one of our 2-part series, ***Coming out***. In this series, we focus on claiming our true identity while reclaiming a perception of God based on the truth of scripture. We learn that God sides with the oppressed, marginalized, and rejected.

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:](#) Warren, J. J. *Reclaiming church: a call to action for religious rejects*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020

² Amy Morin, LCSW. Medically reviewed by Akeem Marsh, MD. "What Is Toxic Masculinity?," © *VeryWellMind*, November 26, 2020

³ Alisha Haridasani Gupta. "How an Assertion to Masks Stems From 'Toxic Masculinity' ", © *NY Times*, Oct. 22, 2020

⁴ Annabelle Bernard Fournier. Medically reviewed by Steven Gans, MD. "What Does Gender Nonconforming Mean?" © *VeryWellMind.com*, November 23, 2020

RESCHEDULED!



MULTICULTURAL FAMILY NIGHT

We are having a fiesta in our parking lot to kick off our new program!

English and music classes for kids start at 3pm

Dinner served at 6pm

Games at 7pm



Questions?

Call 810-235-0016 or

email Katelin at

katelin@flintasbury.org

There will also be a live DJ!

NOW JUNE 11th, 3PM

LOCATED AT ASBURY CHURCH

1653 DAVISON ROAD FLINT, MI 48506



Life groups question & notes

At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness.
Genesis 3:7 (NLT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Genesis 3:7. Have you ever felt ashamed for God to see you? What does hiding from God look like for you? What makes you feel shame? How do you perceive God in the context of your own shame?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Dance lessons*. Have you ever struggled with your gender identity? If you were identified as a male at birth do you feel as though your masculinity differs from the societal norms? In what ways? If you were identified as female at birth do you feel as though your femininity differs from societal norms? In what ways? Have you ever felt rejected by a church or persons claiming to speak on behalf of a church? What was their reasoning? In what ways does your view of God differ from the view that you believe they have?
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.

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 sharing free vegan and **Flint Food Not Bombs** believes other necessities of life—should privilege. Yet in a nation with a other nations, people continue to go hungry. This is immoral and unjust.



group of independent collectives, vegetarian food with others. that access of food—among be viewed as a right, not a military budget many times that of



JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

[Facebook.com/flintfoodnotbombs](https://www.facebook.com/flintfoodnotbombs)

[Twitter.com/flintfnb](https://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



JUNE DATES

Angel Closet & Food Giveaways

June 2nd & 23rd - 11am-Noon
Food Giveaways

June 9th & 30th - 11am-Noon
Angel Closet (Walk-ins only)

**MASK AND TEMPERATURE CHECK
REQUIRED FOR ENTRY.**



South Flint Soup Kitchen
3410 Fenton Road
3 Blocks North of Atherton Rd.
Flint, MI 48507

810-239-3427

What we give and how much we give is quite personal, however. Think of a tithe as the contribution that God expects from you to assure that God's plan for creation is carried out. Tithes, for most of us today, consist of money, time, and capabilities.

Put me to the test and you will see that I will open the windows of heaven and pour out on you in abundance all kinds of good things.

Malachi 3: 7-12

Tithes are one way that we give credit to God for all that we have. God doesn't need our money. God wants our affection for creation to show in our sacrifices. In other words, our tithes.

God wants us to try it out — to test what God promised. In other words, try doing what God asked us to do — try living the way God asks us to live — and then see what happens. This means taking care of creation the way God asked us to take care of creation.

And this includes paying attention to where our food comes from and being grateful for each spoonful.

Try paying attention to the carbon cycle that we talked about a couple of weeks ago. Try turning to local farms that don't use chemicals to grow

food. Try eating foods that aren't processed and enjoying the plants and animals sacrificed so that you can live.

God promised in Malachi that when we live the way God intended us to live, insects will not destroy our crops, and our grapevines will be loaded with grapes. And that our joy will be evident and contagious.

In other words, try living the way God intended us to live — and you will be satisfied.

If you missed our episodes of our series, *Living water*, you can find the articles under the Worship tab of our website — *Messages and Audio Teachings*. Our focus is on food. How we grow it, where we get our food, and how we treat creation in the process.

On June 6 we begin a new series titled *Coming out*. You can find more information elsewhere in the Circuit Rider under the heading *Coming up in worship*.

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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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 Sarah Kaplan "Air pollution from farms leads to 17,900 U.S. deaths per year, study finds," © *Washington Post*, May 10, 2021.

³ Christopher Flavelle "Climate Change Is Making Big Problems Bigger," © *NY Times*, May 12, 2021.

⁴ Steven Mufson "A bad day for Big Oil," © *Washington Post*, May 26, 2021.

As parents, one of our most fervent desires is for our children to stay healthy and safe throughout every stage of life, from infancy to old age. And much of the decisions our kids make now and in the future are significantly impacted by our influence. We know: Your kids don't always act like they're watching and listening to you — but they are.

While being an exceptional parent comes with a lot of pressure, it's something each of us can accomplish. Through God's grace and by implementing some practical everyday strategies, you can be the [role model](#) you're called to be and help your children learn to make healthy choices in life. [Asbury](#) shares some wellness strategies you can begin incorporating today to foster physical, mental, and spiritual health.



Image via [Rawpixel](#)

Engaging in Worship

Worship is at the foundation of any Christian life. As such, it must remain a priority in your life if you want to be effective in leading your children in Christ. It's also essential that you encourage your kids to engage in worship on a regular basis as it will play a more significant role in helping them make good decisions than any other factor.

Along with making time for your personal worship (remember: your kids will notice), make sure you are making room for [family worship](#) at home. This might include anything from singing songs together to watching sermons online. And, if possible, attend corporate worship events (such as weekly church or summer camps) that foster community among believers.

Prioritizing Education

Though they may not see it yet, your children's education will play a major role in their livelihoods in the future. Regularly speak with your kids about the importance of education, and provide verbal encouragement and other types of positive reinforcement as they navigate school. If your child is struggling at school, evaluate their [learning style](#) to ensure they are being given the best chance to succeed.

This is another area in which you can serve as a role model. If you're unhappy in your career, for instance, you can change it by earning a college degree. Say that you feel led to become a teacher. You can take online courses that fit into your schedule and lifestyle and obtain a teaching degree and [license](#). Or, if you are interested in becoming a marketing professional, you can pursue a degree in marketing. Not only will returning to school arm you with new knowledge, skills, and credentials, but it will also show your children that they can achieve their goals in life.

Being Active

Exercise is a critical part of living healthily. Make sure you are maintaining a consistent [fitness routine](#) in your own life so that your kids see the benefits that come with it. As with worship, find ways to exercise [together](#) as a family. For some families, this means scheduling daily walks or bike rides. For others, it means taking weekend hiking trips. Whatever you do, try to facilitate fitness in your household on a regular basis.

There's no reason why you can't be the parent you want to be for your kids. Remember to keep worship, education, and exercise as priorities in your household, and you'll be well on your way to helping your children make healthy choices now and later in life. And most importantly, don't forget to serve as a good role model!

Join Asbury Church every Sunday [for services](#). Online services are available!

(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 [Stongwell.org](#))