

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER



Selfies (Switched at Birth)



ADOBESTOCK_420741644 IMAGE LICENSED

Many of us hide our true identities from the visibility of others. We hide who we are even from people close to us.

J. J. Warren, in his book, *Reclaiming Church*, shared a childhood story about a Halloween costume that his mother made for him. That year, J. J. took to

the streets of his neighborhood as an Airplane.¹

The young J. J.'s problems began as soon as he tried to get through the first door. His costume was too wide, and he had to walk through doorways sideways. His costume made it impossible for another person to share the same sidewalk as he went door to door.

His costume was awkward. But then aren't all costumes a bit

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Volume 2 Issue 27

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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



Reclaiming Queer (Reclaiming the church)



J J Warren speaking at United Methodist Church General Conference...credit Mike DuBose UM News

In a call to reclaim both the church and the meaning of "queer," J. J. Warren, in his book, *Reclaiming Church*, writes that "The Church has institutionalized

racism, sexism, and homophobia."¹

These are serious charges that are sure to result in blow back from

both church leaders and faithful followers. But are they true? Doesn't the church welcome everyone? The answer is that it depends on the church.

Former Michigan journalist and Pulitzer Prize winner Robin Givhan in a Washington Post article differentiates between religious institutions, churches, and faith. Givhan argues that, "The church is a community of imperfect people who create a safety net for the fearful or the broken."²

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Reclaiming Queer (Reclaiming the church ..cont from page 1

Her argument suggests a church that welcomes anyone regardless of whether the church leadership might disagree with their opinions or life-style. Givhan's article focused on the very public knowledge that President Biden is known to be a devout Catholic. The Biden's regularly attend church and usually choose a Catholic church to attend.

Joe Biden should be a breath of fresh air for traditional church leaders. Unlike his predecessor, Biden consistently attends worship and does not try to hide his religious beliefs. Yet the Bishops that oversee the Catholic Church in the U.S. are plotting to refuse communion to the President, citing his support for abortion rights.

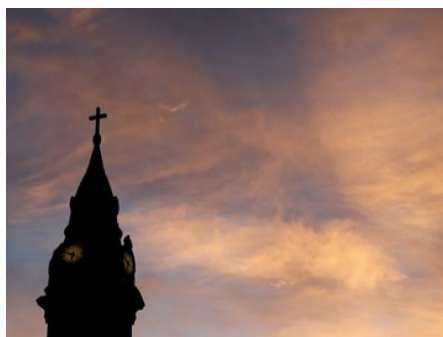
According to an article in the NY Times by Elizabeth Dias and Ruth Graham, a conservative movement within the church gained power during the previous administration. And they plan to use this power to make a political statement. ³

The Christian church began during a time when politics and religion were publicly and culturally intertwined. Yet national tradition states that this country was founded by individuals fleeing from religious persecution. The freedom to worship God as we see fit is a fundamental right protected by law.

Publicly, this is what the action taken by Bishops aims to do. Joe Biden is free to go to a different church where his political opinions do not keep him from participating in the sacred acts of worship. Since

Biden is only the second Catholic President in history this suggestion creates headlines and political soundbites.

"Devout" is apparently reserved for persons living in step with the teachings of the church. More accurately, devout, in this case, is reserved for persons adhering to the teaching that those in power choose to focus on. And in this particular case, the focus is clearly on politics.



A Catholic church in Philadelphia. The city had stopped placements with an agency, Catholic Social Services, after a 2018 article in The Philadelphia Inquirer described its policy against placing children with same-sex couples. Credit...Julio Cortez/AP

Representative Ted Lieu, a Catholic and Democrat from California, raised the question of how Republican politicians who support the death penalty seem to be left out of the scrutiny of these same bishops.

This rift isn't new. In 2016, Biden was selected to be honored at a Notre Dame's commencement ceremony. At the time, Bishop Rhoades, who is leading the charge of a conservation faction of the church, publicly protested choosing Biden.

In an article published by the *Catholic News Service*, Bishop Rhoades stated that, "We should make sure there is a basic consistency between their political decisions and sound Catholic moral and social teaching. At the time the bishop was referring to Biden's support of same-gender marriages and a woman's right to an abortion. ⁴

But the latest rift is laser focused on the single issue of abortion rights. Biden has publicly stated that his support for a woman's right to choose an abortion does not mean that he is not troubled by abortions. His past statements indicate a recognition of the complexity of the subject and an understanding that compromise takes precedent over his personal beliefs.

So why did abortion rise to the forefront of the conversation and same-sex marriage fall to the background?

One explanation is found in a recent Gallup Poll that shows for the first time a majority of Republicans support same-sex marriages? And, overall, more than 70% of Americans support same-sex marriages. ⁵

And while the majority of U.S. voters support a women's right to have an abortion, this question is much more nuanced.

In an often referenced story about Jesus we gain insight into the hypocritical practices that

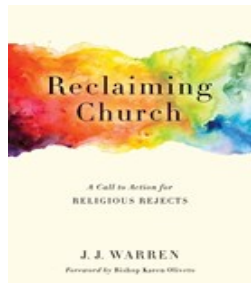
Asbury Worship Series

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 McDaniel	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

Selfies (Switched at Birth)... *cont. from pg 1*

uncomfortable? Whether we are dressed as an airplane or a farmer wearing a business suit — costumes are an attempt to fool the world into thinking that we are someone that we are not.

Whether our costume tells others that we are straight when, in reality, we are gay, a costume is awkward. Whether our costume tells others that we are gay, when in fact, we are straight, costumes are uncomfortable.

We wear costumes for self-preservation. Yet, it is the awkwardness of the costume that can cause the most damage.

The Trevor Project's *National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2021* notes that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth faced many unique challenges during this past year. The pandemic magnified existing struggles too often with damaging results.²

In addition to the disparities caused by the pandemic, the survey also looked at mental health care disparities, discrimination, food insecurity, conversion therapy, and suicide. An alarming 42% of the youth surveyed reported attempted suicide within the prior 12 months. Moreover, 3/4's of LGBTQ youth reported symptoms associated with anxiety disorder. Almost as many reported symptoms associated with depressive disorder.

One of the many fascinating discoveries in scripture is the Bible's unwillingness to skip over the messiness of life. And the poster child for life's messiness is the stories about the descendants of Abraham from which the nation-state of Israel gets its name. This story is about finding and coming to grips with one's identity. The main character, initially named Jacob, is a metaphor for Israel.

Isaac was the son of Abraham and Sarah. Twenty years after marrying Rebekah, the couple gives birth to fraternal twins. Esau was everything his father wanted in a son. He was strong and a great hunter. On the other hand, Jacob preferred hanging out with his mother and learned his way around the kitchen.

At that time, first-born sons were assumed to be the primary heirs of the family's estate. Since Esau was born first, the societal expectation is that he would emerge as Isaac's successor. Jacob would assume a supporting role. Since Esau was also his father's favorite he was assured of his future role.

As readers, we know that a twist is coming as the narrator reveals an insight that plays out decades later as Isaac nears death and loses his eyesight. The second-born son, Jacob, will emerge as Isaac's protégé. Taking matters into her own hands, Rebekah plots with Jacob to make sure this plan becomes a reality.

Rebekah helps Jacob trick Isaac to promise him Esau's birthright. When Isaac discovers his error, he is furious, but the damage is done. When Esau learns what happened, he was understandably angry. When Rebekah learns that Esau was plotting to kill his brother after their father passed, she sends Jacob to live with his uncle.

The story turns toward Jacob's own struggle with his identity and purpose. We learn that Jacob realizes in a dream that God had blessings in store for him. God did not turn back the clock and remake Jacob. God did not even bring up the deception that Jacob used to trick his father. God simply promised that the ground under Jacob's feet was itself holy.

Jacob is blessed by God, not for a costume that he wore, pretending to be someone or something else. God did not dredge up Jacob's past. God did not remind Jacob how he had deceived his older brother and stolen his birthright. Jacob was blessed by God for just being the Jacob God created.

often creates stumbling blocks for church leaders.

A few devout followers tried to trap Jesus into making a gaff that could be used against Him. One of them asks Jesus a politically connected question about paying taxes that supported the Roman Empire. The tax rate imposed on the residents of Palestine were oppressive, and religious doctrine brought into question whether devout Jews should refuse to comply.

Jesus asked whose image appeared on the coins used to pay taxes. So they fetched a Roman coin which had the Emperor of Rome's image engraved on it. Jesus responded with the instructions that even devout Jews should "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God" (Matthew 22:21).

When they handed him a Roman coin he asked, "Whose picture and title are stamped on it?"

Matthew 22:19-20

And what belongs to God? We do. We were created in God's image and given the breath of life along with purpose and capacities. And God asks for one thing in return that forms the basis for all that we owe to God for our lives. We are to love God and our neighbor (Luke 10:27).

This is what separates the notion of religion from what it means to have faith. Religion is a rulebook and a structure to assure adherence. Faith is based on the belief that we are to give to God that which belongs to God. Faith is not based on rituals, rules, or perfection. Faith is

offering to God and to our neighbor the person God created us to be. No substitutes and no fakes.

Givhan writes that, "The rules of religion matter; but they are not the essence of faith."

J. J. Warren ends his book with a call to action. He writes, "It's time we separate ourselves from the empire again and align ourselves once more with the underpaid, the unhoused, the previously rejected and condemned. It's our time in history to reclaim what it means to be the Church."

Asbury echoed his call to action when our church body voted unanimously to publicly declare our alignment with a movement known as a reconciling church. This movement's mission is reflected in the title of the book this series was based on.

This means that our church welcomes LGBTQ persons without reservation. This also means that we respect and honor all variations of gender identity and sexual orientation. Which puts Asbury in conflict with the actual policies of our own denomination.

One of our worship band's favorite songs usually reserved for the days that we take communion is titled "Come to the Table." The invitation with the song's lyrics is for the listener to join a group of misfits. And the bridge names the labels given to both misfits and the usually included.

"Come meet this motley crew of misfits. These liars and these thieves. There's no one unwelcome here." And "that sin and shame that you've brought with you, you can leave it at the door, and let mercy draw you

near." We hope that you will come to the table regardless of whether you agree with what we believe.

We can find common ground to stand on.

Welcome to the conclusion of Part one of our 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 blesses us for who God created us to be.

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

² Robin Givhan. "Faith in silence," © *Washington Post*, June 22, 2021.

³ Elizabeth Dias and Ruth Graham. "In Rift With Biden, a Dramatic Show of Force by a Conservative Catholic Movement," © *New York Times*, June 20, 2021.

⁴ "Bishop Rhoades disagrees with Notre Dame's decision to honor Biden," © Catholic News Service, March 16, 2016.

⁵ Justin McCarthy. "Record-High 70% in U.S. Support Same-Sex Marriage" © *Gallup*, JUNE 8, 2021. All rights reserved.

Life groups questions & notes -

Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.

Matthew 22:15-22 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Matthew 22:15-22. Are you familiar with this story? Retell the story as you remember it and then read it again. Did you learn anything new? What does it mean to give to God that which belongs to God?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Reclaiming Queer*. What does the word "Queer" mean from your understanding? Are you surprised that J. J. Warren chooses to refer to himself as queer? Is J. J. correct in his claim that the church institutionalized racism, sexism, and homophobia? Why or why not? Is J. J. a devout Christian in your opinion? Why or why not?
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”

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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 vegetarian **Flint Food Not Bombs** believes necessities of life-should be Yet in a nation with a military nations, people continue to go hungry. This is immoral and unjust.



group of independent collectives, food with others. that access of food among other viewed as a right, not a privilege. buget many times that of other



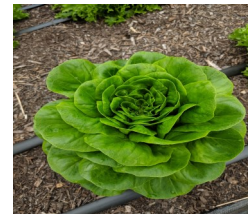
JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

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



JULY ANGEL CLOSET & FOOD GIVEAWAY DATES

July 7th and 28th - Angel Closet
July 14th and 21st - Food Giveaways

**ALL CLOSET AND GIVEAWAY DATES ARE
FROM 11AM-NOON!**

810-239-3427 3410 Fenton Road, Flint, MI 48507
southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

** We have also updated our mask policy. Masks are no longer required to enter the building or submission to a temperature check. We ask that folks that are unvaccinated or under the age of 12 still continue to wear a mask, however, we are not requiring anyone to do so.



ASBURY FARM FRESH

- TRY OUR WEEKLY VEGGIE BOX FOR \$10.00 -

SIGN UP FOR A FREE ASBURY FARMS ACCOUNT TODAY

AND

Receive a \$15 credit on your account for your first purchase

CREATE YOUR OWN VEGGIE BOX

Select what goes in your box from each week's harvest. Get \$5 off your next order when you fill your box with \$15 of produce.

WANT US TO DECIDE FOR YOU?

Choose Veggie Box Subscription and we will fill your order with a variety of each week's harvest. Pay when you pick up your box. **A \$15 VALUE FOR \$10.**

*** CONVENIENT PICKUP AT ASBURY OR AT THE SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN ***

While he believed that his blessing came from God, Jacob's coming out was still ahead of him. The day of reckoning was near. Jacob would meet his brother for the first time since the big deception. How would his brother respond when he meets the real Jacob?

In his restlessness, Jacob once again encounters God. And Jacob wrestles with who his brother sees and who the real Jacob was intended by God to be. Jacob's realization leaves a wound that he would carry with him. But Jacob was no longer the person others knew. With his costumes left behind, Jacob would come face-to-face with his brother as Israel.

Jacob wrestled with his own identity and chose to come out as the person God created Jacob to be.

Your name will no longer be Jacob. You have struggled with God and with men... your name will be Israel.

Genesis 32:28

It is challenging to know each other whenever we wear costumes. When we work together or when we play together. When we go through struggles together and when we celebrate together. The more we show up as who we are, rather than sporting a costume intended to distract from who we are, our engagement is more authentic.

Welcome to episode three 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 blesses us for who God created us to be.

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² "National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2021" © The Trevor Project, 2021.