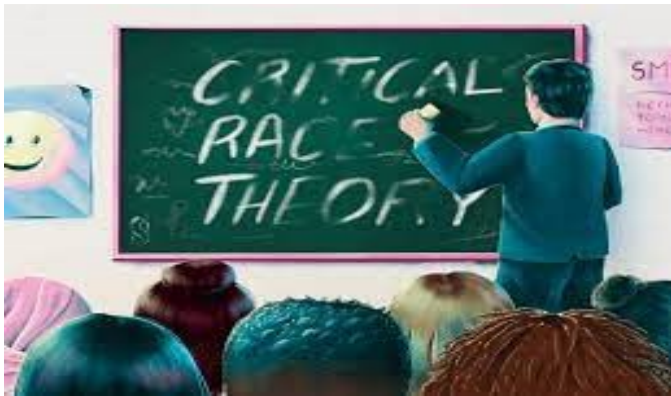


# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

## Bedazzled (Unmasking Critical Race Theory )



A soundbite is a catchphrase, a sticky statement — a few words strung together representing a lot more than just the collection of words used as a stand-in for a much broader topic. The better soundbites fit easily on a sign

hat gets carried to the streets by well-organized groups. Some of the more effective soundbites become slogans that are easily chanted. Black lives matter is one of my favorites.

Three words that fit on t-shirts, hats and roll off the tongue with ease. Yet behind this simple statement lies generations of wisdom and lived experiences. Black Lives Matter represents a particular view of history, a take on the present, and a stance on where we need to go. This short phrase communicated these complex perspectives because we each have a context coming into our hearing.

For me, Black Lives Matter acknowledges an uglier side of history that too often isn't told.

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Volume 2 Issue 25

July 25, 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



## Perfect Storm (Watching out for Sparrows)



The sky in Denver was hazy from wildfires on Tuesday as children cooled down in a fountain. Credit...David Zalubowski/Associated Press

Each morning I look at a weather map that includes fronts and radar images of precipitation. Most days, the map of North America is cluttered with highs and lows, some stretching a thousand miles or so.

It has been decades since I sat in a ground school lesson on the subject of weather. Pilots rely on knowing enough about current conditions and possibilities for severe weather to avoid dangerous situations. This is

important because the fuselages of most airplanes aren't constructed to withstand the turbulence found within clouds that tower thousands of miles above the earth.

Nowadays I check the weather more than once during the day. I do this because I know that the experts who publish the forecasts make frequent changes. This is necessary because weather patterns are less predictable than they were only a few years ago.

In a New York Times article with the headlines, How Severe is the Western Drought? Nadja Popovich writes about the intense

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## Perfect Storm (Watching out for Sparrows) ..cont from page 1

drought that has Western states held tightly in their grip. Popovich, citing the government's official drought-tracking service, the U.S. Drought Monitor, notes that, "The Extreme conditions are more widespread than at any point in at least 20 years."

Her article appeared last month and included the quote, "And the hottest months of summer are still to come." Her warning played out as predicted.

In a more recent New York Times Morning Newsletter article, David Leonhardt analyzed temperatures over the past ten years. The verdict is that 2021 is unfolding to be the hottest summer in history. Leonhardt punctuated the impact, adding, "Summers in Washington and Atlanta are hotter than summers in Tampa, Fla., used to be."

Last month, Ezra Klein shared the transcript of a conversation with four individuals who spend a lot of time thinking and sharing their thoughts about climate change. The background of the four individuals was diverse and included the disciplines of technology, literature, politics, and academia. The question posed to the four by Klein teased out their perspectives on whether our progress so far matches the scale of the emergency. Is our democracy up to the challenge?

The answer depends a lot on you, me, and our neighbors and our willingness to participate in the democratic process.

News of violent weather, raging fires, and other so-called "natural disasters" appear daily. We're in constant jeopardy of experiencing another perfect storm.

According to History.com, the origin of the phrase "perfect storm" is credited to a clash between Hurricane Grace and a massive low-pressure system off the New England coast in October 1991. This rare weather phenomenon created 80-foot waves that struck the coast of Massachusetts. The weather system later transitioned into another hurricane. A rare enough event that the new hurricane remained unnamed until years later when it became known as the "1991 Perfect Storm."

The event was so violent that the story later became a best-selling book by the same name. Sebastian Junger's novel featured the crew of the 70-foot fishing boat, Andrea Gail. It is believed that the crew was fishing for

swordfish when the storm hit and went down during the storm.

*Your land must not be sold on a permanent basis., because you do not own it...*

*Leviticus 25:23*

Perfect storms seem to be occurring with greater frequency. So why is there so much disagreement about the sense of urgency towards the subject of climate change?

Katharine Hayhoe is the lead pastor's wife at a church in Lubbock, Texas, known as the Church without Religion. Professor Hayhoe is also a climate scientist at Texas Tech University.

Dr. Hayhoe describes the adventure she experiences when she shares her "other job" with fellow evangelical Christians as coming out of the closet. The question she most often hears from parishioners and visitors at church is, "How can you be a Christian and believe in climate change?"

The professor can answer for herself much better than I can. So I answer this question for myself based on what I believe to be true from scripture. But I really like her initial answer to this question. "I don't," she responds. "But didn't you say that you are a climate scientist?"

Her response offers us a way to avoid the latest "trap" set by political soundbites. Climate change is not a religion and not a belief system. It is based upon scientific observations and factual evidence. Therefore, recognizing that climate change is taking place should not conflict with what we believe to be true about God.

One of the ancient Mosaic laws that are seldom referenced from Leviticus helps us recognize our responsibility towards climate change. The law reads that "Your land must not be sold on a permanent basis, because you do not own it" (Leviticus 25:23). "But the deed had my name on it, and I pay the property taxes, so don't I own it?" we ask.

The answer, based on scripture, is no. We don't even rent the land we walk on. God asked us to take care of God's creation during our time on God's earth. We're expected to do community service in exchange for the privilege of living on this earth. Any money we pay

to others is between them and us. God is still the owner and never gave up title.

Moreover, according to scripture, God is quite fond of creation. We read in the Gospel of Matthew that all of creation is significant. Jesus asks the question, "What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin?" Sparrows were sold in the marketplace to the poor who couldn't afford a more substantial sacrifice. Sparrows were a bargain.

Nevertheless, Jesus added that "Not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without God knowing it" (Matthew 10:29). So apparently, God pays very close attention to how well we care for creation.

The climate turns out to be a telling report of our track record of caring for creation. And with our climate as a result of our actions, we're receiving notice of a failing grade.

The argument that climate change is not happening is over. It's time to fire politicians that block legislation aimed at turning the downward spiral around. Let's plan to use a legislature's track record on matters affecting the climate as their report card, and vote accordingly.

I pray that you join us this Sunday at 10:30 am, either in person or online. If you miss our live broadcast, you can find our recording on our [YouTube channel](#). We include a link on our Facebook page for your convenience.

Plan to join us next month for our series, Night vision. In this series, we consider the contrasts of light and dark in both scripture and daily life.

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 [connect@FlintAsbury.org](mailto:connect@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



*Asbury Worship Series  
Night Vision  
Coming August 1st*



*Book Club News*

In July, we referenced recent articles for ideas to guide our exploration into the world waiting for us on the other side of pandemic isolation. Re-entry anxiety is a common experience for most of us. We're both eager to come out and yet hesitant. As isolation began, our world was confronted with challenging issues and choices.

Racism, climate change, and attacks on our democracy from within are demanding attention as we craft a new normal together. Is it safer to remain in isolation? It's hard to avoid feelings of darkness springing up from within us.

**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

It is no wonder that so many of us are struggling with some form of re-entry anxiety. I know that I'm eager to return to a different normal than I've experienced during the pandemic. But at the same time, I'm hesitant, given the issues we're facing, including racism, climate change, and attacks on our democracy.

This August, our focus is on finding a form of "lunar spirituality" that recognizes that life never stays the same from one day to the next. Instead, life waxes and wanes like the phases of the

Our book for August was written by retired Episcopal priest and professor of world religions Barbara Brown Taylor. Her book, *Learning to walk in the dark*, questions our tendency to associate all that is good with lightness and evil and dangerous with darkness. In understanding more about the dark, perhaps we can discover a way to find comfort in those times when we don't have all the answers.

Thankfully, God works in both darkness and daylight. Her book encourages us to confront our fears and anxieties long enough to explore what God has to teach us in the dark places in our lives. Taylor contrasts walking in the dark to what she calls "solar spirituality" based on sunny skies and pleasantries while avoiding the dark. Instead, we can learn and exercise "lunar spirituality," which waxes and wanes like moonlight.

We find courage in darkness as we experience the world in new ways. Freeing us to

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.

moon. Knowing this, we can learn and exercise spirituality recognizing how God works in both darkness and daylight.

Throughout our series, our plan is to reference Barbara Brown Taylor's book, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, covering the material from the book in three episodes on August 1, 8, and 29. Our guest speaker for August 15 and 22 will be David Leineke from Hope United Methodist Church.<sup>1</sup>

feel God's presence around us and guiding us through both the seen and unseen. It may be that we grow the most in the dark.

*Learning to walk in the dark* offers guidance through a spirituality of the nighttime. Helping you and me to find our footing in times of uncertainty and giving us strength and hope to face life's more challenging moments.

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](#).<sup>1</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor. *Learning to Walk in the Dark: Because Sometimes God Shows Up at Night*. Harper One, 2015.





*Night Vision**Coming August 1st ... Asbury Worship Series*

We explore what God has to teach us during our series while we are in the dark places in our lives. While sunny skies and roses are to be enjoyed as they come, God's grace finds us whoever life takes us. Whether we're sitting in total darkness or bathed in bright lights, God is with us.

Notice how my choices of words and expressions favor light over dark. Unfortunately, this bias causes us to miss the nuances of darkness and thus miss the lessons waiting for us in the dark. After all, some of the breakthrough revelations found in scripture happened in the darkness of night.

The resurrection of Jesus took place in total darkness behind a stone and inside of a cave. No witnesses except the Trinity itself. Recognition of this holy, world-altering miracle became visible as the sun rose to illuminate a new normal. Even then, those first witnesses couldn't see Jesus until they heard His voice.

Life is an adventure to be savored, and we can find courage in darkness. And we can experience the world in new ways. God's presence surrounds us and guides us through both the seen and unseen.

It may be that we grow the most in the dark. There is a rhythm to life that is much more jazz and improv than a pre-measured recipe.

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 unadvisable. But the rest of us can protect our more vulnerable community members by ensuring that we cannot spread the virus.

The latest variants of COVID are more contagious. As a result, there is a resurgence of new infections among the unvaccinated. 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 our [YouTube channel](#). 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](http://FlintAsbury.org).



Pastor Tommy

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor. *Learning to Walk in the Dark: Because Sometimes God Shows Up at Night*. Harper One, 2015.

## Bedazzled ( Unmasking critical race theory) ... *cont. from pg 1*

This phrase lies at the core of my faith in a God for whom all lives matter. But, until equitable justice is the rule for black lives, all lives are cheapened.

A lot happened since the pandemic began. While a large part of the nation's citizenry hid out in isolation, our country proved that black lives matter a whole lot less within our economic and legal systems than whiteness. The exposure of blatant reminders brought millions out of isolation and into the streets to raise awareness that the time for action is long overdue.

I prefer to use the term, sticky statement when I'm preparing a sermon. A phrase is sticky if it can be easily remembered and effectively represents the meaning behind the message. Each week I spend time thinking about an expression that depicts the core theme of our message. Unfortunately, most weeks, I fall short of an effective sticky statement.

I don't fret over not having a good sticky statement for every message since I also realize the danger of a short phrase as a stand-in for the actual message. Like all posers, a soundbite repeated by persons unfamiliar with the message behind the words is empty. The real meaning takes on a new life of its own that seldom represents the content behind it.

Jesus frequently said things that have since been turned into sticky statements. One of my favorites comes out of a story Jesus told about shepherds. "Good shepherds," according to Jesus, love the sheep under their care. And they show their love by putting their body's between the sheep and danger.

"The real shepherd enters the sheep pen through the main gate," said Jesus, "while a thief jumps the fence." Thieves are more obvious to spot. Less predictable are persons hired to care for sheep with no attachment to their well-being. Hired hands are harder to spot because they enter through the gate like they own the place. But they make lousy shepherds (John 10:1-13).

Politicians utilize soundbites as a way to make headlines and to organize support behind ideas. Political strategists know which keywords and phrases catch the attention of journalists hungry to write a story that appeals to more readers.

In some cases, soundbites help recruit new supporters with whom the idea resonates. But, unfortunately, soundbites frequently spread misinformation that takes on a life of their own.

Critical race theory (CRT) is the latest soundbite catching the attention and imagination of a growing number of people. CRT originated in academia when Harvard law professor Derrick Bell challenged the claim that landmark legislations delivered liberty and justice for Black Americans in his book, *Race, Racism and American Law*, which was first published in 1973. 1

**I am the Good shepherd,  
Who is willing to die for the  
sheep.....The hired man runs  
away because he ....does not  
care about the sheep.**

**John 10:11,13**

CRT questions the progress made in pursuit of the idea of freedom and justice for all. Traditionally "all" referred to white male landowners only. Legislation passed in the past sixty years or so included women and people of color. However, systemic racism persists.

Recently, an increasing number of politicians are using CRT as a catch-all soundbite. Their message is simple — CRT is terrible for America and shouldn't be taught in schools. However, arguments against CRT make accusations that were never a part of the actual content.

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Recently, an increasing number of politicians are using CRT as a catch-all soundbite. Their message is simple — CRT is terrible for America and shouldn't be taught in schools. However, arguments against CRT make accusations that were never a part of the actual content.

Are CRT soundbites an illustration of the warning Jesus offered about thieves and posers? A poser may dazzle us with soundbites that hammer home their claims to be protectors and saviors. But these posers are exposed when real danger appears. This is because posers offer soundbites instead of their bodies when it comes to trouble.

This is the danger of soundbites. They're used to dazzle us into thinking a particular way that often obscures the truth. This is the case with CRT. Politicians are targeting this academic concept offered for public debate as a soundbite to justify laws that legislate content within our educational systems.

Opponents of legislation that hopes to reduce or eliminate systemic racism use CRT as a soundbite in arguments against curriculum that exposes systemic racism. This strategy is working because soundbites don't contain the facts. Once a soundbite gains traction, it is used as a weapon in political battles around subjects that are only vaguely related. Such as opposing Black lives matter by blaming CRT.



Migrant workers, whose work is necessary to keep our economy and agricultural system running, have been particularly affected by the pandemic and recession. With few assistance programs available to them, it's up to neighbors and friends to step up and help. If you'd like to provide support for migrant workers, here are some resources to guide you along the way.

## Family Matters

Countless families are struggling right now, and migrant workers who have brought their families with them need extra support.

- \* Parents concerned that their children may have fallen behind on ESL lessons over the past year can turn to these [online teaching tools](#).
- \* Migrant workers with children may find that their children are [eligible for assistance](#).

## Legal Questions

For many migrant workers, dealing with the legal system can be an intimidating and nerve-wracking prospect.

- \* This [resource](#) outlines all of the possible paths that migrant workers can take to become permanent residents.
- \* Working with a skilled [translator](#) can make a huge difference for migrant workers who do not feel confident in their English language skills.
- \* Migrant workers who need to update their visas will likely need guidance from an [immigration lawyer](#).
- \* For migrant workers who are interested in starting a business, you can refer them to a service like [Zenbusiness](#) that will make establishing an LLC (limited liability company) fast and simple while meeting all the state's requirements.

## Living With the Pandemic

Migrant workers are facing unique issues because of the ongoing pandemic. These resources will answer questions about healthcare and more.

- \* At a time when many essential workers are facing dilemmas in the workplace, all migrant workers should look up their [employment rights](#).
- \* Migrant workers may be concerned about where to get medical treatments at this time - this [guide](#) to healthcare coverage contains helpful information.
- \* Worried that you may have COVID-19? This [resource](#) can help direct you to the nearest testing location.

## Staying Connected With Loved Ones

Reaching out and staying in touch with friends and family in your home country can give you a boost during these difficult times.

- \* Use Skype or [Zoom](#) to hold virtual meetings with your loved ones.
- \* Learn how to [send money](#) back home safely and securely.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the lives of migrant workers everywhere. Most were already living in precarious situations before the pandemic, and the risk of getting sick or losing work has only made things harder. With these resources, you can make life a bit easier for migrant workers who are trying to figure out their next steps.

Contact [Asbury](#) to learn more about our various services to the community -- (810) 235-0016.

*(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](#))*

Photo via [Pixabay](#)

## Life groups questions & notes

*What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it...*

Matthew 10:29 (NLT)

### NOTES FROM WORSHIP

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### QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Matthew 10:29. What does this text say about God? What does it say about you? What does this text say about how God views you? How does God feel about climate change in your opinion?
2. Read the article in this week’s Circuit Rider, *Perfect storm*. In what ways does the weather affect you from day to day? What do you know about predicting the weather? Do you agree that our climate is changing? Do you believe that there are things we can do to stop climate change? Like what? Can you be both a Christian and believe that climate change is really happening?
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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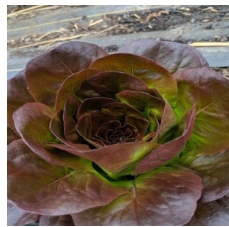
Providing a HOT MEAL and/or local, organic  
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**Food Not Bombs** is a loose-knit sharing free vegan and vegetarian **Flint Food Not Bombs** believes necessities of life-should be Yet in a nation with a military nations, people continue to go hungry. 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



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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

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



The latest controversy involves k-12 curriculum content. Several state legislatures are passing or considering new laws that ban CRT as a subject. Their arguments intentionally misrepresent CRT and mislead the public about the real issues. For example, the former vice-president claimed in a speech last month that, "Critical race theory teaches children as young as kindergarten to be ashamed of their skin color." Really?

The arguments for preventing schools from talking about CRT are based on the view that history "holds no contemporary consequences" and that "racism ended in the past." The take-away intended by the soundbites, according to J Kimberlé Crenshaw, is that "We would all be better off if we didn't try to connect it [history] to the present.

In another Washington Post article, Bryan Anderson described critical race theory as "A way of thinking about America's history through the lens of racism." CRT recognizes that racism is systemic and rises out of our nation's history. Proponents of CRT argue that our schools should tell the truth that federal law historically treated people differently based on the culturally invented idea of race.

Kathryn Schumaker, in her article, covered the signing of a new law in Oklahoma that coincided with the centennial of the Tulsa Race Massacre. By the time it ended, mobs had destroyed over 1,200 buildings taking away a generation of accumulated wealth owned by African-Americans. No one was arrested, and the incident swept under the rug. The new Oklahoma laws require educators to instruct students, "To emphasize that although the perpetrators of the Tulsa Race Massacre did bad things, their actions do not shape the world we live in.

The truth is that history did shape the world we live in today. The consequences of past actions are not neutralized because we chose to move on with our lives. The audacity of legislators to enact laws that perpetuate



systemic racism is tragic. The real damage is hidden behind soundbites that intentionally mislead the public.

Moreover, it is disheartening to see persons who claim to follow the teachings of Jesus offering support for legislators and the soundbites they use to justify their objections to solutions that could help curtail systemic racism.

Nevertheless, each of us has the freedom to choose how we return from isolation to face whatever normal we build together. We make our choices with each vote that we cast.

The next national election will be tainted by numerous new laws that make it more difficult for many people to vote. Instead of being disheartened, let's respond to this attack on our democracy with a record turnout for elections. We can respond to blatant disregard for democratic elections by dismissing legislators who proposed laws that create unwarranted obstacles.

We need to seek out authentic shepherds when it comes to choosing a candidate to support. Real shepherds show loyalty to the people they represent through more than mere soundbites. Let's consider whether their personal history suggests a person willing to give their life for us. Let's dismiss self-serving candidates who spew misleading soundbites and respond to challenges by changing the subject or responding with lies.

But that's me, and I'm only one vote.

This month our series, Coming out, turns the spotlight on coming out of isolation now that restrictions are ending. But what is the new normal that we hope to come out for? Next week we examine climate change. Plan to join us.

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 connect@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.

1 Samuel Hoadley-Brill. "Critical race theory's opponents are sure it's bad. Whatever it is." @ Washington Post, July 2, 2021.

2 J Kimberlé Crenshaw. "The panic over critical race theory is an attempt to whitewash U.S. history." @ Washington Post, July 2, 2021.

3 Bryan Anderson. "EXPLAINER: So much buzz, but what is critical race theory?" @ Washington Post, June 24, 2021.

4 Kathryn Schumaker. "What is critical race theory and why did Oklahoma just ban it?" @ Washington Post, May 19, 2021.