

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 27

February 27, 2022

Fruit (The Lamb and the Lion)

The separation of Church and state is just one of many battlegrounds that prompt public debate among legislators and persons who spend regular time in pews. For example, an opinion piece written by three professors at the University of Virginia School of Law claimed that churches benefiting from Payroll Protection funding violated this sacred separation. Their article, which appeared in the *New York Times*, was titled "The Quiet Demise of the Separation of Church and State". The words found in the First

Amendment to our Constitution states that the country shall have no official religion. But there is more to this debate because the language is vaguely precise:



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Please continue to wear your masks when in the building. If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you.

DONATE

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Interference (Riding on donkeys)



Anyone who has an email address or spends time on the internet knows that not all content is safe to download to your computer or phone. There is the risk that a download will install unwanted code on

your device. Sometimes the unwanted code is just annoying. However, the web is full of viruses that wreak havoc with their host, sometimes doing irreparable damage to our content.

This morning I remembered to renew our security software for computers we utilize at Asbury for our work. The cost is relatively small compared to the threat of losing information and time. I can't imagine why a hacker would waste time on a nonprofit trying to help our community. But it's better to play it safe.

Meanwhile, news of Russian troops surrounding Ukraine is dominating the daily news. According to a recent *New York Times*

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Interference (Riding on donkeys) ...cont from page 1

article, approximately 150,000 military personnel along with enough hardware to launch an invasion, despite Russian official claims to the contrary.¹

The Russian escalation coincides with the annual Munich Security Conference. Usually one of the premier diplomatic gatherings of the year. But this year, it will be dominated by the Russia-Ukraine crisis.

While attending the conference, Vice President Kamala Harris is scheduled to meet with Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine. However, there is concern that the Russians are identifying candidates, more in line with their priorities, which they could install in his place while he is out of the country.

Heavily armed boots on the ground are not Russia's only tactics. A related article reports cyber-attacks that appear to be instigated by hackers located in Russia. This past Tuesday, several websites in Ukraine were hit with denial-of-service attacks. In these cases, hackers overload the servers hosting the websites, forcing them to shut down.²

Russia's military budget in 2020 of just over \$62 billion pales compared to the U.S. military budget of \$778 billion during that same year. However, one article analyzing Russia's motivation for its aggression noted that Russian President, Vladimir Putin, made increased military strength a top priority over the past 22 years.

After the USSR separated into 15 separate countries, the North American Treaty Organization, commonly referred to as NATO, added most newly independent nations to their roster. NATO was formed in 1949 by the United States, Canada, and several western European countries as allies providing greater security in the event of aggression by the Soviet Union.³

There are close cultural ties between parts of Ukraine and Russia. However, in response to the ousting of a leader with close ties to Putin, Russia invaded and annexed Crimea, part of Ukraine. This military action was followed by organizing a separatist rebellion that resulted in the death of over 13 thousand people.

The U.S. warned Putin that an invasion would result in severe sanctions that could further cripple Russia's economy. Russia already lags many smaller countries economically and is highly dependent on the sale of energy to Europe. Which is likewise heavily reliant on Russia to meet its thirst for energy.

The "cold war" that dominated world policies for decades is back on the front burner with the heat on high. Perhaps this is why scripture spends so much time on the topics of violence, war and aggression. Love is clearly the only antidote to these human-made diseases.

Mark's gospel jumps right into action in the very first chapter. According to Mark, soon after Jesus is baptized, he is confronted by a heckler while preaching in Capernaum. "Why are you interfering with us?" the screams at Jesus. "Have you come to destroy us?" (Mark 1:21). So, who are the "us" in the man's question?

The writer describes the man as "having an evil spirit." But what does this mean? Traditional interpretations point to the presence of an outside demonic influence. However, the underlying Greek makes anything more than the idea that the man's attitude, and perhaps his life choices, were less than admirable. In any case, the man saw Jesus as a threat to the way of life he claimed to represent.

Jesus confronts and condemns not the man but the attitude and life choices represented by whatever needed interference from Jesus. As a result, the man is instantly reformed. But let's break this scene down before we jump to conclusions that we're not included in the man's idea of "we."

Translations vary somewhat in their choice of words describing what Jesus said and how either the man or the spirit possessing the man responded. And while Mark's gospel is mainly to the point, great caution is in order when interpreting stories told from the writer's context.

Why are you interfering with us, Jesus? Have you come to destroy us?

Mark 1:21

While movies like the Exorcist evoke images of bizarre behaviors on both the possessed and those interfering, scripture consistently offers us insight into our own lives and situations. Moreover, there is too much confusion between the idea of demon-possessed and mental and emotional illness. Even though they have nothing in common beyond our misunderstanding.

What if the "we" represents the way our world is currently ordered? What if the "we" represents wealth, privilege, and excess? What if the "we" represents self-preservation at the expense of others? What if the "we" point to acts of aggression, war, and violence, whether or not our adversary had it coming?

In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom
Sylvia Pittman
Shirley Craig
Richard Oram

Miriam Watson



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Nancy Elston
Norma Buzzard

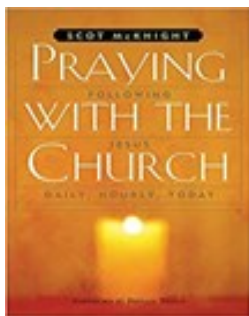
Elaine Lamoreaux
Mary Nations

PASTOR BOOK CLUB NEWS

Pastor Book Club is still meeting via Zoom. Please call the Church Office for more info 810-235-0016 as it changes.

Meanwhile, as a lot of you are already aware, sharp increases in new infections of COVID are pushing us back into isolation. While our regular attenders are vaccinated, we realize that a large number of persons are not vaccinated.

Therefore, we reinstated our policy to require masks in our building for all persons when not eating or drinking. If you don't have a mask, we can provide one for you, just ask the office.



This month's book series is called, "Praying with the Church" by Scot McKnight.

Thank you and everyone stay safe!

COMING UP THIS WEEK

- Feb 28 Mon 6:00pm Worship Team
- Mar 1 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm
Food/Water Distribution
- Mar 2 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club
5:30pm 4th Ward Community meeting on ARPA Funds
6:00pm Ash Wednesday Service
- Mar 3 Thu 1:00pm UMW
- Mar 4 Fri
- Mar 5 Sat 12Noon Food Not Bombs
- Mar 6 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](#).)



Cyndi and I enjoy watching reality shows that feature individuals living in the Alaskan wilderness. Neither of us have a desire to live alone in the woods. Rather, we're fascinated by the creativity and grit that these rugged individuals discover within themselves to survive. And even more so by the few that seem

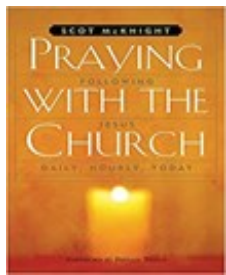
to thrive in the midst of so many obstacles.

A common theme heard among the Alaskan pioneers is a sense of belonging to the vast untamed and unforgiving wilderness. They share common bonds with the other creatures living

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Book Club News

Our group finishes with *Postcards from Babylon* on the first Wednesday in March. Our next selection, *Praying with the Church* by Scot McKnight, will take us through Holy Week. Together we plan to spend seven weeks with this book.¹



Prayer is a practice that the vast majority of us have in common. Although we pray in many ways and for vastly different reasons, there are common elements. Chief among them is a lingering doubt about whether how we pray affects the outcome.

Let's answer this question upfront — it doesn't. However, attitude is critical. And Jesus tells us that persistence is essential. Nevertheless, we all can use some work in this area of our spiritual lives.

Whether you're a regular on Sunday mornings, only attend on an occasional holiday, or don't cross the threshold of a church building without coercion, there is something for everyone in this conversation.

For these conversations, we join with three other Flint area churches. We're planning two sessions each Wednesday. Our regular Noon sessions are co-led by Pastor Jeremy from Court Street. A 2nd session is planned for Wednesday evenings, led by Pastor Carol from Hope and Pastor Greg from Calvary. Both sessions follow the same outline so you can attend whichever sessions best fits your schedule from week to week.

The write-up found on Amazon has this to say about our next book: Scot McKnight, best-selling author of *The Jesus Creed*, invites readers to get closer to the heart of Jesus' message by discovering the ancient rhythms of daily prayer at the heart of the early church. "This is the old path of praying as Jesus prayed," McKnight explains, "and in that path, we learn to pray along with the entire Church and

not just by ourselves as individuals." *Praying with the Church* is written for all Christians who desire to know more about the ancient devotional traditions of the Christian faith, and to become involved in their renaissance today.

Professor McKnight has published over 80 books in his 40 plus years as a teacher and theologian. He is known for getting to the heart of theological concepts through practical and memorable illustrations from everyday life. In his book, we're invited to learn about the prayer practices of Jesus. In addition, our study takes a peek at prayer practices among Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans.

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, delighted when new people 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 Scot McKnight. *Praying with the Church*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2006.

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
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



Wilderness Experience... Asbury Worship Series

around them, even those they hunt for food. All belong to a natural order that is much larger and beyond their grasp.

There are unseen dangers and yet to be discovered delights in the wilderness waiting for the brave ones willing to take the risk to venture into its uncertainty.

Our new series, *Wilderness experience*, explores the risks and rewards of braving the uncertain. And in exploring the uncertain we tackle the thorny question of “Do I belong?”

Brené Brown asserts that “belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us.” Based on her research into one of life’s most intimate questions Braving the Wilderness calls each of us to reclaim who we are by letting go of who we are not. ¹

But discovering who we are is only the beginning. Being who God created us to be is easily confused with fitting into a particular expectation. If we confuse fitting in with belonging we’re disappointed and lacking. It’s exhausting to be whatever persona others choose for us.

I wonder if choosing to be alone in the wilderness of Alaska takes less effort than fitting into a community as an imposter. On the other hand, in being who God created us to be may mean taking a stand where no one else is visible. We may find ourselves standing alone.

But what if this is true belonging?

Our series consists of five episodes that roughly maps to Dr. Brown’s book. There are extra copies of her book in the Arts Center. Alternatively, her book can be found at libraries, bookstores or purchased online.

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

Pastor Tommy

¹ Brené Brown. *Braving the Wilderness — The Quest for True Belonging and the Quest to Stand Alone*. New York: Random House, 2019.

Fruit (The Lamb and the Lion) cont. from pg 1

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Legal interpretation by judges is required to apply generalities to specific instances. As a result, the Federal Supreme Court makes judgments that include detailed statements reflecting their collective wisdom in many situations. Of course, most of this wisdom is left in the footnotes when it comes to public debate. Nevertheless, the opinion piece argued that "Constitutional interpretations forged during times of crisis tend to persist after the danger has eased."

Thousands of churches saw little or no conflict with this form of connection with government and accepted financial assistance without hesitation. On the other hand, the reaction of church leaders and their constituents to governmental restrictions as measures to stop the spread of COVID brought the delicate issue of Church and state to the forefront.

Church leaders around the globe took a stance that the Government should not have the power to cancel

worship, even in response to a pandemic. Numerous religious leaders in the U.S. found themselves on both sides of the separation argument. Benefiting from salary support using public funds while pushing back on any efforts on the part of the Government to restrict in-person gatherings.

For example, according to a Reuter article, the Church led by the former president's spiritual advisor, Paula White, was approved for a loan of \$150,000-\$350,000. And the payout to the City of Destiny Inc., where White is a pastor, paled in comparison to Lakewood Church, Joel Osteen's megachurch, which reportedly pocketed \$4.4 Million in payouts.

The Virginia lawyers are quoted in numerous other articles. After all, they saw the debate coming. In their opinion article, they argued that "The entanglement of church and state will bring predictable conflicts: efforts by religious groups to control government and by the government to control religious groups."

Fortunately, most clergies followed the advice of healthcare professionals and found ways to worship without the usual in-person gathering.

The Church struggled with connections to Government throughout history, and the complications exist across the spectrum of religious worldviews. The Christian Church

suffered persecution as a perceived threat to Roman authority for over 300 years until the Edict of Milan made Christianity a legal religion throughout the Roman Empire in 313.

As Christianity spread across Europe and Asia, church leaders and their congregations faced varying degrees of persecution and government sponsorship. For example, according to an article in the current issue of *Christianity Today*, churches in Russia celebrated their 1,000th anniversary. Their celebration was particularly joyous given the relatively recent history of persecution against the Church in Russia.

According to *Britannica*, Christianity was made the official state religion in Russia in 988. And in 1270, the Church was given tax-exempt status. However, the Church of Russia created a rift with the head of the Russian Government in the 18th century. The arguments began with a power struggle to require that the Church have supreme power over all civic affairs.

Over the years that followed the government tightened control over church leadership in Russia, but otherwise allowed peaceful coexistence until a new form of authoritarian government emerged in 1917. Justified by separation of Church and state, church properties

There is no doubt that Jesus came to "interfere" with human affairs. And the world's response can be described using similar language to what we find in this short story of healing. Likewise, Jesus came to heal the "we" regardless of merit. Fortunately, God is patient and willing to wait until we're tired of searching for answers in all the wrong places.



AdobeStock_57609879

Imagine the scene that takes place some months after this story. It's a major festival in Jerusalem and the Governor arrives accompanied by a military parade. Soldiers on horses trained for war are seen for miles and war chariots take the place of floats. The display makes its point. Step out of line and you'll see shock and awe first hand.

A couple days later Jesus enters from the opposite of town amidst a parade of His own. Instead of soldiers with weapons, Jesus is surrounded by ordinary civilians waving palm branches. Instead of riding in a chariot or on a horse, Jesus rides on a small donkey. Was this display sarcasm or simply a warning of God's interference into human affairs?

Brian Zahnd writes that "Jesus' triumphal entry was the anti-military parade. It was a mockery of Rome's intimidating show of military power." But in response to the divine warning the people put down their palm branches and went along with the use of violent aggression against Jesus. Zahnd notes that the people were "still looking for a Messiah who is some dude on a horse."⁴

I invite you to join us for worship as we study the Way that Jesus teaches us to live as followers. This month, in particular, we celebrate Black History month with celebrity guest interviews. We gather in the Asbury Arts Center in person and online on YouTube and Facebook. Video replays are available to watch later.

You can join us each Sunday online by going to the button on the homepage of our [website](#) - [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to our [YouTube channel](#). You can find 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](#).

Pastor Tommy

¹ Michael D. Shear, David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt. "Western Officials Dispute Russian Claim of Pullback From Ukraine Border." © *New York Times*, Feb 16, 2022, Updated Feb 17, 2022.

² Valerie Hopkins. "A hack of the Defense Ministry, army and state banks was the largest of its kind in Ukraine's history." © *New York Times*, Feb 17, 2022.

³ Dan Bilefsky and Richard Pérez-Peña. "How the Ukraine Crisis Developed, and Where It Might Be Headed." © *New York Times*, Feb. 17, 2022.

⁴ Brian Zahnd. *Postcards from Babylon: The Church In American Exile*. Spello Press, 2019.

Life Groups Questions & Notes:

Some trust in their war chariots and others in their horses, but we trust in the power of the Lord our God. Such people will stumble and fall, but we will rise and stand firm.

Psalm 20:1-9 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS


1. Read Psalm 20:1-9. What do these words mean for you? What might they mean for Christians living in Russia? Ukraine? What do they mean for us?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Fruit*. What does the separation of church and state mean to you? Where do you see examples of governmental interference with the church? Where do you see examples of church interference in government? What are some ways we can follow the Way of Christ while living in a world dominated by the use of military power for intimidation?
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.

“Feed Flint”



“Feed Flint”

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A meal goes a long way for a senior living alone, a family struggling to make ends meet, or a child fearful of empty shelves at home. But for the residents of Flint who carry the effects of lead-tainted water, nutrition is critical. Feed Flint provides locally grown, chemical-free, fresh produce to residents living in and around Flint. And we're hoping that you can help us provide 10,000 meals this summer.

Feed Flint includes takeout meals, produce boxes with recipes, and home deliveries as part of our work to guide and support families in moving to sustainable abundance. The reality is that Michigan's food insecurity levels got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this summer's recovery is leaving behind those at the most risk of having to miss meals.

Flint families continue to struggle with the ongoing effects of the water crisis.

We're bringing together the resources of the Asbury Community Development Corporation. This includes Asbury Farms, the South Flint Soup Kitchen, the Asbury Community Help Center, multiple food pantries, and our Sizzling Culture Mobile Food Trailer. Our plan is to care for our neighbors when they need it most. We accept all people as they are, and our doors are always open to anyone.

Asbury Farms provides locally grown produce used to create fabulous and nutritious meals. Our seed-to-table approach is community-based. This not only helps families make it through emergencies and crises. We help move families towards sustainable abundance.

Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated abundance.

Our work is also about food and justice. Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into active citizens. And all residents can enjoy safety, good health, and a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives. This summer, help us address food insecurity and strengthen Flint's budding local food system by supporting the Feed Flint campaign. Thank you for taking the time to see what we're doing and considering how you can help.

Donate to our Feed Flint Campaign by visiting:
flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate



\$1 raffle with
proceeds going
toward Asbury
Empowerment
Arts Center!

3rd Annual Asbury Flint Film Showcase

Join us for a night of
popcorn, drinks & amazing
local & independent flicks!



**Friday, March
25th**

Doors open at 6:30pm
Event starts at 7pm

FREE
ADMISSION

Asbury Church
1653 Davison Road ★
Flint, MI 48506



Questions or wish to
submit a film? Call Katelin
at 810-239-3427 or email
katelin@flintasbury.org



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AND

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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.

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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 ***

"were seized, and thousands of clergy were arrested. However, peace was restored in 1927 when church leaders agreed to refrain from criticizing government policies and instead support nationalism as a Christian virtue.

The Church in Russia rebounded again in 1943. Although clergy were occasionally arrested, the number of churches increased significantly. Unfortunately, this period of peace was short-lived, and persecution began anew until eliminated under Mikhail Gorbachev.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the churches again flourished. But it wasn't until 2019 that the Church of Ukraine was formally recognized as independent of the Church in Russia.

There continue to be close ties between church leadership in Russia and Vladimir Putin, according to a *New York Times* article published in 2020. For example, an impressive cathedral dedicated to Russia's armed forces opened its doors for the first time on the Day of Remembrance and Sorrow. However, the grand opening was originally scheduled to take place on the 75th anniversary of the Red Army's victory over Nazi Germany and feature a military parade.

Moreover, the original plans called for mosaics of Mr. Putin, his minister, and other state figures, including the Soviet wartime leader Stalin, to adorn the interior. The idea was to symbolize the intimate relations between Putin's regime and the Church. But this idea was eventually scrapped.

The original Church emerged at a time as a counter to religious leaders openly pledged allegiance to governmental leaders in exchange for access and security. Brian Zahnd reminds us of the power of otherwise overlooked phrases when he draws our attention to Caiaphas, the Chief Priest when Jesus was arrested. "We have no king but Caesar," Caiaphas told Pontius Pilate, as he argued that Jesus was guilty of claiming power that belongs only to the supreme leader of Rome.

Zahnd comments that Caiaphas wanted "an invitation to the imperial palace, a trip to the White House, an Oval Office photo-op." But unfortunately, access to power often requires allegiance to governmental leaders over faithfulness to God.

On my better days, I think of Caiaphas as doing the best he could, given the circumstances.

Unfortunately, his words and actions reflected trust in the power to harm and the need to compete for victory. He chose to utilize the gifts and talents provided to him by God to exert control over his enemy, whom he wrongfully saw as Jesus.

Perhaps the outcome would be different had Caiaphas not missed Pilate's earlier conversation. In their discussion, Pilate asked Jesus if it were true that Jesus claimed to be a King. Jesus responded that if He were an earthly king His followers would fight for His release. Instead, Jesus reigns over an emerging kingdom of peace.

But we all miss most conversations that shed light on the complexities of life. So it's not about what we know but who we know. If we know and recognize Jesus as Lord, the rest of the complexities work themselves out whether or not we're in the know.

Pastor Brian makes a telling observation noting that "Christian is a great noun But a lousy adjective." To be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ means that we're doing things the way that Jesus teaches us. We utilize our

God-given gifts and talents, together with the resources God trusted in our care to live the Way of God's kingdom.

Some trust in war chariots and others in horses, but we trust in the power of the Lord our God.

Psalm 20:7

Following the Way is difficult in a country with vast resources, a strong national pride, and a propensity to utilize intimidation to get our way. And too many of our leaders are accustomed to getting ahead of their competition at all costs. Many are willing to compromise any sense of divine ethic in their quest for power. Nevertheless, scripture teaches us that God's justice always prevails.

Psalm 20 addresses this dilemma directly by reminding us that while some trust in tanks and missiles, the faithful trust in the power of God. Those who depend on their own ability to dominate their enemies will stumble and fall, says the Psalmist, while the faithful will rise and stand firm (Psalm 20:7-8).

I invite you to join us for worship as we study the Way that Jesus teaches us to live as followers. This month, in particular, we celebrate Black History month with celebrity guest interviews. We gather in the Asbury Arts Center in person and online on YouTube and Facebook. Video replays are available to watch later.

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Pastor Tommy

- ¹ Nelson Tebbe, Micah Schwartzman and Richard Schragger. "The Quiet Demise of the Separation of Church and State." © New York Times, June 8, 2020
- ² Andrew Higgins. "A 'Breakdown of Trust': Pandemic Corrodes Church-State Ties in Russia." © *New York Times*, May 5, 2020.
- ³ "How Christianity Came to Ukraine and Russia." © Christianity Today, March 2022.
- ⁴ Brian Zahnd. *Postcards from Babylon: The Church In American Exile*. Spello Press, 2019.



ASBURY UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

Invite you to join us in a Special Lenten Project

"FORTY DAYS ~ FORTY ITEMS"

Wednesday, March 2, 2022 is the first day of Lent. I have a challenge for you!

Each day of Lent, starting with Ash Wednesday, remove one item from your closet that you no longer wear or need (or doesn't fit) and put it into this trash bag*. At the end of the forty days, we will donate these items to The Angel Closet at our South Flint Soup Kitchen. This way you will be able to share them with someone who can really use them!!

So instead of "giving up" Chocolate or French Fries for Lent, please give from your heart so we can help with clothes for our neighbors at The Angel Closet. Plus you'll be getting a head start on your own spring cleaning!

*All items must be clean and not torn or ripped or stained. We are giving these items away to our clients and if you won't wear it, we don't want to have them wear these items either.

If you have any questions, please call UMW President Michele Weston at (810) 624-1184.

The Season of Lent is a special time of year for the church. The diversity of ways in which churches around the world experience this season offers insight into the different ways that people experience the holy. For many, Lent represents a time of struggle illustrated by giving up favorite foods after celebrating Fat Tuesday with their favorite Paczki or other treats.



Feedflint hoop house ready for harvest ... credit Asbury Farms

Take a trip through Wikipedia's commentary on Fat Tuesday, and you learn about a few of the different ways Christians celebrate on the day before Lent begins. For example, did you know that Queen Elizabeth is more likely to call it "Pancake Day?" But why all this talk about food as preparation for celebrating Lent?

We launch our new series on Wednesday, March 2, with an Ash Wednesday service at 6 PM. Our message for our kickoff is called *Rocks*, which reflects the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness when Satan tries to get to Jesus through his empty stomach. Jesus doesn't fall for it, but this wasn't a bad attempt on Satan's part. We tend to make bad decisions when we're hungry.

Speaking of hungry. Did you know that a substantial number of families living in the City of Flint experience food insecurity daily? This means that these families face significant obstacles when putting meals on their tables. Now, this is a problem under any circumstances, but for the residents of Flint, access to nutrition is crucial. A state of emergency was declared in January 2016 due to a series of water contamination problems that included lead leaching into public drinking water.

No one knows how many of the nearly 100,000 Flint residents were affected by drinking lead-tainted water. However, healthcare professionals estimate that between 6,000 to 12,000 children were likely exposed to lead.

According to a study published by Genesys Medical Center, childhood lead poisoning has serious health consequences and disproportionately affects vulnerable children and pregnant mothers. In addition, lead poisoning is irreversible and affects many developmental and biological processes.

Lead exposure is linked to lowered IQ (intelligence), reduced academic achievement, behavior problems such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), lack of impulse control, aggression, and more. The Flint Water Crisis will have lifelong, multi-generational consequences.

While there's no actual cure for lead poisoning consuming a balanced diet rich in particular nutrients has been found to mitigate most of the adverse effects of lead. This is encouraging news that brings hope. Except that too many families can't access this life-saving antidote that most of us take for granted.

FeedFlint is focused on breaking down the barriers that create food insecurity for residents of Flint. Asbury Farms turns blighted, vacant properties into gardens of fresh fruit and vegetables. Our produce is distributed through numerous restaurants and partner organizations, including the South Flint Soup Kitchen, Asbury Community Help Center, FlintFresh, the Latinx Center, Boys and Girls Club, Hurley Food Pharmacy, and Oak Street Health.

Learn how you can help at FeedFlint.org.

Lent is much more about what we're gaining than what we're giving up. Pancakes are great. My favorite uses heavier grain flour stuffed with blueberries and pecans and topped with pure Michigan Maple Syrup. But we can't live on pancakes alone. We need other nutrients. And Lent is about ensuring we get what we need for holistic health.

That's why Asbury and three other Flint area churches are teaming up both on this series and on a unique study that kicks off on Wednesday, March 9. We're planning two times, one at Noon and the other in the evening. Everyone is invited to participate. See our Book Club News article for more details.

Our new series, which will take us through March and end with Easter, is focused on food. We all require food to live, and let's face it, good food is a real treat. But we also need spiritual food that comes from the Word of God. So anticipate a balanced diet and a variety. On two Sundays, March 13 and 27, the four pastors are on the road.

Expect Pastor Jeremy Pastors from Court Street UMC to be at Asbury on March 13, and Pastor Greg Timmons from Calvary UMC on March 27.

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

Pastor Tommy