

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 3 Issue 15

Choices (Now what?)

OCTOBER 15, 2023



A high-rise tower hit by Israeli forces in Gaza City, October 2023

War in the Middle East is sadly becoming a cliché. But the horror suffered by victims when brutally attacked this past Saturday is not just another senseless attempt at harassing Israel. Hundreds died during a coordinated attack by a political group known as Hamas . *Page 3*

EVERYONE HAVE
A WONDERFUL
AND SAFE
WEEKEND!

DONATE

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I am (Your best selfie)



Last week, we explored some factors that can cause us to feel unworthy to be called by God to do particular tasks or to take on a challenge. We discovered that feelings of unworthiness often surface when our actions contradict our values.

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As believers, we strive to follow values consistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ. However, since we all fail, at times, it is understandable that when opportunity knocks, we're afraid to answer. We're fearful that we won't measure up or that we're mistaken about what God wants from us.

Often we feel that our past somehow disqualifies us, while other times we disqualify ourselves because we don't want to do whatever God is asking us to do. We may feel justified in our hesitation.

In many situations we feel that our unworthiness runs deep. Unworthiness is who we are and not just what we've done. It is our identity.

According to the Dictionary of the American Psychologists Association, identity is our sense of self defined by two groups of factor. First, identity comprises our physical, psychological, and interpersonal characteristics that make us unique. Second, our identity comes out of our affiliations, such as ethnicity and our social roles.

Psychologist Erik Erikson is credited for discovering the importance of identity and the crisis that ensues when who we are is uncertain. An identity crisis is characterized by a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at the question "who am I?"

In a *Psychology Today* article, Kendra Cherry notes, "an identity crisis can occur at any age." They most often come when facing new challenges and experiences. A frequent challenge in a rapidly changing world. Cherry reminds us that an identity crisis is not an actual psychological diagnosis, however.

In this week's chapters from our companion book, *A Woman of Words*, Matthew comes to grips with his new role as bookkeeper for the church in Jerusalem. "I was willing to do whatever He wanted me to do," Matthew mused to himself, "But I had hoped for a task that would not remind me of my past. I had hoped for a job that reflected my changed character."

No one patches up an old coat with a piece of new cloth, for the new patch will shrink and make an even bigger hole in the coat.

Matthew 9:16

There was a time in Matthew's life when money was his primary focus. Money coming from neighbors who could not afford to pay the taxes imposed by Rome. During that time in his life, Matthew took advantage of the unfortunate circumstances of others to enrich himself.

Jesus liberated Matthew from the hold that money had on him. "But He did not liberate your abilities," replied Peter, "and I know you are still better at calculations than anyone I could name."

Choices (Now what?) *cont. from pg 1*

United Methodist Bishop Alan Bard distributed a letter this past week calling for prayer. I'm grateful for the Bishop's recognition of the complex politics between Israel and Palestine. Any summary of the circumstances leaves out critical details.

Most countries, making up the United Nations, recognize Palestine as an independent nation state. Israel's military presence in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem makes peace harder to achieve.

The history of how the modern State of Israel came about adds fuel to the fire. The history of the Holy Land, which birthed three of the world's most popular religions, further blurs the border between right and wrong.

There can never be a justification for such a heinous act of aggression. Yet, the perpetrators can and will offer a litany of justifications.

I will never forget my visit to Israel and the West Bank. What I saw and heard from clergy and ordinary people left a lasting impression on my soul. I hoped to find a stronger connection with my Lord and Savior, and I did. But the crux of my stronger connection was to share a broken heart.

I have no right or interest in condemning other people. Even those with whom I disagree or those whose actions I condemn. With one exception.

Whenever God's will is invoked as a justification for violence, oppression or hatred, I feel called to take a stand. While I don't have a say in their salvation, anyone who blames God for violence condemns themselves. But I am also convinced that nothing can separate any of us from the love of God.

Our beliefs have great power over the choices we make. So how we choose to interpret God's will matters a great deal. However, our common humanity makes us vulnerable to temptations to make choices that are contrary to God's will.

But there is good news. Matthew tells a story, nearly identical to what we find in Mark and Luke, that highlights the humanity of Jesus. God understands and loves us, anyway.

Jesus went into the wilderness after His baptism, where He faced three temptations. Each of them sought to exploit His human weakness. Of course, Jesus chose not to succumb to temptation.

You and I are not Jesus. He was both human and divine. We are just human with limited power to just say no. Particularly when we can rationalize that God is on the side we believe is right. Whatever divinity possess is a gift of God's Holy Spirit and grace.

All this I will give you, if you kneel down and worship me. Jesus answered, Go away...scripture says, Worship God and serve only Him!

Matthew 4:1-11

Knowing that Jesus resisted temptations that none of us can resist affirms that God has power over all evil. God's will prevails despite whatever catastrophes we bring on ourselves and others.

This means that no matter how hard any of us try to circumvent God's will we will never get our way when it is God's Way. Violence is not justifiable and never ends well for the perpetrator.

It's complicated. I cannot criticize Israel's responding with tremendous and deadly military power. I certainly couldn't claim I wouldn't do likewise.

But there is a voice buried deep in my soul that reminds me to leave God out of it when we make choices to harm others. Fortunately, God understands and loves us, anyway.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website's](#) homepage - [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to our [YouTube channel](#). You can find more information about us on our website at [FlintAsburyChurch.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

Our series was inspired by and relies on content provided by Angela Hunt. *A Woman of Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2021.
Kali Robinson. "What is Hamas" © Council on Foreign Relations, October 9, 2023. Retrieved from: [link](#)

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kevin Croom
Sylvia Pittman
Jonathon Misner
Terrance Williams
Mirium Watson



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux
Norma Buzzard
Nancy Elston



**COMING UP THIS WEEK
OCTOBER 16 - OCTOBER 22**

Oct 16	Mon	2:00pm 6:00pm	Staff Meeting Leadership Team
Oct 17	Tues	10am-12N	Food Distribution
Oct 18	Wed		
Oct 19	Thu		
Oct 20	Fri		
Oct 21	Sat		
Oct 22	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](#).)

Upcoming Worship Series "Words"



There is a plethora of metaphors that warn us about the impact of the words we speak. One that comes to mind is words are like toothpaste. Once you squeeze toothpaste out of the tube, you can't put it back.

And God said through the Prophet Isaiah that God's Word never returns empty, but always does whatever God intended.

We refer to the Bible as God's Word. We read Jesus is God's Word in the opening lines of John's Gospel.

Book Club News



Our companion book for our new worship series is Angela Hunt's third book in her Jerusalem Road Series. *A Woman of*

Words recounts the time after the Resurrection of Jesus when the church first takes root as His followers share the good news.

The narrators are two familiar characters. Matthew was a tax collector named Levi when he first met Jesus. One of the least likely candidates for ordination. But Jesus saw in Matthew what others could not.

of all the persons who travelled with Jesus. Angela Hunt fills in the gaps using her imagination and an in-depth knowledge of scripture and speculation about scripture.

James, Peter and John ask Matthew to move to Jerusalem and help with the growing church. He dreams of preaching and performing miracles, but finds his dreams postponed after speaking with Mary, Yeshua's mother. Mary asks Matthew to help her write down the stories of Yeshua while the eyewitnesses are still available to be consulted.

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Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
	Sr Prog Mgr Local Foods
	South Flint Soup Kitchen

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is one of the most recognized, and perhaps, least understood

Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony & Mirium	Welcome Team
Cyndi	Worship Leader
Anthony & Jim	Ushers
Jonathon & Terrance	Production Team
Yasheah & Mirium	Nursery
Christine & Norma	Cafe

Upcoming Worship Series — “Words” ..cont from pg 5

Speaking of scripture, do you ever wonder where the four gospels we have in our bibles came from? Did four of the apostles try to capitalize on their inside knowledge with a lucrative book deal?

Welcome to our worship series, *Words*.

Our Worship Series beginning in October will take us to Thanksgiving. I encourage you to follow along with our companion book for this series, *A Woman of Words*, by Angela Hunt. This is the third book in her series, *The Road to Jerusalem*.

In her book, the Mother of Jesus asks Matthew to help her record the story of her Son’s ministry. But Matthew is hoping to preach and teach like his colleagues do. Also, Mathew would not mind performing a few miracles.

However, he gets invited to help with the growing church in Jerusalem because Matthew has a head for numbers. After all, he was formerly a tax collector. A past Matthew would sooner forget rather than be defined by his former vocation.

Of course, Hunt’s creative imagination regarding the origin of the gospels isn’t based on verifiable facts. She invites us to imagine together while learning more about how the early church evolved.

In this series, we focus on what happened after the Resurrection of Jesus.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30am. We share our weekly episodes on our [YouTube channel](#). We go live at 10:30am. You can find these links along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website](#) at FlintAsbury.org.

Pastor Tommy

Angela Hunt, *A Woman of Words*, Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2021

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

All this I will give you, if you kneel down and worship me. Jesus answered, Go away... scripture says, Worship God and serve only him!

Matthew 4:1-11

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS


1. Read Matthew 4:1-11. What does this story tell you about the humanity of Jesus? What lessons do you get from this story about the human condition?
2. Read this week's articles titled *Choices*. If you want some background on Israel and Palestine relations there is a link at the end of the article. What does this situation tell you about human nature? What would you want to happen next if you were one of the victim's family members? What is your hope for the future for this region?
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”

Page 9



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

South Flint Soup Kitchen



Bottled Water Drive

ALL SUMMER LONG!

Our clients need bottled water for cooking, going with sack lunches, to bathe and brush their teeth with, and more!

Donations are accepted Monday-Friday
9:30am-Noon at South Flint Soup Kitchen, 3410
Fenton Road (3 blocks north of Atherton Road)
Flint, MI 48507

Questions? Call 810-239-3427 or email
southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

To donate: www.mightycause.com/feedflint





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

Reluctantly, he agrees, although the two face numerous complexities. For one, Gaius Caesar, more commonly known as Caligula, decides to raise a statue of himself in the Holy Temple. And he is willing to kill every man in Israel if needed.

Matthew's attention turns to saving his people. Meanwhile, Mary encourages him to come to terms with his past. When they finally near the completion of their project, Matthew realizes that the job he reluctantly accepted might be his God-given destiny.

Although Hunt's book is fictional, her attention to details in scripture challenges our knowledge of the Bible. With each character, we meet the questions that percolate inside us. What parts of her description are likely genuine, and which are made up?

Angela Hunt has published over 100 books, selling nearly 5 million copies worldwide. Angela, a New York Times bestselling author, received the Times Book Club Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006. She has a Ph.D. in biblical studies in theology and is well-versed in biblical text. Angela can be found online at www.angelahuntbooks.com. Our Book Club does not meet as a group. However, our weekly messages reference that weeks chapters. You can anticipate spoiler alerts unless you keep up with the pace. I've purchased ten books but when they're gone you can still purchase your own copy or visit your local library.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question or enter a prayer request on our website's homepage — FlintAsburyChurch.org.

Pastor Tommy

Angela Hunt. *A Woman of Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2021.

Cash or checks can be sent to/dropped off at South Flint Soup Kitchen, 3410 Fenton Road, Flint, MI 48507. Please make checks out to South Flint Soup Kitchen!

Online at www.mightycause.com/feedflint

Donations can be dropped off Monday-Friday 11am-12Noon. Calling ahead is not necessary, but our needs change frequently, so calling ahead of time is a good idea!

Give time! We need volunteers!!! Volunteers arrive at 9:30am and are done by 12:30pm. Tasks include handing out lunches, assisting in the Angel Closet, light cleaning, putting together items to pass out to clients, and more.

Refer people!!

Questions??? Call 810-239-3427

or email southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

Instead of punishing him for his past, God used the capabilities that Matthew once used for his own gain to help grow His church.

Jesus reminds us we're transformed when we come to know Him as our Lord and Savior. But our past does not go away. Instead, experiences become building blocks for new ways of serving His church. We're given a new identity as a follower of Jesus Christ.

What abilities do you have that may sit on a shelf? How might God help you use your capabilities to help grow His church?

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"Identity." APA Dictionary of Psychology. © American Psychologists Association, 2023, [Link](#).

Kendra Cherry, MEd. Medically reviewed by Daniel B. Block, MD. *"How to Recognize and Cope With an Identity Crisis."* © VeryWellMind.com, April 11, 2023. Retrieved from: [link](#)



October 10, 2023

Dear Friends in Christ in the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church,

I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, who is our peace and who encourages us to be peacemakers when he says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

Early in this century, an acronym to describe our changing world gained wide currency – VUCA.

The world moving into the future is likely to be volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.

This past weekend, the world again experienced volatility when Gaza Hamas fired thousands of rockets into Israel, and Hamas fighters from Gaza invaded nearby Israeli towns. Over 900 people have been killed, and over 2500 injured. There have been reports of rape and torture, and over 130 people, including women and children, have been taken hostage. Much of the world has expressed outrage over these actions, for which there is no moral justification.

Let me be clear, these actions are morally unjustifiable and deserve condemnation.

It is also true that the historical background is complex. While we cannot let that complexity blunt our moral outrage, we must continue to wrestle with the realities that make peace so difficult and elusive in Palestine/Israel. Among the realities that make this situation complex are the long histories of both the Palestinian and Jewish people. These histories include dispossession, oppression, and deep trauma. Deep injustices have often marked the history of Israel's policies toward the Palestinian people. Recent Israeli policies encouraging the ongoing formation of Jewish settlements in Palestinian territory have deepened resentment and injustice. One Israeli journalist described the current policies as "establishing a government of annexation and dispossession." Will the Israeli response to this Hamas attack be measured and proportionate? Thus far, retaliatory strikes have killed close to 700, and we mourn with those grieving in Gaza.

Prior invasions of Israel from nearby countries and terrorist bombings are part of this complex history. Among Israeli citizens are survivors of the Holocaust and family members of those who died during it. Regional politics add to this complexity, including the power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran and its influence on Israeli and Palestinian actions.

I think we must seek to hold together an unambiguous condemnation of this recent attack, a recognition of the complexities of this region of the world, and a deep desire to achieve justice and peaceful coexistence. Our condemnation of these recent Hamas actions does not mitigate our concern for justice for the Palestinian people, a concern supported by our conference resolution last summer. In the name of Jesus, we remain committed to peace, a peace in which Israelis and Palestinians coexist and seek to flourish together. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church states: “We deplore war and urge the peaceful settlement of disputes among nations.... We yearn for the day when there will be no more war, and people will live together in peace and justice.” Let us pray out of this deep yearning for peace, justice, and a better world.

As we pray deeply for peace together in this volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world, may we also pray for hearts and minds large enough to grapple with all the complexities that confront us as we “pursue what makes for peace” (Romans 14:19).

May we remain committed to hearing and following the call of Jesus to be peacemakers.

Grace and Peace

David Alan Bard, Michigan Area Bishop

This statement has been endorsed by the [Michigan Conference Board of Justice](#).

The United Methodist Church of Bishops has also released a statement which I encourage you to read.

A message from Michigan Conference Bishop David Alan Bard. We encourage you to share it with others this week.

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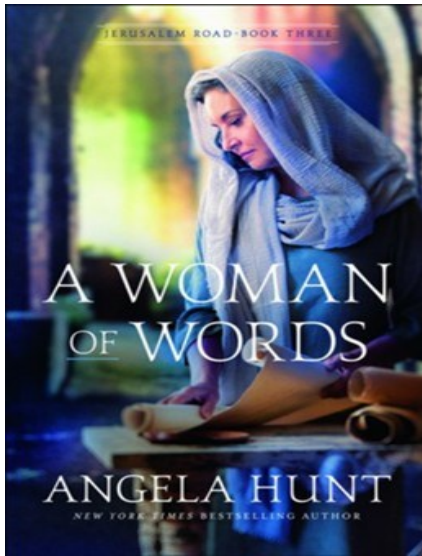
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OFFICE 810-235-0016

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24 oz \$8.99

THE GREEN SALSA WILL BE MILD.

THE RED SALSA WILL BE HOT.



Welcome to the first episode of our new worship series, Words. Each week there is a reading assignment in our companion book, *Woman of Words* by Angela Hunt.

Reading along with us is completely optional. I plan to recap each week's chapters and focus on one or more of the author's references to stories found in scripture.

Nevertheless, we chose this approach to our series based on experience. Those who read the companion book report a deeper connection to scripture.

We begin with the first four chapters. Matthew, an apostle of Jesus is asked by Peter and John, also apostles, and James, a brother of Jesus, to move to Jerusalem to help.

Here is the schedule for episodes two through eight:

Oct 8	Chapters 5 - 9
Oct 15	Chapters 10 - 15
Oct 22	Chapters 16 - 21
Oct 29	Chapters 22 - 28
Nov 5	Chapters 29 - 33
Nov 12	Chapters 34 - 40
Nov 19	Chapters 41 - 45

Cyndi and I are on vacation Sunday, November 26. The Season of Advent begins Sunday, December 3 with a new worship series.

Our Book Club does not meet as a group. However, our weekly messages reference that week's chapters. You can anticipate spoiler alerts unless you keep up with the pace. I've purchased ten books but when they're gone you can still purchase your own copy or visit your local library.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question or enter a prayer request on our website's homepage — FlintAsburyChurch.org.

Pastor Tommy

Angela Hunt. *A Woman of Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2021.



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