

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

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Hope (Hopeful Prophecy)



We have only one chapter from our companion book this week. And our author is still laying out the groundwork for understanding Revelation. Meanwhile, our series is already moving onto the actual text, jumping into the four horsemen and not waiting.

The Reverend Naylo Hopkins is scheduled to bring this week's message. I will be visiting Open Door Church.

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**Welcome to
Asbury UMC
Rev. Naylo
Hopkins!**



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Edges (Where the wild things are)



When I'm working on a platform, I'm careful not to work too close to the edges. The higher the platform, the greater the danger. The smaller the surface, the larger the risk of stepping off an edge.

Living on the edge, the margins, is an uncomfortable dwelling place. You may see relief only a few feet away, but it may as well be miles. You feel pressure pushing you closer to the

edge already uncomfortably nearby.

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Hope (Hopeful Prophecy) *cont. from pg 1*

Jeremy Duncan, in *Upside-Down Apocalypse*, makes the case that the structure of Revelation mirrors the Book of Isaiah. Why would John make this choice if Revelation is apocalyptic? The answer is Revelation is a prophecy borrowing from the prophetic traditions, but using apocalyptic storytelling for impact. And it works.

Reading Revelation as prophecy is the key to breaking through the obscure symbolism borrowed from other prophets, including Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. And the prophetic tradition of telling a story three times. But remember, prophecy doesn't predict the future, although prophecy may illustrate possibilities. Rather, prophecy enlightens humanity by critiquing the present while revealing God's better plan. Prophecy presents hopeful new beginnings.

That is, prophecy points to a better future that is possible because God loves us and all that God created.

Consider the prophecies of Isaiah as three stories, or as one story told from three different vantage points. Isaiah begins with a focus on the lived experience of most individuals. The rich are getting richer and the poorer suffer. Sound familiar?

Revelation is not a story told with a timeline. Instead, Revelation loops back to retell the story multiple times while zooming out to tell the same story from a broader view.

In the first part, Isaiah makes the case that salvation is a call to repentance. A repentance that "illuminates the cost of our individual choices, involves us with restorative justice, and saves us from ruin." Revelation opens with letters to seven churches addressing the lived experiences of individuals facing injustice. John calls for healed relationships between persons facing hardships together. Living the way taught by Jesus.

Part two of Isaiah begins with a new vision. A similar break occurs in Revelation as John, once again, is under the control of the Holy Spirit. In

Isaiah, the story of salvation is told from the vantage point of nations. God disassembles empires. Armageddon, in both Isaiah and Revelation, is a showdown between God and the military machinery of nations. War is no more.

I saw the Lamb break open the first of the seven seals, and I heard one of the flour living creatures say in a voice that sounded like thunder, "Come!"

Revelations 6:1-8

And now Isaiah, in part three, zooms out even further. Salvation includes the defeat of evil. Death is no more, not because we go to heaven, but life itself is transformed. Salvation is for all of creation.

Jeremy Duncan writes, "Personal transformation, social justice, and cosmic healing are implications of a victory already won." Personal transformation, crumbling of empires built on violence and greed, and the disarming of evil and the cosmic triumph of life over death. Salvation from three perspectives.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kevin Croom Jonathon Misner
 Sylvia Pittman Terrance Williams
 Kim Sims



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard Nancy Elston

****Today's Scripture lesson from Rev Naylo Hopkins will be:**

Revelations 6:1-8

Message:

"Calling out the Horsemen"

A short bio of Rev Naylo:

In November 2001, a midnight prayer on an overpass resulted in his heart being "strangely warmed." The following day, Naylo walked into his very first United Methodist Church.

Naylo Hopkins began pastoring Flint Bethel United Methodist Church in 2022. He grew up on the north side of Flint, MI. Naylo entered the ministry in 2011 and served five years as a local pastor before relocating to attend seminary. His Master's in Divinity is from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. He graduated in 2020 as the In Faith 2020 Harry Hoosier Spirit Award recipient.

He utilizes a cross-cultural servant leadership style. He has organized and led church community meals, free stores, and food distributions. He has worked closely with neighborhood schools to help minister to the community. He is enthusiastic about helping God's people take "their next faithful steps" and communicating

COMING UP THIS WEEK
FEBRUARY 26 - MARCH 3

WELCOME REV NAYLO HOPKINS!

Feb 26	Mon	3:00pm	Staff Meeting
Feb 27	Tue	10:00am	Food Distribution
		3:00pm	CDC Board Meeting
Feb 28	Wed		
Feb 29	Thu		
Mar 1	Fri		
Mar 2	Sat		
Mar 3	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](#).)

through the scriptures God's message that everyone has an opportunity to be empowered by Christ's transforming love.

Naylo is the father of 2 adorable boys, Advent and August, and the best Rhodesian Riback in the world, Aja.

Rev Naylo Hopkins

Upcoming Worship Series "Revelations"

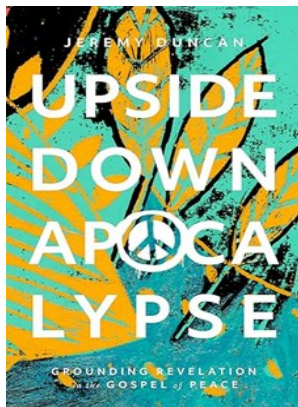


Welcome to our long-awaited series, *Revelations*. While I've occasionally referred to scripture from this mysterious book this is the first time we're dedicating multiple weeks to cover the entire book. Ready?

First, *Revelations* may be one of the most theologically abused books in the Bible. It's used to justify a myriad of questionable opinions and prejudices. *Revelations* lends itself to a variety of interpretations due to its layers of symbolism, metaphors and meaning. However, it is part of our bible and, as such, consistent with the God of Salvation found throughout the scripture.

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Book Club News



Our companion book for our new worship series is Jeremy Duncan's review of the Book of Revelations,

titled *Upside-Down Apocalypse: grounding revelation in the gospel of peace.*

Amazon's website describes his book this way:

The book of Revelation—which deals on a cosmic scale with good and evil, politics and empire, community and eternity—has intrigued and frustrated readers since it was written. How do we make sense of John's prophetic vision of cosmic war in light the nonviolence Jesus embodies in the

gospels? What does it mean to tell us about Jesus, our world, and the future of all things? As End Times conspiracy theories surge, it's more important than ever that we read the final book of the Bible without distorting the true message of Jesus.

In *Upside-Down Apocalypse*, author Jeremy Duncan draws on biblical scholarship and nonviolent theology to guide readers through the book of Revelation, understanding the vision of John in the light

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Asbury Staff

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Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
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	Sr Prog Mgr Local Foods
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Cyndi	Worship Leader
Anthony & Jim	Ushers
Jonathon & Terrance	Production Team
Yasheah & Mirium	Nursery
Christine & Norma	Cafe

Upcoming Worship Series — “Revelations” ..cont from pg 4

And this is the main point of our series. Our plan is to review Revelations through the lens of the Gospels. After all, it is the same Jesus in all situations. The same Lord and Savior. The same God.

**I am the first and the last,
who is, who was, and who
is to come.**

Revelations 1:8

We are doing this series in cooperation with other Flint area UM churches. Two of our Sundays will feature guest preachers. The Reverend Naylo Hopkins, Pastor of Bethel UMC will be at Asbury on February 25th. And the Reverend Kimberly Metzger, Pastor of Open Door UMC will be with us on March 10th.

We have both a companion book and an outline of Revelations to follow. Our guest speakers will follow the outline of scripture, but the companion book is unique to our journey (see Book Club article).

Here is the outline for covering Revelations with chapters from our companion book:

	Scripture	Upside-Down Apocalypse
Feb 18	Revelation 1:9-18	Chapters Forward - 2
Feb 25	Revelation 6:1-8	Chapter 3
Mar 3	Revelation 16:13-17	Chapters 4-5
Mar 10	Revelation 7:9-17	Chapter 6
Mar 17	Revelation 21:1-5	Chapters 7-8
Mar 24	Revelation 5:1-10	Chapters 9 -10
Mar 31	John 20:1-18	Chapter 11


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

Jeremy Duncan. *Upside-Down Apocalypse:grounding revelation in the gospel of peace*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2022.

“Feed Flint”





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

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

I saw the Lamb break open the first of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice that sounded like thunder, "Come!"

Revelation 6:1-8

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Revelation 6:1-8. Are the images in this text familiar to you? If so, what are some of the connections you're aware of? If not, what are some connections to present day circumstances that peak your imagination.
2. Read this week's articles titled *Hope*. Are you able to rethink how you read Revelation by considering the book prophecy? Why or why not? What is the source of your hope for the future?
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.



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of the Jesus we know through the Gospels—the full revelation of the Divine. Along the way, readers will discover what the writer imagines as he weaves this profound revelation of non-violent triumph and see with fresh eyes how the Prince of Peace turns violence on its head once and for all.

We have a limited number of copies Jeremy Duncan's book. But copies are available through most book retailers and libraries.

Here is the schedule of chapters for our *Revelations* Series:

Feb 18	Chapters Forward - 2
Feb 25	Chapter 3
Mar 3	Chapters 4-5
Mar 10	Chapter 6
Mar 17	Chapters 7-8
Mar 24	Chapters 9 -10
Mar 31	Chapter 11

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. You can 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

Jeremy Duncan. *Upside-Down Apocalypse: grounding revelation in the gospel of peace*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2022.

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

There are a lot of edges in life to watch out for, and most of us are feeling dangerously close. It's an election year. And our House of Representatives seem completely dysfunctional. I think it's time to "clean house" in our legislative branch.

Many United Methodist churches feel like the edges are too close for some of our traditional beliefs and theological positions.

Asbury Theological Seminary President Timothy C. Tennent, in a September 2022 blog post, argued that many United Methodist congregations were "pushed to the edge" by churches progressively interpreting scripture in ways that, in their view, are inconsistent with published denominational doctrine.

A reporter from ABC News asked a couple of our Flint-area UM pastors to offer insights into the departure of churches from our conference. Thousands of churches across the country voted to disaffiliate with the United Methodist denomination, primarily over theological disagreements. The more visibly public dispute involves the ordination of LGBTQ clergy and same-sex marriage.

Amna Nawaz, in a PBS story this past December, reported that over 7,000 churches voted to disaffiliate since 2019. Apparently, there were a lot of folks too close to edges they did not want to be near.

Let's be clear. United Methodist doctrine, historically, demonstrates flex. The Book of Discipline, which reads a lot like a legal document, spells out a process for interpreting scripture using the text, tradition, experience and reason. And most theologians realize that experience weighs heavily on how we individually read scripture.

We come to the bible as individuals, created in the image of God and shaped by the world. And the closer the world pushes us towards the edges, the greater the likelihood we're a bit misshaped by world standards.

The Book of Revelations, in particular, with its bizarre imaginary, invites a wide diversity of interpretations.

John begins Revelations letting his readers know the Spirit was influencing his thoughts and actions. Sent to the Island of Patmos for sharing the gospel, John was experiencing his own edges. So his circumstances provided empathy for his colleagues facing pressure to conform to the world around them.

Welcome to the first episode of our Lenten Series *Revelations*. Over the next seven weeks, we will explore the strange and mysterious poetry revealed to John and chosen to conclude our holy scriptures. During our series, we will turn to Pastor Jeremy Duncan's book titled *Upside-Down Apocalypse*, along with other sources, for guidance in navigating John's symbols and references. We will look for the edges of reasonableness based on what we know about Jesus Christ from the gospels, in particular.

Don't be afraid! I am the first and the last. I am the living one! I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever; I have authority over death and the world of the dead.

Revelation 1:9-18

John wrote Revelations over two thousand years ago. It was a different time. Rome was the prevailing world power and led by a ruthless dictator demanding the respect that Christians reserve for Jesus Christ.

This week's text is among the best-known images of Revelation. The seven seals and four riders. The four riders take us back to the chariots of Zechariah pulled by horses of differing colors. I'm looking forward to what Pastor Naylor has to say about John's vision.

Rome claimed to bring peace on earth. And those living within Rome's boundaries as citizens benefited from Rome's subjugation of other nations. Violence never brings lasting peace. But the peace of Christ endures forever.

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*](http://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*](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

Parts of our series was inspired by Jeremy Duncan. *Upside-Down Apocalypse: grounding revelation in the gospel of peace*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2022.

While it is often challenging to see our current circumstances in ancient stories. It is all there. In the first century, the empire was Rome. Today, it's Russia, China, the U.S. and their allies. Then it was Titus Flavius Domitian. Today it is Vladimir Putin. Kin Jong-un and Xi Jinping. A generation earlier, it was Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong.

The genre of Revelations is apocalyptic. An apocalypse, in modern English, describes the end of the world, most often with special effects and storytelling that explore the edges of our imagination. However, this word in ancient Greek, the language of John, means simply the "uncovering of something hidden." While Revelations was written, John's aim was to make clear what was hidden.

Duncan explains that "while an apocalypse is an end—an end to one's imagination, an end to a vision that is incomplete—it is also always the start of something new; a more authentic way to imagine our world."

We expect scripture to reveal life-saving knowledge to us. We expect brilliance and wisdom radiating from the pages. And John does not disappoint us.

Led by the Spirit of God, his utilization of commonly used symbols and metaphors effectively illuminates that which Jesus revealed. God is in charge, not world leaders and empires.

Heaven on earth" is God's promise to humanity. "Peace on earth" is the gospel's deliverable. Not the sort of peace that humans promise and cannot deliver. Rather, God promises an eternal peace.

Jesus Christ, among other things, expresses God's love. Jesus is the logos of God. That is, Jesus is the idea behind the thing. Jesus is the beginning and the end. The alpha and omega. And, in Revelations, John reveals Jesus Christ.

I invite you to travel with us as we explore the edges of Revelations.

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Timothy Tennent. *Let our People Go: The Cry of Disaffiliating UMC Churches*. © Timothy Tennent, September 21, 2022. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Amna Nawaz and Adam Kemp. *Why thousands of congregations are leaving the United Methodist Church*. © PBD, Dec 27, 2023. Retrieved from: [link](#)

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