

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 4 Issue 10

## Peace (One True King)



Last Sunday, we looked ahead to the finale, Armageddon. This Sunday, Pastor Kimberly Metzger, of Open Door UMC, will look back at John's vision that God revealed of divine peace, the heavenly throne room.

John's vision of saints dressed in the color of victo-

ry surrounding the throne filled with the peace and joy only possible through faith in Jesus Christ. This is the church as God intended. "A great multitude no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

*Page 2*

## Survival Kit (Fighting Monsters)



I'm a big fan of watching how-to YouTube videos that I usually find after asking Google search a how-to question.

In preparing for this week's message on Revelation, I found another source that I haven't used before.

The site is called wikiHow.

The platform's mission is to create an extensive library of knowledge about how to do things.

I googled the word Armageddon, and the site was listed near the top of referrals with the summary of How to prepare for Armageddon? The site offered a list of items to have on hand.

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MARCH 10, 2024

EVERYONE  
HAVE A  
WONDERFUL  
WEEK!!



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In this week's reading assignment from our companion book, Pastor Jeremy Duncan reviews our text from two weeks ago, the four riders of the apocalypse. His focus is on the, not so hidden meanings behind the colors and descriptive actions of the riders.

In John's time, Rome was the superpower. And the emperor claimed that peace and prosperity came through violence. The juxtaposition between the fantastical violence of the horsemen, the claim that peace only comes through subjugation, and the throne room, is stark.

Duncan describes this artificial peace:

In revealing God as the one who conquers through love alone, we finally begin to see how our borders, our violence, and our wealth have no ability to save us... Our pseudo-peace depends on borders that keep imagined enemies out and our violence just out of view... Our pseudo-peace is in love with economics, which advantages us but creates an unbearable cost for those lower down the ladder... Our pseudo-peace often

requires a villain to point our frustrations at... When we welcome the pseudo-peace of the powerful, we undermine the trust we depend on for human flourishing. And Jesus says it all has to come crashing down if we're going to start again.

Revelation's creative use of powerful imagery uncouples the text from Rome, Babylon, time, and location, making these stories relevant in all generations. And the use of an apocalyptic genre punctuates the truth told by Christ. Walls of distrust replaced by bridges of hospitality. Angry rhetoric replaced by an invitation to live together in peace.

There was an enormous crowd—no one could count all the people! They were from every race, nation, and language, and they stood in front of the throne and of the Lamb.

Revelation 7:9-17

In a Late Show interview this past week, Yuval Noah Harari offered insightful hope for peace amid wars and rumors of wars. Harari told Stephen Colbert that wars are not really fought over

material goods. Rather, conflict comes from disagreements over the stories we tell ourselves. And this is good news. Peace is possible when we rethink our stories and craft new ones that both sides can agree on.

The apocalypse is not the wrath we have been conditioned to hope for," argues Duncan, "our enemies punished, and our sins visited upon us." Neither is the imagery intended to reassure us. The portrayal of apocalyptic monsters jolts us out of our apathy of comfort. And reveal the fallacy in splitting our trust in Jesus and empire while others pay the price.

Pastor Jeremy Peters writes:

During moments of pressure and persecution, we are often inclined to put up walls, to bunker down, to become closed and suspicious of those who are not like us... John tells us that one of the essential pieces of the faith that God is calling us to hold on to, one of the things we need to hold on to if we are going to survive this stressful moment in history, is the idea that God's

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

**COMING UP THIS WEEK - MARCH 11 - 17**



**KEEPING THE FAITH IN APOCALYPTIC TIMES**  
 Faith Through Worship  
 Revelation 7:9-17  
 Pastor Kim Metzger

WELCOME REV KIMBERLY METZER FROM  
 OPEN DOOR UMC!

|        |     |         |  |
|--------|-----|---------|--|
| Mar 11 | Mon | 2:30pm  | Staff Meeting                          |
| Mar 12 | Tue | 10:00am | Food Distribution                      |
| Mar 13 | Wed |         |  |
| Mar 14 | Thu | 1:00pm  | United Women in Faith                  |
| Mar 15 | Fri |         |  |
| Mar 16 | Sat |         |  |
| Mar 17 | Sun | 10:30am | New Beginnings<br>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 "Revelations"

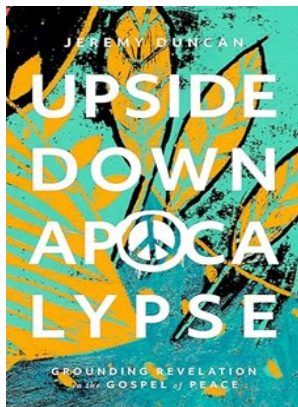


Welcome to our long-awaited series, *Revelations*. While I've occasionally referred to scripture from this mysterious book this is the first time we're dedicating multiple weeks to cover the entire book. Ready?

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

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor  
Kevin Croom Executive Director/CDC  
Connie Portillo Office Secretary  
Kim Sims Finance Director  
Sylvia Pittman Empowerment Arts  
Jim Craig Board & Leadership Chair  
Mike Sampson Farms Manager  
Terrance Williams Arts Center Mgr  
Sr Prog Mgr Local Foods  
South Flint Soup Kitchen

## 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 — “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](http://FlintAsbury.org).

Pastor Tommy


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

“Feed Flint”





# “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](https://flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate)**

**LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:**

*There was an enormous crowd—no one could count all the people! They were from every race, tribe, nation, and language, and they stood in front of the throne and of the Lamb.*

Revelation 7:9-17

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

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**QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:**

1. Read Revelation 7:9-17. Describe the imagery in your own words. What does this text tell you about the church as Christ sees it?
2. Read this week's articles titled *Peace*. What is one of the stories you tell yourself about your circumstances? Is there another version? Name one way that you split your trust between God and the power of our nation? Is there another way?
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](http://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](http://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](mailto:southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com)

The list included items I expected to find, like jugs of water and canned goods. But the list also included more disturbing items like a weapon, along with the warning to presume any other human you encounter is not your friend.

Mostly, Armageddon-like events are associated with natural disasters. But there are plenty of political confrontations that result in rumors and conspiracy theories of an Armageddon of a different sort on the horizon.

It's a presidential election year and the airwaves are filled with messages intended to spread fear, uncertainty and doubt unless a particularly candidate is elected. Some messages resonate when heard among the news stories of wars, terrorism, mass shootings, nuclear weapons in space, and destructive weather.

Remember the 1998 movie Armageddon, where Bruce Willis plays an oil driller sent to drill a hole in an approaching asteroid threatening earth's existence? Fifteen years after this movie was released, an asteroid named Chelyabinsk (chuhl·yaa·binsk) entered the earth's atmosphere over Russia's Ural region in February 2013. It was the second-largest asteroid to do damage to our planet in the last century, weighing approximately 12,000 tons and measuring 19 meters across.

When the asteroid entered the upper atmosphere at a shallow angle and high speed, it disintegrated, releasing a shock-wave that injured over 1,500 people and damaging 7,300 buildings.

This month marks the tenth anniversary of two groups, one led by NASA, responsible for identifying, tracking and planning a response to asteroids heading our way. By a strange twist of fate, the Chelyabinsk asteroid struck on the same day that the United Nations Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space Working Group on Near-Earth Objects met in Vienna to finalize a recommendation to the UN on how to defend Earth from possible asteroid impacts.

So what really is an Armageddon and why is it so often associated with the book we call Revelation, where the word appears only one time?

A book that doesn't mention asteroids, but describes the sort of monsters that we hope to avoid both in life and in our nightmares. The images found in Revelation, for most of us, are reminiscent of marvel comic books. But the book is actually a beautifully written composition that reveals God's Word in Jesus Christ.

Written in the genre of apocalypse, with all the twists and turns of a must read classic, God reveals through the author, John, God's will for humanity. Peace on earth as it is in heaven.

Salvation is not just individual transformation. Salvation includes the dismantling of oppressive empires and their capacity for war. And ultimately, salvation means the defeat of evil and death.

Church, we have met the monsters of Revelation up close and personal.

The spirits brought the Kings together in the place called Armageddon. And when the seventh Angel poured out his bowl in the air, a loud voice came from the throne in the temple, saying, "It is done!"

Revelation 16:16-17

Our text for this week is the culmination of a third cycle of prophecy, commonly known as the "seven bowls of wrath." As chapter 16 begins, John once again hears a voice, but the voice is giving instructions to seven angels to "Pour out the seven bowls of God's anger on the earth!"

church is bigger than any one nation, encompassing every tribe and every language. This image makes it that much harder to hold hate in our hearts, and that much easier to find compassion for Ukrainians and Russians and for our own neighbors. All of these people have a place in God's throne room, and all of these people have a place in God's heart.

John's revelation point us to the actual truth. That peace and joy are found in faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

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](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

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The seven angels are introduced in the preceding chapter. Each angel is associated with a plague. Leading up to this third cycle of prophecy, we read about seven letters to seven churches, seven seals, and seven trumpets. There is a logical pattern here.

In Revelation chapter 11, verse 18, after the last trumpet sounds, we find a worship hymn that ends with the line: "The time has come to destroy those who destroy the earth!" The tension builds as John describes the characters appearing in this round of prophetic drama.

In chapter 12, a child is born and saved from a dragon. The dragon is thrown down to earth where he pursues the child's mother to no avail. Two more monsters appear in chapter 13 — one from the sea and one from the land. The one from the land looks like a lamb, but sounds like a dragon. It is a counterfeit lamb that convinces people to worship the sea monster.

The sea monster is positioned as the anti-Jesus persona. This figure is more often referred to as the anti-Christ, even though this term is never used in Revelation. We read dramatic illustrations of what it looks like turning away from the Way of Christ. This is not a title but a functional role that applies to every one of us at one time or another.

The beast is the embodiment of empire and its systems of oppression that create privilege for some at the cost of others. And this beast is powerful. But its power comes from brute force and violence which are counter to the peace offered by Jesus.

All of this buildup prepares us for the pouring out of the seven bowls. And one by one, John describes chaos and mayhem. The build up leads us to a final showdown. The war to end all wars when all the military machinery on earth gathers for the final battle.

And then the last bowl of wrath is poured out. The seventh angel pours out his bowl in the air, and a loud voice is heard saying, "It is done!"

The end! No shots are fired! Roll the credits. Evil is defeated by the very Word of God.

We have met the monsters. The beast from the sea — our love of political power. The beast from the land — our religion turned sideways. And the figure who rides the beast — the prosperity that overtakes human flourishing.

In all these monstrous examples, Revelation lays bare the conspiracy that traps us—the resignation that there is no possibility greater than what we already know and experience. And we discover it is our collaboration with and benefit from the systems that oppress God's creation is the remaining problem. A problem solved only by the Way of Jesus Christ.

Friends, our willing participation leaves its mark. We take part. We buy, sell and trade in ways that prosper ourselves. But the problem is not so much our shopping list. The problem arises when we slowly, but steadily, come to believe that our well-being is tied to the success of the empire.

God is victorious. And Jesus Christ shows us that the way to victory is self-giving nonviolence. The spiritual battle that remains is the practical experience of living out this truth in everyday life.

But if your politics serves you and not your neighbor, it is evil. If your religion hides the violence of your voting record from you, it is evil. If you don't want to be marked with the beast, then push back against systems, even if they benefit you, whenever they oppress others.

The warnings of Revelation, while written in a different time, are relevant today. The symbols and metaphors stretch our imagination and expose our vulnerability with incredible lucidity.

Evil sneaks its way back into our story, disguising and transforming itself, again and again.

And its goal continues to be simple but threatening — evil hopes to make us think we can worship the Lamb without making hard choices. But the Lamb is life abundant — life eternal. Jesus Christ is the Way of salvation.

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

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