

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 4 Issue 17

## Peace (One True King)



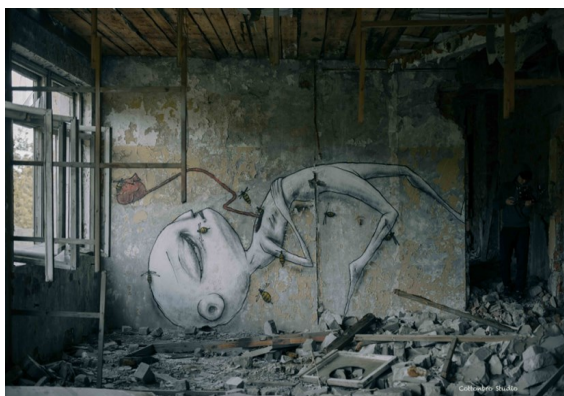
Last Sunday, we looked ahead to the finale, Armageddon. This Sunday, Pastor Kimberly Metzger, of Open Door UMC, will look back at John's vision that God revealed of divine peace, the heavenly throne room.

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."

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## New (No more tears)



A blogger was stealing content from author Vanessa Van Edwards and posting her work on their own blog. "I wanted to rain farts upon his brand," she writes, "I wanted retribution."

Regardless of whether the offense is stealing our

ideas or scratching the door of our truck in the parking lot, most of us have empathy for Vanessa. Most of us know the taste and satisfaction of wanting retribution.

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**MARCH 17, 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  
 Sylvia Pittman  
 Kim Sims

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**

**MARCH 18 - 24**

Mar 18	Mon	2:30pm	Staff Meeting
		6:00pm	Leadership Team Meeting
Mar 19	Tue	10:00am	Food Distribution
Mar 20	Wed		<b>SPRING BEGINS!</b>
Mar 21	Thu		
Mar 22	Fri	5pm-7pm	Fellowship Hall used by Mirium Watson
Mar 23	Sat		
Mar 24	Sun	10:30am	<b>PALM SUNDAY</b>
			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 "Revelations"

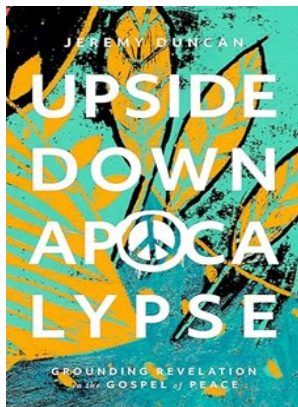


Welcome to our long-awaited series, *Revelations*. While I've occasionally referred to scripture from this mysterious book this is the first time we're dedicating multiple weeks to cover the entire book. Ready?

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 will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared.*

Revelation 21:1-5

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

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**QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:**

1. Read Revelation 21:1-5. Describe what is new in your view? What is heaven on earth like for you?
2. Read this week's articles titled *New*. What retribution are you waiting for? Are you willing to let go of getting even? Why or why not? What would be an alternative to retribution that makes the offender irrelevant?
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.





South Flint Soup Kitchen ...

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Our clients need bottled water for cooking,  
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Flint MI 48507

Any questions, please call 239-3427 or 235-0016 or

Email us at [southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com](mailto:southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com)

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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)

In Vanessa's case, she chose not to act on her desire for revenge. Instead, she researched what was behind the powerful emotions she felt and published an article titled "The Psychology of Revenge: Why It's Secretly Rewarding." And then thanked the thief for motivating her.

The desire for revenge by inflicting hurt on the perpetrator of an offense is about as human as it gets. Marvel makes millions on helping us do so through fantasy rather than taking up arms. Instead of choosing violence, we can read about a superhero that takes care of the bad guys for us.

Revelation has a lot in common with this popular storytelling genre.

In this week's reading assignment from our companion book, Pastor Jeremy Duncan takes us through the second cycle of prophecy. And introduces us to three critical methods of interpreting sacred text. For Revelation, the goal of all approaches is interpreting metaphors, unless you really believe that God's plan includes actual monsters. More likely, each monster is a stand-in for something more subtle and deadly.

One of the more often used techniques looks at history. In this approach, the reader assigns localized and time bound meaning to the imagery of Revelation. In the historical approach, as each trumpet sounds, a past reality is

unveiled. And the enemies of Israel are undone by divine retribution.

In his best-selling book, *Sapiens*, Yuval Noah Harari, shares the Roman Empire collected taxes from up to 100 million subjects. The taxes were used to finance a standing army boasting from 250 to 500 Thousand soldiers. Unfortunately, since Christians were unwilling to yield to a dictator's need for affirmation, they were often targets for retribution.

More popular for unraveling Revelation, however, interpreters look to the future, equating Revelation's imagery with current events leading up to a future outcome. Instead of Rome and Babylon, futurists imagine nations yielding deadly force against their homeland and ideals.

In both cases, the action described as each of the seven trumpets' sound satisfy a basic human desire for retribution. We're able to read Revelation like a Marvel Comic Book while imagining revenge against our enemies.

But notice that after the sixth trumpet sounds, the action stops. Also, whether tying the imagery to either historical or future events, the final trumpet must await the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple for a third time. This may take a while since the current site is occupied by the Dome of the Rock, an Islam holy place.

Duncan suggests using a literary approach to understanding Revelation. After all, Revelation is a beautifully written literary composition. And treating it as such doesn't diminish its importance. Instead, connecting the imagery with God's revelation through Jesus Christ opens our imagination to the truth about violent retribution.

**There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain. The old things have disappeared.**

**Revelations 21:1-5**

The trumpets appear after opening the seventh seal. One by one, the sound of the trumpets brings mayhem, chaos and violent destruction. But after the sixth trumpet, we are told of an intermission.

John is told to eat a scroll with a sweet taste but sour afterwards. Now what tastes sweet but creates regret afterwards?

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

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

Research into how harm and retribution affect us discovered that revenge has the opposite effect from what we expect. Instead of punishing the offender and leaving us satisfied, revenge prolongs our pain and delays recovery.

Wait! Is this where Revelation takes us? We cheer God's punishment for those we believe deserve divine wrath. We equate the butt-whipping to our enemies and applaud John's affirmation of what we want to believe.

And then, the tables turn. "Once again," John is told, "You must proclaim God's message about many nations, races, languages, and kings."

Our text for this week's message comes near the end of Revelation. "There will be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain," God says. "The old things have disappeared." Gone is violence. Revenge vanishes! But the earth continues with God living among us.

Just as God said!

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Yuval Noah Harari. *Sapiens (A Brief History)*. New York: HarperCollins, 2015.



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