

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 4 Issue 31

## Palms (Counterfeit Lambs)



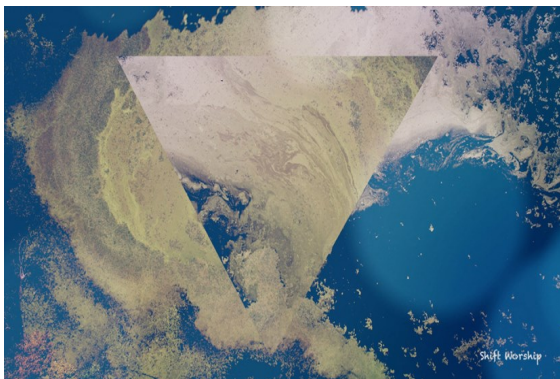
Each year on the Sunday before Easter, we celebrate and remember Jesus entering Jerusalem with palm branches. This tradition got its start sometime around the 4th century of the common era when the Roman Emperor Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of

the empire.

Perhaps this ritual reminds us of how the priorities of empire and Christianity are conveniently woven together. Which is odd. The story of how Jesus entered Jerusalem seems more anti-empire.

Page 2

## Risen (Who are you looking for?)



It's Easter Sunday and John's story, told in the first person by the *Living Bible*, is the appropriate text for ending our study of Revelation. Together with the Lord's description of the New Jerusalem found in Isaiah, we're ready to move

on. That is, move back to the Gospel of Matthew for our new series starting next Sunday.

The writer of John's Gospel says he believed Jesus had risen after seeing the empty tomb. But Mary did not go into the tomb. She wasn't yet convinced. Two angels asked her why she was crying and we learn she believed the practical. Someone stole the body. Page 13

MARCH 31, 2024

EVERYONE  
HAVE A  
WONDERFUL  
WEEK!!



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Risen	1
Palms	1
Palms	2
Coming up this week	3
In our prayers	3
Upcoming Worship/Book Club	4
Upcoming Worship Series/Book Club	5
Feed Flint	6
Feed Flint	7
Life Group Questions	8
Bottled Water Drive for SFSK	9
Support your local farm	10
Book Club News	11
Ways to Give to SFSK	12
Risen	13
Palms	14
Risen	15
Homemade Salsa for Sale	16
Kroger Community Rewards	

## Palms (Counterfeit Lambs) *cont. from pg 1*

Fast forward a couple thousand years and we find many Christians continue to promote political positions as God's will for humanity. This includes God choosing candidates for president, according to more than a handful of persons.

In a New York Magazine article published last year, Ed Kilgore shares concern over a "Christian nationalist movement in which (Donald) Trump can only be described as an irreplaceable figure whose political success is crucial to God's plan for redeeming a sinful world."

According to Pew Research, most white evangelicals support Donald Trump because they believe he fights for them. For example, he appointed Supreme Court justices who subsequently reversed *Roe v Wade* and he moved the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

But even this group of voters question whether their candidate's behavior reflects characteristics Jesus tells us we should have. They're willing to support a counterfeit version of right in exchange for power over individual freedom.

In this week's chapters from our companion book for this series, Pastor Jeremy Duncan equates the quest for power with the dragon found in Revelation because it "looks like a lamb but sounds like a dragon." His argument is compelling. "This beast represents any religion that cosigns the objectives of politics. It may dress in the guise of peace and take on the language of worship, but the object of its fervor is power."

The dragon is a counterfeit lamb.

Ironically, but perhaps consistent with human nature, counterfeit is often our first choice. Perhaps authentic may simply come with too high of a price for most of us.

Apparently, Jesus knew what was waiting for Him in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, He confronted His executioners with a life-sized mirror.

The people expected a warrior king ready to free Jerusalem from Roman occupation and liberate them from oppression. They weren't so much interested in the morality of Jesus as they were in His willingness to use His power on their behalf. Sound familiar?

A Jewish priest, Judas Maccabaeus, led a successful revolt to regain Jerusalem from the Seleucid Empire in 164 BCE. According to the apocryphal book of Maccabees, the people waived palm branches in praise of Judas Maccabaeus as he entered Jerusalem. He was their hero. And they hoped it was time for history to repeat.

But God was interested in reversing and not repeating humanity's history of violence. Incarnating God's love on earth as it is in heaven, Jesus is the authentic Lamb.

**You are worthy to take the scroll and to break open its seals. For you were killed, and by your sacrificial death you bought for God's people from every tribe, language, nation and race.**

**Revelation 5:9**

In chapter 5 of Revelation, John sees the royal throne room. God's Word is written on a scroll that cannot be opened unless there is One considered worthy. But who is worthy of opening the scroll?

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  
APRIL 1 - 7

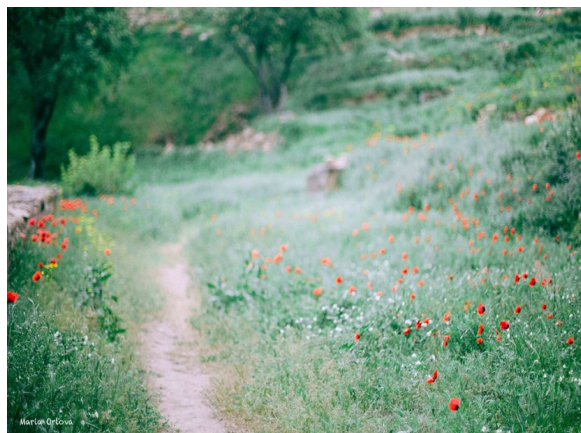


HAPPY EASTER TO ALL!!!

Apr 1	Mon	2:30pm	Staff Meeting
Apr 2	Tue	10:00am	Food Distribution
Apr 3	Wed		
Apr 4	Thu		
Apr 5	Fri		
Apr 6	Sat		
Apr 7	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 "The Alternative"



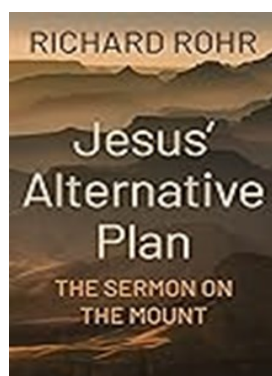
Beginning the Sunday after Easter we begin a new series titled *The Alternative*. Our series is based primarily on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount where Jesus offers us a better way forward.

The teachings of Jesus was commonly known as the Way, acknowledging that following Him is a way of life that changes everything. And, throughout history, the faithful thoughtfully tried to emulate the ways of Jesus.

Our companion book is titled *Jesus' Alternative Plan* by Richard Rohr (see Book Club News). Father Richard positions Jesus' sermon from Matthew within the context of the gospels as a whole. The reality is humanity continues to customize Jesus' plan to suite us. But, in His sermon, Jesus offers us an alternative.

Page 5

## Book Club News



Our companion book for our new worship series, coming in April, is Jeremy Richard Rohr's insights into the Sermon on the Mount. His book is titled

*Jesus' Alternative Plan*.

Amazon's website describes his book this way:

When Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God, he was talking about an utterly different way of relating to human society as we know it. Discover a transformative understanding of faith in Jesus' *Alternative Plan: The Sermon on the Mount* by acclaimed spiritual leader and Franciscan priest Richard Rohr. In this updated edition of *Jesus' Plan for a New World*, Rohr explores the implications of

Christ's best-known teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, offering a fresh perspective on what it means for Christian life today.

Through his insightful analysis and commentary, Rohr explains the historical and cultural context of each of these Bible verses, shedding light on the revolutionary nature of Jesus' blueprint for an alternative way of being. From the Beatitudes to overturning conventional wisdom and challenging traditional power structures, this paperback book provides guidance and inspiration for those seeking the true heart of their faith.

Page 11

## 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 — “The Alternative” ..cont from pg 4

Here is the outline for covering Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount with chapters from our companion book:

	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Jesus’ Alternative Plan</u>
Apr 7	Matthew 7:1-5	Judging	Chapters Intro-1
Apr 14	Matthew 6:24-34	Possessions	Chapters 2-3
Apr 21	Matthew 5:13-16	Condiments	Chapters 4-5
Apr 28	Matthew 5:38-42	Violence	Chapter 6
May 5	Matthew 5:3-12	Beatitudes	Chapters 7-8
May 12	Matthew 7:7-12	Knocking	Chapters 9

Jesus saw the crowds and went up a hill, where he sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.

Matthew 5: 1-2


I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes on [Facebook](#) and 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 [FlintAsburyChurch.org](http://FlintAsburyChurch.org).

Pastor Tommy

“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:

"Why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Whom are you looking for?"

John 20:15

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

Five horizontal lines for taking notes.

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

- 1. Read John 20:1-18. Try to imagine yourself in Mary's place and describe what you felt as you read this text. What does it mean for Jesus to call you by name?
2. Read this week's articles titled Risen. What are your views on the U.S. political support of Israel? Why? What does it mean that your salvation is dependent on what you believe and not what you, or others, do?
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 ...

BOTTLED WATER DRIVE

All Year 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

11:00am-12 Noon at South Flint Soup Kitchen,

3410 Fenton Rd (3 blocks north of Atherton Rd)

Flint MI 48507

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

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

To donate: [www.mightycause.com/feedflint](http://www.mightycause.com/feedflint)



## Show Your Support For Your Local Farm

We need your help to purchase fencing to keep our furry friends from eating up all our crops and not sharing with us.

### How You Can Donate

---

- Text "FARMCDC"
- to 53-555
- Scan QR Code

**Donate Now**



More Information :



(810) 235-0016



funding@flintasbury.org

The enlightening book offers a new way of understanding and living as a Christian woman or man, according to the teachings of Jesus. Whether you are a long-time follower of Jesus, a knowledge truth seeker, or are just beginning to study his religious sermons, Jesus' *Alternative Plan: The Sermon on the Mount* offers a clear yet challenging look at the vision presented by the holy Jesus. Gain a transformative understanding of his preaching and embark on a spiritual journey toward a complete relationship with the Kingdom of God.

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

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

Apr 7	Chapters Intro-1
Apr 14	Chapters 2-3
Apr 21	Chapters 4-5
Apr 28	Chapter 6
May 5	Chapters 7-8
May 12	Chapters 9

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

Richard Rohr. *Jesus' Alternative Plan*. Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 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)

Practical is usually the best strategy. Just not in this case. The same goes for our other natural reactions, like judgment and retaliation. And Revelation punctuates the impracticality and improbability of the gospel.

The more popular interpretations of Revelation rely on a practical strategy. From a practical approach, when Revelation reuses the description of the New Jerusalem found in Isaiah, it portrays this city as God's plan for heaven. Otherwise, why move the U.S. embassy from the capital of Israel to the Holy City?

In a Washington Post article written in 2018 in response to the U.S. Embassy's move to Jerusalem, political journalist Philip Bump wrote about the reasons conservative Christians supported this decision. Eighty percent of respondents believed that the creation of Israel in 1948 was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy that would bring about Christ's return, according to a poll conducted by LifeWay.

The bottom line for many Christians is U.S. policy and support of Israel speeds up the return of Christ and the end times prophecies found in Revelation. The ultimate victory for the church, in their opinion, ends with violence.

What's interesting, and worrisome, is an insistence that salvation depends on the actions of others. This conclusion seems counter to the notion that each of us is saved by faith alone. Which means salvation is personal and not tied to the merit of our actions. And certainly isn't tied to the freedom for others to make choices for themselves.

We don't earn salvation through our actions. And this includes political actions.

Setting aside the idea that God needs our help to bring Jesus back, Revelation seems to presume the victory is already won. Easter reminds us Jesus paid the price for salvation on our behalf. And the Kingdom of Heaven is already here. There aren't any political actions needed on our part.

Perhaps it's a good political strategy to support Israel as an ally in the Middle East. We've got plenty of enemies in that region of the world. But political support for defense reasons differs from claiming God needs the U.S. supporting Israel to bring Jesus back.

According to World Bank, people living in the Gaza Strip import nearly two-thirds of food consumption. However, since the invasion of Israel began food imports trickle in, creating a human made famine. These circumstances are clearly inconsistent with God's will.

There is no reason for the public to stay in the dark about the misery created by violence. The violence in the Middle East is between groups fighting for power. Meanwhile, ordinary people suffer. Suffering is never God's will.

"Why are you crying?"  
Jesus asked her. "Whom  
are you looking for?"

John 20:15

Mary did not stay in the dark on that first Easter morning. And neither should we. Once Mary heard Jesus say her name, she recognized Him as her Lord and Savior

Certainly not the counterfeit lamb. Only the slaughtered Lamb is worthy. The One welcomed with shouts of Hosanna and waving of palm branches only to be executed by religious leaders aligned with and receiving power from the empire.

The crowd welcomed Jesus as a hero and then condemned Him as a criminal when He didn't deliver on their hope for a counterfeit lamb.

One lesson from Psalm Sunday is how a person conducts themselves matters a great deal. Counterfeit is never a substitute for the real thing.

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).

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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. Ed Kilgore. "Do Evangelicals Think Trump Is Jesus?." © New York Magazine, May 8, 2023. Retrieved from: [\*link\*](#)



Revelation lays out a poetic and prophetic summation of God's plan through Jesus Christ. Salvation is for all who hear Jesus calling their name. All are welcome. Jesus is calling people from all nations and races.

Jeremy Duncan writes, "There is no pursuit of scapegoats or religious violence—no need to drive anyone away to justify ourselves ever again. Christ has dismantled our desire to see a scapegoat excluded in order to know we are loved."

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Get your favorite local organization

enrolled today! Enrollment applications can be downloaded at [Kroger.com](http://Kroger.com)

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ZERO WASTE**

by **Kroger**

Add the South Flint Soup Kitchen to your Kroger Rewards Card and Help Feed Flint

We're giving **\$2 million**

to local area non profits  
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**Where shopping and giving come together and you can help!**