

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

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The Religious Folk (Who Dунnit?)



The gospels are filled with stories in which Jesus faces off with the Pharisees. They are his most consistent foils, which is odd, considering that Jesus and the Pharisees had a lot in common. In fact, they had so much in common that some scholars have suggested that Jesus was a Pharisee.

The story of the Pharisees starts hundreds of years before Jesus, just after the end of the Babylonian Exile. The Persian King Xerxes conquered the Babylonians and, in doing so, set the captives free. He encouraged the Jews to return to Jerusalem, to restore their city, and to build a new temple. He did not, however, allow them to establish a new king. *Page 2*

**EVERYONE HAVE
A WONDERFUL
WEEK!!
WELCOME
SPRING!!**

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The King (Who Dунnit?)



Tobi Raji and Michael E. Ruane reported in a Washington Post article that background information on black, Hispanic, Native American, and female veterans had been removed from the Arlington Cemetery website. Pentagon officials defended the deletion as part of an aggressive

campaign to remove all references to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Also missing was any reference to the Civil War.

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Without a king on the throne, the new temple and its priests became the most powerful force in Jewish culture. Not everyone supported the priestly leaders, however. The Jewish people had managed to keep the faith alive for decades, even without a temple. The Jews left behind in Judea focused on gatherings in local houses of prayer (which later became synagogues). The Jews in exile kept the faith alive by emphasizing adherence to the law.

Without a system of temple sacrifices, every child of Abraham could be a sort of living temple, offering their own heart in sacrifice to God. When the exile ended, there were those who wanted to hold onto this idea of the priesthood of all believers.

In time, two major parties emerged: the Sadducees (who represented the ruling elite and the temple priests) and the Pharisees (who were closer to the common people and emphasized the Law). The Pharisees and Sadducees were often hostile to each other, and they had bitter disagreements about important points of Jewish belief. Jesus, as far as we can tell, mostly sided with the Pharisees.

For example, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, while the Sadducees did not. The Sadducees were defenders of the temple system, while Jesus criticized the corruption of the temple leaders. We also see that Jesus had followers among the Pharisees, including Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea.

Why, then, did so many Pharisees oppose Jesus? The answer might lie in the meaning of the word "Pharisee." Most scholars believe that "Pharisee" comes from the Hebrew word *parush*, meaning "separated, set apart." Many Pharisees set themselves apart from Gentiles (unlike the ruling elite, who embraced the Hellenistic culture of the Roman Empire).

Jesus said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent... The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against Jesus and plotted how to destroy Him.

Mark 3:1-6

They set themselves apart from unclean things and from Jews who did not strictly practice

the Law. And this idea of separation, apartness, and purity would put the Pharisees on a collision course with Jesus.

Jesus refused to set himself apart. In Mark 2, the first recorded conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees happens when they object to his practice of eating with sinners and tax collectors. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus demonstrates that a desire to avoid unclean people and things can cause us to stumble in following the law of love and compassion.

By the time we get to Matthew 12, some of the Pharisees are already looking for an opportunity to undermine Jesus and end his ministry. They plan to do this by accusing Jesus of violating the law of the Sabbath.

Jesus sees what they are up to and exposes their plot with a pointed question: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to fill?" the silence of the Pharisees reveals that they know the correct answer, but their hearts are so hardened that they no longer care about the Law for its own sake.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Virginia Bigger
 Sylvia Pittman
 Mirium Watson

Jonathon Misner
 Terrance Williams



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux Norma Buzzard
 Nancy Elston

COMING UP THIS WEEK

MARCH 24- 30

Mar 24	Mon		
Mar 25	Tue	10am-until gone	Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice
		3:00pm	CDC Board Meeting
Mar 26	Wed		
Mar 27	Thu		
Mar 28	Fri		
Mar 29	Sat	1:00pm	Celebration of Life (for Suzanne Larde— Joyce Dudzik’s daughter and Virginia Bigger’s niece) followed by Dinner In the Fellowship Hall
Mar 30	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 "Who Dunit?"

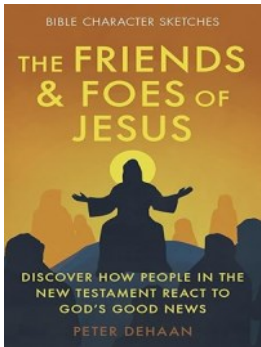


During this year's Lent observance, we, along with several other area UM Churches, are participating in a series titled *Who Dunit? The people who wanted Jesus dead* (see article). The series begins after Ash Wednesday on Sunday, March 9.

In Sunday school, when we asked our teachers, "Why did Jesus have to die?" they usually answered, "Jesus died to save us." This is a really confusing, although truthful answer.

Perhaps they gave us that simplistic answer because it seemed safer than saying, "Jesus died because he challenged the powers of this world." Page 5

Book Club News



For our Who dunit? Series, we will use *The Friends and Foes of Jesus* for a companion book by Dr. Peter DeHaan.

In this series, we will learn about the people who wanted Jesus dead, and we will discover that God is calling us still

to resist the powers that conspired to put Jesus on the cross.

Our author says he often makes religious people squirm, but spiritual seekers cheer. He is not trying to be provocative, he says, but he seeks truth. And the truth makes some people uncomfortable.

Throughout history, some people have called Jesus Lord, while others called Him a great prophet. And some called him a

troublemaker and nailed him to a cross.

The Jesus of the New Testament is both human and divine. He was adored but also feared, and He was both meek and powerful. We cannot sum up Jesus by a word or simple phrase. His impact on world history and on the spiritual lives of believers today can't be overstated.

In our companion book, you'll learn about the closest followers and most outspoken rivals of Jesus, from the High Priest who hated Jesus to the beloved disciple who laid his head on Jesus's breast at the Last Supper.

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

Upcoming Worship Series — *“Who Dunnit?”*

In *Who Dunnit?*, we focus on people who attempted to shorten Jesus's ministry. After all, they represent, in one way or another, the spiritual powers of this world that Jesus encountered in the wilderness.

Let me explain. After His baptism, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness, where Satan attempted to exploit His human weaknesses. During Lent, we are asked to reflect on our temptations and how God may call us to respond.

The people who tried to kill Jesus were consumed by selfish desires. The desire for comfort, desire for power, and desire glory. Many believed Jesus had to die because He refused to play the game, and in doing so, he exposed the hypocrisy of those who claimed to know God and live accordingly.

So the Pharisees left the synagogue and met at once with some of Herod's party, and they made plans to kill Jesus.

Mark 3:6

In this series, we will learn about the people who wanted Jesus dead, and we will discover that God is calling us still to resist the powers that conspired to put Jesus on the cross.


We'll use *The Friends and Foes of Jesus* for a companion book by Dr. Peter DeHaan. Our author says he often makes religious people squirm, but spiritual seekers cheer. He's not trying to be provocative, he says, but he seeks truth. And the truth makes some people uncomfortable.

Reading from our companion book is divided into mostly equal pages each week. Since our companion book is a whirlwind tour of dozens of names, our series won't connect directly. However, we'll have an opportunity to consider how the messages each week inform our understanding of each person's view of Jesus.

“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

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

When Herod realized that the visitors from the East had tricked him, he was furious.

Matthew 2:16-18

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Matthew 2:16-18. Is this a familiar story? What do you suppose Matthew included this story in his gospel?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider titled The king. What are some things you have learned from history that help you avoid making the same mistakes? What are some examples of lessons from history that our nation should avoid repeating? What can we learn from the reign of Herod that can help us today?
3. How can your group members help you be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God this week? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.



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

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More Information :



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funding@flintasbury.org

Since our series focuses more on groups of people than individuals, although a few are named, our weekly messages generally won't follow the companion book. However, our companion book offers excellent insights into the various individuals in the bible and their connections with Jesus.

If you choose to follow along, I suggest using the following schedule:

<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Devotional Readings</u>	
March 9	1 - 16	1st Sunday in Lent
March 16	17 - 29	2nd Sunday in Lent
March 23	30 - 42	3rd Sunday in Lent
March 30	43 - 58	4th Sunday in Lent
April 6	59 - 75	5th Sunday in Lent
April 13	76 - 87	Palm Sunday
April 20	88 - 100	Easter Sunday

We'll have a few books available for purchase, copies are available through Amazon for \$15.99 for the paperback edition. The price is \$9.99 for the Kindle version. This book may be available at the local library.

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. 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

Peter DeHaan. The Friends and Foes of Jesus: Discover How People in the New Testament React to God's Good News. MI: Rock Rooster Books, 2019.

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

The Law at this moment is only a means to an end, a tool they can use to condemn Jesus - why? Because they believe He is wrong. They believe He is loving the wrong people, they believe He is living his faith in the wrong way, they believe he is interpreting Scripture wrongly, and that idea of Jesus' wrongness is so powerful and so upsetting that it makes the Pharisees want to kill him.

If that response on the part of the Pharisees seems extreme - if it's hard to believe that people might want to kill somebody for the crime of being wrong - then consider how much of social media consists of people saying to one another, "I believe you're wrong and that makes me angry."

Consider how many wars have happened (and are happening), how many schisms have splintered the church, and how many friendships have ended because people said, "If that's the way you see it, then there is no place for you in my heart."

Consider how we would feel if Jesus were to stand in the pulpit today and say, "When I said, "Love your neighbor," I especially meant the ones who are wrong, the ones who don't get it, the ones who stubbornly refuse to see the light. For the sake of the kingdom, are you willing to let go of your need to always be right?"

Rev Jeremy Peters

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.](#)

This is a reminder that we publish this newsletter called the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com or let us know when you send a message through our [website.](#) We post an archive of past editions on our website under Connect - choose [Newsletters.](#)

Pastor Tommy

Our series was inspired by The Reverend Jeremy Peters of Court Street United Methodist Church, Flint, Michigan in collaboration with several United Methodist Pastors serving the Flint area.

Their article quoted Civil War historian and former teacher Kevin M. Levin, "This is just the kind of history that we want students to be learning, a history that allows students from different backgrounds to make a meaningful connection with one of our sacred sites."

PBS published a follow-up story by Leah Willingham, Jenifer Sinco Kelleher, and Tara Copp of the Associated Press. The story reported that some pages were restored that were deleted by the Pentagon as part of the administration's widespread program to remove all content referencing ethnicity or race. It remains to be seen how many of the stories will actually be restored and whether redactions will substantially change their context.

Stories that highlight great accomplishments by persons who had to overcome challenges as a result of discrimination are particularly important. We're all more motivated by successes achieved by people we identify with.

While it is clear that the mass deletions were not simply an oops or an overzealous software program, it is also clear the administration is attempting to rewrite history or at least help us forget certain parts of

history. There were also deletions of stories of heroism by persons of Japanese descent who fought bravely in WWII despite thousands being detained using the same law recently invoked to justify the deportation of persons living in the U.S. legitimately and with no criminal record.

The purpose of history should not be to shame anyone. Rather, history is a great teacher. History helps us avoid past mistakes while allowing us to make new ones that those who come after us hope to avoid.

Herod was ruling over Palestine at the time of Jesus's birth. While Herod was born into wealth and privilege, his kingship was not a birthright. Herod's father was a descendant of Esau, the brother of Jacob/Israel. The descendants of Esau were known as Edomites. They settled to the south of Canaan and abandoned the God of Abraham to worship other gods. However, some Edomites moved to the hills of southern Judah a century before the birth of Jesus.

Herod's father was a wealthy Edomite who chose to convert to Judaism. But he approached politics in the same practical way he approached his faith. He did whatever it took to get what he wanted. For example, He sided with Julius Caesar when it was apparent that Caesar would win the Roman Civil War. But

after Caesar's assassination, he switched sides. His flexibility and instincts made it possible for him to rise to the position of chief minister of Judea. However, his association with the Roman Empire made him a figure of hate and scorn among the Jews, and he later died by poisoning.

Herod apparently inherited his father's political instincts. Following is father's lead. Herod curried favor with the Romans, who eventually declared him the King of the Jews. But Herod knew he had little Jewishness. Herod sent his first wife and young son into exile so he could marry a Jewish princess.

Herod also decided he needed a new backstory. So,

*When Herod realized that the visitors from the East had tricked him, he was furious.
Matthew 2:16-18*

Herod created a new history for his family. A story where instead of being an Edomite, Herod claimed his ancestors were Jews who survived the Babylonian exile and returned to Judah after being freed from captivity. This new backstory made it easier for Herod to gain power.

Herod faced any challenge to his legitimacy with ruthlessness. Even executing members of his own family, including his second wife. Herod also used building projects in an effort to win the support of the Jewish people.

Why does history matter? Herod was a deeply insecure ruler who rose to power by cozying up to a ruthless dictator. His success was built on lies. And while he had plenty of loyal supporters, most of his own people despised him.

And then, one day, a group of scholars showed up at the presidential palace, proclaiming that a King of the Jews had been born. For Herod, even the rumors of a new king posed a threat that required an immediate show of force. As a result, Herod became the first in a long line of people who wanted Jesus dead.

In his case, Herod signed an executive order to send the military into the village of Bethlehem to seize and destroy every male under the age of two. Herod was willing to do whatever it took to hold onto power.

But Herod also leaves us with an important lesson.

Herod offers a contrast between Jesus and the rulers of this world. While the rulers often stir up mobs and send in soldiers, Jesus embraced poverty, shunned the spotlight, and taught his followers that whoever wanted to be great must embrace humility and service.

And God affirms the Way of Jesus and the kingship of Jesus. Herod's palaces and building projects crumbled into dust, but the gospel of Jesus remains.

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

Our series was inspired by The Reverend Jeremy Peters of Court Street United Methodist Church, Flint, Michigan, in collaboration with several United Methodist Pastors serving the Flint area. Pastor Jeremy wrote some of the content. Tobi Raji and Michael E. Ruane. *"Arlington Cemetery website scrubs links about Black and female veterans."* © Washington Post, March 14, 2025. Retrieved from: [*link*](#) Leah Willingham, Jenifer Sinco Kelleher, and Tara Copp. *"Pentagon restores some webpages honoring minority service members but defends DEI purge."* © New York Times, Mar 18, 2025. Retrieved from: [*link*](#)



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In Sunday school when we asked our teachers, “Why did Jesus have to die?” they answered, “Jesus died to save us.”

Maybe they gave us that simplistic answer because it seemed safer than saying, “Jesus died because he challenged the powers of this world.”

In this series we will learn about the people who wanted Jesus dead, and we will discover that God is calling us still to resist the powers that conspired put Jesus on the cross.

SERIES OVERVIEW

(Italics indicate pulpit swap Sunday)

March 9	<i>The King</i>	Matthew 2:16-18
<i>March 16</i>	<i>The Neighbors</i>	<i>Luke 4:20-30</i>
March 23	The Religious Folk	Mark 3:1-6
<i>March 30</i>	<i>The Clergy</i>	<i>Luke 21:37-22:2</i>
April 6	The Disciple	Luke 22:3-6
April 13	The Governor	John 19:16b-22

A NOTE ON ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday presents an opportunity to remember that our struggle is not against flesh and blood. In this series we will focus on people who attempted to cut short the ministry of Jesus, but those people represented, in one way or another, the spiritual powers of this world that Jesus encountered in the wilderness. The people who tried to kill Jesus were consumed by selfish desires - the desire for comfort, the desire for power, the desire for glory. Matthew 4:1-11 reveals why so many people believed that Jesus had to die: he refused to play the game, and in doing so he exposed the players and threatened to topple the “winners.”

Here is the outline of our series:

<u>Title:</u>	<u>Sunday:</u>	<u>Scripture:</u>	<u>Guest Speaker:</u>
<i>The King</i>	March 9	Matthew 2:16-18	
<i>The religious folk</i>	March 16	Mark 3:1-6	Ruth VanderSande
<i>The clergy</i>	March 23	Luke 21:37-22:2	
<i>The neighbors</i>	March 30	Luke 4:20-23	Vince Slocum
<i>The disciples</i>	April 6	Luke 22:3-6	
<i>The governor</i>	April 13	John 19: 16b-22	Palm Sunday
<i>The revelation</i>	April 20	John 20:1-25	Easter Sunday

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. We share our weekly episodes on Facebook and our YouTube channel, and we go live at 10:30 a.m. You can find these links, along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our website, FlintAsburyChurch.org.

Pastor Tommy

Peter DeHaan. The Friends and Foes of Jesus: Discover How People in the New Testament React to God's Good News. MI: Rock Rooster Books, 2019.