

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 5 Issue 27

APRIL 27, 2025

Strangers (Lifeboat)



The world is mourning and saying goodbye to Jorge Mario Bergoglio, better known as Pope Francis. Known as the “people’s Pope,” he was chosen in 2013 to lead the Catholic Church. His leadership was different from what most anticipated. Not long after taking office, the Pope’s answer

when asked about gay priests is often repeated and a part of his legacy: “Who am I to judge?”

Page 2

EVERYONE HAVE A
WONDERFUL WEEK!!



DONATE

The Revelation (Who Dunit?)



As we come to the final episode of our series, *Who dunit?*, it’s time to wrap up. Ending a story is a challenge all storytellers face. How should we end our mystery?

Our investigation into the case of who killed Jesus concluded last week with naming the governor, Pontius Pilate, as the person guilty. He was the only suspect with both

motivation and means. It was the governor who made the final decision.

But along the way, we discovered a lot of guilt and very little innocence. This means the mystery mirrors many destructive decisions in life.

Page 14

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The Revelation	1
Strangers	1
Strangers	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
Strangers	13
The Revelation	14
The Revelation	15
Angel Closet	16
Kroger Reward	17

In a recent New York Times article, Elizabeth Dias and Ruth Graham described the response of both Catholics and non-Catholics as “a collective gasp.” The Pope’s remarks, nevertheless, signaled his vision of a brave new world that focused on taking care of the most vulnerable among us.

Pope Francis chose his papal name to honor St. Francis of Assisi, a saint best known for emphasizing caring for animals and the environment. Concerns over climate change were at the top of the Pope’s list of priorities for the world to address, as was caring for refugees and the poor. Income inequality was also at the top of the Pope’s list for world leaders to resolve.

Pope Francis envisioned a church “with doors always wide open,” a church that welcomed the stranger without prejudging their worthiness for God’s grace. He was undoubtedly the people’s Pope.

Meanwhile, U.S. policy and practices toward refugees are shameful. Our current administration has chosen to take us

all down a path involving cruelty and inhumane treatment. Our nation is on a path leading us further away from Christian values.

As I reflected on Pope Francis’s life, along with most of the world, I remembered a 1977 movie titled *Oh God*. George Burns played God in the film, who chose a young grocery store manager, played by John Denver, to be a spokesperson for God. The religious leaders think that the God Denver’s character speaks about is fake. God just couldn’t be that down-to-earth.

But what if God is just that down-to-earth? What if God is the “People’s God,” and Pope Francis had unique insights into God’s character?

As we begin our first episode of our Lifeboat series, we’re introduced to the survivors of the *Galaxy*, which sank off the coast of West Africa. They’re a mixed bag of folks. Some were wealthy, and others were part of the crew, underpaid and overworked. But they were in the lifeboat together, clinging to life and hoping to be saved.

The survivors spotted a stranger in the water three days after the *Galaxy* sank. They helped him into the lifeboat, baffled by where the young man came from and how he survived without a life jacket or anything to help him stay afloat. And clearly a long way from where the boat sank, they were on.

When Nina, one of the survivors, said to the stranger, “Well, thank the Lord we found you.” The stranger responded, “I am the Lord.” The survivors were in disbelief, although each showed it differently. “If you’re really the Lord, save us,” sums up their collective response. Things didn’t add up.

Benjamin, or Benji as he’s known, writes in the notebook he keeps, “When we pulled him from the water, he didn’t have a scratch on him ... he was unmarked with smooth almond skin and thick dark hair matted by seawater.” The consensus among the survivors was that the stranger just seemed too human to be who he claimed to be.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Virginia Bigger Jonathon Misner
 Sylvia Pittman 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 27—MAY 4

April 28 Mon
 April 29 Tue 10am-until gone Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice
 April 30 Wed
 May 1 Thu
 May 2 Fri
 May 3 Sat
 May 4 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings
 Contemporary Worship



Paula Gamble is an Asbury UMC member and very active in our church. She recently started her business, became certified as a Licensed & Insured Therapeutic Massage Therapist. Give her a call to schedule an appointment. Discounts will be given to Asbury family!!

(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 "Lifeboat"

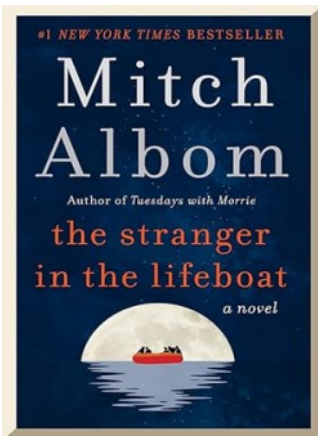


In our worship series, *Lifeboat*, we learn about a group of people desperately clinging to life after the yacht they were on sank. Three days after the accident, after drifting a considerable distance from where the boat went down, they pull a stranger into the lifeboat. The stranger claimed to be the Lord.

In his best-selling novel, *The Stranger in the Lifeboat*, Mitch Albom lays out the beginning of the mystery. "When we pulled him from the water, he didn't have a scratch on him ... he was unmarked, with smooth almond skin and thick dark hair matted by seawater ... He wore no life jacket, nor was he holding on to anything when we spotted him bobbing in the waves."

Page 5

Book Club News



Beginning the first Sunday after Easter, we're embarking on a new series titled *Lifeboat*. This series is inspired by Mitch Albom's

novel *The Stranger in the Lifeboat*.

Mitch Albom is the founder of SAY Detroit, a nonprofit that provides pathways to success for Detroiters in need through major health, housing, and education initiatives. The nonprofit is funded in part by profits coming from a dessert shop and a gourmet popcorn line. He and his wife Janine also operate Have Faith Haiti, a home and school for impoverished children and orphans in Port-au-Prince.

As an author, Mitch Albom has written eight #1 New York Times bestsellers, Emmy Award-winning TV films, stage plays, screenplays, a nationally syndicated newspaper column, and a musical. As a result of his work at the Detroit Free Press, Albom was inducted into both the National Sports Media Association and Michigan Sports Halls of Fame and received the Red Smith Award for lifetime achievement.

In his New York Times Bestseller, *The Stranger in the Lifeboat*, Albom ponders the question, "What would happen if we called on God for help and God actually appeared?" It is a story of hope and faith. Page 11

Asbury Staff

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Terry Kinze	Ops Manager/CDC
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
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Cyndi	Worship Leader
Anthony & Jim	Ushers
Jonathon & Terrance	Production Team
Yasheah & Mirium	Nursery
Christine	Cafe

Upcoming Worship Series — “Lifeboat”

The survivors were baffled by finding someone alive in the chilly waters. One survivor, Nina, said to the stranger, “Well, thank the Lord we found you.” The suspense went into hyperdrive when the stranger responded, “I am the Lord.”

They were in disbelief, although each showed it differently. “If you’re really the Lord, save us,” sums up their collective response. Things didn’t add up.

Fortunately, we’re not in a lifeboat clinging to life, but most of us wonder what will happen now. A lot is going on in the world. Many of us can feel a connection with the survivors in the lifeboat. We may feel like we’re clinging onto life in terms of the future.

But is Jesus really in the lifeboat with us? When we see the mess created by the current administration, we struggle to see the love that Jesus taught. Instead, we see hatefulness, cruelty, revenge, abuse of power, and lawlessness.

When we look at what is happening in our nation, we clearly don’t see Jesus. We worry that Jesus is dead, or at least that which Jesus teaches us is dead. Even if Jesus is among us, we either don’t recognize Him or don’t believe He’s around. Because, if he is here, why won’t He save us?

Save us, Lord!

We are about to die!

Matthew 8:25


There is a lot going on that we can’t control, and most of us didn’t vote for it. The world is a mess.

Unfortunately, God has a track record of allowing us to suffer the consequences of our collective decisions. And we’re all suffering from the mistakes made during the last election, regardless of our role. This is the way lifeboats work. We have to work together to survive.

“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:

I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger and you received me into your homes, naked, and you clothed me. I was sick and you took care of me, in prison, and you visited me.

Matthew 25:31-46

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Matthew 25:31-46. After reading this text, what comes to mind about how you treat strangers?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider titled Strangers. What does it mean to you when Pope Francis is called the "People's Pope?" What does a "People's God" look like to you? In what ways do we meet God when we encounter strangers?
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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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

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More Information :



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funding@flintasbury.org

A diverse group of shipwrecked passengers pulls a strange man from the sea who claims to be “the Lord.” The group challenges the man’s assertion. “If you’re really who you say you are, prove it! Save us!”

The Lord is willing, but there’s a catch. He can only save them if they all believe in Him.

I want to share more with you, but I don’t want to spoil any surprises. In his book, Albom keeps us guessing until the end. You, too, will be anxious to discover whether this strange man is really who he claims to be.

The novel is fast-paced and compelling and promises to cause you to ponder your deepest beliefs. Is it possible that the answers to our prayers may be found where we least expect them?

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

<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Parts</u>
April 27	v - 55	One & Two
May 4	56 - 97	Three & Four
May 11	98 - 144	Five & Six
May 18	145 - 191	Seven to Nine
May 25	192 - 228	Ten & Eleven
June 1	229 - 268	Twelve to Epilogue

We’ll have a few books available for purchase. New copies of the paperback edition are available through Amazon for \$10.86, and used copies in good condition are under \$7. This book may also 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

Mitch Albom. *The Stranger in the Lifeboat*. New York: HarperCollins, 2021.

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

I'm hoping that those choosing to read our companion book, *The Stranger in the Lifeboat*, by Mitch Albom, are able to put themselves into the story.

More importantly, my prayer is that each of us will be able to move from the lifeboat to life itself, and consider whether we can meet Jesus in the strangers we encounter. Particularly, those who are refugees and find themselves the target of cruel and merciless policies that aim to send them back to the place from which they fled.

I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink. I was stranger and you received me into your homes, naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.

Matthew 25:31-46

Jesus once said that in the end, God will focus on how we treated strangers. Did we come to their aid if they were thirsty, hungry, needed clothes, or in peril?

According to scripture, this is the way of the Lord. What does this look like for you? What should this look like for our nation?

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 a weekly newsletter called the Circuit Rider. 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 Mitch Albom. *The Stranger in the Lifeboat*. New York: HarperCollins, 2021.
Elizabeth Dias and Ruth Graham. "Pope Francis' Legacy in the USA: More Open, and Then Divided, Church." © New York Times, April 21, 2025. Retrieved from: [link](#)

In our next series, *Lifeboat*, we learn about a group of people desperately clinging to life after the yacht they were on sank. Three days after the accident, after drifting a considerable distance from where the boat sank, they pull a stranger into the lifeboat. The stranger claims to be the Lord.

They were in disbelief, although each showed it in a different way. "If you're really the Lord, save us," sums up their collective response. Things didn't add up.

Meanwhile, in our story for this week, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb where Jesus was buried and discovers that His body is missing. Two angels ask Mary why she is crying. "They have taken my Lord away," she responds.

As she turned around to head away from the tomb, Jesus is standing right in front of her. But she did not know that it was Jesus.

Mary isn't in a lifeboat clinging to life, but she is wondering what will happen now. Although she was a devoted follower of Jesus, she didn't recognize Him at the moment, even though it had been only three days since she had seen Him.

Had Jesus changed? Perhaps it was Mary who wasn't quite ready to see Jesus alive.

A lot is going on in the world. Many of us feel a connection with the survivors in the lifeboat. Most of us can identify with Mary, too. Even if Jesus is standing among us, we either don't recognize Him or don't believe He's around. Because, if he is here, why won't He save us?

The global trade war will raise prices substantially and result in substantial layoffs. The real truth is only bad news. The lies coming out of Washington and Fox News are sickening.

People are being arrested and sent to a foreign prison without due process. And when the truth is uncovered, the administration stonewalls, lies, and continues on its way.

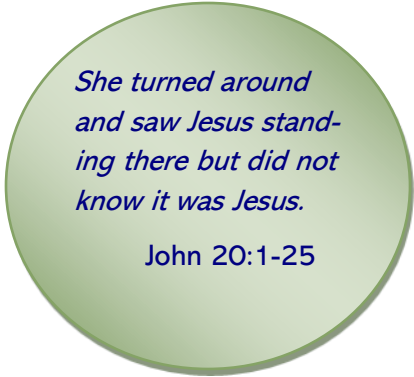
Universities and law firms are under attack if they don't fall in line behind the rhetoric. We're learning what it's like for people living under authoritarian dictators, like Putin.

Worse, Republican legislators are afraid to push back. The Supreme Court set us up for a disaster when it ruled that only Congress can rein in the president.

I feel like I am clinging onto life in terms of the future for myself and my family. Nevertheless, I know Jesus is in the lifeboat with us. But God has a track record of allowing us to suffer the consequences of our collective decisions. And we are suffering from the mistakes made during the last election, regardless of our role.

This is the way lifeboats work.

But Mary had a revelation when Jesus said her name. Something very familiar was present, perhaps the way He said it, the reflection, or the tenderness. I believe Jesus knew what Mary was going through, and she felt it in His voice.



She turned around and saw Jesus standing there but did not know it was Jesus.

John 20:1-25

Mary was in a transitional period in her life. So much had changed, so suddenly, that she couldn't be sure what tomorrow would bring. Mary didn't play a role in the arrest and death of Jesus. But she suffered from decisions made by others. Now what?

Mary's revelation is our revelation. The tomb is empty because Jesus is alive. Once we empty ourselves of our need to cling to life as it may have been or as we believe it should be, Jesus fills us with the joy of life as God intends it to be.

Happy Easter! May you hear Jesus call your name and recognize that He is always with you.

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.

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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.

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PRESENTS**

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Fortunately, God is more powerful than our problems. Fortunately, love always outlasts hate. And God promises us that if we do work together, we will not only survive, we will thrive.

Our series follows Mitch Albom's book but adds our own concerns and relevant stories from scripture. His book is inspirational and should cause us to reflect on our circumstances and faith.

The Book Club article in our weekly newsletter, the Circuit Rider, includes a reading schedule. All relevant articles and past issues of our newsletter are on our [website](#).

Here is the outline of our series:

<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Episode</u>
April 27	Strangers
May 4	Faith
May 11	Identity
May 18	Children
May 25	Fabrication
June 1	Now what?

Please join us each Sunday at 10:30 a.m. We share our weekly episodes on [Facebook](#) and our [YouTube channel](#), and go live at 10:30 a.m. You can find these links and more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website, FlintAsburyChurch.org](#).

Pastor Tommy

Mitch Albom. The Stranger in the Lifeboat. New York: HarperCollins, 2021.