

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

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JULY 20, 2025

Busted? (Heaven)



Cyndi and I could barely talk as we watched the horror that unfolded in Texas early Saturday morning from the safety of our family room. The loss of life was overwhelming. And the tragedy of losing children overloaded our senses. The disaster was unimaginable.

I suspect that even the more faithful among us can't help but ask, "Where was God in all of this tragedy?"

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Rhythm (Prayer)



According to Google, "rhythm is a pattern of recurring elements in time." Rhythm is probably most often associated with music, but it also applies to language, nature, and the human body. For me, rhythm also expresses a harmony that creates a pleasing sensation that all is according to how it should be.

In the creation story, the Garden of Eden offers a glimpse of God's intentions for humankind. There was harmony between God and God's created. Unfortunately, sin entered the world. So it wasn't long before arrogance erupted into violence. The rhythm created by God was no longer harmonious.

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ART AT THE HOOP HOUSES!!



DONATE

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The primary focus is, as it should be, on caring for the survivors and searching for the missing. Cleanup and rebuilding will come in time, as will investigations into whether more lives could have been saved. The lessons learned will likely be identified and hopefully lead to preventive measures for the future.

Of course, opinions are already circulating as investigative reporters uncover who did or didn't do what should have been done. Officials have labeled the tragedy a "perfect storm" given the combination of factors involved. It was also called a 100-year flood, considering the historical frequency of floods of this magnitude.

In his newsletter published by the New York Times, writer David Wallace-Wells raises questions that the broadcast media seem to want to skip over. First, floods, even those once labelled 500-year events, are happening with greater frequency.

The president, who insists climate change isn't real, ordered the retirement of the database of billion-dollar disasters long maintained by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. But hiding history doesn't keep it from

repeating itself. The price tag of ignoring climate change, both in terms of dollars and the loss of life, is increasing rapidly. Wallace-Wells noted that nearly two-thirds of climate-related disasters over the past couple of years came from unspectacular-sounding storms.

My answer to the question regarding God's presence in the midst of a storm is that God is always nearby. And I believe God weeps with us. But does God ever calm the storm?

First, we can't be sure that God didn't take some preventive action. We can't be sure whether God's fingerprints were on proposals for warning systems that were occasionally implemented and more often ignored. Nor can we be certain whether God's voice was heard by first responders trying to warn residents.

One thing is sure. God is trying to warn us that climate change is real, and to ignore God's warnings is to ignore God and put our faith in other gods. We are quickly becoming a pagan nation led by people who try to say the right words but don't put love into action.

Both Mark and Luke tell a story about Jesus calming a storm in time to prevent the storm from sinking the boat carrying Him and His disciples. Jesus was asleep when a storm suddenly began to cause their boat to fill with water.

Jesus stood up and commented the wind, "Be quiet?" and he said to the waves, "Be still?" the wind died down, and there was a great calm. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Why are you frightened? Do you still have no faith?"

Luke 8:22-25

The disciples awoke Jesus in a panic. "We are about to die," the disciples said as they cried out to Jesus. In Mark's telling, one of the disciples asked Jesus, "Don't you care?" But the storm ended on Jesus' command, and they were all safe. "Where is your faith?" Jesus asked them.

Is this all it takes to avert potentially disastrous storms? Yes, but there's more to the story. We also have work to do. Faith looks a lot like love in action, more so than empty words.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Virginia Bigger	Fred Hans
Sylvia Pittman	Jonathon Misner
Miriam Watson	Terrance Williams


FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux	Norma Buzzard
Nancy Elston	

COMING UP THIS WEEK: JULY 21—27

July 21	Mon	11am-12N	Angel Closet (at South Flint Soup Kitchen)
		6:00pm	Leadership Team
July 22	Tue	9am-until gone	Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice
		11am-12N	Angel Closet
		3:00pm	CDC Board Meeting
July 23	Wed	11am-12N	Angel Closet
July 24	Thu	11am-12N	Angel Closet
July 25	Fri	11am-12N	Angel Closet
July 26	Sat		
July 27	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 "Prayer"

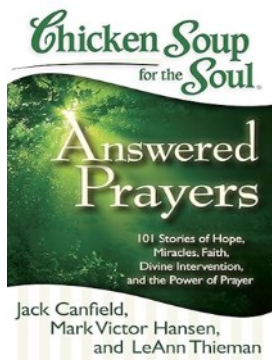


In our last worship series, *Heaven*, we gave thought to what heaven might be like. And we considered the plausibility of someone in heaven speaking to the living. Is it possible? It would be a miracle if it were to happen.

In this series, *Prayer*, we give thought to words, mostly going the other direction. We talk to God, but we also hope to hear back. If not audibly, we hope to see evidence that our prayers were heard. Well, at least some of them once in a while.

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Book Club News



There are hundreds of books under the umbrella title *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. So many that this title is now its own publishing

company. Out of the hundreds of options, we've chosen one special

edition of our new series, *Prayer*.

According to their website, motivational speakers Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen started in 1993 with the idea that people could help each other by sharing stories. The two had shared stories told to them over the years, and their audiences kept asking if any of the stories had ever been published.

But when the two tried to get their first book published, they were turned down by every single big publisher. Fortunately, the book was published by a small health and wellness publisher in Florida named HCI. After the owner, Peter Vegso, read some of the stories, he decided to give the book a chance.

Since then, more than 100 million copies have been sold in the U.S. and Canada, 400 titles, and translations into more than 40 languages. Their goal is to spread happiness, inspiration, hope, and wellness across the globe, "changing your world one story at a time."®

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Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Kevin Croom	Executive Director/CDC
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Kim Sims	Finance Director
Terry Kinze	Ops Manager/CDC
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
Israel Unger (Izzy)	Business Service Mgr
Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
Venus McBeth	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	Cafe

Upcoming Worship Series — “Prayer”

The gospels share that Jesus often prayed, and Matthew and Luke include stories about Jesus teaching His disciples how to pray. This is our source for that which we call the Lord's Prayer.

We also learn about the importance of humility as we pray. After all, we are dependent on God for all that we have. Fortunately, God showers us with love and good things. Unfortunately, humankind is more often out of rhythm with God's intention. Therefore, God's plans are thwarted by selfishness, cruelty, and arrogance.

But we continue to pray not just for ourselves, but for others. God hears our prayers and God acts for our good.

For motivation and some content, we'll utilize a book of stories from people who share their experiences with prayer. Our companion book is part of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series. You can read more about this book in the Book Club article, which includes a reading schedule.

Here is the outline of our series:

<u>Episode</u>	<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Title</u>
One	July 20	Rhythm
Two	July 27	Healing
Three	August 3	Asking
Four	August 10	Grateful
Five	August 31	Trust
Six	September 7	Angels

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

Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, LeAnn Thieman. *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Answered Prayers: 101 Stories of Hope, Miracles, Faith, Divine Intervention, and the Power of Prayer*.
Cos Cob, CT: Chicken Soup for the Soul, 2011.


“Feed Flint”

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“Feed Flint”

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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:

Suppose a woman who has ten silver coins loses one of them. What does she do? In the same way, the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents.

Luke 15:8-10

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Luke 15:8-10. What does this parable mean for you? What similar experiences have you had, losing and finding? How did you feel when you found what you lost?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider titled Rhythm. Can you identify with feeling like you're out of rhythm? Describe how you felt. What experiences have you had with being lost?
3. How about spiritually, but not physically lost? What happened? How can your group members help you be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God this week? Pray for one another to be blessed by the Holy Spirit with greater courage.



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Miracles happen all the time and became a major theme from our last series. The stories in our companion book for the new series of answered prayers are sure to leave you in awe. We hope these stories will not only inspire you but also strengthen your faith and hope.

These stories offer testimony that God is actively involved in our lives. And that God hears our heartfelt hopes and needs. The stories include miraculous true accounts of healing, divine appointments, angels among us, signs from above, timely gifts, and other answered prayers.

Since each story exists independently of the others, you can choose to read all of them or just a few. Perhaps read one story each day as part of a daily devotional routine. For our series, we'll select one or two stories from a specific chapter in case you want to read ahead.

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

<u>Sunday's</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Chapters</u>
July 20	4 - 45	One
July 27	116 - 153	Four
August 3	182 - 217	Six
August 10,	252 -293	Eight
August 31	294 - 327	Nine
September 7	328 - 351	Ten

We'll have a few books available for purchase. New copies of the paperback edition are available through Amazon for \$11.60, and used copies in good condition are usually under \$6, including shipping. 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

Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, LeAnn Thieman. *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Answered Prayers: 101 Stories of Hope, Miracles, Faith, Divine Intervention, and the Power of Prayer*. Cos Cob, CT: *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, 2011.

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

This is our final episode of our Heaven series and the conclusion of our companion book, *The First Phone Call From Heaven*. Mitch Albom left us with a creative, surprising, and heart-warming ending.

In a nutshell, Sully's investigation into the mysterious phone calls from heaven came to the conclusion he had hoped for. Busted! Well, that's the way it seemed at first. Albom shares numerous philosophical insights throughout the story he tells. The one that best fits the story's end is "Desire sets our compass, real life steers our course."

The big day arrived in Coldwater with all the fanfare of a well-orchestrated major event. The world was watching. The producers were prepared for the wait. The longer it took, the more advertising dollars poured into the networks covering the event.

Those hoping to maximize profits were disappointed when, too soon into the extravaganza, several phones began ringing at once.

Meanwhile, the mastermind behind the plot was being exposed. An expert in all the capabilities needed to pull off such a believable scam had

moved to Coldwater after covering up his son's disastrous mistake that resulted in the Hornet FA-18, flown by Scully, clipping a twin-engine Cessna headed for the same runway where both aircraft had clearance from the tower to land.

Once the media caught onto the story, the critics' reactions were fast, furious, and a bit condescending. "I told you so" sums up their collective response.

As Coldwater returned to its usual rhythms, Albom writes, "The world absorbed the Coldwater phenomenon the way a shaken snow globe lets its white flakes settle to the bottom. As happens with all miracles, once life goes on, those who believe retell them with wonder. Those who do not, do not. No one seemed to notice how, in their own way, the calls had steered people to just what they needed."

This included answered prayers as local pastors saw a rise in church attendance.

As the story comes to an end, Scully's seven-year-old son, Jules, awakened by a noise, puts a toy phone to his ear and smiles.

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)

This is a reminder that we publish a weekly newsletter called the Circuit Rider. You can request this publication by email by sending 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 First Phone Call from Heaven*. New York: HarperCollins, 2014.

David Wallace-Wells. *"We Can Adapt and Prepare for Floods. But Will We?"* © New York Times, July 9, 2025. Retrieved from: [link](#)

You and I can feel when the rhythm is off, even if we can't put a name to it. We sense that there's disharmony in our nation as the U.S. drifts further from its democratic roots, grounded in mutual love for God, one another, and our planet. Our leadership is quickly moving toward policies that favor the wealthy and use cruelty as a main tool.

We're a bit like a wall that isn't quite plumb. It's clear that something isn't right, and it's not safe.

The Prophet Amos had a vision in which he saw God standing beside a wall. "Amos, what do you see?" God asked the prophet. "A plumb line," answered Amos. God wasn't happy with the rhythm.

Nicolas Iglesias Schneider, in a reflection on Amos's visions, reminds us that Amos's visions remain relevant today as we confront ecological crises and deep-seated social injustices. Millions of people are exploited, displaced, and unable to live with dignity. Nicolas, a social worker for The Methodist Church in Uruguay, concludes, "Amos's world and our world are both systems built not on love but on calculating the usefulness of others and the planet to serve oneself."

As our rhythms crumble, so does our sense of well-being. We often drift aimlessly. And before long, we feel lost. But we're not lost, we're just out of rhythm or at least the world around us seems to be.

Luke tells us that one day, when some Pharisees and the teachers of the Law started grumbling about the way Jesus would eat with people they considered to be bad company, Jesus shared stories that were sure to cause reflection.

It was common for Jesus to tell relatable stories about ordinary people and circumstances. We often refer to His stories as parables because His stories offered illustrations into the heart of God. His stories continue to impact lives centuries later, even though the specific stories are less relatable at first glance.

One of His parables came up in the first chapter of our companion book for this series. A co-worker, Edie, handed a manila envelope to Lucille as the story began. One page of the envelope's contents was immediately recognizable. It was a copy of the official adoption certificate for her son, Ron. "Who are you?" she asked her co-worker.

Have you ever experienced a coincidence that felt less like

chance and more like a well-orchestrated plan?

Lucille began working for Trinity Broadcasting Network three months earlier, answering the phone and praying for callers. She had no idea that she was working next to her son's biological sister. What are the chances?

She and her brothers had tried unsuccessfully for ten years to get access to the sealed records. Edie decided to try one more time and was able to convince a person working at the children's home to allow her to copy the adoption records.

Lucille's adopted son, Ron, grew up without knowing his biological family. His parents tried their best to help him find them, but to no avail. Ron felt like he was out of rhythm. However, when he finally met his long-lost family, he discovered that some of them lived nearby.

When his sister, Edie, arrived at their home, she shared the Parable of the Lost Coin with her brother's adopted family before revealing their connection to her brother. Like the woman in the parable, Edie searched for her brother, who had been lost from her family.

Luke tells that Jesus told the parable in response to criticism levied against Him for associating with people whom His listeners condemned. Jesus didn't try to defend their actions, nor did he condemn or even disagree with His critics. Jesus told stories.

"Suppose you had 100 sheep and one of them was missing. A woman had ten coins and misplaced one." Surely, His listeners could identify with one or both of these stories. "You would go and search for the lost sheep, wouldn't you? The woman celebrated finding her lost coin." Of course, she did.

Jesus drew a parallel between searching for something of value that is lost and how God doesn't give up on any of us when we're lost. Of course, the word "lost" can describe a wide range of possibilities. The word is the past participle of the word "lose."

But if we lose our job or a friend, we know where the job is or isn't. We know if our friend died or moved away, at least in most cases. However, if we lose our keys, we may have clues like where and when we last saw them, but if we know where they are, they're not lost.

Similarly, the lost Jesus is referring to a relatively wide range of possibilities. Lost persons don't necessarily know they're lost. For example, I suspect Jesus could see that His critics were a bit lost. Oh, they thought they knew exactly where they were. Yet, they didn't seem to know who was speaking to them or whom they were complaining about.

Jesus searches for the lost until they are found. God never gives up on any of us, even when we have given up on God. Eventually, we are found, and if we are fortunate enough to be discovered while still alive on this planet, we find joy in knowing who we are and whose we are.

Suppose a woman who has ten silver coins loses one of them. What does she do? In the same way, the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents.

Luke 15:8-10

Once we allow Jesus to find us, our rhythm is restored. We can feel the harmony even when the world around us is off-key. Poet David Wagoner, in his poem *Lost*, advises, "Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here."

You are not lost, but you could be a bit off rhythm.

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Pastor Tommy

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Nicolas Iglesias Schneider. "The Justice of Reconciliation." *The Upper Room Disciplines 2025*. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2025, Pg 374.

David Wagoner. *Traveling Light: Collected and New Poems*. © 1999 by David Wagoner.

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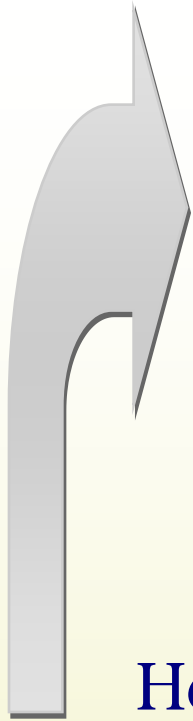
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WHEN YOU SHARE, OTHERS SHINE.
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