

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Bedazzled (Unmasking Critical Race Theory)

Volume 2 Issue 18

July 18, 2021



A soundbite is a catchphrase, a sticky statement — a few words strung together representing a lot more than just the collection of words used as a stand-in for a much broader topic. The better soundbites fit easily on a sign

hat gets carried to the streets by well-organized groups. Some of the more effective soundbites become slogans that are easily chanted. Black lives matter is one of my favorites.

Three words that fit on t-shirts, hats and roll off the tongue with ease. Yet behind this simple statement lies generations of wisdom and lived experiences. Black Lives Matter represents a particular view of history, a take on the present, and a stance on where we need to go. This short phrase communicated these complex perspectives because we each have a context coming into our hearing.

For me, Black Lives Matter acknowledges an uglier side of history that too often isn't told.

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You may still wear a mask while in the area if you are more comfortable. If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you



Anxious (How do I look?)



I realized back in the fall that despite entering the pandemic with a goal of improving my eating habits, my weight reached a new high.

Unfortunately, it still took me a couple months to react and deal with some bad habits adding to my expanding waistline.

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The anxiety of lockdown, together with other worries were taking an unnecessary toll on my wellbeing. I say that my worries were unnecessary because I know better.

The Center for Disease Control issued new guidelines for wearing face masks on May 13 that offered great hope for more of us coming out into the open.. After a year and a couple of months of isolation from seeing smiles and frowns, many of us are excited to rejoin the show in progress.

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Anxious (How Do I Look ?) ..cont from page 1

A production that was interrupted when a deadly virus spiraled out of control.

The guidance mandates the wearing of face masks for the unvaccinated. The leadership of our church made the decision last month to allow persons to enter our building without wearing a mask. However, unvaccinated people are encouraged to wear masks to avoid the possibility of infecting a person unable to receive a vaccination because of age or medical conditions.

Coming out is easy for a lot of us and not so easy for most of us. "Is it really safe?" we ask.

Oli Aworth is a 24-year-old student from Surrey, England. In an interview with BBC News Reporter Annabel Rackham, Oli shared a few of his worries about coming out of isolation, back into the world of social mingling.

Oli believes that coming out of isolation is more complicated for him, stating that it "Piled on quite a lot of pressure, especially for me being in the LGBT community. It brings up issues of do I look good enough? Or will my friends want to see me? And whether I've achieved enough during the lockdown."

A survey conducted by the American Psychological Association found that half of American adults—even those who were vaccinated—were uneasy about returning to in-person interaction. But I'm wondering if even more of us are concerned now that re-opening is finally here.

This uneasiness goes by several names — lately, we hear more about re-entry anxiety. The adjective added to anxiety, in this case, refers to the discomfort created when we're forced to leave the safe

and comfortable environment we made over the past 18 months to cope with isolation.

Persons experiencing re-entry anxiety experience symptoms of a more common condition called social anxiety disorder. This condition refers to a wide range of sometimes crippling symptoms. Symptoms including changes in our mood that may play out as sudden outbursts of anger, long periods of sadness that seem to hang around, changes in appetite, or a feeling of hopelessness. This is only a partial list.

Social anxiety can cause us to lose interest in doing things that are usually enjoyable. We may experience feelings of being overly stressed and anxious. We may not want to leave the house — or avoid situations where going might be difficult. As a result, some lose their desire to socialize at all.

Taken to the extreme, social anxiety disorder can result in feelings of harming yourself or suicide. And sadly, many turn to drugs or alcohol to help them cope. As a result, overdoses rose substantially in Genesee County during the pandemic.

Do not worry about tomorrow it will have enough worries of it's own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings.

Matthew 6:34

While Scripture has quite a lot to say about worry and anxiety, the bible doesn't promise a quick fix. Instead, the bible is more like therapy — offering a longer-term cure with benefits accruing along the way.

My problem with weight didn't suddenly start with the onslaught of the pandemic. I wasn't a healthy weight one day and over-weight the next day. And losing weight is taking months to accomplish, with benefits and setbacks along the way. My success or failure depends upon the decisions I make today.

One day Jesus was standing on the side of a hill speaking to a gathered crowd. He spoke to the crowd about various topics that challenge each of us with an opportunity for a healthier, more fulfilling life. At one point, Jesus says to the crowd, "Do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings" (Matthew 6:34).

A simple invitation that is easily missed and seldom accepted. We who worry for a living figure that this particular invitation isn't intended for us. After all, a big part of my job is to worry about and put actions into motion that help make tomorrow better than today. Nevertheless, I'm confident that these words apply to every one of us — including me.

Experts seem to agree on one suggestion — focus your attention on the present. While the experts likely heard this recommendation in the classroom and read it in professional journals and books. Jesus knew this from divine insight. Regardless of how you came to know this pearl of wisdom try putting it into practice.

In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom
Sylvia Pittman
Shirley Craig
Mirium Watson



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
Norma Buzzard Mary Nations



Coming up this week



Pastor Book Club will still be via Zoom, but will slowly start meeting in the Wesley Room depending on the size of our group. Please call the Church Office for more info 810-235-0016.

You may still wear your mask when coming into the Asbury building. Please use hand sanitizer that is placed throughout the building.

Thank you and everyone stay safe!

Meet Up & Eat Up

Serving Breakfast from 8:30am-9:30am

AND

Serving Lunch from 12Noon-1pm

Monday through Friday

STOP BY—BRING YOUR FAMILIES!!!!

(Asbury UMC 1653 Davison Rd)

- July 19 Mon
July 20 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm Food/Water Distribution
July 21 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club 11am-12Noon food Giveaway at South Flint Soup Kitchen (Walk-ins only)
July 22 Thu Kids Drama classes 3:30-4:30 Pm
July 23 Fri Kids Music Classes 3:30-4:30 Pm
July 24 Sat 12Noon Food Not Bombs
July 25 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.)

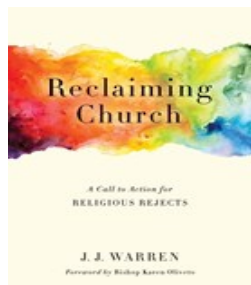
Asbury Worship Series

Coming Out

June 6 to July 25



Book Club News



We finished our study of *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs* by Joel Salatin and completed our worship series, *Living Water*. We learned how connected we are to each other, to our own identity, to the earth, and to God.

The world is an interwoven tapestry, and Joel Salatin's book brought to life the connection between scripture and organic farming. God's plan is for you and me to live healthy, happy lives, but we're often misled by profit motives and false promises.

Our book for June was written by seminary student J. J. Warren. J. J. is a speaker, preacher, and advocate for LGBTQ+ rights in the church. He is a graduate of New York's Sarah Lawrence College and is currently attending Boston University School of Theology.

Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony, Mirium	Welcome Team
Anthony, Jim	Ushers
Jonathon, Terrance	Production Team
Miriam	Children
Cyndi	Worship Leader
Christine & Norma	Cafe

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor & Exec Dir
Connie Portillo	Office Manager
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Exec Chef & Dir Opers

The Center for Disease Control issued new guidelines for wearing face masks on May 13 that offer great hope for more of us coming out into the open. After a year and a couple of months of isolation from seeing smiles and frowns, many of us are excited to rejoin the show in progress. A production that was interrupted when a deadly virus spiraled out of control.

The guidance mandates the wearing of face masks for the unvaccinated. This affects a much smaller

As a certified candidate for ordination in The United Methodist Church, J. J. faces a process that traditionally disqualified openly gay candidates. However, the UMC is in the midst of a historical argument that makes way for J. J. and hundreds of other candidates to respond to God's call on their lives. While able to live as the persons God created them to be.

J. J.'s visibility increased quickly after an impassioned plea for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons at a special meeting of the UMC's top lawmaking assembly in 2019. After his speech went viral, J. J. was later interviewed by HuffPost, NBC, and WXXI Radio.

In his book, *Reclaiming Church*, J. J. Warren calls for his generation to come together in transforming the contemporary church from an exclusionary club to a movement that is open to all people. A church that not only welcomes the LGBTQ+ community but offers leadership and ordination regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Matt DePalma	Farms Manager
Chris Freeman	South Campus Bldg Mgr
Israel Unger	Finance Director
Kim Sims	Connections Suprv
Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
Katelin Maylum	Sr Mgr Local Food
Jose Trejo	<i>Enlace de Idioma Español</i>

Asbury Café

Plan to meet outside the sanctuary each Sunday before worship for coffee, tea, snacks, conversation and so on. The music will start when it is time to wrap up and head in for worship.

group than one might think since persons refusing to get vaccinated are often the same group refusing to wear a face mask. "It's about freedom" is one retort I've grown weary of hearing. Fortunately, businesses still have the option of requiring a face mask to be worn along with healthcare facilities and public transportation. The pandemic isn't over — it's just less of a threat.

A few of us meet in person each week, and we invite you to join us for our conversation about J. J.'s book. New cases of the coronavirus are at their lowest levels in a year in Michigan. However, we continue to encourage diligence.

While our regular attenders are vaccinated, we realize that there remains a large number of persons that are not vaccinated. Therefore, we require masks in our building for all persons when not eating or drinking. We strongly urge all persons to get vaccinated as soon as practical unless advised not to by your doctor.

We each make our own arrangements for lunch at this point. We look forward to returning to pot-luck lunches later this summer if the national targets for vaccinations are met. The CDC relaxes recommendations for wearing face masks.

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away I encourage you to [join us online](#) for our Wednesday gatherings. Alternatively, you can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others say by calling (929) 436-2866 -- enter the meeting ID, 282 039 5568#.

We are a diverse group, and we are delighted when new persons join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — FlintAsbury.org.

Pastor Tommy

¹ Warren, J. J. *Reclaiming church: a call to action for religious rejects*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020.

Coming Out (June 6 to July 25) ... Asbury Worship Series

Coming out is easy for a lot of us and not so easy for most of us. "Is it really safe?" we ask. "Is it really safe to reveal our vulnerabilities to one another?"

Part one of our new series coincides with the celebration of Pride Month. An annual tribute to the victims of a police raid in 1969 of the Stonewall Inn — a place where persons could gather whose gender identity or sexual orientation differed from their gender at birth. Coming out for persons coming to terms with their actual identity is substantially more terrifying than choosing to leave my face mask at home.

Fortunately, activist Brenda Howard, often referred to as the Mother of Pride, organized a way to keep the subject on the minds of a growing number of people. Including people with friends and family struggling with fears of coming out before being found out. And Pride Month took root and grew into a national time of recognition.

That these two life-giving opportunities share the calendar looked like a problem at first glance. Standing in solidarity with people made to feel abnormal for being who God created them to be, is crucial to the Asbury community. After all, we claim to be an inclusive community that puts the teachings of Jesus Christ into action. And as our spiritual leader, I don't want to take away from celebrating the coming out of any who risk relationships and hurt to be who they are wherever they go.

Yet, I realize that the losses created by our response to the pandemic are painful. Everyone was affected because so many of us were infected. And some of the same brokenness that is the human condition led to the needless loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. It's time to come out again and face a new normal. And we need to talk about it now.

Stay tuned. Meanwhile, share your thoughts, prayers, and creative gifts with our community. Testimonies are powerful. What you feel and believe matters a great deal. Let's plan to celebrate together.

I would be remiss if I did not emphasize that vaccinations are essential for everyone. Understandably a few have medical conditions where vaccination could be inadvisable. But the rest of us can protect our more vulnerable community members by ensuring that we aren't able to spread the virus. It's time to come out of whatever fears or biases keep you from being a part of the solution. Get vaccinated.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly explores live on both Facebook and YouTube. 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](http://www.FlintAsbury.org) at [FlintAsbury.org](http://www.FlintAsbury.org).

Pastor Tommy

Bedazzled (Unmasking critical race theory) ... cont. from pg 1

This phrase lies at the core of my faith in a God for whom all lives matter. But, until equitable justice is the rule for black lives, all lives are cheapened.

A lot happened since the pandemic began. While a large part of the nation's citizenry hid out in isolation, our country proved that black lives matter a whole lot less within our economic and legal systems than whiteness. The exposure of blatant reminders brought millions out of isolation and into the streets to raise awareness that the time for action is long overdue.

I prefer to use the term, sticky statement when I'm preparing a sermon. A phrase is sticky if it can be easily remembered and effectively represents the meaning behind the message. Each week I spend time thinking about an expression that depicts the core theme of our message. Unfortunately, most weeks, I fall short of an effective sticky statement.

I don't fret over not having a good sticky statement for every message since I also realize the danger of a short phrase as a stand-in for the actual message. Like all posers, a soundbite repeated by persons unfamiliar with the message behind the words is empty. The real meaning takes on a new life of its own that seldom represents the content behind it.

Jesus frequently said things that have since been turned into sticky statements. One of my favorites comes out of a story Jesus told about shepherds. "Good shepherds," according to Jesus, love the sheep under their care. And they show their love by putting their body's between the sheep and danger.

"The real shepherd enters the sheep pen through the main gate," said Jesus, "while a thief jumps the fence." Thieves are more obvious to spot. Less predictable are persons hired to care for sheep with no attachment to their well-being. Hired hands are harder to spot because they enter through the gate like they own the place. But they make lousy shepherds (John 10:1-13).

Politicians utilize soundbites as a way to make headlines and to organize support behind ideas. Political strategists know which keywords and phrases catch the attention of journalists hungry to write a story that appeals to more readers.

In some cases, soundbites help recruit new supporters with whom the idea resonates. But, unfortunately, soundbites frequently spread misinformation that takes on a life of their own.

Critical race theory (CRT) is the latest soundbite catching the attention and imagination of a growing number of people. CRT originated in academia when Harvard law professor Derrick Bell challenged the claim that landmark legislations delivered liberty and justice for Black Americans in his book, *Race, Racism and American Law*, which was first published in 1973. 1

**I am the Good shepherd,
Who is willing to die for the
sheep.....The hired man runs
away because hedoes not
care about the sheep.**

John 10:11,13

CRT questions the progress made in pursuit of the idea of freedom and justice for all. Traditionally "all" referred to white male landowners only. Legislation passed in the past sixty years or so included women and people of color. However, systemic racism persists.

Recently, an increasing number of politicians are using CRT as a catch-all soundbite. Their message is simple — CRT is terrible for America and shouldn't be taught in schools. However, arguments against CRT make accusations that were never a part of the actual content.

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Are CRT soundbites an illustration of the warning Jesus offered about thieves and posers? A poser may dazzle us with soundbites that hammer home their claims to be protectors and saviors. But these posers are exposed when real danger appears. This is because posers offer soundbites instead of their bodies when it comes to trouble.

This is the danger of soundbites. They're used to dazzle us into thinking a particular way that often obscures the truth. This is the case with CRT. Politicians are targeting this academic concept offered for public debate as a soundbite to justify laws that legislate content within our educational systems.

Opponents of legislation that hopes to reduce or eliminate systemic racism use CRT as a soundbite in arguments against curriculum that exposes systemic racism. This strategy is working because soundbites don't contain the facts. Once a soundbite gains traction, it is used as a weapon in political battles around subjects that are only vaguely related. Such as opposing Black lives matter by blaming CRT.

This month our series, Coming out, turns the spotlight on coming out of isolation now that restrictions are ending. But what is the new normal that we hope to come out for? Next week we examine the debate over critical race theory that is raging in some states. The topic for our final episode is climate change. Plan to join us.

We have a new button on the homepage of our website - Click here to watch. This button takes you to a viewer to allow you to join live or watch later in the week. We're also live on our newly launched YouTube channel. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

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Pastor Tommy



1 "5 Steps for Overcoming Social Anxiety After COVID Isolation," © Newport Institute, April 7, 2021.

2 Annabel Rackham. "Covid: How to deal with social anxiety as restrictions ease," © BBC News, May 17, 2021.

3 Joseph Harper. "Too many men ignore their depression, phobias, other mental health issues," © Washington Post, July 3, 2021.

July 18, 2021

Life groups questions & notes

I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. When the hired man...sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away...The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and does not care about the sheep.

John 10:1-3, 11-13 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read John 10:1-3, 11-13. What are some illustrations from your own life when you have encountered thieves or hired hands? What do thieves and hired hands have in common? Do you know any shepherds? What makes a person a shepherd?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, Bedazzled. Have you heard of Critical Race Theory before? Do you believe that history affects the present? In what ways? Can you give an example? Is it important for schools to teach factual history? Should schools teach children about our country's history regarding race? Why or why not? What is systemic racism? What are some ways that we might put an end to systemic racism?
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.

“FLINT FOOD NOT BOMBS”

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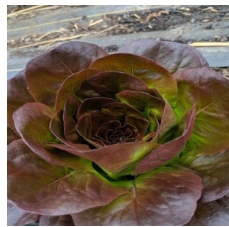
Providing a HOT MEAL and/or local, organic
PRODUCE weekly.

SATURDAYS starting around 12NOON

Asbury United Methodist Church

1653 Davison Rd, Flint (810) 235-0016

Food Not Bombs is a loose-knit sharing free vegan and vegetarian **Flint Food Not Bombs** believes necessities of life-should be Yet in a nation with a military nations, people continue to go hungry. This is immoral and unjust.



group of independent collectives, food with others. that access of food among other viewed as a right, not a privilege. buget many times that of other



JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

Facebook.com/flintfoodnotbombs

Twitter.com/flintfnb

Email: flintfnb@protonmail.com

Website: foodnotbombsflint.wordpress.com



We're currently looking for volunteers so we can expand. If interested, send us a message! Solidarity!

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.—MLK



JULY ANGEL CLOSET & FOOD GIVEAWAY DATES

July 7th and 28th - Angel Closet
July 14th and 21st - Food Giveaways

**ALL CLOSET AND GIVEAWAY DATES ARE
FROM 11AM-NOON!**

810-239-3427 3410 Fenton Road, Flint, MI 48507
southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

** We have also updated our mask policy. Masks are no longer required to enter the building or submission to a temperature check. We ask that folks that are unvaccinated or under the age of 12 still continue to wear a mask, however, we are not requiring anyone to do so.



ASBURY FARM FRESH

- TRY OUR WEEKLY VEGGIE BOX FOR \$10.00 -

SIGN UP FOR A FREE ASBURY FARMS ACCOUNT TODAY

AND

Receive a \$15 credit on your account for your first purchase

CREATE YOUR OWN VEGGIE BOX

Select what goes in your box from each week's harvest. Get \$5 off your next order when you fill your box with \$15 of produce.

WANT US TO DECIDE FOR YOU?

Choose Veggie Box Subscription and we will fill your order with a variety of each week's harvest. Pay when you pick up your box. **A \$15 VALUE FOR \$10.**

*** CONVENIENT PICKUP AT ASBURY OR AT THE SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN ***

The latest controversy involves k-12 curriculum content. Several state legislatures are passing or considering new laws that ban CRT as a subject. Their arguments intentionally misrepresent CRT and mislead the public about the real issues. For example, the former vice-president claimed in a speech last month that, "Critical race theory teaches children as young as kindergarten to be ashamed of their skin color." Really?

The arguments for preventing schools from talking about CRT are based on the view that history "holds no contemporary consequences" and that "racism ended in the past." The take-away intended by the soundbites, according to J Kimberlé Crenshaw, is that "We would all be better off if we didn't try to connect it [history] to the present.

In another Washington Post article, Bryan Anderson described critical race theory as "A way of thinking about America's history through the lens of racism." CRT recognizes that racism is systemic and rises out of our nation's history. Proponents of CRT argue that our schools should tell the truth that federal law historically treated people differently based on the culturally invented idea of race.

Kathryn Schumaker, in her article, covered the signing of a new law in Oklahoma that coincided with the centennial of the Tulsa Race Massacre. By the time it ended, mobs had destroyed over 1,200 buildings taking away a generation of accumulated wealth owned by African-Americans. No one was arrested, and the incident swept under the rug. The new Oklahoma laws require educators to instruct students, "To emphasize that although the perpetrators of the Tulsa Race Massacre did bad things, their actions do not shape the world we live in.

The truth is that history did shape the world we live in today. The consequences of past actions are not neutralized because we chose to move on with our lives. The audacity of legislators to enact laws that perpetuate



systemic racism is tragic. The real damage is hidden behind soundbites that intentionally mislead the public.

Moreover, it is disheartening to see persons who claim to follow the teachings of Jesus offering support for legislators and the soundbites they use to justify their objections to solutions that could help curtail systemic racism.

Nevertheless, each of us has the freedom to choose how we return from isolation to face whatever normal we build together. We make our choices with each vote that we cast.

The next national election will be tainted by numerous new laws that make it more difficult for many people to vote. Instead of being disheartened, let's respond to this attack on our democracy with a record turnout for elections. We can respond to blatant disregard for democratic elections by dismissing legislators who proposed laws that create unwarranted obstacles.

We need to seek out authentic shepherds when it comes to choosing a candidate to support. Real shepherds show loyalty to the people they represent through more than mere soundbites. Let's consider whether their personal history suggests a person willing to give their life for us. Let's dismiss self-serving candidates who spew misleading soundbites and respond to challenges by changing the subject or responding with lies.

But that's me, and I'm only one vote.

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1 Samuel Hoadley-Brill. "Critical race theory's opponents are sure it's bad. Whatever it is." @ Washington Post, July 2, 2021.

2 J Kimberlé Crenshaw. "The panic over critical race theory is an attempt to whitewash U.S. history." @ Washington Post, July 2, 2021.

3 Bryan Anderson. "EXPLAINER: So much buzz, but what is critical race theory?" @ Washington Post, June 24, 2021.

4 Kathryn Schumaker. "What is critical race theory and why did Oklahoma just ban it?" @ Washington Post, May 19, 2021.