

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 5 Issue 30

MARCH 30, 2025

The Neighbors (Who Dunit)



cliff with a front room tacked on.

The Bible does not tell us much about the village of Nazareth. Most of what we know comes from archeologists, who tell us that Nazareth was hardly a village at all. In Jesus's time, Nazareth was a collection of huts, two-room houses that often consisted of a cave in the

Page 2

**EVERYONE
HAVE A
WONDERFUL
WEEK!!**

DONATE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The King	1
The Neighbors	1
The Neighbors	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
The Neighbors	13
The King	14
The King	15
Kroger Reward	16
Pastor Vince Bio	17

The King (Who Dunit?)



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

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

Page 14



Most of the people in Nazareth were farmers and shepherds, which means that Joseph would have been an anomaly. Without a field to farm, he earned a living as a builder. He wouldn't have found much work in Nazareth. Most likely, Joseph walked two hours each morning to Sepphoris, the nearest big city, where he got work as a day laborer on construction projects.

Sepphoris would have been a bustling, cosmopolitan sort of place with traders and merchants from foreign lands. When Jesus tagged along with Joseph, he would have experienced an astonishing diversity of people, clothing, and languages. All of this might explain why the people of Nazareth looked down on Joseph and his family.

The people don't expect much when Jesus, who is just beginning to establish a reputation as a wandering rabbi, returns to preach in the local synagogue. Jesus reads about a great jubilee—a moment when God will lift up the poor, set the prisoner free, give sight to the blind,

and end oppression. Jesus declares that this moment is at hand, and his neighbors are impressed—they seem delighted that Jesus can even string a few words together.

But then the sermon takes a turn. Instead of quitting while he is ahead, Jesus keeps going. He predicts that the people of Nazareth will reject him, his ministry, and his message. He starts telling stories from Scripture. He tells the story of Elijah, who gave miraculous food to a Canaanite widow. He tells the story of Elisha, who heals a Syrian leper. He makes it clear that in his ministry, God is once again reaching out to outsiders and foreigners, and he correctly predicts that this is going to make people angry.

Why does Jesus take his sermon in this particular direction? We can only assume that Jesus knew which message the people most needed and least wanted to hear. Jesus knew firsthand how the people of Nazareth looked down on outsiders (like his father Joseph). And he had heard them talking about the evils of the big city. "You'd never catch me over there," they said, "You know what those people are like."

*Today, this
Scripture has been
fulfilled in your
hearing.*

Luke 4:20-23

Jesus knew that people in Nazareth blamed strangers for every crime and every hardship. Jesus knew that the people of Nazareth were proud of their religion (the right religion), they were proud of their nation (God's favorite nation), and they had contempt for people who were not like them. That hatred was the glue that held their religiosity and patriotism together.

And that's what Jesus challenges in his sermon—he challenges their right to hate. He points out that God embraces the people they despise. Jesus challenges their sense of privilege and entitlement. He challenges their belief that God will always choose to be on their side. And he must know what will

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 31 – APRIL 6

WELCOME PASTOR VINCENT SLOCUM TO ASBURY UMC!

(see Pastor Vincent's Bio on page 17)

Mar 31	Mon		
Apr 1	Tue	10am-untill gone	Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice
Apr 2	Wed		
Apr 3	Thu		
Apr 4	Fri		
Apr 5	Sat		
Apr 6	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?"

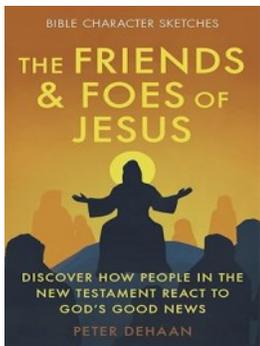


During this year's Lent observance, we, along with several other area UM Churches, are participating in a series titled *Who Dunit? The people who wanted Jesus dead* (see article). The series begins after Ash Wednesday on Sunday, March 9.

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.

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
Mike Sampson Farms Manager
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 — “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:

Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

Luke 4:20-23

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Luke 4:16-30. Is this a familiar story? What do you suppose the people turned against Jesus?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider titled The neighbors. Who are the strangers today who get blamed? What is our role, as followers of Jesus, in welcoming strangers? What can we do to push back on the administration's inhumane treatment of immigrants? Can you imagine a balance between protecting borders and following Jesus?
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.



South Flint Soup Kitchen ...

BOTTLED WATER DRIVE

All Year Long!

Our clients need bottled water for cooking,
going with sack lunches, to bathe and brush
their teeth with, and MORE!

Donations are accepted Monday-Friday
11:00am-12 Noon at South Flint Soup Kitchen,
3410 Fenton Rd (3 blocks north of Atherton Rd)
Flint MI 48507

Any questions, please call 239-3427 or 235-0016 or
Email us at southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

To donate: www.mightycause.com/feedflint



Show Your Support For Your Local Farm

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

How You Can Donate

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

Donate Now



More Information :



(810) 235-0016



funding@flintasbury.org

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

happen next. When Jesus threatens to take away their hate, the people respond with violence. They seize Jesus and try to throw him off a cliff.

Two thousand years into the future, at a time when foreigners, immigrants, outsiders, and refugees are once again being made into scapegoats, at a time when the very idea of diversity itself is the subject of ridicule and scorn, Jesus asks us still: would you allow me to take away your hatred and contempt? Or would you throw me over a cliff in order to hold onto your malicious pride?

Pastor 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. Pastor Jeremy wrote some of the content.

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)

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*](mailto: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. 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*](#)



Where shopping and giving come together and you can help!

Learn more at

KrogerCommunityRewards.com
Or, call Kroger Customer Communications at

**1-800-KROGERS, (576-4377)
OPTION #3**



The Kroger Community Rewards Program is designed to be the easiest fund-raising program in town! Simply swipe your Plus Card and earn rewards!

Eligible Organizations

Kroger Community Rewards is open to organizations that are tax exempt under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Participants include school groups, churches and synagogues, youth sports, food banks, animal support groups and many others. Kroger does not make donations to individuals.

Get your favorite local organization

enrolled

today! Enrollment applications can be downloaded at Kroger.com

**ZERO HUNGER
ZERO WASTE**

by **Kroger**

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

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

to local area non profits
Use your Kroger Plus Card and earn rewards for your favorite organization.

Where shopping and giving come together and you can help!

A life-long follower of Jesus, Pastor Vince grew up the oldest in a family of nine kids! Growing up his family was an every-Sunday worshipping family, active in the Episcopal church they attended in downtown Flint. As a teenager and young adult, Vince was active in supporting the weekly soup kitchen and holiday basket programs which his family lead in their church. This experience instilled a life-long passion for and commitment to active service and social justice.

He joined the United Methodist Church in 2017, entered the ministry several years later, and hasn't looked back since. He has been happily married for 20 years. In 2008, he and his wife adopted their first child, Moon, and in 2014, they celebrated the birth of their second child, James.

He has received two associate's degrees, a B.S. in Economics from the University of Michigan-Flint, and a Master's in Theological Studies from Methodist Theological School of Ohio. In his Bachelor's studies, Pastor Vince's research focused on poverty traps and racial inequality in post-industrial urban economies, while his Master's-level research concentrated on African religious experience within diasporic communities. For the past four years, he has served as Pastor of Lake Fenton United Methodist Church. In addition to his pastoral ministry, he has spent over a decade working in community development and non-profit administration.

In this time he has served as City Planner for the City of Flint, Neighborhood Services Director for Genesee County Habitat for Humanity, Operations Director for Flint's Urban Renaissance Center, and as an independent data and strategic impact consultant for a variety of local non-profits. For the past year, Pastor Vince has also served as Executive Director of Flint & Genesee Literacy Network and as part of Mott Community College's Workforce & Economic Development senior leadership team.

When he's off the clock, Pastor Vince serves on the Board of Directors for Asbury Community Development Corporation and as summer youth counselor at Lake Louise Christian Community. He also spends a lot of time reading, playing video games, singing very loudly in the shower, and constantly begging his wife's forgiveness for bringing home yet another book about world history.

Pastor Vincent



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.



**Children’s
Grief Center**
GREAT LAKES BAY REGION



"To the world you may be one person, but to one person
you may be the world." --Dr. Seuss

I am delighted to inform you about an important new initiative coming to the Flint area, and to ask area faith communities for your help in its launch.

What:

The Children's Grief Center, Great Lakes Bay Region, is helping to establish a new Children's Grief Center in Flint to serve the Genesee County area. The need is enormous for grief support in the Flint/Genesee County area. And due to the abrupt closure last summer of the only free children's grief program in the area, there are very few places for families to seek help--especially help provided at no charge.

Why:

When the previous grief center closed, a group of folks from local hospice companies and funeral homes met together to discuss ways to meet the needs of grieving children and their parents. In the process of gathering information, we learned of the Children's Grief Center based in Midland and contacted them for advice.

The task seemed huge! To replace the previous program, we would need to: create a new non-profit, find a location, raise funds, design a program, recruit and train volunteers, assemble supplies...and we all have full-time jobs. But we decided to take a leap of faith.

The staff at the Children's Grief Center has not only given us great advice...they have graciously offered to help us to open a Genesee County program under the umbrella of their established non-profit organization. They will provide: grant writing services, program materials, volunteer training and help with program oversight.

When:

We hope to begin programming in September 2025. We have secured a location in a church building in Flint Township. We have begun recruiting and training volunteers, and we have reached out to U of M Flint seeking social work and psychology students who could intern with us.

We will start with peer support groups for children from age 5 through high school, as well as their parents/guardians. Our hope is to expand the program to provide grief support groups in local schools within the next couple of years.

What Area Faith Communities Can Do:

1. **Help us locate the right volunteers** by publishing the following announcement in your newsletter/ bulletins for the next several weeks. (Feel free to use the logo and QR code.)

The Children's Grief Center is seeking volunteers from Genesee County to assist with grief support groups for children ages 5 to 18 and for their parents/guardians. Volunteers will receive thorough training to be well-prepared to walk with families through their loss. All volunteers are asked to commit to two evenings per month for a full school year (fall 2025 through spring 2026). Evening Grief Support programming will begin twice a month in September 2025. If you're interested in learning more, please fill out the volunteer form at www.childrengriefglbr.org

2. **Help us raise the funds** we need to get started.

We estimate that it will cost about \$2500 per month to provide these programs for families at no charge. This money will cover all program materials and supplies, a free dinner at each meeting (so that families can come straight from work/sports/etc. without worrying about supper), space rental, outreach materials, and staff time. We are currently seeking grant funding for the ongoing program, but we really need some resources to get started.

Please consider ways your congregation might provide a gift to help the Children's Grief Center to get started. We suggest perhaps receiving a special offering for this program on Sunday, June 8 (International Children's Day). To publicize such an offering, you can find lots of helpful information on the Children's Grief Center website.

Another option is to share this need and the web site address with your members through your newsletter/bulletin, allowing them to choose to donate individually if they wish. (Feel free to use the logo and QR code.)

Donations can be given directly through the Children's Grief Center website: www.childrengriefglbr.org (A mailing address for checks is also found on the donate link.)

3. **Share our wish list** with your members:

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2N5VON1J91N39?ref=wl_share

This list contains many basic supplies we'll need to get started. Folks can donate these things by ordering from the wish list, and items will ship directly to the Children's Grief Center. The QR code will also bring people to the Amazon wish list.

In advance, thank you so much for your support! Already I'm amazed at what a community can do when we work together!

Kristi Kiel
Bereavement Coordinator / Volunteer Coordinator
Mid-Michigan Hospice
1321 S Linden Rd Suite A
Flint, MI 48532