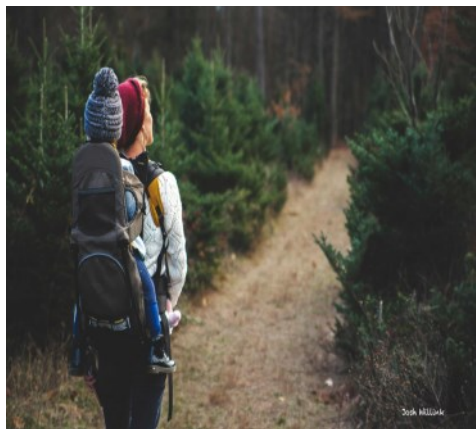


# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 5 Issue 11

MAY 11, 2025

## Identity (Lifeboat)



The election of Pope Leo XIV dominated world news this past week. It is the first time for a U.S.-born pope and more than a century since a Pope has chosen the name Leo. The choice of a name signals a particular bias for the incoming Pontiff. Leo I came to be known as Leo the Great, who convinced Attila the Hun to spare the Roman Empire from destruction in the 5th century.

Page 2

## Faith (Lifeboat)



As hard as I try not to worry, it's getting harder as prices rise and the rest of the world organizes in opposition to the trade war initiated by our current president. The lies attempting to cover up the incompetence and chaos are maddening. Worse of all, the cruelty with which efforts to deport large numbers of

persons with little or no evidence and no due process are sickening.

I've been told that worry indicates a lack of faith. Perhaps.

Page 13

EVERYONE HAVE A  
WONDERFUL WEEK!!



**DONATE**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Faith	1
Identity	1
Identity	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
Identity	13
Faith	14
Faith	15
Angel Closet	16
Kroger Reward	17

A spokesperson for the Vatican emphasized that Cardinal Robert Prevost's choice of Leo "is a clear reference to the modern social doctrine of the Church, which began with *Rerum Novarum*," or the "Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor," written by his predecessor, Leo XIII, in the 19th century. This focus on the dignity of work and the dignity of the worker laid the foundation for the Catholic Church's social teaching.

Pope Leo XIII encouraged the Church to become a voice for the poor and the working class, advocating for a just society during a time when labor was being exploited as fuel for the Industrial Revolution. Pope Leo XIV faces similar challenges as he attempts to fill the shoes of his predecessor, Pope Francis, at a time, in the U.S., when the economy is cratering and mass deportations are taking place without due process.

The new Pope quoted Jesus for his first words to the world, "Peace be with you." These were the first words Jesus said to His followers after His resurrection.

In our reading from our companion book for this week, we learn more about Benji. We've learned bits and pieces as he narrates the story of their days on the lifeboat through pen and paper. Benji never met his father, whom his mother met while attending a professional golf tournament in Scotland when she was 18.

Benjamin was raised by his mother. The two moved from Ireland to Boston, hoping to reconnect with Benji's father. But it didn't go as his mother hoped.

Benji didn't know his father's name. He only knew that his father was wealthy. His mother claimed he cared about Benji, but he knew that wasn't true. Her rejection was also his, and the damage would last a lifetime. He was unsure of who he was, but certain of the labels that seemed to fit him well. His identity was based on people who failed him.

Like many other single parents, Claire did her best to be both a mother and a father for Benji. But when she was severely injured at work, she needed Benji to take care of her.

After his mother's death, Benji felt lost. His mother's advice rang in his ears. "Find one person you can trust in your life," she told Benji multiple times. His mother had been that one person for Benji, and now she was gone, with no one else for Benji to share the love that he carried around like a weight he couldn't put down.

Until he met Annabelle, she was the person Benjamin Kierney would share everything with for the rest of his life.

The stranger seemed to know that Benji was burdened with struggles that he needed to share. "I don't need company," Benji said to the stranger. "I'm just thinking about things." "Your fate," the stranger asked, "Perhaps I can help."

Benji responded, laughing, "Why? If you were God, I would have given up on me long ago." "But you are not," the stranger replied, "and I never 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

MAY 12—18

May 12 Mon

May 13 Tue 9am-until gone Produce will be available each  
week, along with canned goods, until further notice

May 14 Wed

May 15 Thu

May 16 Fri

May 17 Sat

May 18 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 "Lifeboat"



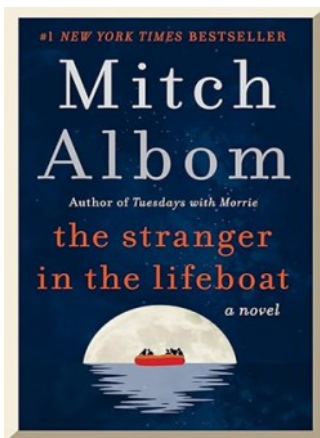
Page 4

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

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 — “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 did not 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”

Page 6



# “Feed Flint”

Page 7



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](https://flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate)**



LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

Whoever has seen me has seen God.

Joh n 14:6 -11

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

---

---

---

---

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Joh n 14:6 -11. What does this scripture mean for you? How does the identity of Jesus aff e ct your identity?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider titled Identity. What are your hopes for Pope Leo XIV? What are some attributes of God that you know b e cause of Jesus Christ?
3. How can your group memb ers help you b e more re c eptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God this week? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.





# 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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](mailto:southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com)

Jesus knew who He was, who He is, and who He will be. His identity is complete. He is more than an image, a reflection of God. Jesus is God in the flesh.

When Jesus had supper with His followers on the evening of His arrest, He wanted to assure them of their importance to God. Jesus also explained that since they know Him, they know God. "Whoever has seen me seen God." He said.

You also matter a great deal to God. And if you know Jesus Christ, you also know God. But it is not too late if you do not yet know Jesus. He has not given up on you and never will.

*Whoever has seen me has seen God.*

John 14: 6-11

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. 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 Mitch Albom. *The Stranger in the Lifeboat*. New York: HarperCollins, 2021. Christian Edwards, "What's in a name? The history of the papal name Leo." © CNN, May 8, 2025. [Link](#).



Marty LeFleur was the Chief Inspector on the island of Montserrat, where the lifeboat from the Galaxy washed up on shore. After his daughter, Lilly, died, he wanted nothing to do with God. She was only four years old when she drowned while her grandmother slept in her chair at the beach. Why didn't God wake her up in time to save his daughter?

Lilly's mother, Patrice, turned to her belief that their daughter was in heaven—a better place than here. On the other hand, Marty could not accept that a merciful God would let such a tragedy happen. For Marty, "The power of misery is its long shadow. It darkens everything within view." Our author suggests that Marty lost his faith while Patrice found hers.

Faith is a mystery. You cannot hold faith like you can hold someone's hand. You cannot taste faith the way you can a glass of water. Nor can you see faith with the naked eye.

The irony is that you must have faith to see faith.

In a New York Times opinion article, David Brooks writes, "The word 'faith' implies possession of something, whereas I

experience faith as a yearning for something beautiful that I can sense but not fully grasp. For me, faith is more about longing and thirsting than knowing and possessing."

In his gospel, Luke tells about a time when Jesus' followers asked Him to increase their faith. Rather than do as they requested, Jesus shared with them one of the most powerful mysteries of faith. "If you had faith as big as a mustard seed, He said, "you can tell a mulberry tree to pull itself up by the roots and plant itself in the sea, and it would do as you said."

The obvious interpretation here is that faith gives one great power in the physical world. Perhaps, but I'm thinking faith is even more powerful.

Meanwhile, water is scarce on the lifeboat. And with no rain in sight, the survivors' thirst is mounting. Nina pleads with the stranger to do something, "Don't you see how worried we are?"

"Worry is something you create," the stranger responds. "Why would we create worry?" Nina asked, puzzled. "To fill a void," replies the stranger. "A void of what?" asks Nina,

The stranger offers a one-word answer, "Faith."

Was the stranger, reminding Nina, that they must believe he is the Lord, as he said before, before he can save them? But is faith really about what we believe?

David Brooks writes, "When I was an agnostic, I thought faith was primarily about belief. Being religious was about having a settled conviction that God existed and knowing that the stories in the Bible were true."

Soon after, the stranger took a nap. As the stranger slept, rain clouds began to accumulate. It wasn't long before it started to rain. The survivors scrambled to collect as much water as possible. But Benji slipped and spilled most of what he collected just as the rain stopped.

"Keep it going?" Benji screamed. "So you believe I created that storm?" the stranger asked. Benji responds, "if you did, it wasn't enough."

Wasn't one raindrop enough to prove who I am?" the stranger replies.

So, what is the connection between worry and faith? If faith isn't about believing that God exists? Or, in the case of the Galaxy survivors, is the stranger the Lord?

Brooks describes coming to faith as "falling in love" rather than finding the answer to a difficult question. Faith seems to be a yearning that can't be satisfied by substitutes.

*If you had faith as big as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, "Pull yourself up by the roots and plant yourself in the seat," and it would obey you.*

Luke 17:5-6

It seems to me that Jesus wasn't talking about landscaping without machinery or labor. Instead, Jesus offered a comparison for us to glimpse the power of faith.

Brooks turns to Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's description of Moses receiving the Book of Law from God. He writes, Moses "received the Torah from Sinai not as a simple recipient

but as a creator of worlds, as a partner with the Almighty in the act of creation."

Our quest towards greater faith can be thought of as three movements, each taking us closer to God. Beginning with a desire to become a better person, we will eventually gain a better understanding of the world God created.

This improved version of ourselves then turns attention towards the world and the needs of others. For some, their mission is vast, and they help thousands, if not millions, of people. But most of us utilize the capacities and resources God makes available to us to help where and whom we can.

Finally, we experience a convergence whereby we pursue a greater and more intimate relationship with God, who is no longer a stranger but a trusted friend.

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.

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 Mitch Albom. *The Stranger in the Lifeboat*. New York: HarperCollins, 2021. David Brook. *"The Shock of Faith: It's Nothing Like I Thought It Would Be."* © New York Times, Dec. 19, 2024. Retrieved from: [link](#)

**THE SOUTH FLINT  
SOUP KITCHEN  
PRESENTS**

# **THE SFSK ANGEL CLOSET**

Shop for new and gently used  
clothing and household goods!

**OPEN THE 2<sup>ND</sup> AND 4<sup>TH</sup>  
WEDNESDAY OF EACH  
MONTH, FROM 11AM  
UNTIL 1PM.**

**CALL (810) 239-3427 FOR**

## **MORE INFORMATION**

We believe that everyone has a  
right to shop with dignity and  
have access to quality clothing  
regardless of their  
circumstances in life.

**South Flint Soup  
Kitchen  
3410 Fenton Road  
Flint, MI 48507**







**community  
rewards**



**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**



### **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

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

**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!**



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.*



LANSING MI...Bishop David A. Bard announces to the Michigan Conference the appointment of the Reverend John Kasper as district superintendent of the East Winds District, effective July 1, 2025. Rev. Kasper is currently serving as the district superintendent of the Central Bay District. He will follow the Rev. Dr. Margie Crawford, who has been a district superintendent since 2018. Rev. Dr. Crawford has been appointed as pastor of Northville United Methodist Church, effective July 1.

With Rev. Kasper serving as superintendent of two districts, Bishop Bard also announces the appointment of the Rev. John Hice as half-time assistant to the East Winds District Superintendent, effective July 1. Rev. Hice is being appointed as a retired elder. Immediately preceding his retirement, Rev. Hice served as district superintendent for the East Winds District. It is expected that this appointment will continue through the end of 2025.

Bishop Bard is making these appointments in light of likely changes to the Michigan Conference budget. Bishop Bard: "Even though finances play a significant role in these decisions, I am pleased that our current cabinet is willing to think creatively about superintending moving into the future. We will continue to think and imagine new ways of fulfilling our Disciplinary responsibilities while helping the churches of our conference explore unique ways to grow in vital mission and ministry. I am very grateful to Rev. Kasper and Rev. Hice for their willingness to assume new responsibilities."

Bishop Bard said: "Making a new appointment to the cabinet is always a joy, and always also means a loss. The Rev. Dr. Margie Crawford has served as a district superintendent faithfully and well. Her ministry in both the Western Waters and East Winds districts has been deeply appreciated. She has served with her keen mind, out of her deep faith and love for the church. She has cared deeply about the congregations and clergy under her care. Her cabinet colleagues and I will miss her."

The 2026 budget proposal, if approved, will provide funds for five district superintendents for the Michigan Conference. Bishop Bard will work with the cabinet and other conference leaders on a plan for superintending and districts to be proposed to the 2026 annual conference session. "We will want to think in new and creative ways about how our annual conference provides support for and supervision of our clergy and how we can encourage and provide resources for local congregations and ministries as they seek to be vibrant places for the ministry of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."