ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 5

Issue 14

SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

Angels (Prayer)



In the first story from our companion book this week, we learn that there is no doubt that Barbara Jean believes in angels and depends on them coming through. We also learned that one of her angels had the same name, and while Barbara Jean number two may be more skeptical about

angels, the kindness she showed to a stranger brightened her day.

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VEGGIE BOXES FROM ASBURY FARMS!





Formation (Hurricane)



According to Spaceplace, a website for kids maintained by NASA, tropical cyclones are the most violent storms on Earth. Tropical cyclones that form over the Atlantic Ocean or eastern Pacific Ocean are called "hurricanes."

The site describes hurricanes as giant engines that use warm, moist air as fuel. The warm, moist air over the ocean rises upward from near the surface, causing an area of lower air pressure below. This process continues to develop a full-fledged hurricane:

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The stranger was a middleaged woman with a bandaged arm who waved at her as she was leaving the hospital, "as if she were a New York City taxi cab driver. "Can you give me a ride home?" the woman asked.

Barbara Jean (number one) explained that her grandson brought her in after she hurt her arm. But the wait was too long for him to stay with her. So prayed for help. And soon, Barbara Jean number two stopped by.

The stranger also had a prescription she needed to drop off at the pharmacy. "Well, it just so happens I was heading there when I left the hospital," Barbara Jean replied, a bit shocked.

To make sure she didn't miss the lesson, on her way home, Barbara Jean drove by a church known for posting insightful quotes on their sign. "TODAY, YOU COULD BE SOMEONE'S ANGEL," the quote of the day proclaimed. "Amen," responded Barbara Jean, "Amen!"

The word "Angel" appears throughout scripture in numerous circumstances. Sometimes they are messengers, other times guides, and often, other times guides, and often, angels become superheroes, doing God's bidding the way Barbara Jean did that day.

Angels are messengers as Luke begins his story of the birth of Jesus. First, Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, finds out from an angel that his wife, Elizabeth, will give birth despite her advanced age. Mary is told that she will give birth, despite being young and single, to God's Son. After Jesus is born, shepherds find out about His birth from angels.

In scripture, there is often a close connection between hospitality and angels. This is not surprising given the high premium God puts on hospitality. Being kind to strangers is a mandate in God's kingdom. On the other hand, treating strangers with cruelty, regardless of the justification, offends God.

In other stores from our companion book, Maggie saw a bright light as she prayed next to her dying son. She saw a glimpse of heaven, she believed, as God showed her four angels coming to escort her son into heaven.

Phyllis was kept from getting on I-75 after praying God would protect her while driving in dense fog. She later realized that it must have been an angel who told her the interstate was closed, since the highway patrol confirmed that it was never closed that morning.

On the other hand, Candace wasn't sure she believed God existed, as she cried out, "God, if you are really there, I need your help. What am I going to do with my life now?" It had been a month since she left her job and had been unable to find another one. If God really existed, why was life so hard for her family?

One night, Candace couldn't sleep and kept checking the clock as the night felt like it lasted forever. Suddenly, a young boy appeared next to her alarm clock, dressed in a robe, with swirling, colorful lights glowing from inside him. The boy turned away and slowly disappeared into the distance.

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IN OUR PRAYERS

Virginia Bigger Sylvia Pittman Mirium Watson Fred Hans 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:

SEPTEMBER 15—21



Sept 15 Mon 6:00pm Leadership Team

Sept 16 Tue 9am-until gone Produce will be available each

week, along with canned goods, until further notice

11am-12N Angel Closet

Sept 17 Wed 11am-12N Angel Closet

Sept 18 Thu 11am-12N Angel Closet

Sept 19 Fri 11am-12N Angel Closet

Sept 20 Sat

Sept 21 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings

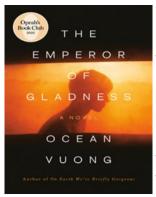
Contemporary Worship

(We are live on <u>Facebook</u> and our newly launched <u>YouTube channel</u>. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at (<u>FlintAsbury.org</u>.)

Upcoming Worship Series "Hurricane"



Book Club News



Miracles happen all the time. In our last two series, we explored both miracles and the prayers that often precede them.

In our new series, *Hurricane*, we put miracles aside for a while to focus on everyday reality, where miracles

Asbury Staff

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

In this series, *Hurricane*, we explore how God is our shelter and always ready to come to our aid in times of trouble. And troubles come that only God can get us through. However, God allows us to suffer the consequences of our collective decisions.

For a companion book, we're using Ocean Vuong's best-selling novel and Oprah Book Club selection, *The Emperor of Gladness*. One of the main characters, Grazina, is an elderly widow dealing with dementia who persuades Hai, a young adult, to become her caretaker. Over the following months, the unlikely pair forms a life-changing bond based on love, empathy, spiritual reflection, and heartbreak. Through this, their relationship changes Hai's view of himself, his family, and a community on the edge. *Page 5*

often come wrapped in the ordinary.

A New York Times best seller and Oprah Book Club selection, *The Emperor of Gladness* is a thought-provoking novel. The author is Ocean Vuong, known for his innovation, syntactic dexterity, and the ability to combine grit with grace through tenderness.

The setting is the postindustrial town of East Gladness, Connecticut,

Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony & Mirium
Cyndi
Anthony & Jim
Jonathon & Terrance
Yasheah & Mirium
Christine
Welcome Team
Worship Leader
Voship Leader
Voship Leader
Voship Ushers
Production Team
Nursery
Cafe

where the story begins as nineteen-year-old Hai stands on the edge of a bridge in steady rain, ready to jump. It was a late summer evening when Hai heard someone shout from across the river, urging him not to jump.

Grazina is an elderly widow dealing with dementia. She also appears to be out of options and persuades Hai to become her caretaker. Over the following months, the unlikely pair forms a life-changing bond based on empathy, spiritual reflection, and heartbreak. Through this, their relationship changes Hai's view of himself, his family, and a community on the edge.

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Upcoming Worship Series — "Hurricane"

Both hurricanes and dementia are destructive forces that form without regard to our hopes and dreams, interrupting life with a destructive force that we're unable to stop once they're underway. But do we play a role?

The debate about the existence of climate change ended years ago. No one can force us to believe it doesn't exist, but we all have the power to ignore the warnings. Despite our personal views, storms are becoming more severe and frequent, leading to a rising toll of lives and property. Among weather events, hurricanes are the most powerful, occurring more often and with greater strength.

The Department of Energy published a controversial report written by five authors who were hand-selected by Energy Secretary Chris Wright, a former executive in the fossil fuel industry. Not surprisingly, the report concluded that "carbon dioxide-induced warming appears to be less damaging economically than commonly believed." This group was subsequently disbanded in response to a lawsuit filed by the Environmental Defense Fund and the Union of Concerned Scientists, which alleged that the group had violated the Federal Advisory Committee Act by failing to disclose its formation and by deliberately presenting a one-sided argument.

Tracy J. Wholf, Senior Coordinating Producer of Climate and Environmental Coverage for CBS News, covered the science community's response, claiming the report did not fairly represent a scientific understanding of climate change. The report was reviewed by more than 85 climate experts, who noted that the report misrepresented scientific literature and cherry-picked data to support its conclusions.

The policies of our current administration appear to be suffering from memory loss brought on by a disease that causes them to choose to ignore factual data and instead fabricate their own reality.

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LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

This poor widow put in more than all the others. For the others offered their gifts from what they had to spare of their riches

Luke 21:1-4

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

- 1. Read Luke 21:1-4. Is this story familiar to you? Retell it in your own words and how you remember it. What does it mean for you?
- 2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider titled Formation. What is your experien ce with or knowledge of hurricanes? Dementia? Climate change? How are they related for you?
- 3. 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.



Ocean Vuong is also the author of the poetry collections *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* and *Time Is a Mother*. He wrote another New York Times bestselling novel, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*. And, he received the MacArthur Fellowship and the American Book Award. Vuong was born in Saigon, Vietnam.

In our companion book for our new worship series, Vuong creatively illustrates the profound ways in which love, labor, and loneliness form the bedrock of American life. At its heart is a brave epic about what it means to exist on the fringes of society and to reckon with the wounds that haunt our collective soul. It is a story of loss, hope, and how far we're willing to go for a second chance.

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

<u>Sunday's</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Chapters</u>
Sept 14	1 - 69	1 - 4
Sept 21	70 - 133	5 - 7
Sept 28	134 - 208	8 - 13
October 5	209 - 274	14 - 17
October 12	275 - 344	18 - 21
October 19	345 - 401	22 - 25

We'll have a few books available for purchase for \$15. New copies of the hardcover edition are available through Amazon for \$19.08, and used copies in good condition are in short supply, starting at \$17.47, 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

Ocean Vuong. The Emperor of Gladness. NY: Penguin Press, 2025.

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

Angels (Prayer) ... cont from pg 2 Page 12

Having trouble convincing herself it was only a dream, Candace searched the internet for answers and went through family photos to find a face resembling the boy in her dreams. While at the local library, where she had read everything she could find about spiritual encounters, Candace discovered a book on angels. "But he didn't have wings," she thought to herself.

However, she found a description of an angel that also radiated colored lights. But her angel didn't leave her with a message.

Weeks later, Candice discovered she was pregnant, despite not having been able to conceive without medical help. After speaking with her doctor about her pregnancy, she realized that the day coincided with a visit from an angel. Candice now knows that God not only exists but also watches over us.

What is your experience with angels? How broad is your definition of angel? Has God ever used you as one of His angels?

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our *website's* homepage. *Click here to watch*. This button takes you to our *YouTube channel*. You can find more information about us on our website

at FlintAsburyChurch.org.

This is a reminder that we publish a weekly newsletter called the Circuit Rider. You can request this publication by email 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 Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and 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.

Do not neglect hospitality to strangers for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Hebrews 13:2

Air from surrounding areas with higher air pressure pushes into the low-pressure area. Then that "new" air becomes warm and moist and rises, too. As the warm air continues to rise, the surrounding air swirls in to take its place. As the warmed, moist air rises and cools off, the water in the air forms clouds. The whole system of clouds and wind spins and grows, fed by the ocean's heat and water evaporating from the surface.

Mass destruction may appear chaotic while happening, but there is a lot of organizing that usually precedes catastrophes. Hurricanes organize power as they move over warm water, beginning as a "tropical disturbance," and slowly gaining velocity and destructive energy.

Nevertheless, hurricanes are a part of the Earth's ecosystem and, as such, deliver benefits along with the destruction caused. For example, hurricanes redistribute nutrients that support marine food chains. For humans, however, the cost far outweighs the benefit.

The organizers of the MAGA political party spent months planning and promoting Project 2025 as the movement shifted from disruption to an unfortunate reality. Millions see a benefit in their success. But most of us know that the cost greatly outweighs any gains.

For example, ignoring climate change while promoting an increase in fossil fuels and ending investments in alternative energy greatly benefits a handful of mostly wealthy individuals. But the cost to the vast majority of us is deadly.

In the first four chapters of our companion book, *The Emperor of Gladness*, we' re introduced to the town of East Gladness, sitting along the Connecticut River. Hai, who is 19, stands on the King Philip's Bridge, "the last way out of town," in the rain, preparing to jump. As Hai climbs over the railing, he sees a bedsheet floating in the water, mistaking it for a dead body.

Fortunately, Grazina, an immigrant from Lithuania, sees Hai on the bridge and convinces him to climb down and offers him shelter. She invites him to stay the night and convinces him to become her caregiver in exchange for room and board. Grazina has dementia and needs help managing her medications.

Dementia also takes time to organize before it reaches a destructive stage where it interferes with daily life. Hai quickly learns ways to help Grazina get through her dementia episodes, which are often quite vivid. Meanwhile, he grieves over the loss of Noah, and his own life is in flux. Grazina teaches Hai a ritual of stomping on dinner rolls as a symbolic act of victory over sorrow.

The town of East Gladness is portrayed as a place marked by loss, poverty, and hopelessness. However, Grazina's stubborn insistence offers an example of how survival often comes in rough, imperfect forms.

Life is forever a divine love story. God created humankind out of love and never abandons us when calamity strikes, whether or not we played a role in causing it. However, this doesn't mean that God doesn't have favorites.

Scripture consistently shows that God considers the poor, widows, orphans, and immigrants as people needing a little extra help—and expects those with the ability to provide it to do so.

This poor widow put in more than all the others. For the others offered their gifts from what they had to spare of their riches.

Luke 21:1-4

We begin our journey recognizing and identifying with the tension between remembering and letting go, always keeping in mind the importance of grace offered out of love, more so than familiarity. Grazina and Hai began their story together as strangers. Grazina didn't save Hai because she knew him and believed he was worth saving. She saved him because it was the right thing to do.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our website's homepage. Click here to watch. This button takes you to our YouTube channel. You can find more information about us on our website at FlintAsburyChurch.org.

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Pastor Tommy

Our companion book for this series: Ocean Vuong. The Emperor of Gladness. NY: Penguin Press, 2025...

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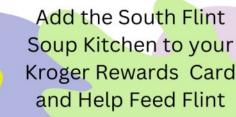
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The Alzheimer's Association website describes dementia as a general term for the loss of memory, language, problem-solving, and other thinking abilities, especially when these symptoms are severe enough to interfere with daily life. And dementia is usually the result of Alzheimer's. Dementia is not a single disease. Instead, dementia refers to a collection of symptoms representing a variety of diseases.

To diagnose Alzheimer's and other types of dementia, doctors review the patient's medical history, conduct a physical examination, collect data from laboratory tests, and look for changes In thinking, day-to-day function, and behavior associated with each type of dementia.

Notice the importance of both historical context and scientific data. Ignoring either one makes it difficult to come to a factual conclusion. The disease is likely to go undetected, but the symptoms will persist and likely worsen. The patient and their family suffer whether or not an accurate assessment is made.

What do hurricanes and dementia have in common? The first similarity that comes to mind is the destruction and turmoil caused by our climate, in the first case, and by disease in the second. We' re all familiar with the damage caused by hurricanes. More of us are also facing the heartbreak of dementia. The effects of both hurricanes and dementia are evaluated in stages. Hurricanes are rated by categories based on wind speeds, while dementia is measured in progressive stages. The higher the category or stage, the more severe the impact.

God is our shelter and is always ready to help in times of trouble. So we will not be afraid, even if he earth is shaken and mountains fall into the ocean depths, even if the violence shakes the seas; roar and rage, and the hills.

Psalm 46:1-3

Our national dementia goes undetected if we all choose to ignore history and scientific data. Moreover, in the case of our recent onslaught of national dementia, we're all facing a rapid increase in suffering. Fortunately, most are not fooled by fools, and many are sounding the alarm.

Similarly, the Word of God spoken throughout scripture sounds alarms that we all need to hear. God's alarms are timeless and thus beg for faithful interpretation by persons chosen to speak truth to power. However, since God's Word requires interpreters, there are always false prophets who convincingly deceive those for whom their interpretation may fit the listeners' preconditioned ideas.

Church bells remind me of the prophetic voices found in scripture and elsewhere. Speaking truth to power, prophets throughout history have spoken and sang warnings both to leaders and to the people they aspire to lead.

What do you feel when you hear Church bells?

Is it a sound that signals hope?

Like the lost seaman hearing the lighthouse horn,

it sings comfort to my soul.

But an alarm also sounded, time to change course before my journey ends.

What do you feel when you hear Church bells?

Do they stir your heart to sing?

The fog horn has sounded danger ahead,

For my path was well worn.

Maybe you're walking along a familiar but unsettling path. Maybe you've passionately supported our current president, hoping for a better tomorrow. Hopefully, you're beginning to focus more on facts than on lies.

So far, the U.S. remains a democracy, offering hope that new leaders will be elected. But we're going through a very dark time. Our leaders have failed us, but instead of listening to the warnings, they continue to organize around principles that fail to care for God's beloved. A hurricane is forming, and the destruction is already underway.

Here is the outline of our series:

<u>Episode</u> One	<u>Sundays</u> Sept 14	<u>Title</u> Formation
Two	Sept 21	Confidence
Three	Sept 28	Freedom
Four	October 5	History
Five	October 12	Truth
Six	October 19	Agency

Please join us each Sunday at 10:30 a.m. We share our weekly episodes on <u>Facebook</u> and our <u>YouTube channel</u>, 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 <u>website</u>, <u>FlintAsburyChurch.org</u>.

Pastor Tommy

Ocean Vuong. The Emperor of Gladness. NY: Penguin Press, 2025.

"How Do Hurricanes Form?." © Spaceplace, 2025. Retrieved from link

Tracy J. Wholf. "More than 85 climate experts say Energy Department report on greenhouse gases is 'full of errors'," © CBS News, September 2, 2025. Retrieved from Link

Rev Dr Tommy McDoniel. "A Certain Road." © Tommy McDoniel, June 18, 2006.