

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 5 Issue 12

OCTOBER 12, 2025

History (Hurricane)



In this week's chapters from our companion book, BJ, the manager of HomeMarket, has a breakthrough in her wrestling career. We learn about BJ's ambition to transcend her daily life, and how the world often responds to such efforts when her performance falls flat and she gets booed by the crowd.

Meanwhile, Hai reflects on how things might have turned out as he considers the choices that brought him to this point, blending the past and the present. The author highlights a contrast between BJ's public performance and Hai's internal reflections as both attempt to reshape their lives or craft their own stories.

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Truth (Hurricane)



On October 1, the start of a new fiscal year, the U.S. government was forced to cease all non-essential operations after Congress was unable to agree on funding. Both sides of the political aisle blame the other for the shutdown. But this is a gross over simplification that obscures

the truth.

Truth is the seed of peace.

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ASBURY FARMS!



Located in Flint's Eastside, Asbury Farms is one of the largest urban farms in the U.S, with 18 hoop houses and 12 outdoor garden beds spread across 5 campuses. All within walking distance to Asbury Church.

DONATE

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Vuong takes us on a flashback to Hai's childhood with Sony. The scene opens at a McDonald's in Virginia, when we discover that Sony prefers things to be "real" and dislikes some of Hai's imaginative stories. But when the families visit the Stonewall Jackson Museum, they discover that the word "slaves" is avoided. Instead, saying "servants," drawing attention to historical erasure and how narratives are shaped or muted.

The Museum's omission of the word "slaves" is a subtle reminder that history, as presented, is often incomplete and whitewashed. This idea applies to Hai's family history. Some stories are told, and some are not. Even Grazina's memories of Lithuania and World War II stand in contrast to how American history is presented. Both serve as a reminder that how institutions handle the stories of our shared past and identity have come under recent scrutiny.

But regardless of whether the stories we craft match reality or the chances we take pay off, life goes on, and history is made and recorded in various ways. Some moments can be rightfully remembered as benefiting the community both then and in the future. Many, however, leave a stain.

And stains bleed and spread beyond their original spot, seeping into surrounding areas and making the stained area larger and more challenging to clean. And a stain bleeds through history. Its effects spread and remain visible long after its making.

In many ways, the most horrible stains of all are left when humankind finds ways to eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion. Scripture wrestles with these challenges to God's plan for abundance for all of creation.

The terms "clean" and "unclean" are categories of belonging and exclusion illuminated in the Laws of Moses. For example, only foods considered clean were eaten. However, the term "clean" was also used to label who could enter the temple, who could worship, and who was considered acceptable. Over time, these categories become tools of control by changing the narrative and obscuring the truth of God's intentions.

Instead of helping people follow God faithfully, the designations provided a way to exclude some individuals, while declaring others "pure."

However, God's insistence on inclusion challenges us to tell the truth about history. Even though diversity reflects the true nature

of God's intent for creation, humankind is prone to changing the narrative told by history, covering the stains of past injustices, and setting us up to return and repeat practices that God sees as atrocities.

Clean refers to who is an ally, a neighbor, and worthy to sit in the pew next to us. The setup offered in the Old Testament, both in the Laws of Moses and illustrated in the stories that follow, undergirds the teachings of Jesus on the criticality of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and is reinforced in the letters of Paul and others.

The ideal of substituting "servant" for "slave" is, in a sense, declaring, "The word slave is unclean, so let's make it presentable." But in doing so, the narrative changes and tries to cover up the truth about the stain left from oppression. To deny or alter language about injustice is to rob the oppressed of voice.

Jesus confronted this kind of sanitizing head-on. He touched lepers, spoke to the "unclean," and even declared, "It is not what goes into a person that makes them unclean, but what comes out of their heart" (Mark 7:15).



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: OCTOBER 13 – 19



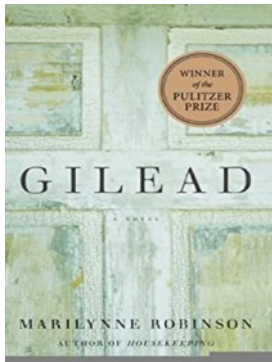
Oct 13	Mon	(We apologize for the convenience but Angel Closet at SFSK is closed at the present time. I will post when we reopen it back up.)	
Oct 14	Tue	9am-until gone	Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice
		11:00am-5pm	Taco Tuesday in the Fellowship Hall (benefit fundraiser, see page 19)
Oct 15	Wed		
Oct 16	Thu		
Oct 17	Fri		
Oct 18	Sat		
Oct 19	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 "Woke"



Book Club News



The companion book for our next series, "Jesus was woke," was written by Marilynne Robinson. She won a Pulitzer

Prize for her bestselling novel, *Gilead*, which also became a selec-

A movement is underway to change both the meaning and original intent of the word "woke." The word first appeared in African American communities in the 1940s. And through the 1960s, to "stay woke" meant to be aware of racial injustice and the need to be alert to systemic racism or hidden prejudice.

The term was revived through the Black Lives Matter movement and came to describe people who are conscious of social inequalities. Not only racism, but also sexism, homophobia, and other injustices. Being "woke" meant being informed and active in seeking fairness.

The word was adopted and often mocked by critics who saw "wokeness" as excessive political correctness, moral posturing, or ideological conformity. For some, "woke" became shorthand for progressive activism that had gone too far. The administration now labels any language or policy that encourages diversity, equity, and inclusion as "woke."

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tion for Oprah's Book Club.

Robinson has honorary degrees from Brown University, the University of the South, Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Amherst, Skidmore, and Oxford University. She was also elected a fellow of Mansfield College, Oxford University.

Gilead takes the form of a long letter written by Reverend John Ames, a

76-year-old Congregationalist minister, to his seven-year-old son. Ames is dying of heart disease, and he wants to leave behind a written record of his life, faith, struggles, and hopes for the boy who will grow up without him.

Through these letters, Ames tells the story of three generations of preachers in his family. His fiery abolitionist grandfather, his pacifist father, and himself. He recalls the moral and spiritual tensions that shaped their lives, particularly around questions of justice, forgiveness, and grace.

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Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Kevin Croom	Executive Director/CDC
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Kim Sims	Finance Director
Terry Kinze	Ops Manager/CDC
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
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Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
	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 — “Woke”

So today, “woke” is a contested word, which still means being aware and caring about justice for all of us. But to the radical right, “woke” means being overly sensitive or performative about social issues.

Beginning on the last Sunday in October, we’ll start a new series, titled “Jesus Was Woke.” This 5-Week spiritual journey was inspired by the Pulitzer Prize–winning novel, *Gilead*, by Marilynne Robinson. Together, we’ll explore what it truly means to be awake—to live with eyes open to the wonder, memory, grace, belonging, and love that form the heart of the gospel.

To help guide us, we’ll be reading Marilynne Robinson’s novel as background. You can find a reading schedule in the Book Club article.

The story unfolds as the aging Rev. John Ames writes a letter to his young son, reflecting on his long life, his faith, and the light of grace that shines even through sorrow. It’s a quiet, deeply spiritual novel—filled with beauty, forgiveness, and the struggle to love well in a complicated world.

*What are human beings,
that you think of them,
mere mortals, that you care
for them? Psalm 8*

Psalm 8 reminds us that God created us, cares for us, and put us in charge of caring for our planet.

Each week, our worship, scripture readings, and reflections will connect with a section of the novel. A companion devotional guide will be available to help you follow along, offering weekly scripture, insights from *Gilead*, and reflection questions for personal or group use.

This series invites you to slow down, listen deeply, and rediscover what it means to live awake—to notice the sacred in the ordinary, to remember how God has carried us, to extend grace where it’s hardest, to belong with humility, and to love as Jesus loved.

Whether you read along with the novel or simply join us in worship each week, this is a season to open our hearts and wake up to the living presence of God among us.

Here is the outline of our series:

<u>Episode</u>	<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Theme & Title</u>
One	Oct 26	Wonder - Awake to God’s presence
Two	Nov 2	Memory - Awake to our stories
Three	Nov 9	Grace - Awake to mercy
Four	Nov 16	Belonging - Awake to community
Five	Nov 23	Love - Awake to the heart of Jesus

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

Marilynne Robinson. *Gilead*. NY: Picador, 2004.

“Feed Flint”

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“Feed Flint”

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A meal goes a long way for a senior living alone, a family struggling to make ends meet, or a child fearful of empty shelves at home. But for the residents of Flint who carry the effects of lead-tainted water, nutrition is critical. Feed Flint provides locally grown, chemical-free, fresh produce to residents living in and around Flint. And we're hoping that you can help us provide 10,000 meals this summer.

Feed Flint includes takeout meals, produce boxes with recipes, and home deliveries as part of our work to guide and support families in moving to sustainable abundance. The reality is that Michigan's food insecurity levels got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this summer's recovery is leaving behind those at the most risk of having to miss meals.

Flint families continue to struggle with the ongoing effects of the water crisis.

We're bringing together the resources of the Asbury Community Development Corporation. This includes Asbury Farms, the South Flint Soup Kitchen, the Asbury Community Help Center, multiple food pantries, and our Sizzling Culture Mobile Food Trailer. Our plan is to care for our neighbors when they need it most. We accept all people as they are, and our doors are always open to anyone.

Asbury Farms provides locally grown produce used to create fabulous and nutritious meals. Our seed-to-table approach is community-based. This not only helps families make it through emergencies and crises. We help move families towards sustainable abundance.

Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated abundance.

Our work is also about food and justice. Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into active citizens. And all residents can enjoy safety, good health, and a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives. This summer, help us address food insecurity and strengthen Flint's budding local food system by supporting the Feed Flint campaign. Thank you for taking the time to see what we're doing and considering how you can help.

**Donate to our Feed Flint Campaign by visiting:
flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate**

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

Speak the truth to one another. In the courts, give real justice, the kind that brings peace. Do not plan ways of harming one another. Do not give false testimony under oath.

Zechariah 8:16–17

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Zechariah 8:16-17. What does it mean to you to know that you can trust a person to tell you the truth? What struggles do you have when it comes to being truthful?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider titled Truth. What does it mean in the context of today's divisive political turmoil to tell the truth? What are some ways that you seek out the truth about what's really going on?
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.



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

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

<u>Sunday's</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Themes</u>
Sept 14	1 - 60	Light
Sept 21	61 - 120	Memory
Sept 28	121 - 180	Grace
October 5	181 - 230	Belonging
October 12	231 - 247	Love

I invite you to take your *Gilead* experience deeper with our weekly devotional guide. Each week pairs passages from the novel with Scripture, reflection questions, and prayer prompts. Our goal is to help you notice the overlooked, reflect on God's presence, and live fully awake in your daily life. The guide can be used for personal study or small-group discussion.

We'll have a few used books available for purchase for \$6 or new for \$10. Additional new copies of the paperback edition are available through Amazon for \$10.35, and used copies in good condition start at \$8.15. This book may also be available at the local library. Note that the weekly reading guide uses a paperback edition with no chapter divisions and 147 pages.

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

Marilynne Robinson. *Gilead*. NY: Picador, 2004.

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

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are about breaking down false boundaries of what is considered clean and unclean, and creating space for those who have been excluded. But when DEI is reduced to superficial wordplay, it turns into a new "purity code" that focuses more on managing discomfort than facing reality.

Our current president signed an Executive Order in March aimed at "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History." It orders Smithsonian museums, educational/research centers, and the National Zoo to eliminate what the administration chooses to label as "divisive, race-centered ideology."

The order was followed by a directive calling for a "comprehensive internal review" of certain museums, potentially revising how history is told in Smithsonian exhibits to align with a narrative that replaces "divisive or ideologically driven language with unifying, historically accurate, and constructive descriptions."

While there is a policy framework and a directive to review all public-facing materials and revise language considered "divisive or ideologically driven," it does not specify which words must be changed. However, it is possible that replacing "servant"

with "slave" could be targeted if seen as less "divisive" or more "constructive." The directive aims for completion within 120 days from the date of the letter, so some changes may already be in progress.

Kennedy signed Executive Order 10925, which required government contractors to "take affirmative action" to ensure equal employment opportunities.

DEI policies aimed to highlight marginalized voices, ensure representation, and prevent injustice. However, the current administration's rhetoric claims that inclusion and equity are distractions and liabilities.

This past week, hundreds of generals and admirals were summoned at short notice to a meeting of the U.S. military's top leaders, where they listened in silence to highly partisan speeches from our current president and defense secretary. Each criticized their predecessors harshly, promoted their political objectives, and railed against diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, calling them part of "decades of decay."

Some observers see this meeting not just as a personnel or morale event, but as a symbolic pivot—a way to reshape institutional culture and memory. Instead of focusing on national

security and alliances, they were bombarded with new ideas of what is clean and what is unclean. That is, who belongs in the circle of trust, who is excluded, who is "ally," and who is "enemy."

Just as the museum replaced "slave" with "servant," this meeting signals an attempt to reframe institutional identity and history. By calling DEI policies destructive or decay-makers, it positions them as part of a "wrong narrative" that must be corrected. The new narrative deems them "unclean."

Just as illustrated in scripture, the temptation is to define purity (clean) by power, by strength, or by image. But the gospel insists that true cleanness is found in truth, justice, and mercy.

When a powerful institution begins to suppress or delegitimize specific histories or policies (e.g. casting DEI as a "virus"), there's a risk of erasure—of displacing collective memory about discrimination, marginalization, or structural inequality.

Democratic representatives point to rising healthcare costs as the reason they're unwilling to support the current administration's proposed budget, which includes over \$1.2 trillion in cuts to federal spending, primarily from Medicaid and nutrition funding programs. It also introduces work requirements for Medicaid recipients, which could result in the loss of coverage for millions. These measures disproportionately impact rural hospitals, which serve populations with higher rates of chronic illness and limited access to alternative healthcare options.

The damage done by the most recent budget approval is already being felt. For example, Glenn Medical Center, the only hospital in rural Glenn County, California, closed on September 30, marking the end of 75 years of service to the community.

According to an article in The Guardian by Dani Anguian, the closure was due to the loss of its critical access hospital designation by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), a decision based on a technicality regarding the distance to the nearest hospital. This has left the county's 28,000 residents without essential emergency and ongoing care, sparking outrage and concern among the community.

Experts warn that if Democrats give in to the massive cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, this will have devastating effects on hundreds of rural hospitals, which rely more on federal funding from the US's most extensive public health insurance programs.

This standoff underscores the profound impact that decisions, whether made by individuals or institutions, can have on the well-being of others. It serves as a stark reminder of the importance of truth and transparency in all aspects of life, especially when it concerns matters of health and safety.

The truth is starting to come out about an incident in Chicago, where the Reverend David Black, of the First Presbyterian Church of Chicago, was shot in the head with pepper balls while praying in front of an ICE facility. The pastor spoke to CNN's Erin Burnett in his first television interview since the incident happened.

Video footage captured by a bystander shows masked ICE agents on the rooftop of the facility firing pepper balls at the protesters below. Black, who was wearing his clerical collar and had his arms outstretched in prayer, was struck directly on the head. The impact caused him to fall to his knees. After he was hit, agents continued to

fire, hitting him multiple times in the torso, arms, and legs. He claimed he could hear the agents laughing.

In response to a lawsuit alleging that federal agents illegally suppressed First Amendment rights with excessive force, a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order against the federal government. This order restricts the use of force and crowd-control measures against protesters and journalists at the Broadview facility.

The claim that climate change is a hoax is the most devastating of the lies coming out of Washington. Unfortunately, the truth behind policies is nearly impossible to uncover. And most journalists seem to be afraid to call out lies or report news that may be seen as contradicting the administration's rhetoric.

We live in a world where it's tempting to hold on to illusions, to stories we tell ourselves and others to make life feel safer or happier. In this week's reading from our companion book, Hai faces the consequences of living in such a world. Grazina's health is failing, and Hai must confront not only her reality but the lies he has told—both to her and to himself.

Hai's struggles reflect the personal consequences of avoiding the truth. Just as Hai faces the repercussions of his past actions, communities and nations also bear the weight of decisions made without complete honesty or consideration.

The closure of rural hospitals is a tangible example of how neglecting the truth can lead to real harm. How often do we cling to comforting stories, delusions, or half-truths to avoid facing hard realities? And what happens when the truth finally confronts us?

During the time of the Prophet Zechariah, the people of Israel had returned from exile in Babylon. The temple was in ruins, Jerusalem was a shadow of its former self, and the community was fragile and divided. Through the prophet Zechariah, God called them not just to rebuild their city but to rebuild their integrity.

These verses come from a moment of hope and warning. God promises restoration—prosperity, peace, and the return of joy—but ties that promise to a moral condition: you must live truthfully with one another.

God's people could not rebuild their nation with stones alone. They had to rebuild trust. God knows that truth is the seed of peace.

Therefore, this week we're calling ourselves out to confront the truths in our own lives, communities, and our nation. By embracing honesty and transparency, we can slow down the erosion of trust and ensure that we do not inadvertently cause harm to those God calls us to serve and protect.

Let this story inspire us to reflect on our own actions and the truths we may be avoiding, and to commit to living with integrity and compassion. Remember that truth is the seed of peace.

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

This is a reminder that we publish a weekly newsletter called the Circuit Rider. You can request this publication by email by sending a request to [FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com,](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 companion book for this series is Ocean Vuong. *The Emperor of Gladness*. NY: Penguin Press, 2025.

Dani Anguiano. "Rural US town outraged as only hospital forced to shut: 'I would have died without it'." © The Guardian, October 7, 2025. Retrieved from: [Link](#)

Erin Burnett. "Chicao Pastor Shot by ICE speaks to CNN." © CNN, October 10, 2025. Retrieved from: [Link](#)

They bandaged the wounds of my people as if they were not very deep—are they ashamed of their hateful actions? They feel no shame at all. They do not even know how to blush.

Jeremiah 6:13:15

We can try to soften a hard truth. "Servant" sounds gentler, less offensive, and easier to read aloud to children on a school trip. But a terrible truth is covered by wrapping a wound with a polite bandage. The pain of slavery, the chains, the loss of dignity, and the forced labor were swept under the rug with a safer word.

Scripture confronts enslavement. In Exodus, God liberates Israel from Pharaoh's oppressive rule. And failing to name slavery honestly in history is a refusal to honor God's liberating work. God urges people to remember. "Do not forget that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out" (Deuteronomy 5:15). Forgetting distorts both justice and identity.

The Prophet Jeremiah said of his generation, "They bandage the wounds of my people as if they were not very deep... Are they ashamed of their hateful actions? They feel no shame at all. They do not even know how to blush." (Jeremiah 6:14). And Jesus tells us plainly in John 8:32, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

God never calls us to rewrite our past. He calls us to remember it truthfully. This point is

intentionally reinforced in the ritual we call Communion. On the night of His arrest, Jesus told His followers, "As often as you do this, remember Me!" So it is our practice to list examples of God's grace.

The good news is that while we cannot make the world clean by covering its stains, God makes the world clean by naming them, bearing them, and washing them in the blood of Christ. Because of what Christ has done, we can face history with honesty, face each other with humility, and face the future with hope.

They bandage the wounds of my people as if they were not very deep. Are they ashamed of their hateful actions? They feel no shame at all. They do not even know how to blush.

Jeremiah 6:13-15

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

Janay Kingsberry and Kelsey Ables. "Trump says Smithsonian is too focused on slavery. Scholars see sanitizing." © Washington Post, August 21, 2025. Retrieved from: [Link](#)

Tara Copp, Dan Lamothe, Alex Horton, Ellen Nakashima and Noah Robertson. "Hegseth orders rare, urgent meeting of hundreds of generals, admirals." © Washington Post, September 25, 2025.. Retrieved from: [link](#)

ASBURY FARMS PRESENTS



Asbury Farms invites you every Friday to pick cherry tomatoes, a pay what you can farm stand, and urban farming planting technique demonstration.

Come join us between 7am-1pm every Friday at 1613 Jane Ave!



Marsha Stevens-Pino is widely recognized as the “mother of contemporary Christian music.” She penned the deeply beloved song “For Those Tears I Died (Come to the Water)” at age 16, and her influence helped shape the early Jesus Movement and contemporary Christian music scene.

After publicly coming out as a lesbian in 1981, she faced severe rejection: her songs were removed from hymnals, performances were canceled, and she was largely ostracized by the mainstream Christian music industry. In response, Marsha founded BALM Ministries (Born Again Lesbian Music), creating a vital artistic and spiritual home for LGBTQ+ Christians. Justin Ryan—a queer Christian singer-songwriter originally from Paducah, KY met Marsha through the Metropolitan Community Church after a period of personal crisis and disenfranchisement from traditional gospel circles. Encouraged by Marsha, Justin moved to Nashville to record with her, which led to studio work and background singing for renowned country artists. In 2024–2025, BALM recognized Justin’s contributions by appointing him to their Board of Directors. In this leadership role, Justin helps steer outreach efforts, shares his training experience, and continues producing his popular Southern Gospel Sissy Series on Facebook and YouTube.

PRESENTS

BALM MINISTRIES

Marsha Stevens-Pino & Justin Ryan

In Concert



Saturday, October 25 • Potluck 4pm • Concert 5pm

Sunday, October 26 • 10:30am Worship

Marsha Stevens-Pino will provide special music

Court Street United Methodist Church

225WestCourtStreet, Flint, MI48502

www.courtstreetflint.org • 810-235-4651



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African Drum and Dance Parent Association Presents

TACO TUESDAY

Every Tuesday in October
October 7, October 14, October 21
and October 28
11:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Asbury United Methodist Church
1653 Davison Road, Flint, MI 48506



Call Baba Collins at 810-394-3880
or Mama Mel at 810-394-6521

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 the earth is
shaken and mountains fall in-
to the ocean depths, even if
the violence shakes the seas;
roar and rage, and the hills.*

Psalms 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>	<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Title</u>
One	Sept 14	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 [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

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 McDaniel. "A Certain Road." © Tommy McDaniel, June 18, 2006.

