

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 5 Issue 9

NOVEMBER 9, 2025

Memory (Jesus was woke)



Cyndi and I are building a log home. As each log was placed during the first stage, I picture an old story coming to life through the grain—an ancient, steady, and deeply human tale. There's a sense of nostalgia that makes you imagine pioneers carving out a life in the wilderness, gathered around a fire while snow falls softly outside.

It's a beautiful picture. But as I learned more about the origins of log homes, I've realized that what we call nostalgia often smooths over the rough edges of memory.

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Grace (Jesus was woke)



We're living in a season of deep weariness and division. So many of us feel exhausted by the noise of accusation—the endless cycle of blame and counter-blame that fills our headlines, our conversations, even our inner thoughts. Every day, we're told who is to blame for our problems, who cannot be trusted, and who deserves our anger. It becomes

easy, almost natural, to absorb those messages until judgment feels like truth.

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November 11th



DONATE

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The first log homes were not built for charm. They were born out of necessity — crafted by settlers who had more courage than comfort, more endurance than luxury. In the 1600s, Swedish and Finnish immigrants brought this building tradition to North America, using what the land gave them: timber, tools, and time. The thick logs kept out the cold and stood against the wind, a simple technology of survival. But these homes also trapped smoke, leaked heat, and demanded endless maintenance. Life in them was rough, unpredictable, and often lonely.

Nostalgia remembers the hearth; memory recalls the hardship.

And yet, there's something redemptive about remembering both the hearth and the hardship. Today's log homes are far different from those early structures — not because we've abandoned the past, but because we've learned from it. Modern builders have kept the wisdom of the old ways — the strength, sustainability, and simplicity — while applying what time and experience have taught us: better materials, stronger seals, safer designs. That's what true memory does. It preserves what matters and redeems what was broken. It honors the past not by romanticizing it, but by letting it teach us how to live more faithfully in the present.

On the other hand, there's a strange comfort in forgetting. Forgetting helps us move past what hurts, gloss over what shames us, and escape what demands change. But the comfort is shallow and temporary. When we forget our history, our pain, and our promises, we lose something sacred. We lose awareness. We lose compassion. We lose the thread that ties us to one another and to God's redemptive work.

Nostalgia doesn't respect memory, but it still draws us in, similar to forgetting but potentially more damaging. Nostalgia creates a false story that only shows the good parts of the past, hiding the failures—though not always consciously.

We live in a culture of amnesia. Our news cycles are shorter than ever. Yesterday's outrage vanishes by morning. And we live in an age where nostalgia has become a sales tactic, a political slogan, and a weapon. An alluring story we tell ourselves about a past that feels safer, cleaner, simpler.

But nostalgia, unlike true memory, is not faithful to truth. It is selective, cosmetic, and seductive. It turns history into a lullaby that keeps us asleep. Memory, by contrast, keeps us awake. It demands honesty. It holds both the beauty and the pain of what was so that we can be alert to what is—and faithful to what can be.

Political scholar Tinatin Japaridze, writing for the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, compares and contrasts the current leaders of the U.S. and Russia, two of the most powerful global figures, and how they use nostalgia to gain support. She warns that instead of presenting a realistic, hopeful future, "the powerful narratives crafted by political 'nostalgists' can hinder society's ability to envision a future built on present realities."

Our current administration is recycling nostalgia, labeling it as "make America great again," and rewriting parts of our shared history that remind us why we should steer clear of the direction they want to take us. The very idea behind the movement taps into a longing for a supposed era of American "greatness" in the "good old days," sparking pride and desire while hiding realities such as racial injustice, inequality, and environmental consciousness.

Japaridze goes on to note that "the belief that the past was superior to the present and that the only path forward is to revert to earlier times poses a tangible risk of national decline."

Her words expose more than political rhetoric; they diagnose a spiritual illness. When people lose the courage to face the present, they take refuge in a past that never was. Nostalgia becomes a

IN OUR PRAYERS

Virginia Bigger
 Sylvia Pittman
 Mirium Watson
 Brian DuFour

Fred Hahns
 Jonathon Misner
 Terrance Williams
 Richard Oram

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
 HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux Norma Buzzard
 Nancy Elston

COMING UP THIS WEEK: NOVEMBER 10—16

Nov 10 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.)

Nov 11 Tue **VETERANS DAY**

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

12Noon-6pm Taco Tuesday at Flint Asbury UMC
 (see flyer on pg. 20)

Nov 12 Wed

Nov 13 Thu 1:00pm United Women in Faith

Nov 14 Fri

Nov 15 Sat

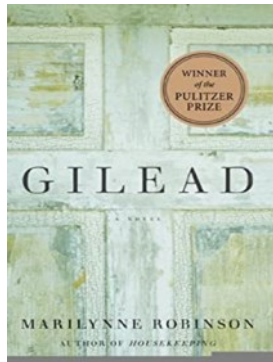
Nov 16 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings
 Contemporary Worship

(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 selection for Oprah's Book Club.

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	South Flint Soup Kitchen

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." Page 5

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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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](http://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:

We had to celebrate and be happy, because your brother was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.

Luke 15:11-32

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Luke 15:11-32 and the article in this week's Circuit Rider titled Memory. When judgment rises this week, remember the father running to his son. When resentment stirs, recall Ames struggling to bless the man he distrusted. When you feel divided from others, remember that Christ loved you while you were still a work in progress.
2. Take inventory of your own heart: Who have you quietly written off? Which group of people have you learned to fear, mock, or ignore? Where have you mistaken comfort for righteousness? Find a story that challenges your bias. Read it. Hear it. Let it unsettle you. That discomfort is grace doing its work.
3. When someone uses language that dehumanizes—whether it's about immigrants, political rivals, or entire communities—don't let silence agree. Challenge the lie, but do it with compassion intact. Because once we lose compassion, we mirror the very cruelty we oppose.
4. 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.



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- Scan QR Code

Donate Now



More Information :



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

<u>Sunday's</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Themes</u>
October 26	1 - 60	Light
November 2	61 - 120	Memory
November 9	121 - 180	Grace
November 16	181 - 230	Belonging
November 23	231 - 247	Love

A word of caution on the above schedule. There have been several publications of this book with slightly different pagination, and therefore a different total number of pages. Use the above as a guide and stop on an obvious division near the ending page.

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

kind of idolatry—an emotional Egypt we keep wandering back toward. We then find ourselves retreating to the comforting, yet often illusory, embrace of a past that never truly existed and the darkness of an uncertain future.

Families fracture under the weight of unspoken stories. Communities forget the shoulders they stand on. Even churches can be tempted to skip over the more difficult parts of our story, including the wounds, the injustices, and the failures of courage. Forgetting feels easier than facing the discomfort of memory. But when we forget, we fall asleep to the truth of who we are.

Her warning is prophetic, and it echoes one of Scripture's oldest commands: "Remember the long way that the Lord your God has led you..." (Deuteronomy 8:2). In this ancient directive, remembering is not a sentimental exercise—it is a divine mandate. Don't just remember the victories, but also remember the hunger, the mistakes, the moments when faith nearly failed. God wanted His people to remember the whole journey — because in their remembering, they would stay humble, grateful, and faithful

As the Israelites faced the harsh realities of their escape from captivity, nostalgia kept them chained to Egypt. But God urged them to remember that they were once slaves, freed by

God's grace and led through the hardships to a promised land. But nostalgia crept in even then. They longed for Egypt — not the chains, not the cruelty, but the taste of meat and onions by the fire. They remembered comfort and forgot captivity. They wanted to go back, not forward. Nostalgia made them forget who they were and whose they were.

To remember is to resist the falsehood of nostalgia. To remember is to honor both the pain and the promise that shape us. Forgetting, by contrast, is how injustice repeats itself, how fear finds its footing again.

In this week's pages from our companion book, *Gilead*, Reverend Ames wrestles with his family's divided legacy. A grandfather who carried a gun for abolition and a father who renounced violence altogether. Between them stands Ames, trying to reconcile zeal and peace, justice and grace. His story mirrors ours: the tension between what we inherit and what we choose.

Each of us carries a story we would rather not remember — personal, familial, or cultural. Yet memory, when held in the light of God's mercy, becomes sacred ground for transformation.

Memory is a part being woke and a biblical mandate. The command to remember runs like a golden thread through the story of God's people. Biblical

remembrance is never passive. It's not nostalgia—it's an act of faith. To remember is to bring God's past faithfulness into the present moment. It's how the people of God stay rooted when everything else feels transient and loud.

If Jesus were to speak directly to our age of distraction, perhaps he would say: "Stay awake to the story that made you. Stay awake to the pain you'd rather not see. Stay awake to the love that refuses to die." That's what remembrance looks like in a restless world—it's holy attentiveness.

Imagine what would happen if we truly practiced remembrance as a community of faith. If we remembered the courage of those who fought for freedom and justice, we might find new strength to confront racism and poverty today. If we remembered our own seasons of doubt, we might offer gentler grace to those still searching. If we remembered what it felt like to be forgiven, we might become less judgmental and more merciful.

Memory transforms us because it roots us in truth — and truth, as Jesus said, sets us free. When a people forget their story, they lose their soul. But when we remember in the light of Christ, our stories become part of God's ongoing redemption.

We also live in an age where judgment is our native language. Newsfeeds and comment sections overflow with quick condemnation; relationships fracture over differences of opinion; compassion is treated as weakness. Every week brings new stories that remind us how polarized we've become—how easily we sort the world into "us" and "them," and how quickly we forget that every person carries a story we have not heard.

Every era finds new ways to draw lines between "us" and "them." Today, those lines are being drawn again—only thicker, louder, and crueler. We hear talk that equates difference with danger, and we're told that empathy is weakness. Every time a leader or commentator calls an immigrant a criminal, or labels those who disagree as radicals, we are invited to make the same ancient mistake: to see another human being as something less than human.

And it is no accident that this wound is so visible in our public life. The temptation to divide the world into "good" and "bad," "us" and "them," has become one of our defining cultural habits. Whether it's politics, race, religion, or nationality, the categories may differ, but the pattern is the same: suspicion replaces understanding, and fear becomes the measure of belonging.

That's what dehumanization is—not just hatred, but forgetfulness. It is forgetting that every person carries the image of God. And when we forget that something sacred dies inside us. The tragedy of our time isn't only what's happening to those under attack, it's what happens *in us* when fear hardens into judgment.

It's fair to feel anger. It's righteous to demand accountability. Some people choose to assume the best—to say, "Maybe it's just politics; maybe they don't mean it." That's their choice, even if they seem Pollyanna. Others feel rage at the cruelty they see. That's understandable.

What is not okay, however, is to be fooled by any attempt—whether by power, policy, or personal bias—to dehumanize another soul. Because the moment we accept that, we have surrendered the gospel itself.

It's not just the world "out there." That same impulse to judge lives quietly within each of us. We make instant assumptions about strangers. We carry unspoken resentments toward those who have wronged us. Even in our communities of faith, we sometimes confuse being right with being righteous. The pain of this constant judgment is that it leaves little room for grace to breathe.

The pain of this is real. It isolates us from one another and leaves us spiritually depleted. When we live on constant alert, assuming the worst of others, our hearts grow calloused. We stop listening to stories that challenge our assumptions. We stop believing that people can change. We stop seeing the image of God in the very faces we are called to love. This is not just a social problem—it's a spiritual wound.

And yet, deep down, we long for something different. We ache for the kind of compassion that doesn't excuse wrongdoing but still refuses to give up on people. We long to be seen not by our worst moment, but by the love that holds us through every moment. This longing is the beginning of grace—an awakening of the heart that scripture calls us to remember and practice.

Grace is not naivety. Grace is clarity wrapped in compassion. It is what allows us to confront evil without becoming it. Scripture doesn't tell us to ignore injustice. But grace demands that our hearts stay awake while our minds remain clear. Where judgment builds walls, grace builds bridges — for grace is love enacted.

In a letter to the Roman church, a divided community of Jews and Gentiles, Paul reminds them that God's grace precedes every act of human worthiness. Christ did not come for the righteous few but for the undeserving many. That truth dismantles every hierarchy of merit or morality we construct.

"While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Paul doesn't just explain salvation; he defines reality. God's grace isn't a reward for good behavior—it's love in motion toward those who don't deserve it.

In a world obsessed with sorting people into categories of good and bad, worthy and unworthy, grace collapses the dividing wall and insists that we all stand on level ground before the cross.

Jesus illustrates what grace looks like when it interrupts our pride in the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32). In this story, Jesus tells of a younger son who squanders everything and returns home expecting rejection, but instead encounters grace. But the older brother is angered by his sibling's welcome, exposing a self-righteous heart.

We usually focus on the prodigal—the reckless younger son who wastes everything and comes home in shame. But the real tension lives with the elder brother, the one who stayed

home. He's hardworking, responsible, and furious. His anger makes sense. Why should his father celebrate the one who squandered love?

The elder brother's wound is righteousness turned inward. He believes grace should be earned, that repentance should be visible, that love should make sense. But the father's love is irrational by design. He runs to meet the son before confession is complete, because grace always moves first.

This parable is not just about forgiveness, it's about the blindness that judgment creates. The father's open arms reveal what divine love looks like when it refuses to let shame or resentment have the final word.

When we forget that Jesus died for us, despite our failures, we become the older brother outside the feast, staring through the window of mercy we refuse to enter. Where judgment builds walls, grace builds bridges — for grace is love enacted.

We had to celebrate and be happy, because your brother was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost; but now he has been found.

Luke 15:11-32

In this week's reading from our companion book, *Gilead*, Reverend John Ames wrestles with his own blindness. Jack Broughton,

the estranged son of Ames's dearest friend, has returned to town after years of absence and wrongdoing. Jack is courteous, intelligent, and evasive—a man marked by regret but still searching for belonging. For Ames, Jack becomes a mirror he does not want to face. His presence stirs old wounds, jealousies, and fears about his own legacy.

Ames can preach grace, but living it costs him something. His sermons are eloquent, yet his heart is wary—especially toward Jack Boughton, his godson. Jack's past is ugly: deceit, neglect, a child abandoned. Ames watches Jack return home years later, seemingly unchanged, and something in him recoils. "Where is the repentance?" he wonders. "Where is the sorrow?"

But Ames sees something his theology didn't prepare him for. Jack's father and sister, Glory, welcome him without hesitation—"as though the past never happened." He begins to see a glimpse of the gospel he has preached for decades, but never fully lived. In their love, Ames recognizes the story of the prodigal son played out before his eyes. The grace he sees in them exposes the judgment still lingering in him. That realization does not shame him; it awakens him. It becomes, as he says, "a wound that heals."

This week, take time to remember. Not just the pleasant parts of your story, but the parts that still ache. Sit with them. Name them before God. Ask what they might still be teaching you about love, humility, or justice. Reach out to someone who carries a different story — a neighbor, a coworker, an elder in your family — and listen without defending or correcting. Let their story expand your own.

Because memory keeps us awake — awake to compassion, awake to gratitude, awake to God's continuing work, maybe that's what it means, in the truest sense, to say that Jesus was woke: He remembered — every name, every wound, every promise — and He refused to fall asleep to the suffering or beauty of this world. There's a kind of remembering that heals, and there's a kind that harms. And it's easy to confuse the two.

Then Jesus took a piece of bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and gave it to them, saying "This is my body; which is given for you. Do this in memory of me."

Luke 22: 14-22

When God calls us to remember, it is not to make us sentimental — it is to make us awake. Memory, in Scripture, is not a wistful glance backward; it is a moral act that ties our past to our present calling. But nostalgia — that longing for "the good old days" — is a counterfeit memory. It selects only the parts of the past that comfort us, sweeping pain and failure out of sight. It feels harmless, but it quietly blinds us to truth.

In our time, nostalgia has become one of the most dangerous spiritual temptations — not just personally, but nationally. We've seen it packaged and sold in slogans that promise to "make things great again," while rewriting or erasing the parts of history that challenge our pride. Nostalgia is memory without repentance.

When we sanitize the past, we risk repeating it. The Bible isn't a collection of feel-good stories — it's a record of human drama lived out before a faithful God. Scripture remembers the betrayals, the failures, the regrets — not to shame us, but to keep us awake to the truth that grace has always been greater than our forgetfulness.

Memory keeps us awake. Nostalgia puts us to sleep.

The Table of Memory

Centuries after God led the Israelites out of slavery, Jesus gathered his disciples for what would be His final meal with them before He was arrested and executed. Luke tells us Jesus took a piece of bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, and gave it to His friends, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in memory of me."

This was not a call to mere ritual — it was a command to stay awake. To remember who Jesus was, what He did, and why it mattered. And in that room sat Judas — a living reminder that betrayal, greed, and human frailty are part of the story too. Although Jesus knew that Judas would later betray Him, He did not push Judas out of the circle. Jesus saw and acknowledged Judas. Jesus remembered him.

Because remembering means facing the full truth of our story — not editing out the parts that make us uncomfortable.

At the Communion table, we are invited to the same act of sacred remembering. We hold the bread and the cup, and we hold our stories — the parts we're proud of, and the parts we'd rather forget. Christ gathers them all, redeems them all, and says, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

It's not nostalgia for a simpler faith. It's a radical act of honesty. It's how we stay awake to love in a world that keeps falling asleep to pain.

When Nations Fall Asleep

Since the time of Luke, whole societies have fallen captive to nostalgia — longing for imagined golden ages while ignoring the suffering those eras required. In every generation, nostalgia has been used to justify inequality, to excuse authoritarianism, and to disguise fear as patriotism.

When leaders promise to "restore" greatness without reckoning with the sins that corrupted it, they invite people to worship an illusion. Nostalgia thrives where memory has been silenced.

Faith, however, demands remembering. Real remembering. The kind that humbles nations and heals people. The kind that teaches us not to repeat Egypt, even when the wilderness feels hard.

Memory keeps us awake!

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 Marilynne Robinson. Gilead. NY: Picador, 2004.

Tinatin Japaridze. *"Erase & Rewind: The Politics of Nostalgia & its Ethical Implications."* © Carnegie Council for Ethics, April 23, 2025. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Ames wants to be gracious, but he discovers how deeply his instincts for judgment run. He admits to himself that he has never liked Jack and that he cannot quite trust him. Yet he also recognizes that this distrust says as much about himself as it does about Jack. "Grace has to find its way in me," he writes, "or nothing I have preached will amount to much."

Ames begins to realize that grace isn't a transaction—it's a transformation. It changes us first. Grace does not deny sin, but refuses to let sin have the final word. Ames slowly discovers that his inability to love Jack says more about his own heart than about Jack's unworthiness.

In this way, *Gilead* becomes a mirror for us all. Like Ames, we want to believe in grace until it asks us to offer it to someone we have already condemned. His struggle invites us to see that grace is not an idea to affirm but a discipline to practice—a slow re-training of the heart to see others as God sees them.

And if we look closely at our own world, we see the same test. Many of our national leaders show no repentance, no empathy, no self-awareness—and it enrag- es us. When leaders mock com- passion or glorify cruelty, our anger is justified. But grace whis- pers, "Don't let their blindness make you blind." To hold onto compassion in such a time is not weakness—it is resistance.

Where judgment builds walls, grace builds bridges — for grace is love enacted.

Grace is not sentimental for- giveness; it is a radical re-training of how we see. It calls us to con- front the bias within us and the prejudice around us. Grace invites us to believe that love can still reach the parts of the world—and the parts of ourselves—that we have written off as hopeless. Imagine if grace—not fear, not tribal loyalty, not cynicism— shaped our public life. Imagine a society where power modeled re- pentance instead of demanding loyalty; where apology was not humiliation but healing.

In that world, immigrants wouldn't be spoken of as statis- tics or threats but as neighbors. Political opponents wouldn't be enemies to destroy but humans to understand. Disagreement would- n't signal disloyalty. It would mean our democracy is alive. Grace doesn't cancel justice; it perfects it. Justice without grace becomes vengeance; grace with- out justice becomes sentimentality. True grace stands in the mid- dle and holds both truth in one hand, mercy in the other.

That's the world Jesus imag- ined when he told stories like the prodigal son. It's the world Ames glimpsed as he wrestled with his disdain for Jack Boughton. It's the world we claim to long for when we pray, "Thy kingdom come."

And we can start building it now—bridge by bridge, act by act, word by word. Because where judgment builds walls, grace builds bridges — for grace is love enacted. If we took this message serious- ly, the world would begin to look different. Our speech would soften; our politics would heal; our neighborhoods would become places of shared hope instead of suspicion. Grace would no longer be a word whispered in church—it would become a public witness, a way of living that defies the culture of contempt.

We may not be able to change every system overnight, but we can begin by changing the way we see. We can refuse to repeat narratives that reduce people to their worst choices or their assumed identities. We can hold ourselves account- able for the stories we tell and the assumptions we make. Grace, lived out this way, becomes a quiet revolution.

Grace happens when we let Scripture guide our sight— teaching us to see others as God already does. If we learn to see through the eyes of grace, we will begin to live differently. And that differ- ence—patient, merciful, and brave—may be the clearest sign that Christ is still redeem- ing the world through us.

This week, let Scripture guide your sight. When judgment rises, remember the father running to his son. When resentment stirs, recall Ames learning to bless the man he once distrusted. When you feel divided from others, remember that Christ loved you while you were still a work in progress.

So where do we begin?

First, with seeing. Take inventory of your own heart: Who have you quietly written off? Which group of people have you learned to fear, mock, or ignore? Where have you mistaken comfort for righteousness?

Second, with listening. Find a story that challenges your bias. Read it. Hear it. Let it unsettle you. That discomfort is grace doing its work.

Third, with courage. Speak truth in love. When someone uses language that dehumanizes—whether it's about immigrants, political rivals, or entire communities—don't let silence agree. Challenge the lie, but do it with compassion intact. Because once we lose compassion, we mirror the very cruelty we oppose.

Fourth, with hope. Remember that grace is not passive. It acts. It risks. It reaches across. It is the love of God in motion through us.

So yes—be enraged, be awake, be wise. Be woke! But be gracious. Because grace is not weakness; it's the only power strong enough to redeem what judgment has broken.

If we live this way—if our churches, our homes, and even our politics become places where grace is practiced—we will find ourselves standing at the same table as the father in Jesus' parable, arms wide open, ready to celebrate the return of those we once called lost.

The work of grace begins with each of us. Where judgment builds walls, grace builds bridges — for grace is love enacted.

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 Marilynne Robinson. Gilead. NY: Picador, 2004.



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**NOVEMBER 27
11:30AM-12:30PM**

Join us for a big celebration dinner on
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giveaway for all children in attendance.

**NORTH END SOUP KITCHEN
735 E. STEWART AVE, FLINT, MI 48505**

AMERICAN DRUM & DANCE PARENT ASSOCIATION PRESENTS:
DRUM and DANCE CONFERENCE 2025

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AFRICAN DRUM & DANCE PARENT ASSOCIATION PRESENTS
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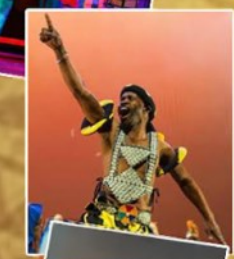
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African Drum and Dance Parent Association Presents

TACO TUESDAY

**Every Tuesday in November
November 4, November 11, November 18
and November 25
12:00 PM to 6:00 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**





Important Updates:

Dear Friends of Asbury CDC,

As *Giving Tuesday* approaches, we are reminded of the incredible generosity that helps Asbury CDC continue its mission to serve our neighbors. But today, we are reaching out with an *urgent* need that simply cannot wait.

Due to the ongoing **Federal government shutdown**, many of our Flint residents are being hit hard. Some government employees have been **furloughed or are working without pay**, and **SNAP/EBT benefits have not been renewed** for numerous families. As a result, more households than ever are turning to us for help.

Through our **Help Center, Food Pantry, and Soup Kitchen**, Asbury CDC is working tirelessly to make sure no one in our community goes hungry. But the growing demand has placed a tremendous strain on our resources — and we need your help to keep up.

Your gift today will directly provide food, supplies, and hope for those facing uncertainty. While Giving Tuesday is around the corner, our neighbors need us *now*.

Please consider making a donation today so we can continue to stand in the gap for Flint families who need it most.

Thank you for your compassion and continued support. Together, we can ensure that no one in our community is left hungry or forgotten during this difficult time.

With gratitude,
Kimberly Sims
Finance Director
Asbury Community Development Corporation

Our mailing address is:
Asbury CDC
1653 Davison Rd., Flint, MI. 48506