

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

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Belonging (Jesus was woke)



From the air, parts of the Midwest look like a quilt of green circles stitched into brown soil. Each one marks where a machine turns, drawing perfect patterns of life into the land. Inside those circles, crops flourish; beyond them, the earth withers.

Six years ago, I borrowed an image from Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber that has stayed with me — and perhaps with some of you as well. It's the image of crop circles, not the mysterious flattened ones that spark conspiracy theories, but the living, green ones we see from the air — those lush circles carved into the patchwork of farm fields across the Midwest.

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Love (Jesus was woke)



Across our communities, a profound ache has taken hold of daily life. People describe a fatigue they can't quite identify — the feeling that something valuable in our daily routines has been unraveling. Conversations seem more pointed. Neighbors feel more distant. Families are caught between anger and resignation.

It's as if we're watching the core of our shared moral compass shift gradually, one small degree at a time, and we worry about what the next degree might cost.

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HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



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They exist because of a system invented in the 1940s by a farmer named Frank Zybach, who developed what's called center-pivot irrigation. The water source stands at the center, turning on its axis and spraying in a perfect circle. Every seed within that circle can thrive, but those beyond it struggle and fade. From above, you see life in circles — bright green within, brown at the edges.

Nadia used this as a metaphor for the church — and it convinced me deeply. Because the church, too often, imitates that same pattern. We build our systems of belonging around human pivots — power, tradition, doctrine, politics — and those within our circles flourish. But those who fall outside our reach, who live in the corners of our care, are left thirsty.

I still remember how excited I was to share this idea. But, at the time, I thought inclusion was about the size of the circle. And I wanted us to make the circle bigger, stretching it wider, bringing more people in. But now I see that the issue isn't the circle's size. Instead, it's the system itself.

Today, in our fractured public life, it's easy to mistake sameness for belonging. Some faith communities have drawn their circles so tight that only those who think or vote alike fit inside. Loyalty to a politician or party becomes a proxy for belonging.

In other words, churches often form similar circles where insiders flourish within our care, while others stay outside, unseen and untouched. We justify these circles in many ways: politics, purity, preference.

In the age of algorithms and artificial belonging — where our social feeds and even our faith networks are curated to keep us comfortable — this image challenges us again. So maybe the question for us is not, "How big is our circle?" but "Where are the corners we've ignored where thirsty people have been excluded?"

If you've ever gone too long without a drink of water, you know what desperation feels like. Your mouth dries, your head spins, your strength fades. Every cell in your body cries out for connection to the source of life. Belonging is like that — a need so basic we cannot survive without it. Loneliness has been called an epidemic, one that quietly steals health and hope from millions.

Psychologists and physicians alike warn that isolation can be as deadly as smoking or obesity, increasing the risk of heart disease, depression, and premature death. Experts tell us that our nation is "suffering from a crisis of disconnection."

And yet, our social and religious structures often make it harder, not easier, to belong. Churches that once served as safe harbors for the weary and wounded now risk becoming exclusive clubs for the like-minded and socially comfortable. The wealthy and well-connected are ushered to the front row, while those who are struggling, questioning, or simply different are left standing outside the circle — thirsty.

Fortunately, God doesn't irrigate by pivot. God sends rain — generous, unpredictable, and inclusive. And rain doesn't obey human geometry. Rain reaches corners, fence lines, forgotten fields. Rain reveals a God whose love cannot be mechanized, controlled, or contained. The church that draws circles ends up worshipping its own irrigation system. But the church that learns to live by rain becomes a place of resurrection for all who are parched and waiting.

Jesus crosses the boundaries we create and pours living water into the dry places. The Gospel of John tells a story of one such person, living in a corner unreached and excluded by established religion. John tells us that she was a Samaritan woman who came to draw water at noon, when the sun scorched the earth and no one else was around.

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 24—30

- Nov 24 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 25 Tue 9am-until gone Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice
- 12Noon-6pm Last Taco Tuesday of the month with Baked Sale at Flint Asbury UMC (see flyer on pg. 22)
- 3:00pm CDC Board Meeting
- Nov 26 Wed
- Nov 27 Thu Check out the free Thanksgiving Dinner on pg. 21
- Nov 28 Fri
- Nov 29 Sat
- Nov 30 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 "Artificial Christmas"

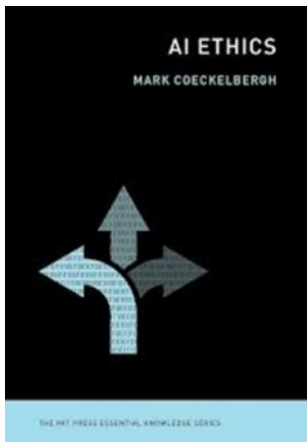


Christmas is supposed to feel real — filled with warmth, wonder, and worship. Yet for many, it doesn't. The decorations go up, the playlists return, and the obligations multiply, but something inside feels missing. Many of us go through the motions, trying to manufacture the Christmas spirit, and it all feels... artificial.

Over the past few years, the word "artificial" has taken on a greater meaning. Artificial intelligence has entered nearly every corner of our lives — the way we communicate, create, and even believe. It writes our words, shapes our opinions, curates our news, and sometimes replaces our work. For some, it's a marvel. For others, a menace. But for all of us, it raises deep spiritual questions:

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Book Club News



This Advent, our series "Artificial Christmas" invites us to examine the incarnation — God made flesh — through the odd and probing light of our technological age. We're

surrounded by things that appear real but aren't: artificial intelligence, artificial relationships, artificial peace, and even artificial joy.

And yet, the story of Christmas reminds us that God's love is not artificial at all — it is embodied, relational, and redemptive.

So why talk about AI at Christmas? Because the incarnation is God's declaration that presence matters. In an age of digital substitutes,

artificial intelligence poses one of the most profound questions of faith: What does it mean to be truly human?

Advent prepares us for God-with-us — not God-as-code, or God-at-a-distance, but God entering real life, real struggle, and real love. Our series explores how that truth speaks to the world of algorithms and automation that increasingly shapes our daily lives.

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

Why AI Ethics Matters

We'll be reading *AI Ethics* by philosopher Mark Coeckelbergh as a companion book for this series. Coeckelbergh encourages us to look beyond headlines about artificial intelligence and explore the moral questions that define this technological era.

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Upcoming Worship Series — “Artificial Christmas”

That’s what we’ll explore in our new Advent series, *Artificial Christmas*. In this series, we explore how humanity’s attempts to manufacture meaning, presence, and perfection through technology (especially AI) reveal our deep spiritual hunger for incarnation — for God with us.

Our series consists of six episodes over five weeks, beginning November 30. Together, we’ll follow the story of the incarnation through the lens of a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence, technology, and pretense. And we’ll discover that the message of Christmas has never been more relevant: God doesn’t avoid what’s artificial — God enters it, redeems it, and makes it real again. Where our artificial creations offer simulation, God offers salvation. God redeems the artificial.

Why cover an artificial topic during the Season of Advent and Christmas? First, this series is for the curious. But this series is also for anyone who’s ever felt disconnected, disenchanted, or displaced by the pace of modern life. For those who scroll endlessly, hoping to feel something real again. For those who wonder if faith can still mean something in a digital age.

We’ll look deeper into how the Christmas story — the story of God becoming human — speaks into this moment. What happens to humanity in an age of machines? Can something artificial ever point us toward what’s real?

Advent is a season of anticipation — and this year, each week will draw us closer to the surprising ways God shows up where we least expect it. We start where creation and technology meet. Just as God breathed life into dust, humanity now breathes data into algorithms. But where is God in all this? We’ll uncover how even in artificial beginnings, divine intention still moves.

Artificial light brightens our homes, but cannot warm the soul. We’ll explore how the real Light still breaks through imitation — exposing truth in a world obsessed with image and illusion.

When everything feels manufactured — joy, peace, connection — how do we find authentic hope? In this series, we face our disillusionment and find that God’s hope doesn’t depend on perfect circumstances or unbroken faith.

At the heart of Advent is incarnation — the divine entering human form. But what happens when humanity builds new forms? We’ll ask how the Word made flesh still dwells among us, even in the circuitry of our modern lives.

On Christmas Eve is the night it all comes together — the mystery of God entering our world, born not into perfection but into the real and the artificial alike. God comes to redeem even the imitation, turning digital echoes into living voices of grace. We hope you’ll join us for a candlelight service starting at 6 pm.

Upcoming Worship Series — “Artificial Christmas”

When Christmas ends, the lights come down — and we ask, Now what? What does it mean to live as people who believe that God rescues what’s artificial — not just once a year, but every day in an artificial world?

*For God so loved the world
that God chose to live among
us to save us all.*

John 3:16-17

Because the story of Christmas isn’t about escaping the artificial, it’s about a God who enters it. A God who brings light, love, and life to everything that has lost its way.

Join us in person or online for *Artificial Christmas: God Rescues the Artificial* — and rediscover the miracle of incarnation in a world that desperately needs something real. Here is the outline of our series:

<u>Episode</u>	<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Theme & Title</u>
One	Nov 30	Hope - Artificial beginnings
Two	Dec 7	Peace - Imitation light
Three	Dec 14	Joy - Synthetic hope
Four	Dec 21	Love - Incarnation in the machine
Five	Dec 24	With us - God redeems the artificial
Six	Dec 28	Love - After the upload

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

Dr. Mark Coeckelbergh, *AI Ethics*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2020. (ISBN 9780262538190).


“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:

Meanwhile, these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 13 and the article in this week's Circuit Rider titled Love. Reflect on telling the truth, even when it is costly. Pray for the victims of the Epstein crimes and for those standing with them. What happens if every policy, every vote, every public stance, and every private choice is measured by how they protect or harm those who are already hurting? How can we resist cruelty without participating in it?
2. Remember that this is not work we do alone. Courageous love becomes real when we practice it together—when we care for our neighbors, advocate for those in need, stand against harm, and choose compassion over convenience. Think of ways for us to make our public witness flow from our shared life.
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.



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AI is no longer science fiction. It's writing our news, curating our social feeds, influencing our politics, and even shaping how we think about ourselves. We're told it will make our lives easier, but it also threatens to hollow out what makes us human — empathy, responsibility, relationships, and soul.

In his book, Coeckelbergh invites us to pause and ask:

What does it mean to act ethically in a world increasingly guided by machines?

How do we form moral communities when our technologies make decisions for us?

What happens to human dignity when we delegate our judgment to algorithms?

Why This Author

Mark Coeckelbergh is not an alarmist. He's a philosopher who has spent years teaching ethics and technology at the University of Vienna, advising European policymakers, and engaging theologians, scientists, and artists alike. He approaches AI not as a problem to be solved, but as a mirror — one that reflects back our values, fears, and aspirations.

In *AI Ethics*, Coeckelbergh avoids jargon and ideology. Instead, he asks deeply human questions about power, vulnerability, and moral imagination. His work helps us see that the "ethics of AI" isn't really about the machines — it's about us: what kind of people we are becoming, and how faith can anchor us amid rapid change.

Why You'll Want to Read Along

Reading *AI Ethics* alongside our weekly messages will give you a vocabulary and vision for navigating this new world with faith, humility, and courage. It will challenge easy assumptions and help us discern what it means to be a community that values both innovation and integrity.

As we'll explore in worship, God's redemption extends even to the artificial — not by erasing technology, but by restoring the humanity within it. Coeckelbergh's insights equip us to be wise stewards in a digital age, shaping technology for love and justice instead of fear and profit.

Our vision at Asbury comes from how we collectively interpret scripture.

We envision a church in love with God, one another, and our neighbors, evidenced by the transformation of ourselves and our neighborhood.

This Advent, that transformation means asking how we might love in a world remade by machines — how we can stay human in an age that tempts us to settle for the artificial. If you choose to follow along, I suggest using the following schedule:

<u>Sunday's</u>	<u>Chapters</u>	<u>Themes</u>
Nov 30	Ch 1 - 2	Hope
Dec 7	Ch 3 - 4	Grace
Dec 14	Ch 5 - 6	Joy
Dec 21	Ch 7 - 8	Love
Dec 24	Ch 9 - 10	Incarnation
Dec 28	Ch 11 - 12	Renewal

I invite you to take your *Artificial Christmas* experience deeper with our weekly *Questions for Life Groups*. Each week pairs passages from our companion with Scripture, reflection questions, and prayer prompts. Our goal is to help you make each week's message a part of your reality. The guide can be used for personal study or small-group discussion.

We'll have a few new books available for purchase at \$11 each. Additional copies of the paperback edition are available through Amazon for \$11.18, and used copies in good condition start around \$8. 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

Dr. Mark Coeckelbergh, *AI Ethics*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2020. (ISBN 9780262538190).

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

We aren't told her name, only that she was tired, alone, and likely weighed down by whispered judgments. Tradition paints her as immoral, but a more compassionate look suggests there might be something more tragic. She was likely a woman shaped by circumstances, by systems that let her down, and by a community that decided she didn't belong.

And then Jesus showed up.

He met her at the well — not in the temple, not in the crowd, but in her cornered isolation. Jesus didn't start by listing her sins; He first asked for a drink. It's a small act, but a profound reversal: a Jewish man asking a Samaritan woman for help was unheard of and considered improper. But in His request, Jesus restored her dignity by validating her worth. Jesus then offered her "living water," not just to quench her thirst, but to remind her she was still part of God's story.

She had been unseen, unheard, uninvited. But Jesus saw her and heard her. And then Jesus invited her to know that she belongs to His kingdom.

This story is about more than one woman's redemption. This story reveals God's heart for those left out and left behind. Jesus invites us to insert our names and join Him at the well of living water.

The water I will give them will become in them a spring that will provide life-giving water and give them eternal life.

John 4:5-30

She is the foreigner, afraid that they too will be brutalized, arrested, and sent away without due process. She is the person who doesn't fit the image that others have locked in their mind of who is acceptable. The woman at the well is every person whose accent, appearance, past, or pain has made them unwelcome. She is every outcast told they are beyond the reach of grace. She is every person living outside the circle, where systems fail her.

When we remember that Jesus first revealed his identity as Messiah not to a disciple or a priest, but to this woman — a foreigner, a woman of questionable standing, and a theological outsider — we glimpse the radical belonging of God's kingdom. If the church is a circle of irrigation, the woman at the well lived far outside its reach. But Jesus brought the rain to her.

Imagine a church that no longer guards its circle but lives by the rhythm of rain. Imagine a community where belonging isn't earned by conformity but received as a gift. A church where every corner

of the field is nourished by grace. A community where life isn't measured by who's inside or outside the system, but by how far grace can flow.

Picture a landscape where every thirsty soul — every person who has felt unseen, unheard, or uninvited — is drenched in love that doesn't discriminate or stop at human boundaries. Where our walls no longer keep people out, but help hold the water in.

When the rain falls, no corner is dry. No one is too far gone, too different, or too complicated to be nourished by God's love.

The woman at the well ran back to her village after encountering Jesus. The same people who had shunned her now heard the good news through her voice.

What changed? The woman they avoided became the one who carried the message of life. When she met Jesus, she didn't just find belonging — she became belonging.

That is the vision of a rain-fed church: a place where those who once stood at the margins become messengers of mercy. People who don't ration grace but release it freely. A fellowship that remembers its purpose — not to control the flow of God's love, but to ensure no one dies of thirst.

Much of our ache stems from witnessing cruelty take hold in public life. Our current administration has doubled down on policies that use suffering as a weapon — starving families by cutting SNAP benefits, stripping food support from children through limited school lunch programs, and forcing millions to choose food and shelter over healthcare, as once again, trying to dismantle the Affordable Care Act without a viable replacement.

Immigration enforcement not only regulates borders but also increases hardship for already desperate families. These choices do not reflect responsible governance or economic necessity. They are designed to use cruelty as a tool to make life harder for the vulnerable. And people see it. They feel it. Even those who supported this administration are unsettled by the direction it has taken.

Families in our churches and communities are asking the same questions: How did we get here? Why does cruelty feel normal? Why does no one in power seem moved by the suffering of ordinary people? These are not partisan questions. They are moral questions. And they reveal a deep spiritual crisis — a crisis created whenever love withdraws from the public square and leaves power unchecked.

Researchers warned us for years that something like this was coming. Brené Brown's work on shame, fear, and dehumanization anticipated the moment we live in now. She notes that when leaders model contempt, followers learn to mirror it. When public rhetoric frames entire groups of people as problems rather than neighbors, cruelty becomes an acceptable political strategy. Her research affirms what many feel in their bodies: this climate is not just stressful — it is spiritually exhausting.

People are not imagining the tension; they are responding to a documented pattern of social disconnection and moral injury.

Political scientists and ethicists echo this concern. Studies published over the past year show rising support for punitive policies even when they are ineffective; growing acceptance of violence as a political tool; and a measurable decline in empathy, especially in communities most immersed in the rhetoric of fear. These findings validate an essential truth: people are not alone in feeling that our public life is drifting toward something harsher, colder, less human.

When love refuses to act, cruelty fills the gap.

So many people today are longing for leaders who name the pain honestly and respond with moral clarity. They are longing for a love that doesn't excuse cruelty and doesn't just look away. We've come to realize that the truth is becoming impossible to ignore. But whenever love refuses to act, something else fills the space. And in our current moment, what fills that space is cruelty, and we all need a kind of love that doesn't retreat.

State Representative James Talaric, who plans to unseat Senator John Cornyn in Texas, articulated this truth in a recent interview on *Pod Save America*. He delivered his comments in a way that resonates deeply with our moment. He said, "Love is sometimes confrontational... It does whatever it takes to stand up for the vulnerable."

The Representative reminds us that Jesus did not stay silent when the powerful preyed on the weak. Jesus entered the seat of power and overturned the tables of injustice, not out of rage, but out of fierce, protective love. That is the kind of love Christians are called to embody: not passive, not polite, and willing to act courageously.

Love acts with courage.

This is why this message matters now, in this season, in this country. We cannot pretend that the consequences of political choices are abstract. Families are being harmed. Healthcare is being stripped. Groceries are rising. And compassion is being redefined as weakness. We are watching, in real time, what happens when leadership is shaped more by grievance and ego than by grace.

And yet — scripture, tradition, and the lived witness of Jesus tell us that another way is possible, by speaking with great clarity into this moment.

It's easy to forget that Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13, often relegated to weddings, is much more than sentimental poetry. Paul wrote these truths to a fractured, angry, anxious church. It is a letter to a community that had begun to value power, winning arguments, and spiritual prestige more than mutual care.

Corinth was a booming port city. Wealthy, diverse, socially stratified, and deeply influenced by Roman patronage culture. The young Christian community reflected that complexity. They were gifted, enthusiastic, and sincere, yet deeply divided. Factions had formed around different leaders, and those divisions threatened to fracture the church.

Social status, spiritual competition, theological disagreements, and ethical confusion were all pulling them apart. The church was vibrant but chaotic. Full of potential, but on the verge of collapsing under its own dysfunction.

When love refuses to act, cruelty fills the gap.

But in his letter, Paul doesn't tell the people to "feel more love." That's too passive. Paul tells them to act with courageous love, in ways that protect their community from collapse. Biblical love is not sentiment. It is courageous. Biblical love chooses to resist cruelty with a different kind of power.

Paul's entire letter is a testimony to courageous love. A love that confronts division, protects the vulnerable, and insists on truth even when truth is costly. When love refuses to act, cruelty fills the gap. Therefore, we must pursue a love that acts with courage.

Those reading Gilead alongside this series encounter another model of courageous love—a love quieter than prophetic confrontation, but no less bold. Reverend John Ames, writing in the final years of his life, wrestles with what it means to love faithfully in a world marred by conflict, injustice, and

human frailty. His love is not naïve. It is a love shaped through loss, disappointment, and the painful awareness of his own limitations and mortality.

Meanwhile, these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13

But Ames refuses to let cynicism define his final word. Instead, he writes with a tenderness that holds truth and grace together. He blesses a world that has not always blessed him. He extends forgiveness where resentment would have been easier. He chooses compassion toward the prodigal Boughton son, even when his past raises every alarm in him. Ames does not mistake gentleness for weakness; he understands it as a form of strength that resists the easy temptation to withhold love from those who have wounded him.

In a world choking on loneliness, this kind of belonging is revolutionary. It heals bodies, mends hearts, and revives communities. Because when we live by rain, we learn that God's kingdom doesn't grow in perfect circles — it spreads like water across dry ground, finding every low place, every crack, every forgotten field.

Becoming a Rain-Fed People

Belonging begins when we notice who isn't at the well. When we pay attention to the corners of our own communities — the people who don't make it onto our invitation lists, our friend circles, our church commitments.

The next step is simple but profound: see them. Look for those whose lives have been parched by rejection or neglect. Ask questions that open a conversation. Listen before you label. Invite before you evaluate.

As a community, we can choose to bring the source of living water closer to the edges — to shift our energy, compassion, and resources toward those who need them most. That's how irrigation becomes rain.

Each act of welcome — each moment we refuse to draw a smaller circle — is a drop of grace that ripples outward. A smile across a dividing line. A

table set for someone who's never been asked to sit. A prayer lifted for someone who's been told they don't belong.

The rain will fall. It always does. The question is: will we stand under it — together?

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, 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.

In the final chapters, as he blesses Jack Boughton on the street, Ames demonstrates what courageous love looks like in its most vulnerable form: a love that chooses mercy over fear, hope over suspicion, generosity over self-protection. He blesses Jack not because Jack deserves it, but because love demands it. In Ames, we see the kind of courage that doesn't always flip tables—but still changes lives.

This, too, is courageous love: the kind that doesn't make headlines, but quietly heals what is broken. A love that acts with courage.

And this is where Gilead meets our own moment. The book invites us to imagine a faith that holds firm against cruelty—not by mirroring cruelty, but by embodying a deeper, steadier strength. Ames reminds us that courageous love is not always dramatic; sometimes it is a choice we make day after day, in the shadows of disappointment and uncertainty. It is a love rooted in God's faithfulness rather than our own control.

Courageous love is not only an ancient witness or a literary illustration—it is something we are seeing lived out in real time.

The survivors pressing for the release of the Epstein files have shown extraordinary

courage. They are demanding truth in the face of enormous pressure, cultural backlash, political obstruction, and in some cases, real personal danger. Many know that speaking publicly risks harassment, character attacks, and even threats from those determined to protect the powerful. Yet they continue.

One survivor captured the heart of this entire message when she said, "We are not here for revenge. We are here because telling the truth is an act of love—for ourselves, for the girls who were hurt, and for the girls who will come after us."

This is what courageous love looks like: Truth-telling as protection. Truth-telling as solidarity. Truth-telling as the refusal to let cruelty have the last word.

Their witness names the risk: whenever love retreats, cruelty advances. But their courage also shows what is possible when ordinary people refuse to remain silent. Their determination mirrors the very call Paul gives to the church in Corinth: pursue love—not a sentimental love, not a quietist love, but a protective, truth-aligned, justice-seeking love.

Their example is not about political speculation; it is about moral clarity. They show us what it looks like to resist cruelty

without dehumanizing those responsible—a line Paul insists the church must not cross, and Jesus himself modeled.

This week, we turn to the kind of love that does not shrink back: courageous love. Love that makes room for truth-telling. Love that defends the vulnerable. Love that stays grounded in compassion while refusing to tolerate cruelty. This is the path the early church walked. It is the path Jesus walked. And it is the path our communities need now.

In a season when cruelty too easily fills the space left by passive love, we are called back to the heart of our faith. The way of Jesus is not withdrawal or silence, but a courageous love that protects, tells the truth, and seeks the good of the vulnerable.

As we move toward Advent, may we become a community shaped by that love—steady, compassionate, grounded in truth, and unafraid to act. A love that does not retreat. A love that restores. A love that refuses to let cruelty have the final word.

Remember, Love acts with courage.

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.

Brené Brown. "Words, Actions, Dehumanization, and Accountability." *Unlocking Us*. © Brené Brown, Jan 13, 2021. [Link.](#)

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Neil Fasching, et al. "Persistent American political animosity is not driven by specific election cycles." © Science Advances, Sep 4, 2024, Vol 10, Issue 36. [Link.](#)

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WE WISH YOU A WARM AND JOYFUL THANKSGIVING!






THANKSGIVING DINNER

NOVEMBER 27
11:30AM-12:30PM

Join us for a big celebration dinner on
Thanksgiving Day. There will be a toy
giveaway for all children in attendance.

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




African Drum and Dance Parent Association Presents


TACO TUESDAY

Including A Bake Sale



Tuesday, November 25, 2025
12:00 PM to 6:00 PM
Asbury United Methodist Church
1653 Davison Road, Flint, MI 48506



BAKE SALE



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

GCORR Celebrates the Ratification of Constitutional Amendments Advancing Equity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice in The United Methodist Church

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Jeehye Kim, Senior Director of Communications and Marketing

General Commission on Religion and Race

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November 5, 2025

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) celebrates the ratification of four constitutional amendments that mark a historic step forward in The United Methodist Church's ongoing journey toward inclusion, equity, and justice. These amendments reaffirm the denomination's commitment to becoming a truly worldwide and inclusive church—one that reflects the image of God in the rich diversity of its people and contexts.

Among the four newly ratified constitutional amendments is the complete revision of [Article V on Racial Justice](#), an amendment originally proposed by GCORR. This ratified Article V reaffirms The United Methodist Church's biblical and theological conviction that every person is created in the image of God and is of sacred worth. It names racism as sin—a direct contradiction of God's law of love—and calls the Church to embody a deeper commitment to justice, equity, and reconciliation.

Building on a global understanding of the harm caused by racism, colonialism, white privilege, and white supremacy, the amendment acknowledges the Church's own historical complicity and the ongoing impact of racial injustice across generations. "Article V moves beyond recognition to action. It commits the denomination to eradicate racism in all its forms, dismantle systems of privilege and oppression, and lead transformation within both the Church and society through education, advocacy, and accountability," said Rev. Dr. Giovanni Arroyo, General Secretary of GCORR. "It positions the Church to live out its mission as a diverse and inclusive body that reflects the kingdom of God—a community where all people are valued, loved, and free to flourish."

The ratified amendments include:

1. **Regionalization:** Reorganizes the worldwide United Methodist Church into geographically based regional conferences, replacing the term "Central Conference" and affirming equality among regions across the global connection.
2. **Paragraph 4, Article IV – Inclusion in Membership:** Expands the Church's constitutional commitment to inclusivity by adding "gender" and "ability" to the list of characteristics that cannot be used to bar individuals from church membership.

3. **Paragraph 35, Article IV – Educational Requirements for Voting Rights:** Clarifies the educational requirements for clergy voting for delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences, ensuring fairness and consistency in representation.
4. **Article V – Racial Justice:** A comprehensive revision strengthening the denomination's constitutional stance on racial justice, originally proposed by GCORR, affirming that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching and that the Church must work toward equity and reconciliation in all its structures and relationships.

The full text of Article V - Racial Justice reads: "The United Methodist Church proclaims that from God's goodness and love, God created all persons as God's unique and beloved children. Racism opposes God's law, goodness and love and diminishes the image of God in each person. Fueled by white privilege, white supremacy and colonialism, the sin of racism has been a destructive scourge on global society and throughout the history of The United Methodist Church. It continues to destroy our communities, harm persons, obstruct unity and undermine God's work in this world. Racism must be eradicated. Therefore, The United Methodist Church commits to confronting and eliminating all forms of racism, racial inequity, colonialism, white privilege and white supremacy, in every facet of its life and in society at large."

The Disability Ministries Committee of The United Methodist Church, under the care of GCORR, also celebrated the passage of Article IV on inclusion, emphasizing its impact on accessibility and belonging across the denomination:

"As co-chairs of the Disability Ministries Committee, we rejoice in the passage of Paragraph 4, Article IV, adding the words 'gender' and 'ability' to the Constitution of the UMC! This amendment will help ensure that people with disabilities are no longer excluded from the church. This amendment recognizes that disabled people belong as full members in the body of Christ. This is in keeping with the mission of the DMC to lead the denomination in creating a culture where people with disabilities are fully included in all aspects of worship, leadership, ministry, and mission through advocacy, education, and empowerment. We look forward to all the ways that God will continue to work in and through our UMC to bring about inclusion and true belonging for those with disabilities and those who accompany them!"

— *Rev. Melinda Baber and Rev. Mimi Luebbbers, Co-Chairs, Disability Ministries Committee of The UMC*

As The United Methodist Church continues to live into these constitutional commitments, GCORR stands ready to equip, challenge, and support the Church in building a beloved community rooted in equity, dignity, and grace for all.

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About GCORR

The General Commission on Religion and Race of the United Methodist church equips and empowers individuals and institution to engage in vital conversations, develop intercultural competency, and ensure institutional equity throughout the Church and society. Learn more at www.gcorr.org