



# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 5

Issue 7

DECEMBER 7, 2025

## Hope (Artificial Beginnings)



Artificial things have been with us long before technology. Many of us remember the spray-on snow we used to decorate our windows at Christmas. We didn't buy those cans because we needed snow; we bought them because they promised a feeling—warmth, nostalgia, a sense of magic we wanted to recapture. After all, real snow melts as soon as you bring it in the house. But a few swirls of a can, and suddenly the living room looked like a holiday scene.

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## Peace (Imitation light)



This week, as part of our Advent celebration, we light a candle representing our prayers for peace. In lighting this candle, we are reminded that Christ was born into a world shaped by fear, occupation, and political violence. Yet the longing for peace is not only ancient — it is also deeply and painfully present. We cannot talk of peace without remembering that Ukraine enters yet another winter under bombardment, the shadows lengthen not only over cities and villages but also over the moral imagination of the world. Ukraine is not a symmetrical conflict. They did not ask for war. They did not invade a neighbor. They are fighting for survival and sovereignty.

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WELCOME DECEMBER!!



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But the illusion broke the moment we touched it. The “snow” that sparkled from a distance crumbled into a chemical dust. It clung to our fingers, left a smell in the air, and never quite matched the expectation raised by the picture on the can. And its ingredients—propellants, plastics, residues—were far less harmless than we imagined.

We may not all describe it the same way, but we know the feeling: something essential is slipping from our grasp. We hunger for what is real.

Across our communities and towns—and increasingly across our nation—many people share a growing sense of disorientation. We live in an age where so much around us feels manufactured. Artificial images pass as photographs, political messages are crafted to manipulate rather than inform, and online interactions often substitute for real relationships. Even the news we consume is filtered through systems trained to hold our attention rather than tell the truth.

We begin this series with a simple but important word: artificial. By artificial, we mean what we create to imitate the real—functional, impressive, even beautiful at times—yet ultimately unable to give the truth, presence, or life that only the real can provide. Our world is filled

with such imitations. They surround us so completely that we often accept them without question, even when something in us still hungers for what is genuine.

And that hunger is everywhere. Many people describe a growing sense that modern life feels manufactured. We scroll past images engineered to influence us, hear news shaped for profit rather than truth, and engage in conversations that feel rehearsed rather than honest. Even our relationships can thin out when mediated entirely by screens. We are connected in ways unimaginable a generation ago, yet many feel strangely alone.

Spray-on snow was a small thing, but it teaches a larger truth. Artificial substitutes work just well enough to keep us from asking what we’re truly hungry for. They offer a moment of escape, a brief sense of comfort, a way to decorate the ache without addressing it. But like a body that keeps signaling hunger because its food lacks nutrients, our souls keep signaling hunger because the substitutes we grab for cannot nourish the places that hurt. The craving itself points beyond the artificial to something real—something we cannot manufacture.

And into this landscape, we now introduce another substitute that promises relief: artificial intelligence, better known as AI.

AI delivers on promises we’ve yet to imagine, yet AI can never deliver on the one promise we need to hear the most. Our souls keep whispering that something essential is still missing. Like a body signaling hunger because the nutrients are gone from our food, our spirits signal hunger because the artificial comforts we reach for cannot nourish the places that hurt.

And the more we try to fill ourselves with substitutes, the more we realize the substitute was never the point. The craving itself points to something deeper—something real—that we cannot manufacture. This is the quiet pain that runs beneath our towns and neighborhoods. We reach for things that promise relief but deliver only distraction. We settle for the artificial because we don’t know where else to turn.

And right here—into the small ache beneath our artificial comforts—God enters the artificial.

Advent begins here, in the honest recognition that we inhabit a world where appearance often matters more than substance and where artificiality has become normal. Yet Scripture insists that God meets us precisely in this place.



IN OUR PRAYERS

Virginia Bigger  
 Sylvia Pittman  
 Mirium Watson  
 Brian DuFour

Fred Hahns  
 Jonathon Misner  
 Richard Oram

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux      Norma Buzzard  
 Nancy Elston

**COMING UP THIS WEEK:      DECEMBER 8—14**

Dec 8	Mon		
Dec 9	Tue	9am-until gone	Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice
		12Noon-6pm	Taco Tuesday in Fellowship Hall
Dec 10	Wed		
Dec 11	Thu	1:00pm	United Women in Faith
Dec 12	Fri		
Dec 13	Sat		
Dec 14	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"

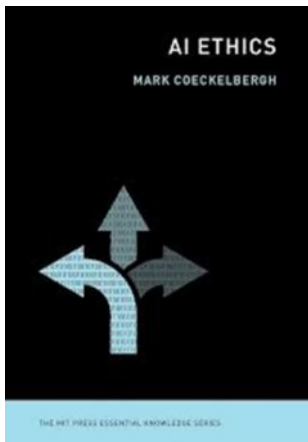


Christmas is supposed to feel real — filled with warmth, wonder, and worship. Yet for many, it doesn't. The decorations go up, the playlists return, and the obligations multiply, but something inside feels missing. Many of us go through the motions, trying to manufacture the Christmas spirit, and it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

## 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

## 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 &amp; 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](https://flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate)**



**LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:**

*He will settle disputes among great nations. They will hammer their swords into plows and their spears into pruning knives. Nations will never again go to war, never prepare for battle again.*

Isaiah 2:1-5

**NOTES FROM WORSHIP**

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**QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:**

1. Read Isaiah 2:1-5 and the article in this week's Circuit Rider titled Peace. Reflect on how the technology you're using protects or diminishes the image of God in another human being?
2. Counter the numbing effect of distance by looking for the story behind the technology. Who is affected? Who benefits? Who is at risk?
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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- to 53-555
- Scan QR Code

## Donate Now



More Information :



(810) 235-0016



[funding@flintasbury.org](mailto:funding@flintasbury.org)

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](http://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](http://www.mightycause.com/feedflint)

Donations can be dropped off Monday-Friday 11am-12Noon. Calling ahead is not necessary, but our needs change frequently, so calling ahead of time is a good idea!

Give time! We need volunteers!!! Volunteers arrive at 9:30am and are done by 12:30pm. Tasks include handing out lunches, assisting in the Angel Closet, light cleaning, putting together items to pass out to clients, and more.

Refer people!!

Questions??? Call 810-239-3427  
or email [southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com](mailto:southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com)

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, and new light is shining on them. You have given them great joy.*

Isaiah 9:2-7

Isaiah speaks to a people who also felt surrounded by shadows: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.” Artificial light can brighten a room, but spiritual darkness remains unchanged until God speaks. Isaiah proclaims that the real Light—the Light that the artificial cannot imitate—comes from God alone. And this Light doesn’t wait for us to escape the artificial. Instead, it enters our world precisely as it is.

Here is the promise: God does not stand far off from our artificial world. God steps into it. Into our substitutes, our disappointments, our longing, our ache. The real enters the artificial so that the artificial no longer defines us.

John, the fourth Evangelist, takes Isaiah’s promise and directly connects it to Jesus, stating even more boldly: “The Word became a human being and lived among us,” while reminding us that the Word is God. Not artificial. Not imitation. Not symbolic. It’s real flesh. Real presence. Real love.

This is the hope we carry into Advent: God enters the artificial—so that we don’t have to stay there.

In a world full of illusions—ancient or modern—God’s answer is embodiment. God comes not as an idea or an image, but as a person with breath, heartbeat, and vulnerability. When everything feels unreal, the incarnation stands as God’s declaration that truth, presence, and humanity still matter.

Jesus is God’s answer to every artificial substitute we’ve used to silence our hunger. Where the artificial promises something it cannot deliver, Jesus delivers what the artificial cannot promise: life, fullness, peace, and presence.

What would our world look like if we took this seriously? One thing is sure: we would reclaim the depth that so easily slips from our grasp. Families might rediscover the value of presence that isn’t mediated by screens. Churches could become sanctuaries of honesty where people are genuinely seen rather than curated. Our civic life might resist the temptations of spectacle, choosing wisdom and integrity over whatever feeds outrage or fear.

Advent invites us to imagine—and practice—a more grounded way of living, one shaped by God’s insistence on the real.

Our companion book for this season, *AI Ethics*, opens with a reminder that technological power now outpaces our moral maturity. Artificial intelligence has become one of the primary ways many people encounter the world. These systems filter what we see, shape what we believe, and in subtle ways redefine what counts as real.

The author, Dr. Mark Coeckelbergh, warns that when a society loses its shared sense of reality, it becomes vulnerable to manipulation, to confusion, and to fear. His observation is not meant to alarm us, but to awaken us to our calling. Christians cannot escape this artificial age, but we are invited to live wisely within it.

Coeckelbergh reminds us that AI systems don’t simply imitate human abilities—they also shape our behavior, our decisions, and even our sense of self. In subtle ways, AI can encourage us to accept imitation for reality. Convenience becomes a kind of comfort.



Russia's invasion of Ukraine is quite personal for photojournalist Julia Kochetova who has observed the war through her camera lens. In interviews and public statements about her work, she has emphasized that photographing war is not simply about capturing destruction but about naming the human cost. Her camera becomes a way of resisting the anonymity that violence imposes. She says her vocation is to "tell the truth about people's lives," because in war, truth itself becomes a contested territory.

Kochetova has also reflected on the ways ordinary Ukrainians have learned to survive amid relentless threat—observing that families, children, and elderly neighbors now instinctively listen for the difference between incoming artillery, the buzz of a drone, or the whine of a missile. It is not a skill anyone seeks to acquire; it is one imposed by necessity.

The ability to distinguish sounds is not poetry, nor hyperbole—it is the grim education of life under bombardment. In a world where drones and remote-guided munitions can be deployed without ever seeing the face of a victim, those who live beneath them must become experts in the machinery of their own endangerment.

Here, the moral dimension intersects with the technological one. Many drones used in modern warfare incorporate AI-assisted systems—such as pattern recognition, autonomous flight stabilization, or target-selection algorithms—that influence who suffers. Violence is mediated by machines that accelerate choices, obscure responsibility, and widen the distance between the one who orders the strike and the one whose life is destroyed by it.

In our companion book for this series, Mark Coeckelbergh calls this the "moral distance" problem: when killing becomes easier because it becomes less personal.

Kochetova's body of work, paired with testimony from other journalists in Ukraine, reveals something else: the targeting of civilians is no accident. Modern warfare often treats cruelty as a strategy—destroying homes, schools, power stations, hospitals—not only to weaken an enemy militarily but to break their will, identity, and future. Photojournalists on the ground witness this first-hand. They move through the rubble after the cameras of the world have turned away. They tell the stories that no algorithm will ever understand.

U.S. photojournalist Lynsey Addario speaks candidly about the emotional cost of her work.

Addario has family she longs to see. She misses birthdays and holidays. She fears for friends on the front line. She has said in various interviews that the hardest part of photographing war is not the danger but the knowledge that many of the people she photographs today may not be alive tomorrow. This is what proximity to suffering looks like—not an abstract moral puzzle, but the weight of real human faces carried home at the end of the day.

Hopefully, their testimonies slow us down and cause us to look again. They force us to face what distance—political, geographical, or technological—makes easy to ignore. And this is where the themes of Artificial Christmas meet the lived experience of those caught in war.

In a world where machines can listen, track, and target without compassion, and where violence can be carried out by screens instead of soldiers, we need something more than a superficial or sentimental peace. We need a peace that restores human presence. A peace that refuses to treat people as abstractions. A peace rooted in justice, dignity, and truth.

Stories like these remind us that peace is not an abstraction. It has faces. It has graves. It has mothers, fathers, children, and elders who bear the marks of decisions made far from their homes.

At the heart of this war is the use of AI-assisted targeting systems—software designed to identify patterns, movements, or heat signatures and determine, in real time, who or what should be struck. Some systems can track a single vehicle for hours or identify a “high-value target” using facial recognition scraped from social media. The line between surveillance and attack has collapsed.

This technology is often described as “precision warfare,” promising fewer civilian deaths. But the promises rarely hold, since warfare increasingly targets civilians deliberately—not as accidents, but as strategy. Cruelty becomes policy. The result is not simply the destruction of buildings but the erosion of moral norms that govern how nations relate to the vulnerable.

When AI speeds up the process—when a drone receives a new target in seconds rather than hours—technology does not produce peace. It simply accelerates harm.

The struggle to restrain violence is as old as Scripture. Before there were armies or weapons forged in fire, Cain rose up and killed his own brother. The first recorded act of violence required no technology at all—only the tragic capacity of humanity to turn against itself. And yet, as history unfolded, we learned how to shape metal into blades, blades into weapons, and weapons into instruments of terror.

God breaks through the artificial.

The prophets confronted this reality head-on. They cried out not only for the end of war but for the transformation of the human heart and the tools it creates. It is into this world—our world—that the angels proclaim “peace on earth” to the shepherds in Luke’s Gospel, and Isaiah envisions a day when nations will beat their swords into plowshares.

This is the world in which we light the candle of peace. And into this world Scripture speaks.

Luke tells us that the birth of Jesus was first announced not to commanders or diplomats but to shepherds, people far from the levers of political power. The angels proclaimed: “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth.”

This proclamation was not wishful thinking. It was a declaration that God’s reign interrupts the violence of our world with a different kind of power. God breaks through the artificial.

Isaiah then lifts our eyes toward a future rooted in God’s justice: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares... nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4).

This is not a call to naïveté. Isaiah understands warfare intimately. His vision is radical precisely because it confronts reality. The transformation he describes—turning weapons into tools for life—is a transformation of purpose, not merely metal. God breaks through the artificial.

*He will settle disputes among great nations. They will hammer their swords into plows and their spears into pruning knives. Nations will never again go to war, never prepare for battle again.*

**Isaiah 2:1-5**

Automation becomes a sort of trust. We slowly trade the unpredictable richness of real relationships for the smooth polish of artificial interaction.

And as our series unfolds, we will explore what it means to live as people of the Light in an age of imitation—how to use technology without being used by it; how to pursue truth in a world full of imitation; and how to find our grounding not in the artificial but in the God who became flesh for us.

Episode one is our starting point, but our journey continues as we ask together: If God enters the artificial, where might He be entering our lives right now—and what real transformation might follow?

So where do we begin? We begin by naming the ache honestly—acknowledging the ways we've settled for artificial comforts instead of seeking the real presence of God. We begin by paying attention—recognizing where artificial solutions have numbed us instead of nourishing us.

We begin by opening ourselves to Advent's promise: The Real has come. The Light has dawned. God enters the artificial.

Advent encourages us to begin with truthfulness about our own lives and to notice where artificial substitutes have replaced embodied presence or real connection. It invites us to small, intentional acts of grounding: a conversation without distractions, a shared meal, a moment of quiet reflection, or an act of care that cannot be automated or optimized. As artificial systems increasingly mediate our attention, Advent asks us to cultivate discernment—to verify before sharing, to pause before reacting, and to choose depth over speed.

This year, for Advent, we begin with a simple proclamation: we live in a world shaped by the artificial, but we worship a God who enters the real. The incarnation is God's response to our longing, reminding us that hope does not emerge from manufactured things.

Instead, hope was born in a manger—in the most uncrated way possible—and grows into a light the darkness cannot overcome. Advent invites us to follow that light, trusting that God rescues the artificial, not by avoiding it, but by transforming it with presence and truth.

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

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



The Prophet Micah echoes the same hope: a world in which people sit under their own vines and fig trees, unafraid; a world where weaponry is no longer the organizing principle of national identity.

These texts do not deny the brutality of the world. They speak into it. They name a peace that is not coerced but cultivated, not imposed but embodied.

If Scripture offers the vision, our age confronts the question: How do we live toward that vision when our tools and technologies can be used for both harm and healing? This question leads us into the ethical terrain of technology—ancient and modern.

Long before artificial intelligence existed, humanity struggled with the dual use of technology. The blacksmith's forge could shape a plow or a sword. The question was never whether metal could be formed, but for what purpose and in whose hands.

Our companion book, *AI Ethics*, reminds us that technology does not possess morality on its own. Human intention shapes the outcome. Without justice, "precision" becomes a more efficient form of cruelty. Without accountability, automation magnifies the impulses of whoever wields it.

Isaiah's image of beating swords into plowshares is not a mandate to abandon tools, but to redeploy them toward flourishing. The prophetic imagination pushes

us to imagine drones that deliver medicine rather than missiles, algorithms that track missing persons rather than amplify disinformation, and data systems that protect children rather than monitor dissidents.

And it challenges us to resist the seductive idea that peace can be achieved by forcing the vulnerable to accept injustice. For Ukrainians, the question is painfully real: Can peace be called peace if it requires them to lose their home, their language, or their freedom? Scripture's answer is clear—peace without justice is not God's peace.

These reflections bring us to the core of Advent: not simply observing the world as it is, but preparing ourselves for the world God intends. Advent is the season when we choose hope in the midst of sorrow, when we acknowledge the world's wounds without surrendering to them. When we practice the waiting that forms moral courage.

*Artificial Christmas* challenges us to examine how our tools shape our souls. Our digital habits, our engagement with news, our trust in algorithms, and our fears of the future all influence how we understand peace. Yet Christ calls us to a peace made of courage and compassion, not complacency.

In Christ, God enters a world ruled by violence and chooses vulnerability. In Christ, God reveals that justice is not a distant dream but a lived commitment. And in Christ, God invites us to join the

work of reshaping our world—one tool, one decision, one act of compassion at a time.

May this Advent transform our imagination and our use of technology, so that we become people who not only pray for peace but practice it. People who look honestly at Ukraine's suffering and refuse to avert our gaze. People who resist imitation light and walk toward the Light that the darkness cannot overcome.

Remember, that God breaks through the artificial.

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

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## 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



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**UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH - SECOND ANNUAL COOKIE WALK!!**

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2025 – 11AM TO 2PM



1. Select Cookie Assortment Bag Size
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**For more information or to send in an order, contact us by phone after 3pm and leave a message, or by email:**

**Calvary UMC 810-238-7685 flintcalvary@gmail.com**

**Hope UMC 810-732-4820 or Kathy 810-814-0731**

**Angie 810-2757034 angjohnn@gmail.com**

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



**Call Baba Collins at 810-394-3880  
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