

“Justice Rolling Down”  
Amos 5:18-24

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I’ve spent the better part of this week wondering what a post-election sermon would look like in 2020. I assumed that I needed to know the results before I could find my inspiration, that the political climate might change the arc of what I am called to preach this week. Then I received a text message that changed my perspective, or rather, brought it back to God’s perspective.

A wise woman reminded me of a question posed to me early in 2016 when I was interviewing to be Edgewood’s perspective pastor. The last question the search committee asked me was, “What are you going to preach on the Sunday before the 2016 presidential election?” The answer then is the same today: our worship is grounded in story and a faith that outlasts the politics of today. Our call is the same today as the same yesterday, same after the 2020 presidential election as it was before and after the 2016 election.

I want to do something that I almost never do, and I want to share some of my sermon from November 6, 2016, a day when we were in the same liminal space we were in this week, at the threshold of something new but not knowing what would unfold or where we would go next. These words were as true four years ago as they are today:

“As we enter into a week when the only thing certain is that big changes are coming, we are called to remember where our hope comes from. Does our hope come from Washington? Has our hope *ever* come from Washington? We are a people who have historically worked *with* the system to enact justice, and worked to *change* the system whenever it fails, but we have never been a people to turn to the government for hope,

love, or comfort. The nature of political campaigning, especially on the presidential scale, is that our candidates try to convince us that they alone can save us and protect us. This is not and has never been true. We are not in the business of electing Saviors. We are electing representatives for whom we will hold accountable to work and represent not just us, but all of God's people.

Stand firm and hold fast. As we look forward to how our country might be shaped in the next four years, we should also look back to remind ourselves of whom we already are, and who we – meaning the “we” right here in this sanctuary today – have always been. At Edgewood, we are not prone to sitting around and waiting for someone else to do the work for us or demonstrate God's love to the world on our behalf. We are a people of action, a people whose faith is embodied in our everyday efforts to live out God's love right here in our community.”

That message from 2016 has guided us through four years of speaking out against xenophobia, racism, sexism, and homophobia. In these four years we have invited speakers and art exhibits to share with us the experience of being an immigrant in Central Michigan as we have advocated for an end to dehumanizing immigration policies. We supported the birth of Lansing’s only LGBTQ center, providing refuge for queer and trans people of color at a time when LGBTQ visibility was being erased at a national level. We partnered with our local Islamic Center to build deeper relationships in opposition to anti-Muslim policies and rhetoric. We proclaimed that Black Lives Matter, did intensive learning about systemic racism and white privilege, and have fundraised to support Mother’s Day Bail Outs for women of color in our community. We have worked to amplify diverse voices and experiences and de-center whiteness in our own

congregation, and we know it will take a whole lot more than four years for that work to unfold. We have listened, learned, advocated, marched, and stood in solidarity more times than I can list.

And we're not done. We've only just begun. The challenge of the prophet Amos' message is that everyone thinks Amos is warning someone else about God's displeasure. But his words are for us. We are not to become so focused on ourselves, or on our celebrations, that we lose sight of the knowledge that God cares about one thing: justice rolling down like waters, righteousness throughout our lands like an ever-flowing stream.

We have seen glimpses of justice these past four years, and none of them have come from the White House. I suspect that whatever gains we make in these next four years, the changes that take root in meaningful ways in our community, won't come from the White House either. They will come from communities and people of faith who are unrelentless in their work for justice. Unrelentless in their quest for righteousness. Unwavering in their called to eradicate oppression and spread a radical message of God's love for all people. We are called to continue the work, today, for the next four years, and until such a time as justice rolls down like water, righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amen.