

CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

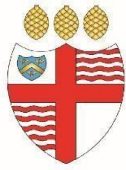
I speak to you as a sinner to sinners, as the beloved of God to God's beloved, as one called to bear witness to those called to bear witness. Amen.

In just a few weeks, we are going to watch the Super Bowl, and I don't care who plays. What I watch the Super Bowl for is the commercials. I love the commercials. I try to get pirated copies of the commercials ahead of time because I cannot wait. I love the commercials. Why? Because these commercials are a great gambit on the part of companies to try to capture our attention and to name a national mood.

And the best commercials – I know this from marketing classes. The best commercials are not simply those that fill you with a bit of jealousy that you don't have the product. The best commercials are not those that fill you with a sense of need for this beautiful, shiny new object. The best commercials are not those that somehow tap into your desire to advance yourself. The best commercials are those that somehow reinforce in you your identity, and show you who you are truly. The best commercials show you how this product can create a cooperation between you, the customer, and the company who provides the product so that you can somehow be creative in ways you never imagined.

One of my favorite commercials came in 1984. It was for the Apple Macintosh. It was this moment where this beautiful athlete swung a hammer around her head and threw it into a screen in this setting that was meant to convey a totalitarian state, and the screen explodes and light shines, and then it says Macintosh. And immediately I went out and bought a Macintosh because in that moment I saw why I needed a personal computer. Until that point, I had looked at a personal computer as a kind of glorified typewriter. But in fact, after watching that commercial, I realized that my personal computer was more like a paintbrush. It was going to help me be creative. I'd be able to do things I never imagined with a personal computer.

But my favorite commercial of all time, one that I have studied because I think it conveys a message that is incredibly powerful, an identity that is so true and spot on that I want to lift it up before you today, is from 2011 and it's called "Born of Fire" by Whedon and Kennedy. It was shown at the 2011 Super Bowl, and it was for the Chrysler 200. And it didn't just talk about a product, the Chrysler 200, it talked about the city of Detroit.



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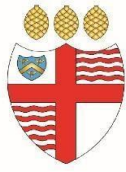
And I realize that some of you might not remember this. Some of you have been born after 2011, and so I'm just going to paint the picture from the beginning because this commercial is so worked into my consciousness. It begins with a kind of new innovative camera technique, which was called guerilla techniques, in which you kind of catch things off kilter and you focus in on different things, and you're almost like you're walking into a landscape and noting what's there in the environment as you make your way.

And it approaches Detroit from the south on I-75, not the prettiest approach to our city, and it begins to talk about our struggles. In 2011, we were in the midst of going down and the city would later declare bankruptcy in 2013. And it begins to name all of these iconic images about Detroit. This was meant to talk about Detroit. It's meant to talk about the factory work that we do in Detroit. And so it shows Joe Louis's fist pointed towards Canada that is there quite beautifully. And then it showed the Diego Rivera's Detroit Industry and the DIA, which is one of the most amazing frescoes that has ever been composed.

Riviera showed a picture from the River Rouge plant at Ford, and in it he put in an ethnically diverse and racially diverse workforce working together in industry. And what people don't always remember is that in 1933, factory production was still racially and ethnically segregated, but Diego Rivera believed in Detroit and he believed that in this industry we would find our way forward, and so he depicts this incredibly diverse workforce working together to lift the city.

And then you see the person who is the main character of the commercial. You see the car but you see the driver and the driver was the rapper, Eminem, Marshall Mathers. Eminem had come to prominence in the late nineties and early two thousands. He had an iconic movie made about him in 2002 called Eight Mile, and then he began to struggle with depression and he began to struggle with addiction. But he came back. One of his first great returns, and he changed the name of his album in 2010 from Relapse: Part Two to Recovery.

He came by his recovery with a sense of integrity. He didn't sign up for many commercials. He didn't endorse many products, but you saw him at the wheel of a Chrysler 200. And he's driving through a city at night, a city that has struggled to lift itself up. And he pulls up in front of Fox Theater and he gets out of his car and he goes down a ramp of an empty theater and there is a choir waiting on the stage. And suddenly you realize that the commercial you've been watching isn't just for a car. And it isn't just for a company, it isn't just for a city, but it was also in



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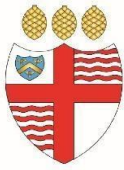
some ways about a church. And he climbs the stage and the choir sings and he delivers a line.

Now, I know that some of you haven't seen this commercial for a minute, and so I've asked the choir to help me. And if you'd turn to page eight, I'm going to recreate the libretto from this commercial. And you should know that the voice actor who did this libretto, he was from Midland, Michigan. And he felt like when he did it, he said, I thought I did about 50/50 not a great job. And he won an award for it. And so the choir's going to help me, and Jonathan's going to help me. And here it is.

"I got a question for you. What does this city know about luxury, huh? What does a town that's been to hell and back know about the finer things in life? Well, I'll tell you. More than most. You see, it's the hottest fires that make the hardest steel. Add hard work and conviction, and the know-how that runs generations deep in every one of us. That's who we are. That's our story. Now, it's probably not the one you've been reading in the papers, the one being written by folks who have never even been here and don't know what we're capable of. Because when it comes to luxury, it's as much about where it's from, as who it's for. Now we're from America, but this isn't New York City or the Windy City or Sin City, and we're certainly no one's Emerald City. This is the Motor City and this is what we do."

Can you join me in thanking the choir for that? Now I'm trying to paint the picture of this commercial for you because I feel like there's a lot of competing narratives out there. There's a lot of competing narratives about the shape of this country. There are a lot of competing narratives about the shape of the church. There's a lot of competing narratives about what this city is and what isn't. But that commercial, that told our story, that told this story. It was at a moment where you and I, citizens of Detroit, were faced in our history with the opportunity to make a decision. Were we going to be subject to fear? Were we going to be subject to fear, or were we going to be people of love?

Those were the decisions that we had to make. We had to choose whether we were going to be people of fear and people of love, and this city made that choice at that time to be people of love. What does it mean to be subject to fear? It means to be subject to a very fixed moment because when you are full of fear, you ossify the relationships around you and you fix in stone the other who you are opposing. What does it mean to be subject to fear? It's to become fragile because as strong as you might seem in your beliefs, you become brittle the moment those fears are challenged.



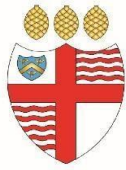
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What does it mean to be subject to fear? It means to have your sphere of concern shrink. You become subject to yourself and concerned with your survival. But cities cannot be built on fear. You can build a wall on fear. You can build a fortress on fear, but you cannot build a city. Cities need love to be built, only love builds a city that lasts. And love is unlike fear in almost every way. Love sees in these blessed exchanges that happen in a city, an opportunity not just for transaction, but for transformation. Love sees in the moments that we find ourselves in, in which there is conflict and challenge and difference and opportunity, not to be fragile, but to be flexible. Love has, when it permeates a body – and I mean not just the body personal, I mean the body politic. When it permeates a body, love becomes a source of an increase in concern.

This commercial told the story of our city, and one of the things that I am most proud of is I am from a place that had a decision to make and we chose love. It was a hard choice, but we did it. And that goes with the grain of our reading today from 1 Corinthians. Paul is talking to a community that is divided, and he says to them that they need to see themselves as members of one another, as captive to one another, as enamored with one another, as part of one another, as one body, not many members out of love. And so he says that the hand cannot say to the eye, I have no need of thee.

In our tradition, the Anglican tradition, one of the great architects of our tradition, Richard Hooker, writes about sin. He defines sin differently than many others. He says, sin is the deliberate decision to say to any other person or member of this universe, I need thee not. Because what happens when we love is we have to admit that we need each other. That is what it means to let love guide you in building your communities.

And what goes for a city goes for a church. You and I have a decision to make as a church each day, but today is an important day to make that decision, particularly given all the narratives that are around us. We get to choose our narrative. We can choose to love, we can step away from fear, and we've done that over the past year in amazing ways. And yes, that can be misunderstood, and yes, that can be challenging. And yes, that's going to force us to be flexible when we are encountering difference, it's going to force us to have a concern for others that is going to stretch us, and it's going to have us realize in every exchange that there is an opportunity for transformation rather than just transaction. But that is the promise of the gospel. That is what makes us who we are.



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Over the past year, we have come upon this strategy, which I have called the "architecture of belonging." Why? Because we see the world around us as being captivated by loneliness. We see loneliness as a kind of epidemic, and loneliness has been filling people with fear. Loneliness has been fixing our beliefs. Loneliness has been making us fragile, and so we have spoken about the architecture of belonging because what holds us together is that love, that transformation, that ability to be flexible, that need for each other and that growing concern for others.

And we have said and shown that all of what we do comes from five practices that we've done. We've given reverence to God because God is at the center of all we do and we'll be lost without God. We've talked about the necessity of relationship because our relationship with each other and our relationship with God is the source of our strength, our identity. It's the story we tell. We talk about the work of recovery because all of us are broken and beautiful people, and we all need to recover from something. We talk about the work of repair because this world needs us and the world around us. This world needs us and we need them. And finally we talk about the work of renewal because when we do all those things, when we enter in and lean in, when we decide, yes, I'm going to be for love, yes, we are going to be for love, when we say those things, renewal happens in this church in a way that is a witness to other churches.

For the past year, we've been talking a bit about this architecture of belonging, and we have stumbled upon a strategy, not just for survival, but for moving into the new way in which we are in the world around us. That new chapter in our lives as a church in which we will bear witness, you and I today have that opportunity. And all that pits you and all that disturbs you, know that you are needed here. No matter what you believe, no matter who you are, our lives would not only be incomplete without you, but we would be unfaithful to God if we didn't say, we need you at this time. We need you at this time because God has called us together to be his people of love.

And no, this isn't a commercial; this is a way of life. The authenticity God is asking us to enter into now more than ever, choose love, forsake fear. Choose love.

Amen.