

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER



Volume 2 Issue 5

December 5, 2021

## Urgency (Such a time as this<sup>1</sup>)



I have a round wooden token on my desk that I received while attending a seminar. It was at least 20 years ago, and I've long forgotten the subject matter. The token has the words printed on one

side: "Round Tuit."

Reasonable guesses as to the theme of the seminar would center around urgency. That is, moving from an attitude of "When I get around to

it" towards a greater sense of urgency. Here again, the play on words is powerful. Now that I have the "round tuit" I was waiting for — the time to move forward is now.

I remember an interview with Dr. Brené Brown where she described the culture of her family environment as a "lock and load" mentality.

Page 6



Please continue to wear your masks when in the building. If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you.

**DONATE**

## Inside this issue:

Urgency	1
Peace	1
In Our Prayers/Coming up this Week	3
Asbury Worship Series	4
Pastor's Book Club	4
Leadership in Worship & Service	4
Asbury Worship Series	5
Urgency	6
Peace	7
Small Group Questions & Notes	8
Feed Flint	9
Feed Flint	10
SFSK December Dates	11
Asbury Veggie Boxes	12
Urgency	13

## Peace (The Fear of Home)



Are you a Flintstone? I love this play on words, even though I realize it doesn't apply to me. I have no claim to being a Flintstone unless I pass some

time test after living here for over ten years. Some say that Flintstones are persons who were born in Flint.

I decided to do a little research, so I went to a popular source, *Wikipedia*. And I discovered, according to this source, that "Flintstones" referred initially to Mateen Cleaves, Morris Peterson, and Charlie Bell. These three basketball players from Flint helped lead the Michigan State Spartans to three consecutive Final Fours and a national championship.

Page 2

## Peace (The Fear of Home)....cont from page 1

*Wikipedia* also noted that the use of Flintstones now refers to Flint natives. This implies birthrights rather than occupational rights, which leaves me an outsider. But is Flint still "home" for me?

When I first arrived in Flint, I noticed something unfamiliar for me. When I asked the persons living in our neighborhood where they call home, their response most often began with the phrase "I stay at" followed by a location. Is home the place where we stay?

In an article that introduced this month's series, I wrote that "Home is whatever place you feel hope, peace, joy, and love. It is a place where hope never fades entirely out." For most of us, we find home wherever we are at the time that we're searching for home. In this case, we don't need a plane ticket or a gas card to go home. But this also suggests that when we lose hope, or when our joy fades, love evades us, or peace seems impossible, we leave home in some way.

Admittedly, we each experience "home" in different ways. If our topic is "going" home, we must be talking mainly about a place somewhere other than where we are currently. And if this place we call home offers us peace, why would we experience anxiety while contemplating our upcoming journey?

It's complicated.

I still remember returning "home" several months after I left to attend college. As the summer after high school came to an end, I loaded up my parent's car with my belongings for the drive to Bowling Green. I was moving away from home for the first time. "Home" as the place where my parents lived would never be the same.

I didn't get haircuts when I lived on campus while attending college. I'm sure that my new city of residence had barbers, but I seldom had extra money that wasn't already spoken for. And I never had long hair before, so the first time I went home for Christmas, I was greeted with "You need a haircut." Admittedly, this is not a harsh judgment for a person who doesn't spend time in front of mirrors, but this would be sufficient reason to dread going home for some.

As a parent, I know how quickly our standards drop out of focus for our children. And how quickly seemingly reasonable requests can escalate into arguments. This is hardly a peaceful scenario.

For others, the home of parents was never a place of peace. Rather the memories of abuse and violence overshadow any sense of longing. In this case, home is clearly somewhere else.

Can we agree that home is a place that gives us a sense of belonging? A place, physical or otherwise, where we fit in? Simple enough on the surface, but belonging is a very personal notion. When I say that "I feel like I belong here," our understanding of the "I" is crucial. Let me explain.

Research Psychologist Dr. Brene Brown, in her book, *Braving the Wilderness*, offered a definition of belonging that really hits "home" for me (pun intended). But first, Dr. Brown quoted poet Maya Angelou in an interview with Bill Moyers, "You are only free when you realized you belong no place." Dr. Brown shared that this quote made her angry every time she thought about it.<sup>2</sup>

I noticed that my stomach did a few flips the first time I read Maya's words. This doesn't sound like a place I want to call home. Is this what Dorothy meant in the Wizard of Oz when she said, "There's no place like home?" That we don't belong any place in particular?

Frankly, I get it. As I read Dr. Brown's introduction to her book, I realized one thing we have in common is a sense of not belonging due to multiple moves while growing up. Once we've lived in different neighborhoods and schools, you feel like you don't belong anywhere. In which case, our desire to belong can feel like everything.

**In Our Prayers**

Kevin Croom  
 Sylvia Pittman  
 Shirley Craig  
 Richard Oram



**FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE**

Nancy Elston            Elaine Lamoreaux  
 Norma Buzzard        Mary Nations

**Coming up this week**

**\*\* PASTOR BOOK CLUB NEWS:**

Pastor Book Club is still meeting via Zoom. Please call the Church Office for more info 810-235-0016 as it changes.

Meanwhile, as a lot of you are already aware, sharp increases in new infections of COVID are pushing us back into isolation. While our regular attenders are vaccinated, we realize that a large number of persons are not vaccinated.

Therefore, we reinstated our policy to require masks in our building for all persons when not eating or drinking. If you don't have a mask, we can provide one for you, just ask the office.

Thank you and everyone stay safe!



- Dec 6    Mon
- Dec 7    Tues    10:00am-12:30pm  
            Food/Water Distribution
- Dec 8    Wed    12Noon            Book Club  
            11:00am-12N    Food Giveaway at  
                         South Flint Soup Kitchen  
                         (No Appointments Needed)
- Dec 9    Thu
- Dec 10   Fri
- Dec 11   Sat    12Noon            Food Not Bombs
- Dec 12   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](http://FlintAsbury.org).)

*Asbury Worship Series*  
*Time to go home*  
*(A search for normal)*



Licensed Image...Adobe

The pandemic has proven pervasive and invasive. Michigan is again at or near the top of new COVID cases. A lack of co-operation, absurd conspiracy theories and outright lies conspire to thwart the efforts of our health professionals to protect us. And we're faced with the potential for another dangerous Christmas season. It's frustrating and downright depressing to think about it.

Our new series, *Time to go home*, is in some ways a search for "normal" or at least a search for the intersection between tradition and our current reality. The idea of going home for the holidays is a favorite Hallmark movie theme. There is something about familiarity that comforts us. <sup>1</sup>

**Book Club News**

We concluded our discussions of *Better together* by Danielle Bean. We're taking a break from choosing another book during the holidays. Instead, we're talking about what it means to go home for Christmas. Of course, our conversations are within the context of some of the prophecies found in scripture about the birth of Christ and what Jesus said about His return.

Recent increases in new infections of COVID among the unvaccinated are pushing us

**Leadership in Worship & Service**

Tony, Mirium	Welcome Team
Anthony, Jim	Ushers
Jonathon, Terrance	Production Team
Miriam	Children
Cyndi	Worship Leader
Christine & Norma	Cafe

**Asbury Staff**

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor & Exec Dir
Connie Portillo	Office Manager
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Exec Chef & Dir Opers

back into isolation. While our regular attenders are vaccinated, we realize that a large number of persons are not vaccinated. Therefore, we reinstated our policy to require masks in our building for all persons when not eating or drinking.

We strongly urge all persons to get vaccinated as soon as practical unless advised by your doctor. Avoid news sources and rumors that promote baseless claims and pay closer attention to the experts we depend on to keep us safe.

We each make our own arrangements for lunch at this point. However, we look forward to returning to pot-luck lunches when infection rates fall. We anticipate this happening as the number of vaccinations reaches herd immunity levels, and the CDC relaxes precautionary measures.

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away I encourage you to join us online for our Wednesday gatherings. Alternatively, you can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others say by calling (929) 436-2866 -- enter the meeting ID, 282 039 5568#.

We are a diverse group, and we are delighted when new persons join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — [FlintAsbury.org](http://FlintAsbury.org).

Pastor Tommy



Matt DePalma	Farms Manager
Chris Freeman	South Campus Bldg Mgr
Israel Unger	Finance Director
Kim Sims	Connections Suprv
Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
Katelin Maylum	Sr Mgr Local Food



*Time to go home (A search for normal) ... Asbury Worship Series*

If our memories of home are tainted with trauma, our search looks elsewhere when we feel as though our joy is under siege.

Families, communities, cities, and religious groups have varying ideas for rituals of celebration. And our calendars routinely overlap. Since Asbury Church comes out of Christian orientation, our calendar calls for a time of reflection, celebration, and communal rituals beginning on the last Sunday of November. The insider term is "Advent," but we're okay with simply calling this time the holiday season.

Advent captures a sense of anticipation about the future. Traditionally, we choose a theme each week that illuminates that which we're anticipating. Words like hope, peace, joy, and love show up on banners and posters to remind us of what we're expecting to find as we celebrate Christmas and beyond.

This year, our plan is to capture the spirit of this particular Christmas in a dramatic role-play that combines our present-day reality with the wonderment of anticipation. Even though the birth of Christ took place over two thousand years ago, we want to share the emotion felt by first-hand witnesses. But we weren't there, and any attempt we make looking backward is only partial.

We believe that the birth of the Christ child was anticipated for generations and interpret ancient prophecies as predictions of His arrival. Therefore, Advent is also about the promises He made and our anticipation of their fulfillment.

The main character in our role-playing is Mary, and the connection with the biblical character is intentional. Christmas is a big deal for Mary. And each year, she looks forward to time off from work, getting together with family, exchanging gifts, and lots of Christmas gatherings. Last year was a massive disappointment for Mary. This Christmas was supposed to be different.

Mary's Christmas journey isn't her's alone. Along the way, she meets others who, like her, struggle with our present circumstances. Mary also meets a few fascinating characters who try to help her see the joy in every Christmas.

Home is whatever place you feel hope, peace, joy, and love. It is a place where hope never fades entirely out. Home is space, feelings, longing, desires, and wholeness. And so, going home is a journey worth making.

The latest colder weather is bringing more people together indoors. Closer contact with each other, supercharged by new variants of COVID, is driving a resurgence of new infections among the unvaccinated. It's time to come out of whatever fears or biases keep you from being a part of the solution. Get vaccinated! If you've already done your part, thank you, but don't forget to get your booster.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes live on our [\*\*\*YouTube channel\*\*\*](#). We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [\*\*\*website\*\*\*](#) at [\*\*\*FlintAsbury.org\*\*\*](#).

Pastor Tommy

<sup>1</sup> Katelin Maylum, Tommy McDoniel, and Terrance Williams. "Home for Christmas. Flint, Michigan. © Asbury Church, 2021.

## Urgency (Such a time as this<sup>1</sup>).. *cont. from pg 1*

The inclination seems to suggest that her family was action-oriented with little or no planning ahead of time.

Another phrase that illustrates this tendency to respond without first looking at consequences is "ready-fire-aim." Consultants seem to never run out of slogans that remind us of essential points.

Admittedly, I've collected numerous slogans over the years, trying most of them on for size and either adopting or discarding them along the way. I've also left for trips without so much as a map or a plan. And I've missed opportunities waiting for the right time. It's hard to get the timing just right.

This reminds me of another favorite — a good plan well executed is better than a great plan waiting to get started. The goal is to find a balance between fact gathering, planning, and moving ahead.

If only it was so easy.

Who else has discovered very rational reasons for hesitation when it comes to risk? Behavior psychologists, fascinated with researching why some of us are risk-takers while others are risk-averse, have written volumes on determining where we fit.

One of my favorites is a mother-daughter duo, Katharine Cook Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers. While their contemporaries criticize their lack of scientific rigidity in their research, their observations opened up a century of debate on the subject. Are we born as either risk-takers or risk-avoiders?

The Book of Esther is a fascinating story about risk-taking and timing and was written sometime after the fall of Jerusalem when Jews were scattered.

Sidnie Crawford, in her commentary, describes Esther's story as "an exciting, fast-paced story... with all the elements of a popular romance novel." The writers leave God's role in this story to the imaginations and faith of the reader. But the storyteller's ability to use drama and humor to expose themes of racial hatred, pride, vanity, and the threat of genocide makes this novelette a must-read. It seems fitting that Sidnie would dedicate her interpretation of Esther to her mother, who she declares is likewise a heroine.<sup>2</sup>

The story's setting is ancient Persia during a time when King Xerxes ruled over 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. The king loved to show off his wealth and was generous with his guests, which sometimes included all of his subjects, whether rich or poor. His parties featured an open bar with no limits.

One day the king sent for Queen Vashti to show her off to his guests, but the Queen refused to come. The king was furious at the Queen's rejection. So he issued a mandate naming men the head of their households with total authority over everyone in their homes. And with the urging of his advisors, Xerxes authorized a search for a new queen.

Esther was a young woman at the time and became one of the chosen candidates. She attended charm and beauty schools, along with the other candidates, but stood out among all of the others. Esther kept her heritage a secret at the advice of her older cousin, Mordecai, who adopted her as his daughter. Esther's relatives were among the thousands of Jews living throughout Persia.

Esther becomes Queen, and Mordecai is given an administrative position in the palace with access to the king's top advisors. Hearing two officials plotting against the king, Mordecai tells Esther, who exposes their plans to the king, who launches an investigation that validates the plot.

I've been slow to learn that fitting in is not the same thing as belonging. I've never been very good at fitting in either. It's hard to find peace trying to pretend that the person others see when they look at you is real. Because when that person doesn't exist, there is a sense of being invisible that overshadows any sense of belonging.

I will send my messenger to prepare the way for me. Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to his Temple.

Malachi 3:1

You have to be seen to belong, and people can't see you if you're invisible. But to visibly emerge is frightening. I discovered that I'm actually afraid to go home because I'm fearful that if I am myself, I don't belong there.

So Going home is what Christmas is really about, Charlie Brown, so Linus can keep his thoughts to himself. But is this really what Christmas is all about — going home?

The prophecies associated with God's decision to live among us in human form are significant for Christians. And as Christmas approaches, we hold onto these promises to get us through the anxieties of everyday life.

One relatively obscure prophet named Malachi offered this message from God that continues to resonate when we think about Christmas. Malachi said that a messenger will prepare the way for God to appear in the flesh. What does it mean to prepare the way for God to come? And when God arrives, will God feel a sense of going home like belonging?

How can we prepare the way for God's homecoming?

I read where people are decorating Christmas trees earlier than ever this year. After working all week, my sister's neighbor turned on their light display the Friday after Thanksgiving. This is one way to prepare.

Our series for this year's holiday season is *Going home*. During Thanksgiving, the news stories focused on people traveling, and with COVID cases rising to new levels, travel is likely to top the charts again during Christmas. Along with product shortages, higher gas prices, of course, COVID. So going home, if home is elsewhere, is risky business again this year.



Perhaps this Christmas, we can focus some of our energy that COVID insists we don't utilize to focus on our sense of belonging. Not because we try to fit in, but because we reveal more of who we are as the person God created us to be.

You can join us each Sunday online by going to the button on the homepage of our [website](#) - [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to a viewer to allow you to join live or watch later in the week. We're also live on our [YouTube channel](#). You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).

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Pastor Tommy

<sup>1</sup> Katelin Maylum, Tommy McDaniel, and Terrance Williams. "Home for Christmas." Flint, Michigan. © Asbury Church, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Brené Brown. *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone*. NY: Random House, 2017.

Life groups questions & notes:

*I will send my messenger to prepare the way for me. Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger you long to see will come and proclaim my covenant.*

Malachi 3:1-4 (GNT)

**NOTES FROM WORSHIP**

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**QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS**

1. Read the book of Malachi 3:1-4. Who is the Messenger for you? What is their message? The Prophet Malachi says that this Messenger will also come as a divine judge — does this worry you? Why or why not? What do you believe that judgment means in this case?
2. Read the article in this week’s Circuit Rider, *Peace*. Where is home for you? What memories do you have of Christmas at home? Are they good or bad memories for you? Where do you feel like you belong? Are you a Flintstone? What does belonging mean for you? In what ways are you preparing a way for God to live among us?
3. How can the members of your group help you this week and on-going to help you to be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.




“Feed Flint”



## “Feed Flint”

Page 10



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)



SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN  
PRESENTS...

# DECEMBER GIVEAWAYS!

Have a jolly holly holiday season in our Angel Closet!

**ANGEL CLOSET: DECEMBER 1ST**  
**CHRISTMAS CLOSET: DECEMBER 22ND**  
**APPOINTMENT ONLY! CALL 810-239-3427**  
**OR EMAIL**  
**SOUTHFLINTSOUPKITCHEN@GMAIL.COM**

**FOOD GIVEAWAYS: DECEMBER 8TH &**  
**15TH - NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED FOR**  
**FOOD!!!**

**ALL GIVEAWAYS 11AM-NOON**

**South Flint Soup Kitchen**  
**3410 Fenton Road**  
**Flint, MI 48507 (three blocks north of**  
**Atherton Road)**





**ASBURY FARM FRESH**

**- TRY OUR WEEKLY VEGGIE BOX FOR \$10.00 -**

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Select what goes in your box from each week's harvest. Get \$5 off your next order when you fill your box with \$15 of produce.

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Choose Veggie Box Subscription and we will fill your order with a variety of each week's harvest. Pay when you pick up your box. **A \$15 VALUE FOR \$10.**

**\* CONVENIENT PICKUP AT ASBURY OR AT THE SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN \***

Meanwhile, the king appoints a new Prime Minister by the name of Haman and orders all subjects to bow to him. But Mordecai refuses to bow. When Haman demands an explanation, Mordecai explains that he is Jewish and their customs prevent showing such allegiance.

Haman is furious and goes to the king with a plan to justify arresting and executing anyone of Jewish descent. His approach is straightforward and gets repeated by candidates and politicians throughout history. These people are not like us and pose a threat so let's rob and eliminate them for our own protection and peace of mind.

When Esther learns that Mordecai is protesting, she sends messengers to try and convince him to stop, but he refuses. Instead, Mordecai sends back a message often repeated by persons knowledgeable of this story and facing a difficult decision.

*Yet who knows—maybe it was for a time like this that you were made queen!*

*Esther 4:14*

Mordecai acknowledges the great risk that Esther is facing if she chooses to confront the King about his decision. And then, as

though it was simply an afterthought, Mordecai adds, "Yet who knows—maybe it was for a time like this that you were made queen!"

Hundreds of years later people of Jewish faith celebrate the Festival of Purim. This celebration remembers the heroic acts of Esther who saved her people through her willingness to take action with urgency, despite the risk. And her story is retold year after year as part of her people's celebrations.

Perhaps you are not faced with an act of heroism or even a decision that comes with great risk. On the other hand, life often presents forks in the roads we travel. Our choices may be between multiple options or not. But no choice is still a choice.

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Pastor Tommy

<sup>1</sup> Much of the content of this series is based on the book: Danielle Bean. *You are Enough: What Women of the Bible Teach You about Your Mission and Worth*. West Chester, PA: Ascension Publishing, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Sidnie White Crawford. "The Book of Esther," *The New Interpreters Bible*, Vol III. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999.

