

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 16

January 16, 2022

## No Bull (Speaking truth to bull artists)



We've all been there. A time when someone is speaking about a topic they clearly know nothing about. Truth and lies flow out with equal measure and emphasis. Even if we like the person our minds wander to more productive scenery, wondering when the speaker will finally grow tired of hearing the sound of their own voice.

This scenario, according to Princeton Professor Harry Frankfurt, is an illustration of bull (2nd word intentionally omitted).<sup>2</sup>

"[Bull] is a greater enemy of truth than lies are," concludes Professor Frankfurt. The bull artist is so dangerous because he or she makes no distinction between truth and lies. Fact or fiction doesn't matter to the speaker. A liar at least cares about the truth. The bull artist writes

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:

No Bull	1
Temptations	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
No Bull	6
Temptations	7
Small Group Questions & Notes	8
Feed Flint	9
Feed Flint	10
SFSK January Dates	11
Asbury Veggie Boxes	12
Open Mic Night at Asbury	13

## Temptations (Packing for the wilderness<sup>1</sup>)



It's 2022 — a new year is underway. Have you committed to any resolutions this year? If not, I highly recommend it. Even if you don't keep them, there is therapy

committing to important ideas and moving in a direction that helps them come true. If you have committed to New Year resolutions, I hope you'll take those first steps.

During our December series, *Going home*, the topic of belonging emerged. Of course, we want to go home for Christmas because home is where we belong. But what if I told you that you need to pack for the wilderness to travel to a place of true belonging?

If belonging and wilderness sound like two different places to you, then our January series,

Page 2



## Temptations (Packing for the wilderness<sup>1</sup>) ....cont from page 1

*Wilderness experience*, will offer you some crucial insights into what it means to belong.

Admittedly, the wilderness is the go-to metaphor for places where the welcome sign seems more like an invitation for bad things to happen. Poems, scripture, songs, and artistic expressions of all genres use the idea of wilderness as that place where we are more apt to spend time alone.

The connection between wilderness experiences and belonging is a paradox. They fit more comfortably as opposites, and it seems absurd to put wilderness experience and belonging together. But paradoxes are those contradictions that prove to be true.

So if we are headed out into the wilderness, how do we pack? How do we prepare for our journey?

The wilderness experience recommended by Dr. Brené Brown does not require us to pack a suitcase. Carrying any extra baggage weighs us down, and this is the problem. We get to the wilderness by first shedding anything that changes who we are to the people around us.

We use the wilderness as a metaphor for this place of vulnerability. We choose to be authentic but it takes courage to avoid being inauthentic to fit in. "But I don't try to fit in," you respond, "I'm usually on the other side of most arguments."

According to Dr. Brown's research, finding value in fitting in and finding value in being different, defiant, or contrarian are two sides of the same coin. For the contrarian, being true to who God created us to be is likely to cause us to agree with others on issues that we thought we opposed. Likewise, those of us who show agreement to fit in may discover that we don't agree at all.

The wilderness is where we take a stand on who we are and what we believe even though we are likely to face criticism. And this is why we are tempted to avoid the wilderness altogether.

A story about Jesus found in all three synoptic gospels about a time of temptation in the wilderness. This story is filled with symbolism and wisdom. So much so that a myriad of interpretations are offered even by the same person. Our discussion of belonging clamors for yet another angle.

As our story begins, Jesus leaves from His baptism into the wilderness. All three accounts tell us that God's Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. This was a journey with a divine purpose. I believe that we are led into the wilderness at critical times for a divine purpose. And this includes our need to live out the identity and purpose God gives to each of us.

The temptation of Jesus began with an appeal to His physical vulnerabilities. Jesus was hungry and was tempted to address His hunger with the most immediate resources available. Similarly, fitting in feels like a pang of physical desire, even more than our craving for our favorite treat.

When we fulfill our need to belong by adapting to whatever role and belief offer acceptance, we open ourselves to attaching our allegiance to whatever helps us feel better about ourselves. This leads us to shift our priorities to fitting in rather than keeping God as our first love and focus. This was the 2nd temptation of Jesus.

**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**

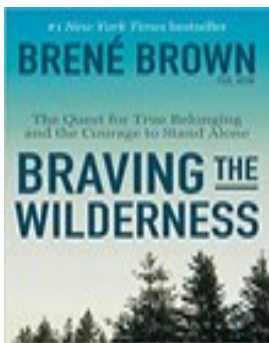
**PASTOR BOOK CLUB NEWS:**

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.



This months book series is called, "Braving the Wilderness".

Thank you and everyone stay safe!

- Jan 17    Mon    6:00pm    Leadership Team
- Jan 18    Tues    10:00am-12:30pm  
Food/Water Distribution
- Jan 19    Wed    11am-12N    Angel Closet at  
South Flint Soup Kitchen (Appts needed) see pg 11  
12Noon      Pastor Book Club
- Jan 20    Thu
- Jan 21    Fri    7:00pm-10:00pm    Open Mic Night
- Jan 22    Sat    12Noon      Food Bombs
- Jan 23    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).)



Cyndi and I enjoy watching reality shows that feature individuals living in the Alaskan wilderness. Neither of us have a desire to live alone in the woods. Rather, we're fascinated by the creativity and grit that these rugged individuals discover within themselves to survive. And even more so by the few that seem

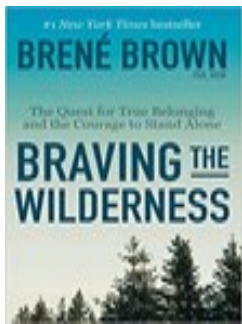
to thrive in the midst of so many obstacles.

A common theme heard among the Alaskan pioneers is a sense of belonging to the vast untamed and unforgiving wilderness. They share common bonds with the other creatures living

Page 5

## Book Club News

Our theme for December was *Going home*. This theme led us into weekly conversations about home as we wrestled with what home means for each of us. In addition, we celebrated the Season of Advent by studying the ancient prophecies that promised the coming of the Messiah.



We kick off the New Year with a topic most associate with home. In our next series, *Wilderness experience*, our theme is belonging.

Our book for this series is *Braving the Wilderness*. In her best-selling book, Dr. Brené Brown offers the metaphor of wilderness as a paradox. In scripture, the wilderness is thought of as a place of solitude and

## 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 McDaniel	Pastor & Exec Dir
Connie Portillo	Office Manager
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Exec Chef & Dir Opers

dangerous temptation. But the untamed wilderness is where we travel to find true belonging according to our author.

The write-up found on Amazon has this to say about our next book:

Social scientist Brené Brown, Ph.D., MSW, has sparked a global conversation about the experiences that bring meaning to our lives—experiences of courage, vulnerability, love, belonging, shame, and empathy. In *Braving the Wilderness*, Brown redefines what it means to truly belong in an age of increased polarization. With her trademark mix of research, storytelling, and honesty, Brown will again change the cultural conversation while mapping a clear path to true belonging.

In her book, Brené Brown describes a spiritual crisis of disconnection that she believes is pervasive in society. And she offers recommendations for how to experience true belonging that challenges what we think about ourselves and each other. She encourages us to venture out of our ideological bunkers and show up as our true selves. Dr. Brown challenges us to brave the wilderness of uncertainty and criticism.

Increases in new infections and yet another variety of COVID pushed us back

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

into isolation. While the latest surge is described as a pandemic of the unvaccinated, breakthrough infections are rising, putting us all at risk.

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).



*Wilderness Experience... Asbury Worship Series*

around them, even those they hunt for food. All belong to a natural order that is much larger and beyond their grasp.

There are unseen dangers and yet to be discovered delights in the wilderness waiting for the brave ones willing to take the risk to venture into its uncertainty.

Our new series, *Wilderness experience*, explores the risks and rewards of braving the uncertain. And in exploring the uncertain we tackle the thorny question of “Do I belong?”

Brené Brown asserts that “belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us.” Based on her research into one of life’s most intimate questions Braving the Wilderness calls each of us to reclaim who we are by letting go of who we are not. <sup>1</sup>

But discovering who we are is only the beginning. Being who God created us to be is easily confused with fitting into a particular expectation. If we confuse fitting in with belonging we’re disappointed and lacking. It’s exhausting to be whatever persona others choose for us.

I wonder if choosing to be alone in the wilderness of Alaska takes less effort than fitting into a community as an imposter. On the other hand, in being who God created us to be may mean taking a stand where no one else is visible. We may find ourselves standing alone.

But what if this is true belonging?

Our series consists of five episodes that roughly maps to Dr. Brown’s book. There are extra copies of her book in the Arts Center. Alternatively, her book can be found at libraries, bookstores or purchased online.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes 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> Brené Brown. *Braving the Wilderness — The Quest for True Belonging and the Quest to Stand Alone*. New York: Random House, 2019.

## No Bull (Speaking truth to bull artists) .... *cont. from pg 1*

Frankfurt "does not care whether the things he says describe reality correctly. He just picks them out, or makes them up, to suit his purpose."

If this sounds familiar, you may be listening to politicians and journalists who are particularly adept at spewing bull. Besides its blatant disregard for the truth, the danger of bull is that culturally we are likely to give the bull artist a pass when it comes to the validity of their statements. While at the same time, we hold someone who tells a lie accountable, even if unintended or misinformed, if not said within the context of bull.

Bull is often used as a substitute for knowledge about a particular subject. We expect candidates for political office, to weigh in on a wide range of topics. Most of which they and we know very little about. The result is bull as a substitute for actual facts.

In a democracy, a decision to implement a policy, write and enforce a law, and oversee the nation's vast resources requires voting. A decision comes from choosing sides of any and all arguments when the time comes to vote. And in the U.S., most of us choose to support one of two political parties even though other parties exist and some candidates self-identify as independents.

This leads to one of the primary dividers that sort us into one of two ideological camps. Even though the vast majority of us likely fit in more than one camp based on our core beliefs.

Dr. Brené Brown writes that "one of the biggest drivers of the sorting that's happening today is the proliferation of the belief that you're either with us or you're against us." Philosophers note that this argument is a false dichotomy since there are almost always other choices. Nevertheless, some politicians regularly spew bull to force us to take sides.<sup>2</sup>

But what if we refuse to accept the terms of the argument and challenge the framing of the debate? This is a hard choice because doing so is a lonely place to go. Insisting that a better decision comes from debate rather than division sends us out into the wilderness.

Dr. Brown notes that standing up to bull and refusing to take sides is challenging. Refusing to take sides is difficult "Because the argument is set up to silence dissent and draw lines in the sand that squelch debate, discussion, and questions." It doesn't matter that debate, discussion, and questions lead to practical problem-solving.

I sometimes wonder if Jesus adds fuel to the bull fire when He challenges us to take a stand with Him? After all, we are asked to choose. We're asked to make a solemn declaration regarding our loyalty to Jesus. There are only two choices according to the gospel accounts.

As the ministry of Jesus reached larger numbers of people, His popularity was on the rise. He was healing, teaching, and challenging the political, religious, and economic systems privileging a few while oppressing the most vulnerable. And the more His popularity rose, the more aggressive those who had the most to lose looked for ways to silence Him.

His attackers started showing up and heckling Jesus in front of crowds making accusations that while Jesus was doing some miraculous things, He was breaking the law. So Jesus takes a stand with the challenge, "Anyone who is not for me is really against me; anyone who does not help me gather is really scattering" (Matthew 12:30).

Pay particular attention to the distinction that Jesus makes about gathering rather than scattering. The challenge made by Jesus is not about dividing as much as it is about unifying. Don't get me wrong. We're being asked to make a decision.

We either believe that Jesus is really who He claims to be or a liar. While historically, bull artists are given a pass, it was clear that Jesus was focused on the truth and exposing lies. So if His opponents could catch Jesus in a lie, they could send out their spokespersons on a media circuit to smear His reputation. This would be much harder to do if Jesus was a bull artist.

Their challenge was that if Jesus was telling the truth, which He was, they ran the risk of their negative campaign backfiring when their lies were exposed. The proven solution that is quite popular today is to send in the bull artists.

Truth isn't of concern to the bull artisan. They easily blend truth and lies together as they weave a narrative to accomplish their intended goal. Even if there are dire consequences, they are given a pass because it's understood that bull doesn't need to be truthful.

Saving the more subtle temptation for last, Jesus' recognition of His own value is tested. If you are precious to God, God will surely save you even from the most foolish mistakes. So what's the hurt in going along even when the crowd heads in a direction you know is wrong for you? Jesus knew His value to God, and He also knows your value.

When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity come.

Luke 4:13

None of us need to increase our value to God to earn God's love. We are each a beloved child of God who loves us and wants us to find belonging. But our journey to belonging begins with being exactly that person God intended us to be.

The wilderness is any place where we're tempted to fit in, but we choose to take a stand to be who we are instead.

Welcome to the Wilderness experience. I'm glad you're going with us. Be sure not to pack anything, however. We'll be going entirely as ourselves without anything extra.

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 our [YouTube channel](#). You can find more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).

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Pastor Tommy

<sup>1</sup> Brené Brown. *Braving the Wilderness — The Quest for True Belonging and the Quest to Stand Alone*. New York: Random House, 2019.

Life groups questions & notes:

Anyone who is not for me is really against me; anyone who does not help me gather is really scattering.

Matthew 12:30 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

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QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read the book of Matthew 12:30. What does this statement mean for you? Take some time to read the verses leading up to our theme verse and answer this question again. Some additional verses that may help are Matthew 15:1-20 and Luke 9:46-50.
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *No bull*. Do you tend to give bull artists a pass while holding persons claiming to tell the truth but caught in a lie accountable? If so, why? Do you claim to be a member of a particular political party? In what ways does the claims of your party of choice correlate with your own claims? Are there any differences? How do you handle reconciling your differences in how you vote? Are you willing to speak truth to bull artists? Why or why not?
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 January Giveaways

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

May this year bring new happiness...

Angel Closet Dates (Appointment only):

January 19th & 26th

11am-noon

**MASK REQUIRED REGARDLESS OF VACCINATION STATUS.**

If you  
don't have one, one will be provided for you.

Food Giveaways (NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED):

January 5th & 12th

11am-noon

Call 810-239-3427 to make an Angel Closet appointment or for  
questions!

South Flint Soup Kitchen

3410 Fenton Road

Flint, MI 48507



**This institution is an equal opportunity provider**



**ASBURY FARM FRESH**

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

**SIGN UP FOR A FREE ASBURY FARMS ACCOUNT TODAY**

**AND**

Receive a \$15 credit on your account for your first purchase

**CREATE YOUR OWN VEGGIE BOX**

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.

**WANT US TO DECIDE FOR YOU?**

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 \***



**\$1 Raffle**  
**with proceeds going to**  
**Asbury Help Center!!!**

ASBURY CHURCH

## OPEN MIC NIGHT

Friday, January 21, 2022

7:00pm -10:00pm

Doors Open at 6:30pm

RSVP Required!!

Email to: [Katelin@FlintAsbury.org](mailto:Katelin@FlintAsbury.org)

Located at 1653 Davison Road, Flint

Any questions??? Call 810-239-3427 and  
ask for Katelin

For example, fact-checkers at the Washington Post counted over thirty thousand false or misleading statements from our former president. Yet he is given a pass by millions of Christians. This is because he is skilled in the art of bull.<sup>3</sup>

A Fortune Magazine article noted that our former president told six times more lies in his first ten months in office than Obama said in eight years. Defenders attempted to refocus the public's attention on the "quality of lie" told by the two. But this really wasn't necessary since bull artists constantly get a pass on lying regardless of the quantity.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, I'm betting that we are all guilty of bull artistry from time to time. This partly happens because of the pressure to weigh in on unfamiliar topics and our dependence on bull artists for information. In addition, most journalists are beholden to sponsors and ratings, and apparently, bull artistry gets high ratings. Perhaps this is one reason we give bull artists a pass on lying.

So what does scripture say about our cultural focus on rewarding bull over truth? The answer is quite a lot. Jesus, in particular, spoke truth to bull artistry. Spoiler alert. The bull artists didn't handle the loving correction of Jesus very well.

Jesus quoted the Prophet Isaiah in one story where He responded to criticism that He and His followers were not following the rules. Of course, Jesus wasn't against following rules, but he insisted that intention is critical. In other words, Jesus did not share our appreciation for bull artistry.

Jesus accused the leaders of turning away from God while claiming otherwise. "You are defined by the words that come out of your mouth," argues Jesus, "for from your heart comes evil thoughts" (Matthew 15:18).

Isaiah was one of the numerous famous prophets who lived centuries before Jesus was born. Unlike journalists, we count on prophets to share God's mind with us. No bull — just the facts.

Leaders in every generation, including religious leaders, struggle to keep their priorities in line with what's important to God. And prophets were responsible for holding the leaders accountable when the gap widened enough to ignore the suffering of vulnerable and powerless citizens.

Scripture testifies that God uses prophets to warn leaders and those who support them when divine priorities are pushed aside. If God's warnings are ignored, divine intervention, justice, and correction follow. While the stories in scripture happened thousands of years ago, these stories are divinely constructed as insight into what is true and false.

The history of God's chosen people (substitute you and me) is a history of separation from God followed by divine intervention, transformative justice, and long periods of peaceful abundance. During one of the times of separation, God warned the people through Isaiah that the leaders "carry out their schemes in secret and think no one will see them or know what they are doing. They turn everything upside down" (Isaiah 29:15-16).

**You are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth...**

**Matthew 15:18**

"Upside down" is explained by illustrating God's plan for transformative justice. "It will be the end of those who oppress others and show contempt for God." Contempt for God is shown when "people claim to worship God, but their words are meaningless, and their hearts are somewhere else." And when "their religion is nothing but human rules and traditions" (Isaiah 29:13).

In another story found elsewhere, Jesus walks in on His team, arguing over which one of them is greater than the others. Rather than correct them directly, Jesus illustrates the importance of humility

and focusing on what's important. A child became a metaphor for anyone without power (Luke 9:48).

The powerless, excluded from privilege and placement, is God's first priority. And those who choose similar preferences demonstrate faithfulness to Jesus Christ and thus honor God. Instead, bull artists focus on their own agenda, which centers around their own self-interest. Truth doesn't enter into their consciousness.

There is clearly one time that the statement "you're either with us, or you're against us" rings true. Jesus made this case with leaders whose claims aren't connected to truth. In His words, Jesus reminds us that we either spread divisiveness or we call for unity in following the truth (Matthew 15:30).

Welcome to the Wilderness experience. I'm glad you're going with us. Belonging begins in the wilderness, where we discover the person God created us to be. And sometimes, we may stand alone. But wherever we stand, we'll know that we belong.

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 our [YouTube channel](#). You can find more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).

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Pastor Tommy

<sup>1</sup> Brené Brown. *Braving the Wilderness — The Quest for True Belonging and the Quest to Stand Alone*. New York: Random House, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Harry G. Frankfurt. *On Bullshit*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Glenn Kessler, Salvador Rizzo and Meg Kelly. "Trump's false or misleading claims total 30,573 over 4 years." © *Washington Post*, January 24, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Kirsten Korosec. "How the Quantity of Trump's Lies Compares to Obama's." © *Fortune Magazine*, December 14, 2017.