

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 30

January 30, 2022

Courage (At home in the wilderness¹)



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What frightens you?

This past week, Christina Caron shared that she was afraid of driving in a *New York Times* article. As a result, she avoided driving for almost a decade until the pandemic motivated

her to face her fears. On the first day of driving school, Christina's instructor helped her put her anxiety into a helpful perspective when he told her that "The fear never leaves you."²

I'm usually a cautious driver myself. And while I wouldn't describe the anxiety I feel while driving as fear, I'm generally on high alert when I'm driving around the neighborhood. But my concern doesn't come from a fear of children darting from behind a parked

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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

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Collective Effervescence (Welcome to Worship)



A year ago, in a Forbes Magazine article, Tracy Brower wrote that "The pandemic has played havoc with our mental health." Top among reasons that so much isolation is bad for mental health is that "We

are hardwired for connection." And the key to feeling connected is "all about our need for belonging."¹

"But belonging is more than just being part of a group, writes Brower. Be-

longing is also critically tied to social identity—a set of shared beliefs or ideals. "But Brené Brown warns us that "Common enemy intimacy is counterfeit connection and the opposite of true belonging." So what is "common enemy intimacy," and how do we recognize and avoid falling into a trap baited by it?"²

Let's acknowledge that it's not easy to avoid the lure of believing that we

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Collective Effervescence (Welcome to Worship)cont from page 1

belong to a particular group because we dislike or even hate the same ideals or people. There is a lot of emotion involved from our need for connection to our fear that the ideals or people targeted by our disdain represent our worst nightmare.

Mid-term elections come up this fall. This means that every member of the House of Representatives and one-third of our Senators are elected or re-elected. Unfortunately, this means you and I are in for months of political rallies and speeches, along with a daily barrage of unwanted emails and ads.

The elections are months away — it's only January. Still, based on past elections, Democrats are predicted to lose their razor-thin margins in the House and Senate. Particularly since 19 states passed new laws making voting more difficult. And this trend is expected to continue in response to the "big lie."

The "big lie" is, in actuality, a label for a national marketing campaign to raise money and rally support to slow down our nation's shift towards more progressive policies. However, since public opinion has moved decisively towards more progressive policies, higher voter turnout favors the more progressive candidate.

Reducing the influence of the majority of citizens is challenging. However, majorities have been convinced to go against their self-interest for centuries. And often by a relatively small number who benefit the most from their agenda. Their secret is to promote hate and fear of a common enemy. And the less specific the definition of the enemy, the easier it is to fabricate believable lies.

In last week's episode, we noted how standing up to an onslaught of bull with the truth takes courage. But this is part of finding true belonging. This is how we claim the identity that God gives us and live as the person God intended. The bigger lie is that belonging comes from hating the same ideals and people.

What if we stop looking for belonging by joining groups supporting candidates who oppose the same people and ideas that we don't like or frighten us? What if, instead, we focus our energies and expectations toward our love and concern for each other?

In his book, *The Happiness Hypothesis*, Jonathan Haidt calls this "vital engagement." Brené Brown offered a phrase from research known as a collective assembly. You and I might call it getting together with a bunch of other people.³

Whatever we choose to call such a gathering, it's much different than a political rally organized around common enemies. And the most effective group events include music that moves us by sharing artistic expressions of how life brings us closer together.

Worship is likely the most effective vital engagement that offers a starting point for belonging. However, remember that worship is ambiguous and sometimes just as misleading as belonging. So just to be clear, by worship. I'm presuming that we begin with the notion that the focus of our worship represents the center of our belonging.

Émile Durkheim, a sociologist, focused on studying the role of religion in society, coined the term "collective effervescence." He used this term to describe the sacred connectedness we experience when we realize that we are a part of something much bigger than ourselves. During these times of collective effervescence, our focus shifts from ourselves to the group.⁴

Searching for the word "worship" in the Bible yielded a wide range of hits depending on the translation. For example, the NASB translation produced 180 verses while the Contemporary English Version used worship 1,016 times. The Good News Translation, which is found in our worship center, uses worship in 762 verses. What gives?

According to the GNT, worship first appears in Genesis 4:26. Here worship is described as the people acknowledging or "calling upon" the name of the Lord in worship. The CEV uses the phrase "worshipping in the name of God." But the NASB, which is known for staying closer to the original Hebrew, states simply that "people began to call upon the name of the Lord."

Several complicating factors are involved in translation, not the least of which is interpretation disguised as translation. The GNT and CEV are interpretations that choose worship as an act of calling on the name of the Lord. I lean towards this editorial freedom, in this case, because I'm inclined to agree with a more general application of worship.

In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom
 Sylvia Pittman
 Shirley Craig
 Richard Oram



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

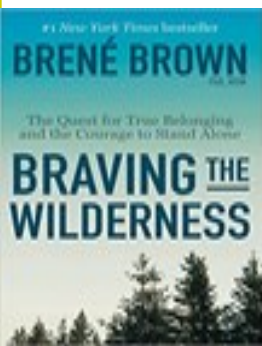
Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard Mary Nations

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!

COMING UP THIS WEEK

- Jan 31 **Mon**
- Feb 1 **Tues** 10:00am-12:30pm
 Food/Water Distribution
- Feb 2 **Wed** 11:00-12Noon Food Giveaway at
 South Flint Soup Kitchen (No appts needed)
 12Noon Pastor Book Club
- Feb 3 **Thu** 1:00pm UMW (meet in Library)
- Feb 4 **Fri**
- Feb 5 **Sat** 12Noon Food Bombs
- Feb 6 **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](#).)



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

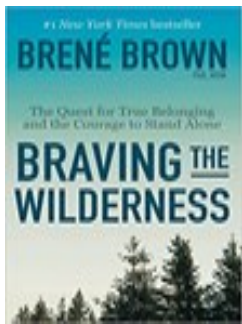
to thrive in the midst of so many obstacles.

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

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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

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

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.

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

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



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. ¹

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

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

Courage (At home in the wilderness¹).... cont. from pg 1

car into my pathway. Instead, it's other drivers who treat stop signs and red lights as suggestions.

But I don't ride my bike either. Instead, I simply look both ways and presume that a car coming toward the intersection may choose not to stop before speeding through the intersection. Like Christina, I treat my anxiety as a warning, but I still cross intersections on my way to my destination.

According to neuroscientist and author Wendy Suzuki, "The emotion of anxiety and the underlying physiological stress response evolved to protect us." Her conclusion comes from a theory known as Yerkes-Dodson validated that anxiety helps improve performance. However, there is a tipping point. As anxiety increases, so do the physical symptoms, including a faster heart rate, muscle tension, rapid breathing, sweating, and fatigue.²

However, attempts to simply refuse to acknowledge anxiety produces even more stress. Psychologist Seth Gillihan writes, "A lot of the distress that we feel with anxiety comes from the resistance to it." In other words, telling myself that "I need to stop feeling anxious" adds to my anxiety.²

Nevertheless, driving to the store shouldn't feel like a workout at the gym. But speaking of exercise, taking a walk helps reduce anxiety by increasing the level of serotonin and dopamine in our brain and reducing stress.

There are other benefits to accepting that anxiety is simply part of living. For one, "accepting anxiety can help you face your fears," argues Christina in her Forbes article.

Often, being the person God created takes courage. Much more courage than driving. Particularly if the critique of others feels like a personal attack. And when we choose to stand in opposition to popular choices, the spotlight reaches us, even in the wilderness. Therefore, engaging and managing our anxiety is essential in the wilderness.

A popular story is found in three of the gospels about a woman who forced her way through the crowds to get to Jesus. She believed that healing was certain if only she could get close enough to Jesus to touch His coat tail.

The woman suffered from a persistent medical condition for twelve years. Then, apparently, she heard the stories about this traveling Rabbi who miraculously healed people. But the popularity of Jesus created obstacles for access.

When we look close enough, this story about an unnamed woman contains bits and pieces of our own story. We all have persistent obstacles in our lives that hold us back from being the person God created us to be. Sometimes our obstacles come in the form of addictions. Other times we lose a job, or a person we depend on lets us down.

But we must be living under a rock if we haven't heard stories about Jesus and miraculous healing. Sure, some of the stories may be a little over the top or come from less than reliable sources. Yet, there is something during luring about His reputation that piques our interest. Just as it has for generations.

Luke's telling offers a few more details. For example, we read that the people were crowding Jesus from every side. And that the woman's medical bills took every penny she had. But there's another detail from Luke that's important.

We read that after the woman touched the edge of His coat, Jesus stopped and asked, "Who touched me?" Everyone denied it, of course. And Peter, who may have rolled his eyes, spoke up. And he reminded Jesus that, of course, someone touched Him given the size of the crowd. But Jesus persisted in His search.

Of course, the woman knew that it was she who pushed through the crowd behind Jesus until she caught up with Him, reached out, and grabbed a hunk of His coat tail.

Luke writes that when the woman realized that she had been found out, she came up to Jesus trembling and threw herself at His feet. And then, in front of everybody, she told Jesus why she had touched him. And how she had been healed at once.

Courage, my daughter! Your faith has made you well.

Matthew 9:22

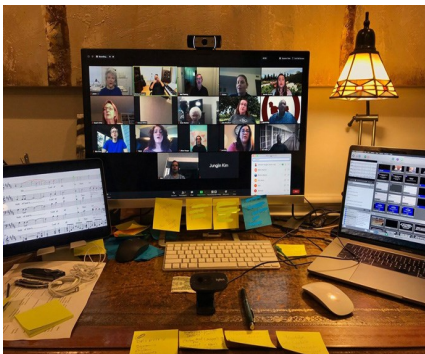
What happens next is where I prefer Matthew's telling of the story. Matthew writes that after the woman's confession and public show of humiliation, Jesus tells her to have courage.

It was then that people began using the Lord's holy name in worship.

Genesis 4:26

For me, worship acknowledges a higher power by showing reverence and ascribing a degree of separation from the fray of everyday living. Whether we choose to call it karma, the force, God, or the Holy Spirit, this higher power is the glue that holds us together collectively and individually.

For Christians, this higher power is manifested in Jesus Christ, whom we believe was God living among humanity. Our belief in incarnation is not held by the other two-thirds of the world. So when I worship, I call on the name of the Lord, whom I call Jesus Christ, in the belief that God's power is greater than whatever I fear the most.



A worship leader planning online worship

Rather than worship focused on asking God to deal with our problems, I believe that worship should focus on gratitude for all that God is already doing. If I expect God to focus on my agenda, I'm discounting the importance of other agendas that conflict with mine. And frankly, I may be

showing a bit less reverence to the only power that I believe can sort this all out if I try to dictate God's priority list.

This doesn't mean that worship shouldn't include prayers of intercession and an expression of our felt needs. On the contrary, Jesus teaches us that we ought to ask and expect that God hears and acts on our behalf. However, we should keep in mind that Jesus was focused on the common good, which requires that we all sacrifice a degree of autonomy and self-indulgence.

Worship also includes our request for mercy and forgiveness. The Bible tells the story of Cain taking the life of his brother Abel sometime after their parents were expelled from Eden. A murder motivated by Cain's jealousy after he learned that God preferred Abel's display of reverence.

The first record of one human taking the life of another human came after an argument over the best ways to show reverence to God. And the debates continue.

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.

I invite you to worship with us on any given Sunday. We gather in the Asbury Arts Center in person and online on either YouTube or Facebook. Video replays are available to watch later.

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](#).

A reminder that we publish this newsletter that we call the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to connect@FlintAsbury.org or let us know when you send a message through our [website](#). We post an archive of past editions on our website under the tab, Connect - choose [Newsletters](#).

Pastor Tommy

¹ Tracy Brower. "Missing Your People: Why Belonging Is So Important And How To Create It." © Forbes Magazine, January 21, 2021.

² Brené Brown. *Braving the Wilderness — The Quest for True Belonging and the Quest to Stand Alone*. New York: Random House, 2019.

³ Jonathan Haidt. *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*. NY: Basic Books, 2006.

⁴ Émile Durkheim. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Mark S. Cladis (Editor), Carol Cosman (Translator). New York: Oxford University Press, Revised Edition 2008.

Life groups questions & notes:

JESUS TURNED AROUND AND SAW HER, AND SAID, "COURAGE, MY DAUGHTER! YOUR FAITH HAS MADE YOU WELL." AT THAT VERY MOMENT THE WOMAN BECAME WELL.

MATTHEW 9:22 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. READ THE STORY ABOUT THE WOMAN HEALED WHEN SHE TOUCHED JESUS IN A CROWD FOUND IN LUKE 8:42-48. READ THE SAME STORY IN MATTHEW 9:20-26, BUT PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO VERSE 22. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STORY FOR YOU PERSONALLY? WHY DO YOU SUPPOSE THAT JESUS SAID TO THE WOMAN TO HAVE COURAGE?
2. READ THE ARTICLE IN THIS WEEK'S CIRCUIT RIDER, *COURAGE*. WHAT CAUSES YOU ANXIETY? IN WHAT WAYS WILL YOU NEED COURAGE ONCE A SIGNIFICANT OBSTACLE IS NO LONGER HOLDING YOU BACK? HAVE YOU PURSUED THE HEALING POWER OF JESUS IN YOUR PURSUIT OF CURES? GOD GIFTED MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS WITH SKILLS AND MOTIVATION TO KEEP US HEALTHY AND OFFER CURES FOR OUR ILLNESS. BUT HUMAN POWER IS INSUFFICIENT AND EVEN THE BEST MEDICAL CARE CANNOT KEEP US ALIVE FOR EVER. WILL YOU TURN TO JESUS CHRIST FIRST AND FOLLOW HIM ALONG WITH THE OTHER CURES THAT GOD MAY HAVE IN MIND FOR YOU?
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”

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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.

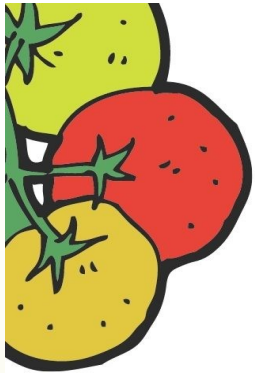
We're bringing together the resources of the Asbury Community Development Corporation. This includes Asbury Farms, the South Flint Soup Kitchen, the Asbury Community Help Center, multiple food pantries, and our Sizzling Culture Mobile Food Trailer. Our plan is to care for our neighbors when they need 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



**SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN
PRESENTS**

**FEBRUARY
FOOD
GIVEAWAYS &
ANGEL CLOSET
DATES**

3410 Fenton Road (three blocks north of Atherton
Road)

Flint, MI 48507

Call 810-239-3427 for appointments/questions or
email southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

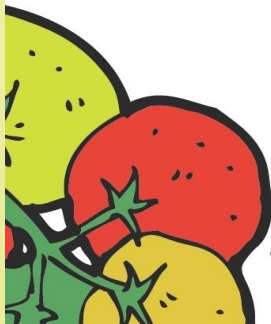
Food Giveaways: NO APPOINTMENT NECESSARY!

Feb. 2nd and 16th, 11am-noon

Angel Closet: APPOINTMENT REQUIRED

Feb. 9th & 23rd, 10:30am-noon

**MASK REQUIRED FOR ENTRY, ONE CLIENT AT A TIME
IN THE ANGEL CLOSET**





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 ***

**FREE!
FAMILY FRIENDLY!
\$1 RAFFLE FOR ASBURY
CDC!**

Asbury Church February Open Mic

1653 Davison Road
Flint, MI 48506

02.25.2022

Show 7pm

Doors open

at 6:30pm

ALL ARE

WELCOME!!

Questions??? Call Katelin at 810-239-3427 or
email katelin@flintasbury.org

In all three accounts, we learn that the woman's belief that Jesus had the power to heal her was sufficient for her to get what she needed. But it took courage to do what she did, although not as much courage as it takes for her to live differently as a result.

After encountering the living Lord, the woman moves from the comfort of knowing that her condition kept her back. With her obstacles out of the way, she moved into her wilderness home of knowing the truth about Jesus.

This knowledge changes everything for her. Including a realization that she can't possibly keep what happened to herself. Her friends, family, and strangers will notice. For one, focusing on her own suffering is no longer necessary.

And while her meeting Jesus took care of an immediate problem, there are always more challenges. But now she knows where to look first for the solution. For she learned that day who she is in the eyes of God.

And so you and I are likewise faced with a choice. Do we spend everything we have searching for quick fixes and promises that never live up to our expectations? Or do we muster the courage to go to where we belong?

There is room at the feet of Jesus for everyone looking to confess. Everyone willing to say, "I am the one who reached out for You, Lord. I am the one who found healing when I finally felt Your touch. I need the courage to carry Your message in my heart, on my lips, and in what I do."

This week, will you push through the crowded circumstances that keep you from knowing that Jesus is the One who holds the keys to releasing you from your suffering? Will you reach out for Him with the confidence or even the desperation of knowing that nothing else is working?

There will always be new challenges and more struggles. But you never need to face them alone.

This week is the final episode of our series, *Wilderness experience*. As we end our series, we discover that the wild heart we developed by being who God created us to be, has changed our perspective. In other words, metaphorically, we realize that we belong to the wilderness.

This week we don't transition out of the wilderness. Instead, we take a new path that takes us further into the wilderness. We've discovered a new home in the wilderness, and we follow a path that brings us to the New Jerusalem. This path was called *the Way* by those first pilgrims.

We follow Jesus into the wilderness by sticking close to *the Way*. But this takes courage.

I'm grateful that you chose to join us on our *Wilderness experience*, and I pray that you're starting to feel at home. Feeling at home in the wilderness is crucial because we're not ready to leave here just yet. More work is to be done as we live *the Way* that Jesus teaches us to live.

Our new series, *the Way*, begins February 4. I hope you will join us as we celebrate Black History month by examining our role as followers of Christ in a world plagued by privilege and idolatry.

I invite you to worship with us on any given Sunday. We gather in the Asbury Arts Center in person and online on YouTube and Facebook. Video replays are available to watch later.

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

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

²Christina Caron. "The Upside of Anxiety." © New York Times, Jan. 24, 2022.