

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 27

March 27, 2022

Fish (You feed them)



This past week, our non-profit submitted a proposal for funding to the Healthy Food Financing Initiative. Our proposal requested funding to support the purchase and renovation of a building to house a program we hope will help reduce food

insecurity among Flint residents. We call this new program Community Kitchen because kitchens are often the center of homes fortunate enough to have family meals together.

We know that receiving funding from such a highly competitive process is a long shot. But, we also know that we need to do whatever we can to help Flint families gain access to healthy food alternatives. And we believe we have a way to accomplish this, but why do we think this effort is essential, and why us?

Here is what we know.

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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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Grain (Sabbath Connections)



I love mornings. I refer to mornings as my holy time. For me, mornings are spent with God. One of my favorite activities is writing in my prayer journal. I'm very much a visual learner, and seeing words makes them come more alive to me than hearing them.

This is my way of experiencing the Sabbath each and every day.

My morning conversations with God are often dominated by whatever makes me feel anxious. Sometimes my anxiety comes from interactions with the people around me. Conflict is often the source of my anxiety. We weren't built for conflict. And, for me, conflict is like a constant dose of poisonous venom.

Another ongoing subject for my conversations with God is hunger. For me, hunger is a craving for that which

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gives abundant life. So I'm not talking about craving tacos from Taco Bell, Big Macs, or KFC. Instead, we hunger for nutrients that fuel our minds and bodies. And, just as important, we hunger for intimate connections. We hunger to be close to God. And we hunger for connections to other people who care about us. Most of all, we hunger to know and be connected to ourselves.

Lately, I've been reading a lot about food shortages. Again, I'm referring to food that offers nutrients needed by our bodies more than food that satisfies our cravings and addictions. I've noticed that considering the global scale of hunger helps me put my own challenges in perspective. This allows me to keep my fears from hindering decisions that come out of my daily conversations with God.

For example, this past week, I scanned a United Nations report published by the Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (IPCC). Their conclusions predict a worsening situation for hunger as more land is exploited and greenhouse gases deteriorate our atmosphere. However, I've noticed that farmers are aware of climate change without reading reports.¹

International journalist Anthony Faiola reported in a *Washington Post* article that countries reliant on food exports from Ukraine and Russia responded with emergency trade restrictions to protect their already strained food supplies. Unfortunately, their actions further exacerbate global food shortages caused by both availability and access.²

According to Wikipedia, the World Food Programme is the largest humanitarian organization focused on hunger and food

security. In a recent opinion article, Executive Director David Beasley writes that "Russia's invasion has reminded us that the root cause of hunger around the world is human folly and reckless disregard for human life."³

Approximately one-half of the wheat that supplies this massive mobile kitchen comes from farmers under attack in Ukraine. A country familiar with the devastation brought on by authoritarian regimes focused on accumulating power and their own personal wealth.

In his article, he recalls how millions of Ukrainians perished when Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin enforced agricultural "collectivization." A program that stripped peasant farmers of their land and produce. Imagine the horror felt by a people under attack by yet another dictator that values power above human life.

The WFP's food budget is already up 30% from 2019, increasing \$50 Million per month in three years. And now the movement of wheat that feeds millions of people is in reverse. If Ukrainian farmers cannot plant this spring, the entire world will feel the aftershock. While here in the United States, we'll be inconvenienced and angry, the real suffering happens in the most vulnerable nations.

A line in a song we sang in worship a couple of times after the Russian invasion of Ukraine asks the haunting question, "If we are the body, why aren't His hands healing... why aren't His feet moving?" For me, we sang these questions to the church in Russia. What are they doing for peace besides hosting Putin's military for a celebration of a new monument to their arsenal.

However, in my daily Sabbath, God keeps asking me what we are doing for peace in our own community? Are our hands healing? What are we doing to feed others? Are our feet moving?

However, in my daily Sabbath, God keeps asking me what we are doing for peace in our own community? Are our hands healing? What are we doing to feed others? Are our feet moving?

Food insecurity is the anthesis of peace, but food insecurity didn't start with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The problems that create food insecurity belong to all of us. And climate change is an increasing obstacle that denial won't solve.

Admittedly, time spent on Sabbath doesn't solve climate change, food insecurity, or a myriad of other struggles facing us. Instead, Sabbath is more like the huddle before the next play, the rehearsal before opening night, or creating a budget to launch a community kitchen.

Honoring a weekly day of rest is found among the Ten Commandments. According to scripture, God expects all humanity to set aside one day where work takes a backseat to the holy. And society struggles with how to live out this axiomatic requirement for health. Is part of our problem that we focus on the minutia of rules rather than the rhythms of how the Sabbath affects our daily lives.

In their commentary on the Sabbath, the *Theology of Work Project* authors notes how important starting each day with prayers was for Jesus. Based solely on the testimonies found in scripture, they conclude that Jesus "couldn't imagine going to his work without prayer,



In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom
 Sylvia Pittman
 Shirley Craig
 Richard Oram
 Chris Freeman



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUNDED OR IN NURSING CARE

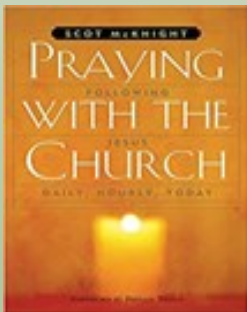
Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard Mary Nations

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 month's book series is called, "Praying with the Church" by Scot McKnight.

Thank you and everyone stay safe!

COMING UP THIS WEEK

WELCOME PASTOR GREG TIMMONS!

- Mar 28 Mon 6:00pm Worship Team
- Mar 29 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm
Food/Water Distribution
- Mar 30 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club
11am-12N Food Giveaway at
South Flint Soup Kitchen (No appts needed)
- Mar 31 Thu
- Apr 1 Fri
- Apr 2 Sat 12Noon Food Not Bombs
- Apr 3 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](#).)

Asbury Worship Series "Hungry"



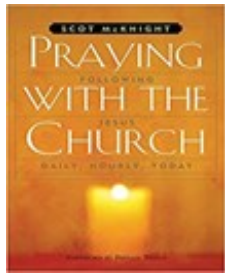
Feedflint hoop house ready for harvest ... credit Asbury

The Season of Lent is a special time of year for the church. The diversity of ways in which churches around the world experience this season offers insight into the different ways that people experience the holy. For many, Lent represents a time of struggle illustrated by giving up favorite foods after celebrating Fat Tuesday with their favorite Paczki or other treats.

Take a trip through Wikipedia's commentary on Fat Tuesday, and you learn about a few of the different ways Christians celebrate on the day before Lent begins. For example, did you know that Queen Elizabeth is more likely to call it "Pancake Day?" But why all this talk about food as preparation for celebrating Lent?

Book Club News

Our group finishes with *Postcards from Babylon* on the first Wednesday in March. Our next selection, *Praying with the Church* by Scot McKnight, will take us through Holy Week. Altogether we plan to spend seven weeks with this book.¹



Prayer is a practice that the vast majority of us have in common. Although we pray in many ways and for vastly different reasons, there are common elements. Chief among them is a lingering doubt about whether how we pray affects the outcome.

Let's answer this question upfront — it doesn't. However, attitude is critical. And Jesus tells us that persistence is essential. Nevertheless, we all can use some work in this area of our spiritual lives.

Whether you're a regular on Sunday mornings, only attend on an occasional holiday, or don't cross the threshold of a church building without coercion, there is something for everyone in this conversation.

For these conversations, we join with three other Flint area churches. We're planning two sessions each Wednesday. Our regular Noon sessions are co-led by Pastor Jeremy from Court Street. A 2nd session is planned for Wednesday evenings, led by Pastor Carol from Hope and Pastor Greg from Calvary. Both sessions follow the same outline so you can attend whichever sessions best fits your schedule from week to week.

The write-up found on Amazon has this to say about our next book: Scot McKnight, best-selling author of *The Jesus Creed*, invites readers to get closer to the heart of Jesus' message by discovering the ancient rhythms of daily prayer at the heart of the early church. "This is the old path of praying as Jesus prayed," McKnight explains, "and in that path, we learn to pray along with the entire Church and not just by ourselves as individuals." Praying with the Church is written for all Christians who desire to know more about the ancient devotional traditions of the Christian faith, and to become involved in their renaissance today.

Professor McKnight has published over 80 books in his 40 plus years as a teacher and theologian. He is known for getting to the heart of theological concepts through practical and memorable illustrations from everyday life. In his book, we're invited to learn about the prayer practices of Jesus. In addition, our study takes a peek at prayer practices among Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, and Anglicans.

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, delighted when new people 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.

Pastor Tommy

¹ Scot McKnight. *Praying with the Church*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2006.

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
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



“Hungry”... Asbury Worship Series ...cont from pg 4

We launch our new series on Wednesday, March 2, with an Ash Wednesday service at 6 PM. Our message for our kickoff is called *Rocks*, which reflects the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness when Satan tries to get to Jesus through his empty stomach. Jesus doesn't fall for it, but this was not a bad attempt on Satan's part. We tend to make bad decisions when we're hungry.

Speaking of hungry. Did you know that a substantial number of families living in the City of Flint experience food insecurity daily? This means that these families face significant obstacles when putting meals on their tables. Now, this is a problem under any circumstances, but for the residents of Flint, access to nutrition is crucial. A state of emergency was declared in January 2016 due to a series of water contamination problems that included lead leaching into public drinking water.

No one knows how many of the nearly 100,000 Flint residents were affected by drinking lead-tainted water. However, healthcare professionals estimate that between 6,000 to 12,000 children were likely exposed to lead.

According to a study published by Genesys Medical Center, childhood lead poisoning has serious health consequences and disproportionately affects vulnerable children and pregnant mothers. In addition, lead poisoning is irreversible and affects many developmental and biological processes.

Lead exposure is linked to lowered IQ (intelligence), reduced academic achievement, behavior problems such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), lack of impulse control, aggression, and more. The Flint Water Crisis will have lifelong, multi-generational consequences.

While there's no actual cure for lead poisoning consuming a balanced diet rich in particular nutrients has been found to mitigate most of the adverse effects of lead. This is encouraging news that brings hope. Except that too many families can't access this life-saving antidote that most of us take for granted.

FeedFlint is focused on breaking down the barriers that create food insecurity for residents of Flint. Asbury Farms turns blighted, vacant properties into gardens of fresh fruit and vegetables. Our produce is distributed through numerous restaurants and partner organizations, including the South Flint Soup Kitchen, Asbury Community Help Center, FlintFresh, the Latinx Center, Boys and Girls Club, Hurley Food Pharmacy, and Oak Street Health.

Learn how you can help at FeedFlint.org.

Lent is much more about what we're gaining than what we're giving up. Pancakes are great. My favorite uses heavier grain flour stuffed with blueberries and pecans and topped with pure Michigan Maple Syrup. But we can't live on pancakes alone. We need other nutrients. And Lent is about ensuring we get what we need for holistic health.

That's why Asbury and three other Flint area churches are teaming up both on this series and on a unique study that kicks off on Wednesday, March 9. We're planning two times, one at Noon and the other in the evening. Everyone is invited to participate. See our Book Club News article for more details.

Our new series, which will take us through March and end with Easter, is focused on food. We all require food to live, and let's face it, good food is a real treat. But we also need spiritual food that comes from the Word of God. So anticipate a balanced diet and a variety. On two Sundays, March 13 and 27, the four pastors are on the road.

Expect Pastor Jeremy Pastors from Court Street UMC to be at Asbury on March 13, and Pastor Greg Timmons from Calvary UMC on March 27.

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

Fish (You feed them).... *cont. from pg 1*

Food security requires two things: availability and access. And 1 out of 3 Michigan households with children are experiencing hunger. Unfortunately, economics usually determines availability and access, and Flint has the highest poverty rate among Michigan cities, with over 65,000 people.

Access includes know-how, capacity, time, economics, and motivation. For example, without a functioning kitchen that includes basic items like a stovetop or microwave and accessories, a family is limited in their access to healthier food due to insufficient capacity. In addition, even if someone picks up fresh produce from our help center or soup kitchen, if they don't know how to prepare a meal, the ingredients offer insufficient help.

We know that the social determinants resulting in food insecurity are directly linked to poor health outcomes. And Genesee County ranks 80th in health outcomes among the 83 counties in Michigan. One reason is that Flint and Genesee County's food insecurity rate is higher than state and national averages. For example, 45% of young children are in households eligible for public food assistance, and the pandemic further increased the need for food assistance.

While public food assistance, pantries, and mass food giveaways help reduce economic barriers, parents who work full-time have limited time to plan, acquire ingredients, and prepare healthy meals. This is particularly true if a lot of their time is spent in long lines at food giveaways.

Abating the adverse effects of lead

According to an article written by Elaine Waxman and Megan Thompson and published by the Urban Institute,

without proper nutrition, children are more vulnerable to lead poisoning. Unfortunately, an increasing number of children in Flint live in food-insecure households. This means that these families face significant obstacles in obtaining food to protect their children and help them stay healthy.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 1.3 Million people living in Michigan faced food insecurity. By 2021 this number increased by 600 Thousand, bringing the number close to the 2 Million mark. That's almost 6 Million meals each day where availability, access, economic, and other barriers get in the way of families receiving the nutrition necessary for good health.

The number of children living in food-insecure homes increased by over 60% during the pandemic. This is even worse news for Flint children, in particular, who may already be struggling with the adverse effects caused by the presence of lead in their skeletal tissue.

What would Jesus do?

It's no wonder that food comes up in scripture so often. And it's not surprising that potlucks are a familiar ritual found in every culture and religion. Nutrition is necessary for life.

Jesus and His followers spent a lot of time on the road. And since Jesus often drew large crowds in remote areas, suppertime sometimes came with logistical problems. Hospitality in any culture calls for setting another place at the table for company. Still, even full cupboards run out at some point. Large crowds and limited cupboards create logistical challenges at suppertime.

We find a story in the gospel of Luke about just such a time.

Jesus and His followers host a revival in a remote area with thousands attending. It's been a great experience. Folks are getting healed, saved, and inspired. The worship band was dope, the sermons moving, and the crowds couldn't get enough.

But it's getting late, and as usual, Jesus didn't plan ahead and never worried about things like meals. Fortunately, some members of His posse were worriers and made sure that Jesus knew that trouble was brewing before it got out of hand. And this time, the whole gang could see a storm coming.

According to Luke, His entire inner circle came to Jesus and said, "Send the crowds away to the nearby villages and farms, so they can find food and lodging for the night. There is nothing to eat here in this remote place" (Luke 9:12 NLT).

Picture yourself as one of the disciples that day. What are you expecting Jesus to do? The problem of feeding such a large group is easily imagined. I've helped prepare and serve meals to a few hundred people before. And I've seen videos revealing an inside look at a commercial kitchen preparing meals for larger crowds. There's always a lot of commotion and yelling with large quantities of ingredients everywhere.

But this wasn't the scenario. There was no commercial kitchen and little or no ingredients. And I'm sure that the disciples were genuinely concerned. Jesus likely noticed them talking among themselves through the corner of His eye while

much as most of us couldn't imagine going to work without shoes."

How else could Jesus know the will of His Father unless He took time to ask daily? There is no doubt that Jesus considered God's will in the minutia of daily living.

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus says that "The Sabbath was made for the good of human beings" and not the other way around. This observation comes out of a conflict Jesus had with local religious leaders, critical of how His followers observed Sabbath.

We read that Jesus was walking near some wheat fields on a Saturday. The day of the week that His culture set aside as Sabbath. And as they walked by, a couple of them grabbed a few wheat kernels. Seeing this, the religious leaders said to Jesus, "Look, it is against our Law for your disciples to pick grain on the Sabbath!" (Mark 2:23-24).

The Sabbath was made for the good of human beings; they were not made for the Sabbath.

Mark 2:27

They weren't wrong in reading the rules spelled out in scripture. But Jesus points out another story, also found in scripture, where one of Israel's all-time favorite kings fed bread that was off-limits to his troops. He even ate the bread himself.

This dialogue, by itself, doesn't do a lot to elevate Sabbath to the level of necessity. However, Jesus concludes His defense by declaring that "The Sabbath was made for the good of human beings and not the other way around" (Mark 2:27).

Keeping Sabbath is for our own good and for the world's good. It's not about the specifics of how we each choose what we do for the Sabbath. Instead, Sabbath is about our connection to God, each other, the earth we depend on, and to ourselves. Sabbath is part of the rhythms of healthy living.

In our weekly group study, we're trying to add new prayer habits into our daily routines. We're using prayers that get used by millions of people around the world each and every day. This includes people in Ukraine and Russia.

Consider a way to receive the benefits of the Sabbath by adding a prayer habit. If you can, join us on Wednesdays for further discussions on praying with the church.

Feeding Flint is not a problem of having enough food. It's a problem of available healthy options and equitable access. Not just access to food that satisfies our craving for unhealthy food that lasts for a little while. But the food that gives us the energy and nutrients for an abundant life. Feeding Flint is also about offering spiritual food that brings us closer to God, each other, the earth, and ourselves.

To learn how you can help address food insecurity in our community go to [FeedFlint.org](https://www.feedflint.org).

I invite you to join us for worship during this season of Lent as we consider how scripture addresses the subject of food. In addition, we'll continue to celebrate Black History with celebrity guest interviews. 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](https://www.flintasbury.org) - [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](https://www.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](https://www.flintasbury.org). We post an archive of past editions on our website under the tab, Connect - choose [Newsletters](#).

Pastor Tommy

¹ J. P.R. Shukla, et al. "Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems." Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change. [Link to Article](#)

² Anthony Faiola. "Flour rationing in Lebanon, grain hoarding in Hungary: How the Ukraine war is lurching the globe toward a new food crisis." © *Washington Post*, March 11, 2022. Retrieved from: [Link to Article](#)

³ David Beasley. "Opinion: The Ukraine war could leave hundreds of millions hungry around the world." © *Washington Post*, March 7, 2022. Retrieved from: [Link to Article](#)

Life Group Questions & Notes:

There is nothing to eat here in this remote place. But Jesus said, "You feed them."

Luke 9:12-17

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS


1. Read Luke 9:12-17. Read this familiar story again looking for details you may have missed in your prior understanding. What did you learn? Have you felt overwhelmed at times when mealtime is near and you weren't sure if you had enough to prepare enough for everyone? What is your role in food preparations from day to day?
2. Read this week's article titled *Fish*. What are some of your favorite foods? Why? Which of these offer you the most nutrition? Are you food insecure? In other words, are there days when you don't have access to nutritional food either because it isn't available or accessible for you? What steps can you take to reduce food insecurity either for yourself or for others?
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

MARCH GIVEAWAY DATES



Angel Closet – APPOINTMENT ONLY!

March 9th & 23rd

Call 810-239-3427 or email
southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com for
an appointment.

Food Giveaways – NO APPOINTMENT
NEEDED!! **11am-Noon**

March 16th & 30th

**SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN
3410 FENTON ROAD
3 BLOCKS NORTH OF ATHERTON ROAD
FLINT, MI 48507**

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ONE WILL BE PROVIDED FOR YOU!

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



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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 ***

He was talking. Moreover, He probably saw their anxiety grow as the sun moved closer to the western horizon.

So at the break, they decided that this was too important for one or two of them to confront Jesus with the apparent problem. They all went to Him with their solution anticipating that Jesus would agree that it was time to send the crowds on their way.

There is nothing to eat here in this remote place. But Jesus said, "You feed them."

Luke 9:12-13

But instead, we read in verse 13 that Jesus said, "You feed them."

Can you imagine how well that went over? Unfortunately, Luke leaves out details of the exchange between Jesus and His followers. Had this happened enough times in the past that His followers knew the routine? Likely not. Were they accustomed to Jesus being unreasonable about His expectations of them? Perhaps.

"But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. "Or are you expecting us to go and buy enough food for this whole crowd?"

I'm guessing that the disciples knew the answer. I don't mean the ultimate solution. Only the answer to the question they asked. Jesus was aware that they didn't have enough money to purchase that much food. And by the time they returned with the ingredients, there wouldn't be enough time to prepare a meal. The disciples, like the crowds, were food insecure with neither access nor availability.

I imagine Jesus seeing the worried expressions on the faces of His friends. An expression that He's seen a lot, particularly from you and me. Fortunately, Jesus sees a teaching opportunity. Not just for His disciples, but for the gathered crowd and us.

You feed them!

"You feed them" is a calling heard by chefs, cooks, parents, hospitality workers, and more. More of us have responded to this call than haven't — if only for a one-time occasion. Food is part of daily life except when other circumstances get in the way. For some, fasting keeps us from the supper table. For others, availability creates a barrier that keeps them from eating. Nevertheless, food is essential for life.

There are approximately 95,000 persons living in the City of Flint. If each person eats three meals a day, this will total 21 meals each week and just under 1,100 meals in a year. Across the city, somewhere around 285 Thousand meals are eaten daily. This means that, on average, we collectively consume almost one million meals each week as a city.

You feed them is so pervasive in life that it takes a lot of people to respond. And this includes you and me.

Remember that God warns us through the Prophet Isaiah not to settle for just going through the motions when responding to God's call to tangibly love our neighbor. Instead, we're asked to share our food with the hungry and give shelter to the homeless. And to provide clothes for those who need them (Isaiah 58:7).

As the demands on our time and resources increase, it can feel like something has to give. Even the more faithful recognize that the cupboard empties. But Jesus sees beyond our doubt and invites us to trust that God's provisions are more than enough. And this is hard when we don't know where the time and resources are coming from.

But the resources show up in time and in abundance repeatedly. God is as predictable as our worried expressions.

I trust that this answers the questions I started with: Why is this important? Why us?

I believe that when others learn about the work that gets done by the people who call themselves United Methodists here in Flint, they feel compelled to help. And the divine grace that creates their compulsion lies at the heart of God's Word found in this text from Isaiah. "You will be like a garden with plenty of water, like a spring of water that never goes dry," God says through the Prophet. And I see this in the people around me. I feel this in the depths of my soul (Isaiah 58:11).

Perhaps it is the abundance surrounding me as I walk around the Asbury Farms campus that sits a short walk from the church. Or it could be the massive water bills that come across my desk from the farm team keeping our crops sufficiently irrigated. Yet, I experience God's promise each time I observe the volunteers at the Asbury Community Help Center or the South Flint Soup Kitchen.

Instead of sending the people away because there wasn't enough, Jesus organizes a banquet beginning with a seating chart. First, He instructs His disciples to "Tell them to sit down in groups of about fifty each." And after the people were seated, Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread and fish to the disciples so they could distribute it to the people.

The details of what happened that day leave us to speculate on how it happened, but perhaps this isn't important. Instead, the story is crystal clear about the what and who. The story ends with everyone eating as they wanted and the disciples picking up twelve baskets of leftovers. God provides abundantly when everyone is given equal access.

I know that turning blighted land into gardens is only a part of the answer. And I believe that turning the bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables that God chose to make available into ready-to-prepare meals helps fill the gap between availability and access. And I also know that responding to the call you feed them is a critical beginning.

The rest is up to all of us. We need your help.

Feeding Flint is not a problem of enough. It's a problem of available healthy options and equitable access. To learn how you can help address food insecurity in our community go to FeedFlint.org.

I invite you to join us for worship during this season of Lent as we consider the ways that scripture addresses the subject of food. In addition, we'll continue to celebrate Black History with celebrity guest interviews. 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.

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

"County Health Rankings and Roadmap." © County Health Rankings, 2022. Retrieved from: [Link to Article](#).

Nushrat Rahman. "Report: Michigan's food insecurity problem only got worse during COVID-19 pandemic." © Detroit Free Press, Jan 13, 2021. Retrieved from: [Link to Article](#).

Elaine Waxman and Megan Thompson. "Poor nutrition leaves kids vulnerable to lead poisoning—and not just in Flint." © Urban Institute, April 7, 2016. Retrieved from: [Link to Article](#).



ASBURY UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH



United
Women
in Faith

Invite you to join us in a Special Lenten Project

"FORTY DAYS ~ FORTY ITEMS"

Wednesday, March 2, 2022 is the first day of Lent. I have a challenge for you!

Each day of Lent, starting with Ash Wednesday, remove one item from your closet that you no longer wear or need (or doesn't fit) and put it into this trash bag*. At the end of the forty days, we will donate these items to The Angel Closet at our South Flint Soup Kitchen. This way you will be able to share them with someone who can really use them!!

So instead of "giving up" Chocolate or French Fries for Lent, please give from your heart so we can help with clothes for our neighbors at The Angel Closet. Plus you'll be getting a head start on your own spring cleaning!

*All items must be clean and not torn or ripped or stained. We are giving these items away to our clients and if you won't wear it, we don't want to have them wear these items either.

If you have any questions, please call UWF President Michele Weston at (810) 624-1184.



United
Women
in Faith

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN IS NOW UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

We've taken a new name to better reflect how we answer our calling today. It's an exhilarating time, as we commit to even greater inclusivity, action, and impact in our mission to support women, children, and youth.

All Women of Asbury UMC are invited to join our monthly meetings on the 1st Thursday of the month at 1:00PM in the Library. Your friends and neighbor ladies are also invited, they don't have to be United Methodist any longer. Any questions, please call Michele Weston, our President, at 810-624-1184.



**We believe love in action
can change the world.**

***** [Friday, April 8, 2022](#)** Asbury United Women In Faith will welcome and host the Church Women United in Greater Flint for their first meeting and luncheon since the Pandemic began in 2020. We would like to invite the ladies of Asbury UMC to join us at this CWU meeting at **11:00AM** that day, downstairs in the Wesley Room. Chef Kevin Croom will be serving our **lunch at Noon**. The cost of the lunch is being paid by CWU, but your donations are always welcome. If you are able to attend or have any questions, please call Michele Weston (810-624-1184) who will call in your reservation. Let's show some love to our Neighbors that day!

also

[Save The Date!!](#) Sunday, May 15, 2022 at Noon, after Morning Worship, The Asbury United Women In Faith will be having a Brunch to "Celebrate Spring" and to "Thank our Farm Workers" for all they are doing to get our Hoop Houses planted for this growing season for Asbury Farms.

Watch for a flyer coming soon to tell you more about it, the cost, the menu and reservations etc... The most exciting part of this event is to finally have an Asbury gathering and meal together since we stopped when the pandemic began.

**SOUTH FLINT
SOUP
KITCHEN**

APRIL 6TH,
2022

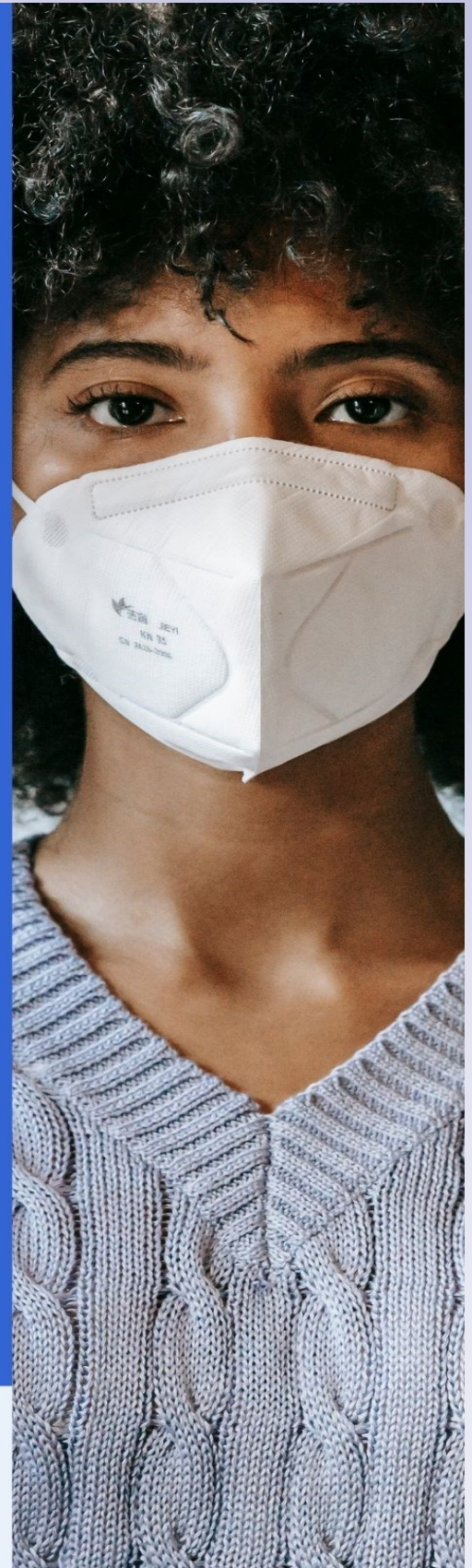


**COVID-19
and Flu
vaccines
are FREE.**

→ We will be offering
Flu and COVID-19
vaccines 10am-
Noon to kids and
adults. No
appointment
necessary!

**South Flint Soup Kitchen
3410 Fenton Road
Flint, MI 48507**

**Call us at 810-239-3427 for
more information.**



Providing a HOT MEAL and/or local, organic
PRODUCE weekly.



SATURDAYS starting around 12NOON

Asbury United Methodist Church

1653 Davison Rd, Flint (810) 235-0016



Food Not Bombs is a loose-knit group of independent collectives, sharing free vegan and vegetarian food with others. **Flint Food Not Bombs** believes that access of food among other necessities of life-should be viewed as a right, not a privilege. Yet in a nation with a military budget many times that of other nations, people continue to go hungry. This is immoral and unjust.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

Facebook.com/flintfoodnotbombs

Twitter.com/flintfnb

Email: flintfnb@protonmail.com

Website: foodnotbombsflint.wordpress.com

We're currently looking for volunteers so we can expand. If interested,
send us a message! Solidarity!

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense
than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.—MLK