

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

WELCOME TO ASBURY PASTOR HALEY HANSEN!!

Volume 3 Issue 22

January 22, 2023

Mud Pottery (Why?)



Anyone who has ever walked on mud consisting of wet clay knows that clay sticks to your boots and is challenging to remove. The higher the clay content of the soil, the stickier the mess. By the time you walk a few

feet, your boots are a lot heavier.

Some clay is heavier and nearly impossible to shovel. This is clay with a denser consistency. All clay can be molded into beautiful art by a potter.

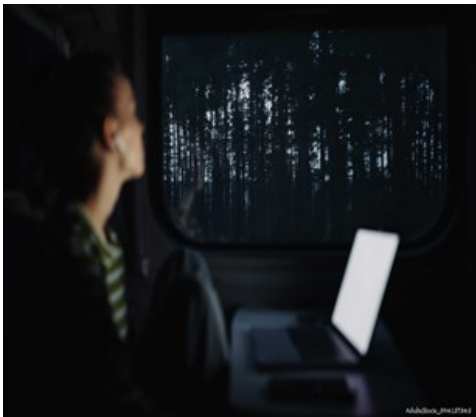
According to scripture, we are made from mud. We are a combination of water and clay. We are made from a substance

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EVERYONE
HAVE A
WONDERFUL
AND SAFE
WEEK!



I have questions too (Are we there yet?)



The questions are familiar, and some variation may be one of the first sentences we learn to form when we grow up traveling somewhere often. "Are we there yet?" the child says from the backseat. "How much longer?" asks the bored teenager. "Shouldn't we be there by

now?" the adult passenger asks his spouse.

Parents learn games passed down through generations in an attempt to shift focus toward the scenery. "I spy with my own eye..." says the participant, as he waits for the impatient travelers to guess what he's referring to. "Is it the snow on the trees, the ice forming on the rock next to the road?" comes a response.

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I once traveled from Detroit to Montreal by overnight train. Unable to sleep, I tried to imagine the scenery outside the window as we zipped past cars waiting for us to pass. But mostly, all that was outside my restricted view was darkness. "Were those sheep?" I wondered. Where is that truck headed?" I arrived the following day exhausted from a night of questions with no answers.

Pastor Haley is speaking at Asbury this week. In her article introducing Sunday's message, she shares some of her experiences with questions that she expected to be answered when she attended seminary. Her's is a common expectation that I also recall for myself. Her article reminds me of my own experience.

Spoiler alert. I still have as many questions as I did on that first day of seminary. Many are different, mostly because I've given up on getting answers to earlier questions.

I'll never forget my first day in a class listed in the course schedule as "The Theology of God." Wouldn't you think that this is a great class for getting answers to a few of the more difficult questions? This is what I thought too.

The professor introduced our first assignment. It was the first of three papers that would determine our grade in the class, and it was due in a few weeks. So, of course, there was plenty of reading offering insight for us to draw on in our efforts to impress the professor with our knowledge. And I couldn't wait to get started until I heard the question forming the paper's premise. A three-word question, "Does God exist?"

"What? Did I hear you right? I thought this was why we were all here. Because God exists, we're here to learn all about what that means so we can teach others." The thoughts in my head buzzed around a shrinking chunk of knowledge that we believers label as faith.

There's a line in a song I haven't heard in a while, and I can't remember the title. The song is written from the pastor's perspective, who sings, "I've got questions too!" But am I supposed to keep my questions to myself? If you all find out that I also have questions, won't your new-found knowledge diminish my credibility?

Paul believed that God existed and dedicated his life to living by the rules found in the first five books of what we now call the Old Testament. He was a belief lawyer, familiar with the finer points of law and capable of interrogating others who fell short of expectations.

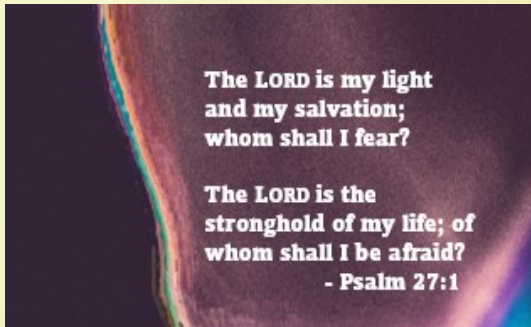
Everything changed for Paul after an encounter with the resurrected Jesus. Years later, Paul writes that every one of us falls short of expectations. Elsewhere, Paul makes a claim to being the worse of the worst.

But his life-changing epiphany didn't end in despair. Instead, Paul learned that not only does God realize we're far from perfect, but we're incapable of perfection.

So why didn't God just smite us to use an outdated biblical word? The explanation is spelled out as a recurring theme throughout scripture. God loves us despite our imperfections. We are God's creation, which matters to God more than perfection.

God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ... everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence.

Romans 3:22-23



In my time as a journalist, I often found that the most uncomfortable questions were the ones I most needed to ask.

As a former newspaper reporter, I spent years of my life learning how to craft questions. In journalism school I slowly shrugged off my Midwestern aversion to confrontation. I learned how to be critical without coming across as overly suspicious or negative. I grew accustomed to asking dumb questions. I rebranded my nosiness into a form of curiosity.

In the church of my youth, however, nobody taught me to ask questions and, for a long time, I didn't feel the need to. Faith was an absolute, and I took comfort in dogma. Eventually, this approach to faith was no longer enough for me. My faith fractured precisely because I never interrogated it, and I spent much of my early adult years wrestling with questions I had never previously dared to ask.

When I started seminary, I naively assumed that I'd leave my program with lots of answers. I thought I'd finally be able to put my questioning to rest once and for all. What I found, however, was that the vast majority of my theological education was about asking questions. In fact, the more I learned, the more questions I had.

While at times I yearned for the more simple and straightforward faith of my youth, I found that I grew immensely through the questions. The work was not always easy or comfortable, but ultimately embracing questions instead of turning away from them led me to a deeper, more expansive understanding of faith. This process taught me to have better appreciation and understanding of the innumerable ways that God speaks into the world.

The life of faith for me has become a form of questioning. It is the willingness to kick the tires even though the bumper might fall off. It is the humility to admit when you're wrong or when you can't find a perfect answer. It is diving into the unfathomed deep end of the pool knowing that it's a heck of a lot better to get in than to have never left the diving board. Questions allow for creativity and innovation. Questions allow us to reimagine what church is and who it includes. Questions allow us to move through doubt into a deeper faith.

I take comfort in the fact that Scripture itself is brimming with questions. Abraham asks God, "Will not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?" Job asks, "When a man dies, will he live again?" In three of the Gospel accounts, Jesus asks Peter "who do you say that I am?" In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus hangs on the cross and cries to God, "Why have you forsaken me?"

These questions aren't always hopeful and they often go unanswered. I've learned to embrace that discomfort. I'm willing to ask. I'm willing to have questions without answers and trust that God is with me in all of it. In my faith life, I often find that the most uncomfortable questions are the ones I most need to ask.

Bio: Born and raised on a farm in rural South Dakota, Rev. Haley Hansen spent her formative years attending small town churches, memorizing pop country lyrics, and biking down gravel roads. Prior to entering seminary at Boston University, Haley worked at newspapers throughout the Midwest, covering everything from pig shows at the Wisconsin State Fair to Aretha Franklin's funeral procession. As a minister and former journalist, Haley is passionate about storytelling and the ways narratives shape and inform lives.



In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom
 Sylvia Pittman
 Chris Freeman Richard Oram



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard

2022 LOCAL CHURCH REPORT TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE IS DUE THIS WEEK...

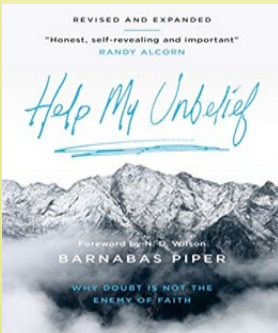
This report is due January 30th. I need the reports in to me by January 25th so I have enough time to go over them and email them to District Office before the 30th.

Thank you, Connie

PASTOR BOOK CLUB NEWS

Pastor Book Club is still meeting via Zoom, but we are also gathering in the Asbury Library Conference Room at 12Noon every Wednesday, unless otherwise noted.

Please call the Church Office for more information, as things could change (810-235-0016).



This month's book series is called "*Help My Unbelief*" by Barnabas Piper. It is based on his personal journey, what faith really means. Join us each Wednesday at 12Noon.

**COMING UP THIS WEEK
 JANUARY 23 – JANUARY 29**

- Jan 23 Mon 6:00pm Worship Team Meeting
- Jan 24 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm Food Distribution
 3:00pm CDC Board Meeting
- Jan 25 Wed 11am-12Noon Kitchen Food Giveaway at South Flint Soup Kitchen (No appts needed)
 12Noon Pastor Book Club
2022 Local Church Report due today in office
- Jan 26 Thu
- Jan 27 Fri
- Jan 28 Sat
- Jan 29 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](#).)

Upcoming Worship Series



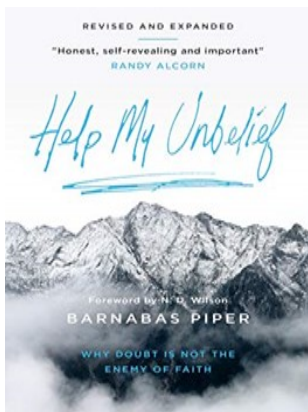
I'm fascinated by science. Unfortunately, my struggles with math limited how far I could progress. Nevertheless, I chose the science of computers as my field of study but focused on utilizing their power in business. Less math was required, and the demand was high. The problem for me was that I enjoyed the company of people more than machines.

Somewhere along the way, I moved further away from God. It was not the fault of science or technology, and I never thought of my situation as not believing. I never stopped believing God created science, scientist, and computer nerds. Nor did I find evidence in science that the universe came from somewhere other than God.

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Book Club News

We completed our series and discussions on *The Wonder of*



Christmas. This series was written and produced by the Skit Guys as an Advent worship

series, and we adapted their content for our use.

As we move into 2023, our first book deals with a subject familiar to every believer. Unbelief is often an under-acknowledged condition of our hearts. And instead of dealing with our unbelief, we choose hypocrisy as an easier road to travel. In other words, what we do is different from what we believe.

means. In doing so, he explains how embracing doubts and questions can help us to get to know God better. His aim is to help us trust God in our everyday lives, even when we don't understand everything we may want to know.

This book encourages us to ask God the hard questions that stand between us and let go of our doubts. Leaving us with the confidence to trust God, even when some questions remain. Initially published in 2015, his revised and updated edition includes biographical stories about Afshin Ziafat, C.S. Lewis, and John Piper.

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
Mike Sampson	Farms Manager
Chris Freeman	South Campus Bldg Mgr
Israel Unger	Finance Director
Kim Sims	Connections Suprv
Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
Katelin Maylum	Sr Prog Mgr Local Foods
	South Flint Soup Kitchen

In his book, *Help My Unbelief*, Barnabas Piper shares, based on his personal journey, what faith really

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

One reviewer writes this:

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Upcoming Worship Series *...cont from pg 4*

Instead, it was a matter of shifting priorities. God became less important than my ambitions. I tried to keep this shift a secret while not realizing that it's obvious when this happens. And God knows long before we realize it ourselves.

Scripture is full of stories about this happening to people. The results are never good. However, God does not give up on anyone. Some of us are slow learners, and it takes a lifetime to figure it out. Sadly, too many never do and miss out on the joy that accompanies trusting God with everything.

Our new series is based on a book by Barnabas Piper titled *Help My Unbelief*. In his book, he shares his personal journey with doubt and unbelief. And you and I gain insight into what faith really means.

The book title comes from a story found in the Gospel of Mark. A man brings his son, hoping to find a cure for his son's convulsions. When Jesus confronts the man about whether he genuinely believed that his son could be healed, the man asks Jesus, "I do believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:14-29).

It turns out that embracing doubts and questions can help us to get to know God better. So our hope for this series is that each of us will come to trust God in our everyday lives. Even when we don't understand everything we may want to know.

Fortunately, God never gives up on us. N. D. Wilson writes in his forward for the book that "When we cannot see, we are still seen." Jesus searches for the lost in the same way a Shepherd never gives up until a lost sheep is found.

We kick off 2023 with a dive into a struggle that is common to all believers, doubt. Few of us call our condition unbelief. But our unwillingness to be honest with ourselves does not change reality. Until and unless we fully trust God with every aspect of our lives, unbelief has a grip on us.

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

Barnabas Piper. *Help My Unbelief: Why doubt is not the enemy of faith*. © Barnabas Piper, 2020. Charlotte : The Good Book Company.

that sticks to the farmer's boot like manure in the barnyard. Clay is obstinate and challenging. And water doesn't easily pass through dense clay.

Yep, this description nails it, but doesn't sound much like "Jesus loves me!" does it?

Speaking through the Prophet Jeremiah, God offers pottery as a metaphor but doesn't offer much clarification. "Go to the potter's house," God instructs Jeremiah. And while observing the potter along with Jeremiah, we gain insight into God's way of seeing creation.

Like the potter, God shapes mud into art. Like mud, we are shaped through life circumstances, mainly due to choices made by persons we've never met and can't hold accountable.

Scripture is clear. It works this way on purpose. While we're each made from mud, we're all mixtures of different types and shades of mud. God throws a lump onto the wheel that begins the creative process. Some of us are porous, while others are less so. Some of us come from primary sources where stone was crushed into clay. Others are made from clay that traveled downstream, picking up impurities along the way.

Potters often mix clays with different characteristics, resulting in a more durable and beautiful piece of art. For example, adding clay with more plasticity improves a very dense clay that withstands high temperatures and finishes harder and stronger.

The Lord said go to the potter's house...whenever a piece of pottery turned out imperfect, he would take the clay and make it into something else.

Jeremiah 18:1-8

And, as a potter, God knows that we each tolerate different levels of hardening and heat. Likewise, some of us are easily molded and shaped, while others are stubborn and resist shaping. Nevertheless, we each become what the Potter chooses us to be, whether by intervention or through the consequences of choices made by persons closely connected and by many we'll never meet.

On the other hand, even though the story's point in Jeremiah is subtle, it's powerful. The miracle is found in the language describing how the potter reacts to a misshaped lump of clay. The potter makes something else, not rejecting or abandoning the clay, but working with the raw material to change what is misshaped into beautiful art.

This sounds more like Jesus loves me but recognizes what I'm trying to hide.

In the Book of Job, we read a story that invites us up on stage. Job's story is our story when things aren't going so well. Like Job, we want to know why calamity happened to us. What did we do that was so terrible? Why are we being punished? And God is often silent?

But what if God decided to answer us? God enters the final scene in Job's case, but the answer isn't what Job expected. So, God has answered already in scripture.

More importantly, God sometimes answers through our connection with others and often through a tiny opening in our souls. Sometimes, despite our rigidity and stubbornness, God makes way for life-giving and life-changing revelation.

I invite you to join us for worship. And if you have a prayer request you can submit your request online on our website [home page](#). In addition, prayer request forms are located around the church and during water and food giveaways.

Life Group Questions & Notes:

God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. God does this to all who believe in Christ, because there is no difference at all: everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence.

Romans 3:22-23

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

Handwritten notes area with horizontal lines.


QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

- 1. Read Psalm 27 and Romans 3:21-26 — Many believe that salvation is entirely dependent on our faith that Jesus Christ is God — or does it? What do you believe? Reflect not only on these texts but consider everything else you believe from scripture, experienced in life and learned over the years. Describe what these texts means for you?
2. Read this week's articles titled A questioning faith and I have questions too. What questions do you have? What are some of the most basic beliefs that you hold onto about God? What evidence do you point to when someone questions why you believe what you do?
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”



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**



January South Flint Soup
Kitchen Food Giveaways

January 11th & 25th
11am - Noon

NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED FOR
FOOD EVER!

South Flint Soup Kitchen

3410 Fenton Road
3 blocks north of Atherton
Flint, MI 48507

Questions? Call 810-239-3427





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 ***

Too often our struggles with doubt are hidden, pushed into the back of the cupboard like a corrosive agent that is too dangerous to touch. With clarity, warmth, and candor, Barnabas Piper shows us that doubt does not have to be something that corrodes, but rather in its right place can be something that strengthens faith. -Mark Sayers (07/01/2015).

Barnabas Piper is a pastor, author, podcaster, and speaker who lives near Nashville, Tennessee, with his family. He writes regularly for *He Reads Truth* and blogs at BarnabasPiper.com. Rev Piper has authored several books and Bible studies. In addition, he co-hosts *The Happy Rant* podcast, a popular show discussing issues of faith and culture in a light-hearted, humorous manner.

I invite you to join us each Sunday for worship as we explore belief, faith, doubt, and unbelief. We will dig deeper into these subjects each Wednesday as we read Piper's book together.

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away, I encourage you to join us via Zoom 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 are 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

The Wonder of Christmas. An Advent worship series written and produced by © Skit Guys, 2022. Used with Permission.

Barnabas Piper. *Help My Unbelief: Why doubt is not the enemy of faith*. © Barnabas Piper, 2020. Charlotte : The Good Book Company



I have questions too (Are we there yet?)

...cont from page 2

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Keep in mind that God loves all creation and consider what this means God wants from us as stewards of our earth.

What Paul realized and shared in letters is an interpretation of the stories found in the Gospels. God loves us and chose to live with us as evidence of that love. And all we have to do to be reconciled with God, no matter how flawed we might be, is to believe this. Simple enough?

Hold on! Yes, I believe this, but I still have questions.

I hope that you'll join us to hear Pastor Haley's message. But if you're somewhere else, like Open Door Church, where Haley is pastor, the broadcast is available to view later.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website's](#) homepage - [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

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The farm's new twist on a
CSA Food Box!!!!

Bring home only the veggies you love!

Want more information??

Email: kelly.jewett@outlook.com



We were stoked to be kicking off our very first Asbury Farms Sliding Scale Food Box Program last week! Get the



most local, organic, delicious produce!! Grown on the East Side!

Pick what veggies you want, how much you want and pay what you can between \$12.00 — \$24.00.

Every Saturday from 11:00am to 1:00pm

1601 Jane Ave Flint MI



Look for the big banner
that says "SALE" ...

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website's](#) homepage - [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

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FLINT ASBURY WATER BOX IS IN FULL OPERATION
SERVING FRESH WATER – PLEASE JOIN US
ON TUESDAYS FOR A 5 OR 2.5 GALLON OF WATER.
STOP BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 10:00AM AND 1:00PM.



COMING SOON FLINT ASBURY DELICIOUS
AND WHOLESOME MEAL KITS!!!

STAY TUNE ...

WILL POST MORE IN
OUR WEEKLY ASBURY
CIRCUIT RIDER!!



First Saturdays at the Farm

Sliding Scale Veggie Sale

\$12-\$24 per 3-4lbs
Pay what you can

HEALTH IS
WEALTH.

Music by DJ lei lei

Farm Tour

Learn: Asbury's winterizations
techniques

Asbury Farms

1601 Jane Ave
12.00am - 3.00pm

QnA w/Experienced Horticulturists

Kid Stuff

Juggling and magic!!
Cozy up with a cup of hot cocoa

More Details@ [facebook.com/AsburyFarmsFlint](https://www.facebook.com/AsburyFarmsFlint) events