

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 3 Issue 29

January 29, 2023

## Choices (Trusting God)



Google the expression "How to make good decisions?" and you'll find a long list of articles offering three to twenty-three steps to help you out. Martin G. Moore, writing for *Harvard Business Review*, lists eight recommended steps. For example, this consult-

ant to corporate executives suggests avoiding consensus decisions but favors input from persons closest to activities most impacted.

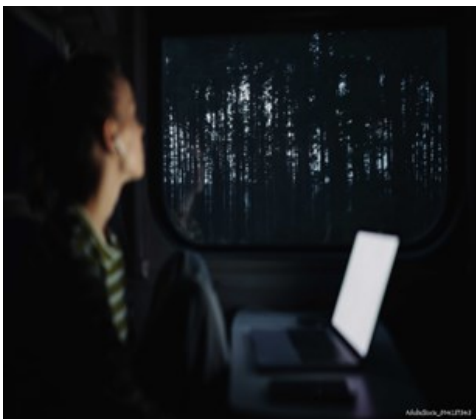
What he doesn't cover in his article, however, are situations where information isn't available that adds clarity to the likely outcomes. And prayer is missing altogether from the consultant's

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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

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](#).

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](mailto: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

Content for this series is based in part on: Barnabas Piper. *Help My Unbelief: Why doubt is not the enemy of faith* © Barnabas Piper, 2020. Charlotte : The Good Book Company.

In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom  
 Sylvia Pittman  
 Chris Freeman                      Richard Oram



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE  
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

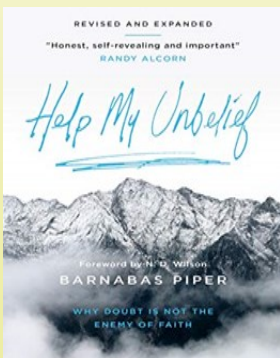
Nancy Elston                      Elaine Lamoreaux  
 Norma Buzzard

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 30 – FEBRUARY 5**

Jan 30	Mon		
Jan 31	Tues	10:00am-12:30pm	Food Distribution
Feb 1	Wed	12Noon	Pastor Book Club
Feb 2	Thu	1:00PM	United Women in Faith
Feb 3	Fri		
Feb 4	Sat		
Feb 5	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



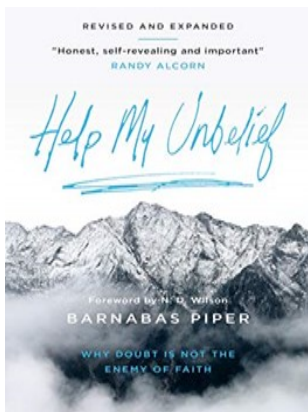
I'm fascinated by science. Unfortunately, my struggles with math limited how far I could progress. Nevertheless, I chose the science of computers as my field of study but focused on utilizing their power in business. Less math was required, and the demand was high. The problem for me was that I enjoyed 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 5*

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](http://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.

list. This leads me to wonder whether prayer is also missing from how he makes decisions he faces that impact him personally.

How about you? Do you pray to receive God's input on which choice to make?

Prayer requires at least some belief. And belief is a delicate balance of emotion, logic, and experiences occurring within a personal context. Nevertheless, our beliefs impact our daily decisions. And depending on the perceived impact of a particular decision, emotions usually way heavier than other factors.

Barnabas Piper argues that the most common form of unbelief involves lifestyle conflicts. We express doubt through our thoughts, words, and actions because we choose to believe that God is okay with our choices. He writes that while our questions and doubts matter, they often hide a deeper problem. That is, "a lack of trust in God as God describes himself."

This makes sense. Trust is tough without hard evidence. And trust, faith, and belief are closely related and used interchangeably. So, for instance, I might say that I trust in God because I have faith that God's way is best, and I believe that God is good. Or something like that.

The story of Abraham is one of my favorites. While he is difficult to relate to, overall, who doesn't have reason to admire a man credited with fathering three of the major world religions. And scripture claims that this was all God's doing as part of a divine plan. So all Abraham had to do was trust God to come through.

We're told that Abraham trusted God and that his faith was credited as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Abraham's adventures in trying to be faithful to God begin with Abraham choosing to leave his homeland to move to some other place that God would disclose later. "Trust me," God said, "It's going to be great!" (Genesis 12:1).

Admittedly, I tend to interpret scripture with great flexibility. While I'm trained to notice the details and nuances, I'm willing to admit that my interpretation may be flawed. And this keeps me from passionate arguments over whether a particular translation best nails the intent of God based on how and which words appear in whichever translation I'm reading. More important, given the infiniteness of God, I'm suspicious of all finite conclusions we draw from scripture.

In the case of Abraham, we can read the text as it's translated and presume that God spoke plainly with audible instructions. And Abraham heard and believed that it was God speaking to him, and he packed up and headed out. No questions, no arguments, no proof of authenticity. Except that life doesn't usually work that way for the rest of us.

The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a land that I am going to show you."

Genesis 12:1

What if, instead, Abraham grew restless over time as feelings of emptiness hovered over him. Perhaps he and Sarah dreamed of raising children, but as their senior years loomed over the near horizon, they wondered if there chances for a meaningful life were better elsewhere. What if Abraham believed it was God's idea to leave despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, and God proved him right

**Life Group Questions & Notes:**

The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's home, and go to a land that I am going to show you."

Genesis 12:1

**NOTES FROM WORSHIP**

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**QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS**

1. Read Genesis 12:1-5 and Genesis 18:20-33. Are these familiar stories? Can you relate to what happened to Abraham? Has God ever told you to leave and go somewhere else? Explain how it played out? Did you go? Why or why not?
2. Read this week's articles titled *Choice*. How do you go about making hard decisions? How do your beliefs about God affect how you make decisions? What role does prayer play in your big decisions? Share an example where you made a decision based on doing what you felt God wanted you to do? How did it work out? How did you determine if it was God's will and not just your own? What big decisions are you facing? Ask God for clarity on what God's wants for you and pay attention in case God answers.
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.

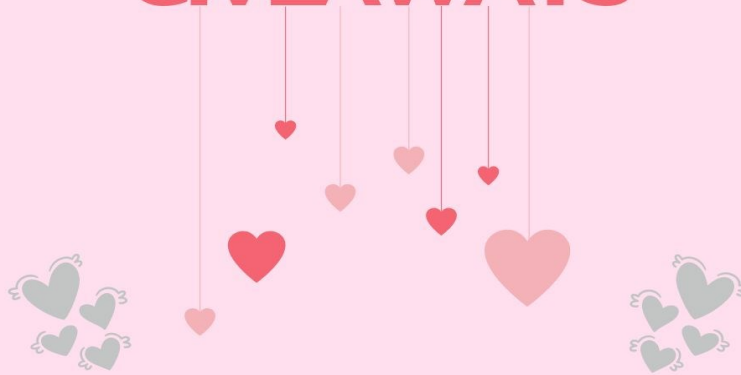
Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated 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](https://flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate)**

# SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN

## FEBRUARY FOOD GIVEAWAYS



**FEB 8TH & 22ND**  
**11AM-NOON**



**NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED!**



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



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**QUESTIONS? CALL 810-239-3427**

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**ASBURY FARM FRESH**

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

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**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](http://FlintAsbury.org).

Pastor Tommy

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

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SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN'S 1ST  
ANNUAL  
**BROWSE THE CLOSET  
FUNDRAISER**

**FEBRUARY 25TH  
3PM-5PM**

SWAP YOUR OLD STYLES FOR NEW ONES, PICK UP SOME  
GOODIES AT THE BAKE SALE, AND LISTEN TO THE MUSICAL  
STYLINGS OF JOHN LI!



**\$5 cover charge, hors d'oeuvres and other  
refreshments provided!**

**ENTRY ON VERMILYA SIDE OF BUILDING**

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Questions? Call 810-239-3427

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](mailto: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” ...

I'm not saying this is how it happened. I'm just saying that this may have occurred for Abraham because I wonder if this is how it happened to my family. My parents chose to leave their home in Arkansas for a better life. My dad shared with me that they concluded there was no way for them to support a family as sharecroppers. But Memphis was unproven potential and eventually we moved to Ohio. Did they follow God's guidance or hope that God would be with them regardless?

And most important, this is how God's directions work for me. In my experience, I'm left to determine which of the numerous voices in my head represents God. So instead of crystal clarity, I see the way toward a better future through blurred vision. And when I choose to do what I argue God led me to do, I do so based on my faith in God and my own, often flawed, ability to interpret God's will for me and the people affected.

And everyone is affected by our choices.

In another Abraham story, we read that God speaks to Abraham in the presence of three strangers he welcomed into his home. First, the men tell Abraham that Sarah will have a child despite her age. Later, as Abraham is walking with them, God tells Abraham about two cities where the people are collectively bad news. And God is considering an intervention that won't end well for anyone living there.

After the men left, Abraham continued his conversation with God. "What if there are 50 people who aren't like the rest? What if there are 50 who, instead of going along with the crowd, try to do good?" God responds, "If there are 50 good people then the city will be spared". Whew!

"Okay, but 50 is a lot to expect. What about 45?" "Sure, why not. If there are 45 innocent people, then everyone is spared." Abraham kept up the negotiation in the form of questions until he got the number down to ten. Indeed, there must be at least ten innocent persons even in the worst city.

This story is fascinating. Did the writer really intend for us to believe that this exchange took place between God and Abraham to illustrate how conversations with God play out? It's possible. But this isn't how it has worked for me. Instead, I have debates within my own head. And if there are any audible words, they come from me. Nevertheless, I'm willing to conclude that God participates with us in similar conversations. The challenge is to figure out when it's God's voice you're hearing.

What do you believe?

Jesus tells us that belief is a divine gift whereby we're assured by the Holy Spirit of God's presence in Him. I believe this to

be true. On my better days, I feel confident that God guides me. But honestly, when problems are piling up, I wonder and worry. Was this really God's idea or my own?

In those times, I believe that God's Spirit brings assurance. Perhaps not the certainty that my choices align with God's will for me because I suspect they're often not. Instead, I feel assured that God is with me, even after I make not-so-good choices. And while God allows me to suffer the consequences, He is with me always, even to the end of time.

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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Martin G. Moore. "How to Make Great Decisions, Quickly." © Harvard Business Review, March 22, 2022. Retrieved from: [link](#)



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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