

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 3 Issue 14

MAY 14, 2023

## Gone Fishing (Following Jesus)



"You're not thinking clearly!" "You're being irrational!" "You need to stop being so emotional!" We might hear these expressions from friends or family who disagree with a decision we're making that doesn't make sense to them. The question is, do we listen

to them and take their advice or go ahead with our choice?

According to Wikipedia, the psychology of reasoning studies how we reason. In other words, what process do we use in drawing conclusions to solve problems and make decisions? We use reasoning daily, even when we take a day off from making big decisions. The ability to reason is hardwired, even when we're irrational.

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## Enigma (Never give up)



There are days when I'm ready to give up on our community. Even though I'm convinced, our community is filled with people wanting better circumstances and more than a few working very hard for change, there seem to be too many obstacles standing in the way.

But our biggest obstacle is a lack of cooperation, which I believe, is driven by a misperception of scarcity.

Our message last Sunday focused on invitation. The premise asserted that one of the primary reasons Jesus was killed was His insistence that every person is cherished by God and should be welcomed. Which is contrary to the notion that God shows favoritism.

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EVERYONE  
HAVE A  
WONDERFUL  
AND SAFE WEEK!!



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On the other hand, His detractors argued that Jesus was breaking too many rules that they held sacred. Of course, their most significant concern was that Jesus threatened the power they held onto that was fueled by division and fear.

It's apparent that the church, from its beginning, was a gathering place for the community. Granted, the belief that Jesus is God was the common glue, but nothing in the teaching of Jesus excluded anyone. Frankly, the only expectation was loving God and each other. As a result, the first church focused on ensuring everyone had what they needed as an antidote to scarcity.

In a *New York Times* opinion article, journalist Jessica Grose explains the increasing numbers dropping out of the church. She quotes Pitzer College Professor Phil Zuckerman, who argues that the image of today's church is too closely linked to conservative Republican politics. Unfortunately, there's ample evidence to support this assertion. Still, their insight is only one of the challenges we face in our efforts to inspire transformation within our community.

After all, even an outsider cannot mistakenly lump Asbury with conservative politics, given our consistent emphasis on unqualified inclusion. Nevertheless, progress in our community continues to be painfully slow. Impaired significantly by bickering and competition for scarce resources.

I don't believe the problem involves believing the right things. The real crux is whether we treat one another with love and forgiveness. Setting aside our varied and nuanced interpretations of scripture to focus on working together for the good of our community.

One of the stories in all three synoptic gospels involves a charge that Jesus was offending God. But first, let's double click on who is in the audience that made this accusation. Luke tells us that Jesus was surrounded by Pharisees and teachers of the law.

Pharisees were not clergy but were generally associated with political power and the interpretation of scripture. Their focus was orthodoxy. A twenty-five cent word for having the correct beliefs. Their premise was clear and pervasive in the first century. Believe what they believe, and God will bless you with health and wealth. In their view of scripture, God picks favorites and sits with them at the lunchroom table.

Jesus says to a crippled man, "Your sins are forgiven!", And their reaction was visible shock and condemnation. Only God can forgive sin. "Who does He think He is?" was visible in their expressions and muttering.

If you are familiar with the stories of Jesus, there is nothing beyond the ordinary about this story. But let's set the scene and discover why Enigma is the best title I could find for this week's message.

Is it easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Get up and walk? I will prove to you, then, that the son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

Luke 5:23-24

Jesus is in some unnamed person's home. It's standing room only inside, and the crowd is blocking the door. The "right believers" are several persons deep, making it impossible for anyone else to enter the house. Remember that everyone in this crowd appears to be doing okay for themselves. They walked there on their own power, were likely in good health, and were well fed.

And they believed that their good fortune was a reward for their faithfulness to following all of the rules as they interpreted them.

Where are the less fortunate? Somewhere at the back of the crowd, I suspect. Out of sight and unable to see or hear Jesus with many righteous people in their way.

An unnamed man, unable to walk, is carried by four neighbors to the house in the hope that Jesus can heal him. We aren't told anything more about his condition. However, based on the common belief that God used disease and disabilities as punishment, it's a wonder four neighbors were willing to take him to Jesus.

But they did. However, too many "good" people were in the way.

There is something about human ingenuity that inspires me. And I suspect we're the most creative when we're the most desperate. The group finds a way to get the crippled man up on the house's roof. Now what?

The differences between Mark's version and Luke's is interesting. Mark envisioned a peasant's home with a thatch roof that the group dug through to make a skylight large enough for the man to fit through.

On the other hand, Luke writes that the group removed roof tiles, describing a wealthy person's home. Given the audience sitting in the choice seats, I'm going with Luke's telling.

So the crippled man is lowered from the roof onto the floor in front of Jesus. Seeing the faith of this group, Jesus is moved and says to the crippled man, "Your sins are forgiven," apparently creating a synchronized gasp among the crowd. The Pharisees and law teachers began muttering to each other that what Jesus said to the man was offensive. Jesus violated orthodoxy.

Alan Culpepper reminds us of the likelihood that the crippled man also blamed his condition on his failure to follow God's rules. So Jesus responded with the words the man most needed to hear,

knowing that He was hemmed in by persons focused on pursuing their version of right beliefs. He was sure to hear objections to His declaration. But Jesus had an important point to make while illustrating compassion for the crippled man.

Jesus offers a challenge to the naysayers. "Which demonstration of power is more compelling," Jesus asks, "to tell someone their sin is forgiven or to tell this man to get up and walk?" Of course, healing someone who is obviously crippled is immediately verifiable. While forgiveness is less so.

But Jesus makes an even bolder claim that He is the One from Daniel's dream. And the Son of Man has all authority, including forgiveness.

Jesus tells the man to pick up the stretcher he came in on and walk out on his own power. And the man walks out praising God.

I invite you to follow along with us during our series. You can obtain a copy of Angela Hunt's book online, in bookstores, or look for it at the library. Our copies went fast, but you can contact our office if you need help finding a book. We have more copies coming.

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

Our series was inspired by and relies on content provided by Angela Hunt. *Daughter of Cana*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2020. Jessica Grose. *"Christianity's Got a Branding Problem."* © New York Times, May 10, 2023. Retrieved from: [link](#)  
R. Alan Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke," *The New Interpreters Bible*, Vol IX, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 121-126.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kevin Croom  
 Sylvia Pittman  
 Richard Oram



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

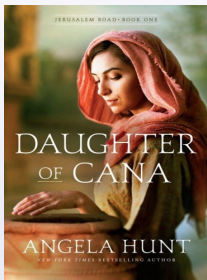
Virginia Bigger      Nancy Elston  
 Norma Buzzard

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.

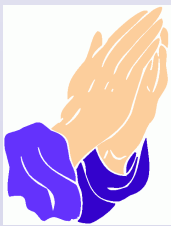
Please call the Church Office for more information, as things could change (810-235-0016).

This month's book series is called "Daughter of Cana" by Angela Hunt. This book will take readers on a tour of the many characters found in scripture and a few that didn't get mentioned.... I hope you all will join us each Wednesday at 12Noon.



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Our Asbury member Nancy Elston is now at Willowbrook Manor on Beecher Rd. Please keep her in your prayers.



Please continue your prayers for Virginia Bigger. She is now home but still recovering.

**COMING UP THIS WEEK  
 MAY 15 - MAY 21**



- May 15 Mon 3:00PM Staff Meeting  
 6:00pm Leadership Team
- May 16 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm Food Distribution
- May 17 Wed 11am-12N Food Giveaway at  
 South Flint Soup Kitchen-no appts needed)  
 (see flyer on pg 15)  
 12Noon Pastor Book Club
- May 18 Thu
- May 19 Fri
- May 20 Sat
- May 21 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](#).)

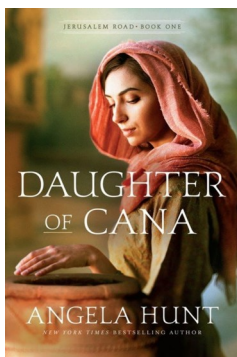
## Upcoming Worship Series "Water into Wine"



According to scripture, Mary, the mother of Jesus, attended a wedding in Cana. The guest list was apparently quite long and included Jesus and other friends of the family, relatives, and friends of friends. Weddings lasted multiple days, and the groom was expected to provide ample food and wine for all guests to have their fill. And this wedding was no different. But a problem was brewing.

The Gospels are full of stories void of detail. Rather than a fictional novel where an author takes us through every twist and turn, building characters with dialogue and description, the bible leaves us hungry for more.

## Book Club News



The very first Easter marked the beginning of a new era in human history. God chose to live among humans, and, as a result, life

would never be the same.

We begin a new worship series called *Water into Wine* in

the spirit of new beginnings. Our companion book was written by best-selling author Angela Hunt. This book is a part of her *Jerusalem Road* series that takes readers on a tour of the many characters found in scripture and a few that didn't get mentioned.

Although Hunt's book is fictional, her attention to details in scripture challenges our knowledge of the Bible. With each character, we meet the questions that percolate inside us. What parts of her description are likely genuine,

and which are made up? Was Thomas really like that? Did Thomas have a twin sister?

Allow our author's creativity to ignite your creativity in exploring the stories of Jesus. Here's what the publisher says about the book:

Thomas and Tasmin, twin siblings hired to oversee a wedding feast in Cana, worry when the host runs out of wine . . . until a guest tells Tasmin to have the servants fill the pitchers by the gate with water from the cistern. Reluctantly, she obeys and is amazed when rain-water becomes the finest wine ever tasted in Cana.

## 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
	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

## Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony & Mirium	Welcome Team
Anthony & Jim	Ushers
Jonathon & Terrance	Production Team
Yasheah & Mirium	Nursery
Cyndi	Worship Leader
Christine & Norma	Cafe

## *Upcoming Worship Series—“Water into Wine” ...cont from pg 5*

Who is the twin brother of Thomas, or is she his sister? Who else was in the room when Jesus washed the feet of His closest allies? Who prepared the meals? What did they eat?

Beginning the first Sunday after Easter, join us as we explore possible answers to questions left hanging from Nazareth to Jerusalem. We start with a story of Jesus as a young boy gone missing as His family returned home from celebrating Passover in Jerusalem.

We won't dive into every story, but all of the tales add to a greater familiarity and a deeper understanding of the Gospels.

We won't allow best-selling author and theologian Angela Hunt to fill in some of the details behind the stories. Each week, after reading the story as told by Angela's creative imagination and gift for storytelling, we will dig into what scripture actually tells us. And we will imagine and share our own versions, as we find ourselves immersed in the stories of Jesus.

In a book from her *Jerusalem Road* series, *Daughter of Cana*, Angela follows Jesus from Nazareth to Cana, Capernaum, and Jerusalem. Along the road to Jerusalem, we will meet other characters, some only mentioned by name or reference, nevertheless, witnesses of God living among us.

You are invited to join us on Wednesdays at Noon to dig deeper into each week's message. You can purchase Angela Hunt's book, look for it at the library, contact our office for a copy, or pick up a copy before or after worship on Sunday.

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

*Angela Hunt. Daughter of Cana. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2020.*

For example, before beginning this article, I googled the "psychology of logical reasoning." And I scanned a couple of the suggested articles to get an idea of whether this topic is helpful, given the content of the chapters from Angela Hunt's book that I'm using to inform this week's message. And I quickly concluded that presenting this topic's technical description is unnecessary. But how did I get to this conclusion? I used logical reasoning.

In *Daughter of Cana*, Tasmin, and Jude travel in search of their siblings. Tasmin is convinced that her twin brother, Thomas, is not thinking rationally. Jude has similar thoughts about his older brother, Yeshua. Their conclusion is based on observing the behavior of their brothers in light of what they believe to be true about how the world works. They used logical reasoning.

In their conclusion, Yeshua and Thomas are not thinking clearly, being irrational, and perhaps letting emotions interfere with sound decision-making. Thomas should be home in Cana helping with date farming, and Yeshua is a skilled carver with work waiting for him in Nazareth. Their siblings aim to convince them to return to their respective homes. And they planned to use logical reasoning.

The problem, however, centers around Jude's brother. Yeshua is derived from ancient Hebrew and is more commonly known as Jesus. Thomas is one of several persons traveling with Yeshua and hanging on to His every word. "Where is the logic?" our story's main characters wonder in their thoughts and conversations.

We know from Scripture that Jesus selected a team of twelve persons as His inner circle. What isn't clear is how Jesus determined His choices and why those He invited didn't ask more questions before joining Him. Where is the logic?

Jesus said to them, "Come with me, and I will teach you to catch people." At once they left their nets and went with him.

Matthew 4:19-20

Matthew tells us that Jesus met Peter and his brother Andrew while walking along the shore of Lake Galilee. The two brothers were using a net to fish in the lake when Jesus said, "Come with me, and I will teach you to catch people."

While Jesus' offer to teach them something new was perhaps intriguing, Matthew offers no other context for how they both conclude to leave their nets and go with Jesus. We only know that they did. But did they use logic to make their decision to change vocations?

And Jesus was not quite finished recruiting.

Walking further, Jesus comes upon two other brothers, James and John. They were in their boat with their father Zebedee, getting their nets ready for fishing when Jesus called them. Like Peter and Andrew, the two left the boat and their father and went with Jesus. Where is the logic?

Nevertheless, the decisions of these individuals, whether based on logical reasoning, gut feeling, intuition, or rumors they believed to be true about Jesus, were life-changing. More importantly, their decisions impacted persons they would never have met with a different conclusion.

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

*Is it easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Get up and walk? I will prove to you, then, that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.*

Luke 5:17-26

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

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QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read the story of Jesus forgiving sin and healing a crippled man in Luke 5:17-26. Reflect on where you fit in this story. In what ways are healing and forgiveness related for you?
2. Read this week's articles titled *Enigma*. Do you believe there is a strong connection between your beliefs and your actions? Do you believe God punishes you for doing wrong? Either way, what is your evidence? Which is more difficult, forgiveness or healing? How are they related?
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](https://flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate)

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!!





**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 \***

When Thomas impulsively decides to follow the teacher from Nazareth, he and Tasmin argue. The twins have been together since the womb, and Tasmin can't accept losing her brother to some magician-prophet. But, aided by Jude, younger brother to Jesus of Nazareth, she decides to follow the Nazarene's group and do whatever she must to mend the fractured relationship and bring her brother home.

Angela Hunt has published over 100 books, selling nearly 5 million copies worldwide. Angela, a New York Times bestselling author, received the Times Book Club Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006. She has a Ph.D. in biblical studies in theology and is well-versed in biblical text. Angela can be found online at [www.angelahuntbooks.com](http://www.angelahuntbooks.com).

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 or enter a prayer request on our website's homepage — [FlintAsbury.org](http://FlintAsbury.org).

Pastor Tommy



## EXPERIENCE APPLEWOOD AS A VOLUNTEER!!



Have you been looking for a way to serve your community?

The Ruth Mott Foundation is adding to our roster of dedicated Applewood volunteers for the 2023 season.

Applewood was built in 1916 as the historic home of Charles Stewart Mott and his family.

Today, it's a community resource open to visitors from May through October near the Flint Cultural Center.

Volunteers at Applewood play a vital role in programming and customer service. The benefits of volunteering are learning new skills, meeting new people, and serving your community.

If you're interested in learning more about volunteering or signing up, please visit [applewood.org](http://applewood.org) and scroll to the Volunteer section.

If you have questions, please contact Julia, Manager of Visitor Services, at [jpopler@ruthmott.org](mailto:jpopler@ruthmott.org).

Visit [applewood.org](http://applewood.org) to apply!

*South Flint Soup Kitchen*

## ANGEL CLOSET PROCEDURES

YOU MUST BRING PROOF OF INCOME WITH YOUR NAME AND THE DATE (FROM THIS YEAR ONLY) CLEARLY LISTED ON THE PROOF. CLIENTS QUALIFY FOR FREE ANGEL CLOSET SERVICES IF THEY MEET THE FOLLOWING:

HOUSEHOLD SIZE ANNUAL INCOME:

1 - \$17,667

2 - \$23,803

3 - \$29,939

4 - \$36,075

IF YOU DON'T MEET THESE REQUIREMENTS OR HAVE A PROOF PRESENT, THERE WILL BE A SMALL ADMINISTRATION FEE OF \$5.

QUESTIONS??? CALL 810-239-3427

This is not to say that had one or more of them chosen differently, the world would be different. For example, we don't know if Peter, Andrew, James, and John were Jesus' first choice or if He was turned down by the first dozen or so individuals He asked. We're not told, leaving us to conclude this information isn't relevant. What matters most is these four said yes when given an opportunity to drop what they were doing and risk everything to follow Jesus.

I'm convinced that God finds a way even when we can't imagine a way exists. I'm also convinced that Jesus is always inviting new followers. And each invitation comes with a decision that may seem so illogical as to cause nausea. But, unfortunately, decisions that promise to turn our life upside-down are like that.

More important, I'm convinced a decision to follow Jesus isn't made through ordinary logic. Instead, to choose to follow Jesus while knowing that life will never be the same is to receive a divinely crafted gift. But this doesn't mean Jesus tells His would-be followers to abandon all logic.

On the contrary, Jesus offered illustrations to a crowd to help them realize that there is a cost to following Him. For example,

Luke tells us that Jesus explained that a rational person wouldn't start a major building project without first estimating the cost. Otherwise, Jesus explained, you could run out of money before completion. In this same way, while our decision follow is a gift and not based on our capacity for complex logic, we need not abandon logic altogether.

How about you? Have you made a decision to follow Jesus? If so, what is the logic?

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Pastor Tommy

Our series was inspired by and relies on content provided by Angela Hunt. *Daughter of Cana*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2020.



**MAY GIVEAWAYS!**

Angel Closet - May 10th & 24th, 11am-Noon  
\*\$5 or proof of income needed, see back of flyer for details.

Food Giveaways - May 17th & 31st, 11am-Noon

NO APPOINTMENTS NEEDED!

**SOUTH  
FLINT SOUP  
KITCHEN**

**3410 FENTON ROAD**

3 blocks north of Atherton Road  
Flint, MI 48507



**MORE INFO**

810-239-3427

# SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN "SUCCESS STORY!!"



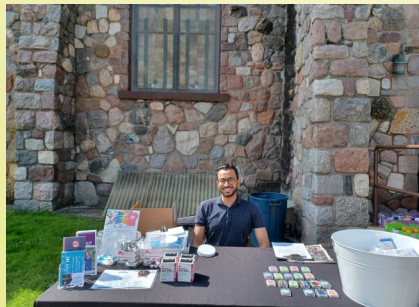
We had a very successful "Healthy Me in 23" event in partnership with Wellness Services on Friday, May 5th at the South Flint Soup Kitchen.

We had at least 10 clients receive services, whether it be HIV or STI screenings.

Wellness Services also had Narcan available and provided training to anyone who needed it.



The first 10 clients received \$10 gift cards for participating in the event!



**We can't wait to partner with them again soon!!**