

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 5 Issue 26

JANUARY 26, 2025

Tempted (Convenient Opportunities)



Thousands, if not millions, of us are wondering and worried about how the recent executive orders signed by the president will affect us or someone we care about.

After pardoning or commuting sentences for those who stormed the Capital and interrupted the certification of his predecessor, including those found guilty of violent crimes, we're afraid that anything goes.

Page 2

Abundance (Finding happiness)



Wedding feast at Asbury Church

The fires in Los Angeles, California, are a blunt reminder of the damage we've done to our planet over the past century. Our planet recorded the warmest year in history in 2024, and Southern California's drought that began several months ago continued into the rainy season, setting them up for disaster.

Page 13

**EVERYONE HAVE
A WONDERFUL
SAFE
WEEKEND!**

DONATE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Abundance	1
Tempted	1
Tempted	2
Coming up this week	3
In our prayers	3
Upcoming Worship/Book Club	4
Upcoming Worship Series/Book Club	5
Feed Flint	6
Feed Flint	7
Life Group Questions	8
Bottled Water Drive for SFSK	9
Support your local farm	10
Book Club News	11
Ways to Give to SFSK	12
Abundance	13
Tempted	14
Abundance	15
Kroger Rewards	16
Empowering the future	17

Individuals who immigrated to the U.S. and are here on temporary authority are understandably afraid and worried, especially those without approval or whose approval has expired. The promise of the largest deportation program in U.S. history can mean many things. Even those trying to help could be collateral damage.

Social media posts, news stories, and family conversations speculate about what will happen next. It's tempting to respond to each statement, news release, or interview with anxious and angry declarations. Many of us are afraid of what will happen next.

Bishop Mariann E. Budde admitted she was a little afraid while making a plea for mercy during her sermon following the inauguration. The Bishop spoke on behalf of everyone who is afraid of the ways the newly elected president has threatened to wield his power.

Power is tempting. Unchecked power is both dangerous and addictive. And an uncertain future is unsettling.

In the final chapters of our companion book, Lisa shares how she deals with uncertainty. In her new reality, she lives under the threat of the men in black. Lisa describes her new outlook to Alex: "Every morning, I wake up and thank God for seeing the sun, hearing the birds sing. I enjoy the rain, the flowers, the clouds in the sky. I love people. I appreciate life because it can be taken away from me at any minute."

Lisa finds her new outlook as a result of the obvious presence of the men in black but reminds Alex and us that this is how life is for all of us. "Our life can end any second, but we don't think about it. It seems to us that we will live forever. And that's because we don't see the people in black."

Alex and Lisa return to their former lives but not to their former selves. Both appreciate life's pleasures and value their time, realizing that each second is a gift from God.

Alex and Lisa spend time in uncomfortable circumstances only to emerge more alive. Scripture often uses the wilderness as a metaphor for such experiences. Sometimes, the characters end up there because of decisions they made, and other times, it happens for reasons they did not contribute to.

The wilderness is a common human experience although we each have our own unique view of it.

The wilderness is full of temptation. It is a place where our insecurities and past hurts are most easily exploited. On our best days, we may feel God's presence and resist opportunities to make decisions that could benefit us in the short term while doing irreparable harm.

God understands our dilemmas.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Virginia Bigger
 Sylvia Pittman
 Mirium Watson

Jonathon Misner
 Terrance Williams



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux
 Nancy Elston

Norma Buzzard

COMING UP THIS WEEK
JANUARY 27 - FEBRUARY 2, 2025

Jan 27	Mon		
Jan 28	Tue	10am-until gone	Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice
		3:00pm	CDC Board Meeting
Jan 29	Wed		
Jan 30	Thu		
Jan 31	Fri		
Feb 1	Sat		
Feb 2	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 "Who Dunitt?"

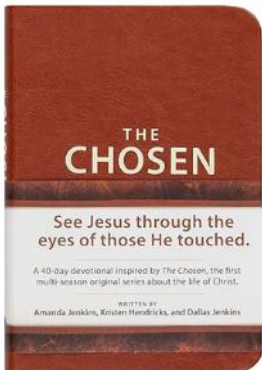


During this year's Lent observance, we, along with several other area UM Churches, are participating in a series titled *Who Dunitt? The people who wanted Jesus dead* (see article). The series begins after Ash Wednesday on Sunday, March 9.

So, in preparation, our February series will focus on the friends of Jesus in our series titled *Friends - the people who wanted Jesus alive*.

Page 5

Book Club News



We began 2025 with a worship series titled *Seconds*. Our last episode is on Sunday, January 26. As our companion

book, we used *The Price of a Second* by Dr. Leonid Altshuler, a board-certified psychiatrist and

writer, who writes under the pen name Leonid Alt. Our focus was on cherishing every moment of life and loving others.

We continue 2025 with a devotional book based on the first season of the TV Series *The Chosen*.

Our companion book for our new series is *The Chosen: 40 Days with Jesus*, which invites us to

encounter Jesus the way his followers did.

The followers of Jesus in the Gospels have a lot in common with us. Like them, we also had a not-so-great "before." In the Gospels, we meet a brash fisherman, a pious religious leader, and a demon-possessed woman, just to mention a few. We also meet a tax collector who exploits others.

In all cases, Jesus saw beyond their brokenness and offered forgiveness. And this was just the beginning. Jesus transforms the lives of all who follow Him.

Page 11

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Kevin Croom	Executive Director/CDC
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Kim Sims	Finance Director
Terry Kinze	Ops Manager/CDC
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
Mike Sampson	Farms Manager
Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
Venus McBeth	South Flint Soup Kitchen

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

Upcoming Worship Series — “Who Dunit?”

In researching companion books, I checked in with friend and colleague Adam Hamilton at the Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, Missouri (and Kansas). Although he hasn't written a book specifically on this topic, his church is already doing a series on it, which began in January. The series is based on the popular made-for-TV series *Chosen*. We will follow their lead but with our own version and schedule.

*We rejoice and delight in you.
We will praise your love more
than wine. How right they are
to adore you!*

Song of Songs 1:4

For a companion book, we'll use a 40-day devotional guide based on *Chosen* (see Book Club article). We'll begin reading these daily devotions on Monday, January 27, but our series doesn't start until February 9. We have a guest speaker on February 2, so we will celebrate communion on the second Sunday in February.

Here is the outline of our series:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Sunday</u>	<u>Reading</u>
Guest Preacher	February 2	Days 1-7
<i>Mary</i>	February 9	Days 8-14
<i>Afraid</i>	February 16	Days 15-21
<i>Tbd</i>	February 23	Days 22-28
<i>Tbd</i>	March 2	Days 29-35
Week of Ash Wednesday		Days 36-40

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m. We share our weekly episodes on [Facebook](#) and our [YouTube channel](#), and we go live at 10:30 a.m. You can find these links, along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website, FlintAsburyChurch.org](#).


Pastor Tommy

Amanda Jenkins, Kristen Hendricks, and Dallas Jenkins. The Chosen: 40 Days with Jesus. © Savage, MN: BroadStreet Publishing, 2019.

“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

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

When Jesus returned from the Jordan River, He was filled with the Holy Spirit and was led into the wilderness, where the devil tempted him.

Luke 4:1-13

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Luke 4:1-13. What experiences of temptation are most difficult for you to ignore? How do your temptations compare with those Jesus faced?
2. Read this week's article titled Tempted. What worries you most about life? In what ways do the things that worry you also tempt you to make short-term decisions that will be harmful in the longer term?
3. How can your group members help you be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God this week? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.



South Flint Soup Kitchen ...

BOTTLED WATER DRIVE

All Year Long!

Our clients need bottled water for cooking,
going with sack lunches, to bathe and brush
their teeth with, and MORE!

Donations are accepted Monday-Friday

11:00am-12 Noon at South Flint Soup Kitchen,

3410 Fenton Rd (3 blocks north of Atherton Rd)

Flint MI 48507

Any questions, please call 239-3427 or 235-0016 or

Email us at southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

To donate: www.mightycause.com/feedflint



Show Your Support For Your Local Farm

We need your help to purchase fencing to keep our furry friends from eating up all our crops and not sharing with us.

How You Can Donate

- Text "FARMCDC"
- to 53-555
- Scan QR Code

Donate Now



More Information :



(810) 235-0016



funding@flintasbury.org

Each of the forty devotions offers scripture, a glimpse into a Gospel story, prayer suggestions, and questions that help you deepen your relationship with Christ. You're invited to see Jesus through the eyes of those who knew him best and explore the backstories of people like Mary Magdalene, Peter, Matthew, Nicodemus, and others.

If you choose to follow along, I suggest beginning day one's reading the Monday after our current series ends (January 27) and using the following schedule:

<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Devotional Readings</u>
February 2	Days 1-7
February 9	Days 8-14
February 16	Days 15-21
February 23	Days 22-28
March 2	Days 29-35
Week of Ash Wednesday	Days 36-40

We will have a few books available for purchase, copies are available through Amazon or ChristianBooks.com for \$6.74 for the paperback edition. The price is \$9.99 for the Kindle version.

Our Book Club does not meet as a group. However, our weekly messages reference that week's chapters. You can anticipate spoiler alerts unless you keep up with the pace. You can purchase your own copy or visit your local library.

You can contact our office with questions by phone or simply type your question or enter a prayer request on our website's homepage — FlintAsburyChurch.org.

Pastor Tommy

Cash or checks can be sent to/dropped off at South Flint Soup Kitchen, 3410 Fenton Road, Flint, MI 48507. Please make checks out to South Flint Soup Kitchen!

Online at www.mightycause.com/feedflint

Donations can be dropped off Monday-Friday 11am-12Noon. Calling ahead is not necessary, but our needs change frequently, so calling ahead of time is a good idea!

Give time! We need volunteers!!! Volunteers arrive at 9:30am and are done by 12:30pm. Tasks include handing out lunches, assisting in the Angel Closet, light cleaning, putting together items to pass out to clients, and more.

Refer people!!

Questions??? Call 810-239-3427
or email southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

According to a recent *New York Times* article, climate scientists warn that “the world has entered a dangerous new era of chaotic floods, storms, and fires made worse by human-caused climate change.” And the wildfires in California are one example. As were the cyclones in Appalachia, where Hurricanes Helene and Milton tore through mountain communities this past October.

Scripture reminds us that God put us in charge of caring for creation from the very beginning. But we’re doing a miserable job of it. Most of us realize there is a problem, but we’re not in a hurry to do something about it. Unfortunately, a few of us continue to deny that we’re the ones God expects to stop the harm.

There is more than enough denial around to make progress painfully slow. But the ramifications are becoming increasingly more deadly.

Alex’s hope to connect with the spirit of his dead father suddenly takes a weird turn he couldn’t have imagined in our companion book chapters for this week. He is transported into another world where his daily work consists of moving rocks from one place to another. Only to start over again the next day. The work seemed meaningless to Alex.

The author’s use of imagery and metaphors to capture the lives of so many of us is brilliant, but it has an in-your-face impact that’s almost too much to handle.

When one of the community leaders, Greg, asks Alex if he is happy in his new life, Alex shares that he is. Alex notices that he has become kinder, calmer, and more appreciative of his time. Nevertheless, Alex longed for the life he had before.

This puzzled his new friend. “Were you happy there?” Greg asked. “To be honest,” Alex replied, “No. I was stressed all the time, But Alex just couldn’t get used to the idea that tomorrow might be the last day of his life.

The mirror that changed everything when Alex stared into it may be the most subtle yet powerful metaphor of all. Don’t most of us deal with this fact of our existence simply by denying the truth? The truth is that we simply don’t know how much time we have left, so we should live as though we may not have a tomorrow.

In his new life, Alex had everything he needed. When he decided to start writing again, he was given everything he needed. Alex had always wanted to get back to writing but never took the time. In many ways, Alex had been transported to a place of abundant hospitality, although it didn’t feel that way. Alex simply couldn’t find contentment.

For most people, the world is not a place of abundance, we say with substantial doubt, “Bring it on!”, though, the abundance sought by most of us is more excess than necessity. For those of us who live in privilege, there is never enough.

When I think of abundance, I wonder what it means to be good host. Let me explain.

We are all visitors here on earth. We arrive as a guest on its Creator. And God knows how to be a good host. So I googled, “What does it mean to be a good host?” In search of ideas we can all identify with that are not clothed in symbolism.

Luke tells us Jesus was led out into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit after He was baptized. The possibility of connections raises questions for most of us. Does baptism guarantee a wilderness experience will follow? Why would God lead us into such a place?

When Jesus returned from the Jordan River, He was filled with the Holy Spirit and was led into the wilderness, where the devil tempted him.

Luke 4:1-13

Matthew and Mark also tell us that God's Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness for forty days. Granted, most numbers found in scripture are not symbolic than actual counts. Regardless, Jesus was in the wilderness for a while. And while He was there, we are told the devil tried hard to convince Jesus to give into temptations the devil put in front of Him.

The devil knows power is tempting, and unchecked power is both dangerous and addictive. But so does Jesus.

The temptations confronting Jesus while in the wilderness began with an appeal to His physical vulnerabilities. Jesus was hungry and was tempted to address His hunger with the most immediate resources available.

Similarly, fitting in feels like a pang of physical desire, even more than our craving for our favorite treat. When we fulfill our need to belong by adapting to whatever role and belief offer acceptance, we open ourselves to attaching our allegiance to whatever helps us feel better about ourselves.

Notice how temptations work. In the wilderness, we're confronted by questions that haunt us. If you're really who you claim to be. If people really cared about you. If you really deserve to be loved.

Saving the more subtle temptation for last, Jesus' recognition of His own value is tested, with a question that most of us face in the wilderness. If you are precious to God, God will surely save you even from the most foolish mistakes.

Jesus knows His value to God, and He also knows your value.

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 FlintAsburyChurch.org.

This is a reminder that we publish this newsletter called the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com 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

Parts of our series are inspired by Dr. Leonid Alt. *The Price of a Second*. © Leonid Alt, 2021.

I found an article by Martha Beck in *Oprah Magazine* that illustrated her experience visiting a friend. She was pleasantly surprised by how comfortable her host made her feel. It was clear that her friend knew what it meant to be a good host. Essentially, a good host focuses on the needs of their guests rather than their own need for approval.

For this week's theme scripture, we turn to John for a story that illustrates abundance and being a good host. According to John, the story takes place in the village of Cana. Jesus, along with His family and friends, attended a wedding there. Jewish weddings usually lasted a week, and there wasn't enough wine for the number of guests.

Since wine is mostly water, it was common to increase the amount of wine by adding water. Unfortunately, by the end of the celebrations, the quality of the wine reached its lowest point. Perhaps there wasn't even enough diluted wine to satisfy all of the guests, or perhaps this story illustrates radical hospitality.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, recognizes an inhospitable situation brewing and asks her Son to help save the party and the reputation of the groom and his family. Jesus instructs the servers to fill the large water jugs, which He then turns into fine, undiluted wine. More than enough to satisfy all the guests.

Everyone else serves the best wine first, and after the guests have drunk a lot, he serves the ordinary wine. But you have kept the best wine until now!

John 2:1-11

Divine intervention enabled the guests to enjoy radical hospitality. God knows what it means to be a good host.

While we're all visitors here, we're made in the image of our home's Creator. We're more than guests, however. We're family, and we're asked to be His hosts.

Good hosts set boundaries for their hospitality. As hosts, we're expected to take care of ourselves even as we take care of our planet. We're expected to find a balance. But we're still obligated to take care of all the guests.

Those who can afford to be the best hosts aren't sharing their wealth. A 2023 report published by Oxfam, an international non-governmental organization focused on climate change, claims that "The richest 1% of the world's population are responsible for as much carbon pollution as the people who make up the poorest two-thirds of humanity. Oxfam is challenging the inequality that comes with climate change.

Oxfam's report reminds us that the richest people and countries have enough wealth, power, and influence to protect themselves.

But with that power comes a huge responsibility to be better hosts for all of creation. And some of the properties lost in the LA fires belong to wealthy people.

Perhaps we're not really able to hide behind wealth or denial.

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 FlintAsburyChurch.org.

This is a reminder that we publish this newsletter called the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com 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

Parts of our series are inspired by Dr. Leonid Alt. *The Price of a Second*. © Leonid Alt, 2021.

David Gelles and Austyn Gaffney. "We're in a New Era": How Climate Change Is Supercharging Disasters." © New York Times, Jan. 15, 2025. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Martha Beck. "How to Make Your Guests Feel at Home." © The Oprah Magazine, 2007. Retrieved from: [link](#).

Emily Ghosh, Anisha Nazareth, Eric Kemp-Benedict, and Sivan Kartha. "Climate Equality: A planet for the 99%." © Oxfam, November 20, 2023. Retrieved from: [link](#)



Where shopping and giving come together and you can help!

Learn more at

KrogerCommunityRewards.com
Or, call Kroger Customer Communications at

**1-800-KROGERS, (576-4377)
OPTION #3**



Eligible Organizations

Kroger Community Rewards is open to organizations that are tax exempt under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Participants include school groups, churches and synagogues, youth sports, food banks, animal support groups and many others. Kroger does not make donations to individuals.

Get your favorite local organization

enrolled today! Enrollment applications can be downloaded at Kroger.com

The Kroger Community Rewards Program is designed to be the easiest fund-raising program in town! Simply swipe your Plus Card and earn rewards!

**ZERO HUNGER
ZERO WASTE**

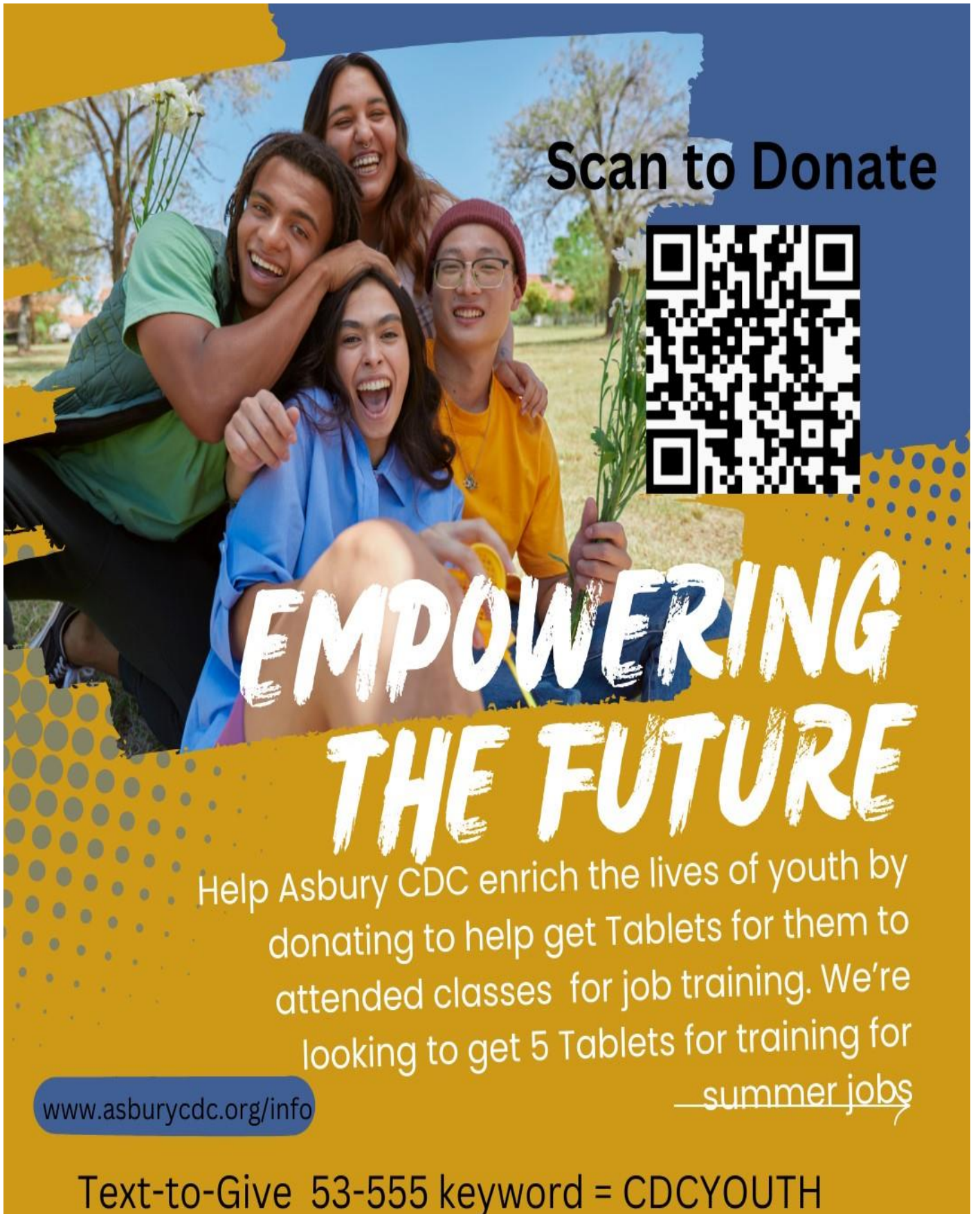
by **Kroger**

Add the South Flint Soup Kitchen to your Kroger Rewards Card and Help Feed Flint

We're giving **\$2 million**

to local area non profits
Use your Kroger Plus Card and earn rewards for your favorite organization.

Where shopping and giving come together and you can help!



Scan to Donate



EMPOWERING THE FUTURE

Help Asbury CDC enrich the lives of youth by donating to help get Tablets for them to attended classes for job training. We're looking to get 5 Tablets for training for summer jobs

www.asburycdc.org/info

Text-to-Give 53-555 keyword = CDCYOUTH



In Sunday school when we asked our teachers, “Why did Jesus have to die?” they answered, “Jesus died to save us.”

Maybe they gave us that simplistic answer because it seemed safer than saying, “Jesus died because he challenged the powers of this world.”

In this series we will learn about the people who wanted Jesus dead, and we will discover that God is calling us still to resist the powers that conspired put Jesus on the cross.

SERIES OVERVIEW

(Italics indicate pulpit swap Sunday)

March 9	<i>The King</i>	Matthew 2:16-18
<i>March 16</i>	<i>The Neighbors</i>	<i>Luke 4:20-30</i>
March 23	The Religious Folk	Mark 3:1-6
<i>March 30</i>	<i>The Clergy</i>	<i>Luke 21:37-22:2</i>
April 6	The Disciple	Luke 22:3-6
April 13	The Governor	John 19:16b-22

A NOTE ON ASH WEDNESDAY

Ash Wednesday presents an opportunity to remember that our struggle is not against flesh and blood. In this series we will focus on people who attempted to cut short the ministry of Jesus, but those people represented, in one way or another, the spiritual powers of this world that Jesus encountered in the wilderness. The people who tried to kill Jesus were consumed by selfish desires - the desire for comfort, the desire for power, the desire for glory. Matthew 4:1-11 reveals why so many people believed that Jesus had to die: he refused to play the game, and in doing so he exposed the players and threatened to topple the “winners.”