

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER



Volume 5 Issue 28

SEPTEMBER 28, 2025

Confidence (Hurricane)



Free speech is a fundamental element of democracy and is protected by the First Amendment. Maybe “protected” is too strong, considering recent events. In our second episode of the *Hurricane* series, we examine the link between confidence, belonging, and free speech.

Research has confirmed a strong connection between free speech, belonging, and confidence. Recent studies reveal that free speech encourages genuine participation, which enhances a sense of belonging and boosts participants' confidence. Conversely, when speech is limited, our sense of belonging drops, and without that feeling of belonging, confidence also decreases. *Page 2*

Freedom (Hurricane)

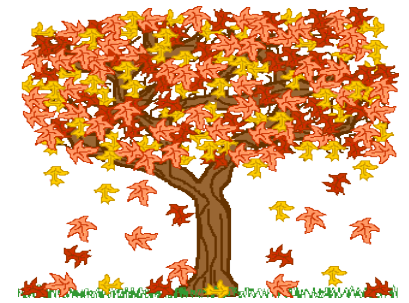


A record number of viewers tuned in to the Jimmy Kimmel show this past week for the comedian's return after being cancelled as a result of unlawful pressure on the network from our current administration. Our freedom to voice opposition to government policy remains under attack.

Last week, we focused on the concept of belonging and its connection to confidence and free speech. And last Sunday, the world witnessed another powerful illustration of freedom when Erika, the widow of political activist Charlie Kirk, forgave the person who murdered her husband.

Page 13

Autumn is Here!



DONATE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Freedom	1
Confidence	1
Confidence	2
Coming up this week	3
In our prayers	3
Upcoming Worship/Book Club	4
Upcoming Worship Series	5
Feed Flint	6
Feed Flint	7
Life Group Questions	8
Support your Local Farm	9
Support your local farm	10
Book Club News	11
Confidence	12
Freedom	13
Freedom	14
Asbury Farms Produce	15
SFSK—Angel Closet	16
Broger Rewards	17

When free speech is seen as threatened or insecure, people feel less confident speaking out. This is especially true for those in less powerful groups. It lowers their confidence in expressing themselves or participating. When people feel less safe or able to express themselves, they may feel excluded or marginalized. In other words, they feel less like they belong.

Belonging and confidence are essential for democratic participation, mental health, and social trust. People who feel they belong are more likely to trust institutions and feel confident in sharing their opinions. Conversely, when free speech is upheld or perceived as upheld, the environment becomes more open to a diversity of ideas, allowing people from different backgrounds to share their views, which promotes belonging and increases confidence.

This week in our companion book, Hai lands a job at a fast-casual restaurant in East Gladness known as HomeMarket. He finds the job by reconnecting with his cousin Sony, who also works there. Hai learns that Sony hopes to post bail for his mother and Hai's aunt, Kim, who is in jail for arson.

HomeMarket becomes more than just a job for Hai. It turns into a place where he finds a sense of belonging. Hai's boss, Big Jean, known as BJ, has a personality that blends toughness and ambition with nurturing care. Alongside his coworkers Maureen, Wayne, and Russia, they create a kind of "found family" for Hai as he starts to feel more accepted at work. His job becomes a way of holding on, of establishing a place in his world beyond his grief, caretaker duties, and feelings of limbo.

Meanwhile, Grazina's dementia episodes become more frequent and intense. Hai begins actively helping her through them. Many of Grazina's episodes take her back to her childhood when Russia invaded Lithuania, so Hai joins Grazina in pretend gunfights as Sergeant Pepper.

Along the way, we learn more about Hai's relationship with his mother, his past, his hopes and frustrations, and the burden he's carrying in terms of losses, responsibilities, and debts, both literal and emotional.

Belonging is a central theme in scripture, especially in the New Testament. In a lengthy

monologue known as the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew, Jesus begins his teaching by describing those who belong to God's kingdom. The spiritually poor, those who mourn, the humble, people whose greatest desire is to do what God requires, the merciful, the pure in heart, those who work for peace, individuals who are persecuted because they do what God requires, and those whom people insult, persecute, and lie about because they are His followers.

Jesus doesn't tell us to pursue these attributes, but rather that God will support us when others come after us. He seems to be describing us when we're feeling vulnerable and like outsiders. We also feel like we have to be cautious with our words, so we don't become the next target ourselves.

And He says things like the Kingdom of heaven belongs to us, and God will comfort us. Jesus also says that we will receive what God has promised, and we'll be fully satisfied. We'll see God and be His children. If this isn't belonging, I don't know what is.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Virginia Bigger
 Sylvia Pittman
 Mirium Watson

Fred Hans
 Jonathon Misner
 Terrance Williams

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
 HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux Norma Buzzard
 Nancy Elston

**COMING UP THIS WEEK: SEPTEMBER 29 – OCTOBER 5**

Sept 29 Mon (We apologize for the convenience but Angel Closet at SFSK is closed at the present time. I will post when we reopen it back up.)

Sept 30 Tue 9am-until gone Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice

Oct 1 Wed

Oct 2 Thu

Oct 3 Fri

Oct 4 Sat

Oct 5 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings
 Contemporary Worship

*** PLEASE GET YOUR CHURCH CONFERENCE REPORTS INTO ME BY OCTOBER 3RD. THEY ARE DUE OCTOBER 13TH TO DISTRICT OFFICE. AND I NEED TO PREPARE THEM TO SEND OUT DIGITALLY AND MAILED OUT. CONNIE

(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 "Hurricane"

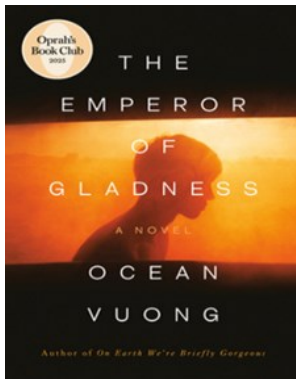


In this series, *Hurricane*, we explore how God is our shelter and always ready to come to our aid in times of trouble. And troubles come that only God can get us through. However, God allows us to suffer the consequences of our collective decisions.

For a companion book, we're using Ocean Vuong's best-selling novel and Oprah Book Club selection, *The Emperor of Gladness*. One of the main characters, Grazina, is an elderly widow dealing with dementia who persuades Hai, a young adult, to become her caretaker. Over the following months, the unlikely pair forms a life-changing bond based on love, empathy, spiritual reflection, and heartbreak. Through this, their relationship changes Hai's view of himself, his family, and a community on the edge.

Page 5

Book Club News



Miracles happen all the time. In our last two series, we explored both miracles and the prayers that often precede them.

In our new series, *Hurricane*, we put miracles aside for a while to focus on everyday reality, where miracles

often come wrapped in the ordinary.

A New York Times best seller and Oprah Book Club selection, *The Emperor of Gladness* is a thought-provoking novel. The author is Ocean Vuong, known for his innovation, syntactic dexterity, and the ability to combine grit with grace through tenderness.

The setting is the post-industrial town of East Gladness, Connecticut,

where the story begins as nineteen-year-old Hai stands on the edge of a bridge in steady rain, ready to jump. It was a late summer evening when Hai heard someone shout from across the river, urging him not to jump.

Grazina is an elderly widow dealing with dementia. She also appears to be out of options and persuades Hai to become her caretaker. Over the following months, the unlikely pair forms a life-changing bond based on empathy, spiritual reflection, and heartbreak. Through this, their relationship changes Hai's view of himself, his family, and a community on the edge.

Page 10

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
Israel Unger (Izzy)	Business Service Mgr
Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
	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 — “Hurricane”

Both hurricanes and dementia are destructive forces that form without regard to our hopes and dreams, interrupting life with a destructive force that we're unable to stop once they're underway. But do we play a role?

The debate about the existence of climate change ended years ago. No one can force us to believe it doesn't exist, but we all have the power to ignore the warnings. Despite our personal views, storms are becoming more severe and frequent, leading to a rising toll of lives and property. Among weather events, hurricanes are the most powerful, occurring more often and with greater strength.

The Department of Energy published a controversial report written by five authors who were hand-selected by Energy Secretary Chris Wright, a former executive in the fossil fuel industry. Not surprisingly, the report concluded that "carbon dioxide-induced warming appears to be less damaging economically than commonly believed." This group was subsequently disbanded in response to a lawsuit filed by the Environmental Defense Fund and the Union of Concerned Scientists, which alleged that the group had violated the Federal Advisory Committee Act by failing to disclose its formation and by deliberately presenting a one-sided argument.

Tracy J. Wholf, Senior Coordinating Producer of Climate and Environmental Coverage for CBS News, covered the science community's response, claiming the report did not fairly represent a scientific understanding of climate change. The report was reviewed by more than 85 climate experts, who noted that the report misrepresented scientific literature and cherry-picked data to support its conclusions.

The policies of our current administration appear to be suffering from memory loss brought on by a disease that causes them to choose to ignore factual data and instead fabricate their own reality.


“Feed Flint”

Page 6



“Feed Flint”

Page 7



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:

The people stood there watching.

Luke 23:32-42

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

**QUESTIONS FOR LIFE**

1. Read Luke 23:32-42. Where are you in this story? What does forgiveness mean to you?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider titled Freedom. What does freedom mean to you? How do forgiveness and freedom connect in your life?
3. How can your group members help you be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God this week? Pray for one another to be blessed by the Holy Spirit with greater courage.



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

Ocean Vuong is also the author of the poetry collections *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* and *Time Is a Mother*. He wrote another New York Times bestselling novel, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*. And, he received the MacArthur Fellowship and the American Book Award. Vuong was born in Saigon, Vietnam.

In our companion book for our new worship series, Vuong creatively illustrates the profound ways in which love, labor, and loneliness form the bedrock of American life. At its heart is a brave epic about what it means to exist on the fringes of society and to reckon with the wounds that haunt our collective soul. It is a story of loss, hope, and how far we're willing to go for a second chance.

If you choose to follow along, I suggest using the following schedule:

<u>Sunday's</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Chapters</u>
Sept 14	1 - 69	1 - 4
Sept 21	70 - 133	5 - 7
Sept 28	134 - 208	8 - 13
October 5	209 - 274	14 - 17
October 12	275 - 344	18 - 21
October 19	345 - 401	22 - 25

We'll have a few books available for purchase for \$15. New copies of the hardcover edition are available through Amazon for \$19.08, and used copies in good condition are in short supply, starting at \$17.47, including shipping. This book may also be available at the local library.

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

Ocean Vuong. *The Emperor of Gladness*. NY: Penguin Press, 2025.

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

The truth is that we all belong to God and, therefore, to one another. The cruelty, lies, and divisiveness that confront us almost daily aren't coming from God. Nor is God only on our side. There is enough room in heaven for everyone. And while the pathway is found in scripture, God is the creator of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

We sometimes disagree on what scripture means. But we should agree that any valid interpretation is based on love for God and others, even when we disagree.

Luke writes about a time when Jesus' closest followers came to Him complaining that he and a couple others from their community witnessed a person, not in their group, performing acts of kindness for others, and using the name of Jesus as their authority. This is one of those really important lessons that can be easier to hear than it is to put into practice. The idea that none of us have a monopoly on kindness. "Don't stop him," Jesus said, "Whoever is not against you is for you."

*Do not try to stop him
because whoever is not
against you is for you.*

Luke 9:49-50

The numbers of issues that we face as a nation, and as a world, are overwhelming. We need leaders who are smart enough to realize that they aren't smart enough, capable enough, or powerful enough to be our savior.

We already have a Savior, who is Christ, our Lord. A Savior who lived among ordinary people and invited those same ordinary people to join Him in His mission to bring heaven to earth. These included minimum wage workers, entrepreneurs, smart people, not-so-smart people, enthusiastic people, less enthusiastic people, reliable people, and not-so-reliable people.

We're all invited to help save the world from itself. But we need to be able to speak out and connect with each other, knowing that we likely won't agree on most things. Still, none of us have a monopoly on good ideas, and there's more than one way to accomplish something.

We owe this to each other and to ourselves, and also to our children and grandchildren. It's not about reclaiming our country or our world but working toward the future we desire. A future with heaven on earth.

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 a weekly newsletter called the Circuit Rider. You can request this publication by email by sending 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 Connect - choose [Newsletters](#).

Pastor Tommy

Our companion book for this series: Ocean Vuong. *The Emperor of Gladness*. NY: Penguin Press, 2025.

I'm sure Jimmy Kimmel and Erika Kirk disagree on politics. But we saw something between them that everyone can agree on. It's a universal truth that forgiven people are free people, and free people forgive!

By way of contrast, this week began with our current president ordering the Attorney General to go after his political rivals. Morals, ethics, principles, or the law do not affect how and why decisions are made in the administration. Instead, personal whim dictates policy.

This is how despotism operates. Many argue that we are already under authoritarian rule because Congress is afraid to do the job it was elected to do. Luckily, the midterm elections provide a solution to this crisis. In the meantime, we must all be vigilant for any attempts to manipulate, precondition, or otherwise interfere with a free and fair election.

As the formation of our country began, the colonies lifted their voice and said, "No more kings!" These founding fathers were not only rejecting a distant king, but they were also rejecting the idea of too much power under a single leader.

They had tasted the bitterness of despotism. That is, policies imposed without consent, burdens laid without representation, and freedom restrained without justice. And so, the birth cry of our nation was a cry for freedom.

Our Declaration of Independence asserts that all people are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights" — life, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness. This belief in inherent human rights anchors the idea of freedom not in government, but in something higher. This founding document also asserted that humans should be free from oppressive rule and that all are created equal. This makes freedom a moral and political necessity.

Our Constitution set up a framework to protect and balance our rights with social order. Beginning with the belief that people can govern themselves through representation, checks and balances, and the rule of law. This belief makes freedom sustainable rather than chaotic.

Our Bill of Rights explicitly secures freedoms such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and due process. In other words, we believe that freedom is a moral truth, rooted in natural law and belief in equality.

In this week's reading from our companion book, Hai and Grazina retrieve her old electric scooter and experience a taste of freedom as they take a ride around town. Unfortunately, their newfound agency is only temporary as Grazina's condition deteriorates. And on Christmas Eve, when they visit her son, Lucas, plans are revealed to move Grazina into the Hamilton Home and sell her house. Grazina's freedom is under attack.

Meanwhile, we also learn more about Hai's addiction and his failed attempt at college. We also learn that HomeMarket's illusion of "fresh food" is more processed than customers realize. Nevertheless, the HomeMarket crew continues to be a community and refuge, but always under attack. Sony is fired after a regional manager visits with news of a competitor opening nearby.

Hai, Sony, Grazina, Maureen, and BJ go on a road trip to Vermont to search for a diamond embedded in his father's hand, but it's not recovered after he died in a car fire. They find a burnt headrest but little else. Grazina again tastes freedom while

becoming increasingly threatened by the possibility of being placed in full-time care. Their stories reveal an ongoing struggle between agency, dignity, and institutional forces.

As their stories continue, the tensions surrounding lies, identity, caregiving, family obligations, and loss accumulate. Grazina's complete loss of freedom seems imminent. And Hai is increasingly torn between choices about truth-telling and survival.

We're not only watching our nation revert to authoritarian control. Our administration's policies are moving our country further and further away from the teachings of Christ. Our nation was founded with the idea that we all answer to God. Sadly, we're following a path leading away from these founding principles.

According to scripture, during the days of Samuel, Israel cried out for a king, despite God's warning against authoritarian rule. One person with that much power will take, take, and take again. This is the way of despotism—taking without giving, ruling without serving. It is the spirit of Pharaoh, not the spirit of Christ.

Just as God knew what happens under the heavy hand of a king, so too God knows the heavy hand of sin. Christ

teaches us that sin is a tyrant, a despot of the soul. Sin takes your peace, it takes your joy, and it takes your future.

Paul wrote in his first letter to the church in Colossae, "Because of what Jesus Christ has done, we have been set free. Because of him, all our sins have been forgiven." God does not want us to carry the burden that sin puts on us, nor does God want us to carry the burden of not forgiving others.

The people stood there watching.

Luke 23:32-42

Luke tells us that Jesus was hung on a cross between two criminals. And in the midst of His suffering, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing."

They obviously didn't. Luke tells us that as God's Son was being brutally murdered, soldiers divided up His clothes by casting lots, and poked fun at Him. The rulers made fun of Jesus.

One of the criminals hanging there also mocked Jesus. But the other one said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus answered him, "What I'm about to tell you is true. Today you will be with me in paradise."

Meanwhile, according to Luke, the people stood there watching.

Jesus often spoke about the possibility of heaven on earth. His presence meant that heaven was near enough to touch. But without forgiveness, heaven is a distant mirage.

Forgiven people are free people, and free people forgive!

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 a weekly newsletter called the Circuit Rider. You can request this publication by email by sending 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 Connect - choose [Newsletters](#).

Pastor Tommy

Our companion book for this series: Ocean Vuong. *The Emperor of Gladness*. NY: Penguin Press, 2025.

ASBURY FARMS PRESENTS



Asbury Farms invites you every Friday to pick cherry tomatoes, a pay what you can farm stand, and urban farming planting technique demonstration.

Come join us between 7am-1pm every Friday at 1613 Jane Ave!



Marsha Stevens-Pino is widely recognized as the "mother of contemporary Christian music." She penned the deeply beloved song "For Those Tears I Died (Come to the Water)" at age 16, and her influence helped shape the early Jesus Movement and contemporary Christian music scene.

After publicly coming out as a lesbian in 1981, she faced severe rejection: her songs were removed from hymnals, performances were canceled, and she was largely ostracized by the mainstream Christian music industry. In response, Marsha founded BALM Ministries (Born Again Lesbian Music), creating a vital artistic and spiritual home for LGBTQ+ Christians. Justin Ryan—a queer Christian singer-songwriter originally from Paducah, KY met Marsha through the Metropolitan Community Church after a period of personal crisis and disenfranchisement from traditional gospel circles. Encouraged by Marsha, Justin moved to Nashville to record with her, which led to studio work and background singing for renowned country artists. In 2024–2025, BALM recognized Justin's contributions by appointing him to their Board of Directors. In this leadership role, Justin helps steer outreach efforts, shares his training experience, and continues producing his popular Southern Gospel Sissy Series on Facebook and YouTube.

PRESENTS

BALM MINISTRIES Marsha Stevens-Pino & Justin Ryan

In Concert



Saturday, October 25 • Potluck 4pm • Concert 5pm

Sunday, October 26 • 10:30am Worship

Marsha Stevens-Pino will provide special music

Court Street United Methodist Church

225WestCourtStreet, Flint, MI 48502

www.courtstreetflint.org • 810-235-4651



**community
rewards**



**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!**



ASBURY FARMS

AND **ally** charity chip in

PRESENTS

PLAY IT

**DONATE \$\$\$ AND WE WILL ADD
VEGETABLES WORTH YOUR GIFT TO
OUR FREE PRODUCE STAND FOR
UNDERSERVED FAMILIES**



FORWARD

**JOIN IN AT THE FREE ALLY CHALLENGE
FAMILY AND FUN NIGHT ON AUGUST 21,
2025 5PM - 7PM AT THE FANZONE HOLE #17
WARWICK HILLS GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB**

**"WHEN YOU GIVE, SOMEONE GROWS.
WHEN YOU SHARE, OTHERS SHINE.
LET'S PLAY IT FORWARD—TOGETHER."**

**PLEASE DONATE AT:
WWW.THEALLYCHALLENGE.COM/CHIPIN**

The Alzheimer's Association website describes dementia as a general term for the loss of memory, language, problem-solving, and other thinking abilities, especially when these symptoms are severe enough to interfere with daily life. And dementia is usually the result of Alzheimer's. Dementia is not a single disease. Instead, dementia refers to a collection of symptoms representing a variety of diseases.

To diagnose Alzheimer's and other types of dementia, doctors review the patient's medical history, conduct a physical examination, collect data from laboratory tests, and look for changes in thinking, day-to-day function, and behavior associated with each type of dementia.

Notice the importance of both historical context and scientific data. Ignoring either one makes it difficult to come to a factual conclusion. The disease is likely to go undetected, but the symptoms will persist and likely worsen. The patient and their family suffer whether or not an accurate assessment is made.

What do hurricanes and dementia have in common? The first similarity that comes to mind is the destruction and turmoil caused by our climate, in the first case, and by disease in the second. We're all familiar with the damage caused by hurricanes. More of us are also facing the heartbreak of dementia. The effects of both hurricanes and dementia are evaluated in stages. Hurricanes are rated by categories based on wind speeds, while dementia is measured in progressive stages. The higher the category or stage, the more severe the impact.

*God is our shelter and is
always ready to help in times
of trouble. So we will not be
afraid, even if the earth is
shaken and mountains fall in-
to the ocean depths, even if
the violence shakes the seas;
roar and rage, and the hills.*

Psalms 46:1-3

Our national dementia goes undetected if we all choose to ignore history and scientific data. Moreover, in the case of our recent onslaught of national dementia, we're all facing a rapid increase in suffering. Fortunately, most are not fooled by fools, and many are sounding the alarm.

Similarly, the Word of God spoken throughout scripture sounds alarms that we all need to hear. God's alarms are timeless and thus beg for faithful interpretation by persons chosen to speak truth to power. However, since God's Word requires interpreters, there are always false prophets who convincingly deceive those for whom their interpretation may fit the listeners' preconditioned ideas.

Church bells remind me of the prophetic voices found in scripture and elsewhere. Speaking truth to power, prophets throughout history have spoken and sang warnings both to leaders and to the people they aspire to lead.

*What do you feel when you hear Church bells?
Is it a sound that signals hope?
Like the lost seaman hearing the lighthouse horn,
it sings comfort to my soul.*

*But an alarm also sounded, time to change course
before my journey ends.
What do you feel when you hear Church bells?
Do they stir your heart to sing?
The fog horn has sounded danger ahead,
For my path was well worn.*

Maybe you're walking along a familiar but unsettling path. Maybe you've passionately supported our current president, hoping for a better tomorrow. Hopefully, you're beginning to focus more on facts than on lies.

So far, the U.S. remains a democracy, offering hope that new leaders will be elected. But we're going through a very dark time. Our leaders have failed us, but instead of listening to the warnings, they continue to organize around principles that fail to care for God's beloved. A hurricane is forming, and the destruction is already underway.

Here is the outline of our series:

<u>Episode</u>	<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Title</u>
One	Sept 14	Formation
Two	Sept 21	Confidence
Three	Sept 28	Freedom
Four	October 5	History
Five	October 12	Truth
Six	October 19	Agency

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

Pastor Tommy

Ocean Vuong. The Emperor of Gladness. NY: Penguin Press, 2025.

"How Do Hurricanes Form?." © Spaceplace, 2025. Retrieved from [link](#)

Tracy J. Wholf. "More than 85 climate experts say Energy Department report on greenhouse gases is 'full of errors'," © CBS News, September 2, 2025. Retrieved from [Link](#)

Rev Dr Tommy McDaniel. "A Certain Road." © Tommy McDaniel, June 18, 2006.

A MESSAGE FROM A YOUTH AT THE END OF OUR SUMMER PROGRAM ...
"SUMMER YOUTH INITIATIVE—ASBURY FARMS—CLEAN & GREEN 2025!"

Page 21



Good afternoon,

We're here today on behalf of the Asbury Community Development Corporation to speak about the work we've been a part of this summer—and the impact it's had on both our community and us personally.

This summer, we had the opportunity to work through the Clean & Green program, where we helped cut grass throughout the neighborhood. It wasn't just about lawn care—it was about bringing pride back to the blocks we live on. Every time we cleaned up a yard or cleared a sidewalk, we were sending a message: that Flint is worth caring for—and we're the ones willing to do it.

We also worked on the Asbury farm, where we got our hands dirty growing fresh food for the community. We planted, we watered, we harvested—and we saw firsthand how something so simple can bring people together. That food doesn't just feed stomachs—it feeds hope. And we were proud to play a role in that.

Inside the church, we handled cleaning and organizing—keeping the space welcoming for everyone who walks through the doors. We made sure it was ready for service, ready for outreach, and ready for the community that depends on it.

Through it all, Asbury didn't just give us jobs, they gave us responsibility. They gave us trust. They showed us that we have value, that our work matters, and that we can be part of the change we want to see.

We're grateful to everyone at Asbury CDC, Clean & Green, and the whole team who believed in us and gave us this opportunity. You taught us more than just how to work—you taught us how to lead, how to care, and how to serve.

This summer, we didn't just show up—we showed out. And we hope to keep that same energy wherever we go next.

Thank you,

Shanaree Farmer