

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 3 Issue 5

Saved (Before Abraham)

NOVEMBER 5, 2023



EVERYONE
HAVE A
WONDERFUL AND
SAFE
WEEKEND!!

DONATE

In our companion book for this series, A Woman of Words, Matthew experiences a revelation. The story of Yeshua did not begin with His birth.

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Persistence (Hearing God's Voice)



In this week's reading from Woman of Words, Matthew and Mary argue about him gathering stories during her time in Bethlehem for her grandson's birth. When Mary returned and Matthew proudly shared his accomplishments, Mary dismissed him. She would find someone else to finish writing her Son's story.

Page 2

Matthew was shocked and heartbroken, but tried to see his dismissal as a blessing. Mary's decision freed Matthew to pursue his original desire to preach and teach alongside Peter, James, and John. But the Holy Spirit wasn't finished with Matthew's role of helping Mary and tells him to go back to her.

For the next several days, Matthew arrives at Mary's home early and sits in the courtyard waiting for Mary to invite him in, but with no acknowledgment from Mary. Multiple persons encourage him not to give up. Mary is stubborn but, if it is God's will that they continue their work together, she will eventually reconcile with Matthew.

One day, Mary brings bread and cheese to Matthew, along with a sincere apology. In response to Mary calling Matthew stubborn, he shares a story her Son once told about a persistent widow and an unjust judge. Jesus explained that if an unjust judge will give in to a persistent widow, God will reward the persistence of a faithful believer.

I am the unjust judge," Mary concludes after hearing Matthew's story. Matthew didn't disagree with Mary's revelation, nor did he hesitate to forgive her. Instead, he shared how the Holy Spirit would not let him walk away from the work he was called to do.

The parable of the persistent widow is somewhat baffling. Is God really moved by constant whining? Does it matter what we're asking for? After all, Matthew hadn't given up on his desire to preach and teach. Did God insist on him continuing to work with Mary because Matthew gave in too easily instead of hounding God with his desires?

The story of the persistent widow appears in the Gospel of Luke after Jesus talks about the unfolding reign of God and His imminent departure. Perhaps Jesus noticed the disciples needed to hear a "feel good" story. After all, if an unjust judge will give in to a powerless widow, how much more will a just God grant our petitions?

Oh, if it were always so easy!

Because of all the trouble this widow is giving me, I will see to it that she gets her rights.

Luke 18:5

In the Book of 1 Kings, we read about a time when the Prophet Elijah is at a low point in his career. After a showdown with the close advisors of Queen Jezebel, Elijah was on the run. He was hiding in a cave after saying to God, "Just kill me!

Elijah desperately wanted to hear words of encouragement. God tell Elijah, "Go out and stand before me on top of the mountain." While not exactly words of encouragement and certainly no solution to his woes, Elijah chose to be obedient,

The story goes on as Elijah is waiting for the Lord. The writer tells us that a furious wind blew that split the hills and shattered the rocks.

Saved (Before Abraham) *cont. from pg 1*

You and I know Jesus was with God at the beginning. But this revelation does not come to us because we're smarter or better people. No. The revelation that Jesus is God comes to each believer as a divine gift.

So why isn't every person a believer? Why does not God simply put give everyone the gift of knowing the identity of Jesus Christ?

The answer is deceptively simple. Not that the revelation is so difficult to receive. This gift is always there waiting and many believe that it begins with a prayer asking that Jesus Christ be our Lord and Savior. Others believe in a tradition that it begins with baptism.

For most of us our faith journey begins with hearing the testimony of someone else. And the message triggering our belief may be a line on a billboard or from a song we hear.

In her fictional novel, Angela Hunt postulates that Matthew's belief began with a personal invitation from Jesus to follow Him. Yet, a couple of years later, Matthew befuddled by this notion of belief. Jesus would sometimes perform miracles without wanting people to talk about them, but he also speaks to large crowds and performed

miracles openly.

But one thing Jesus said to some Pharisees quizzing Him about something Jesus said regarding Abraham. "Wait, are you claiming you've met Abraham?" they asked in disbelief. "You are too young for that to be possible!"

The response Jesus gave is powerful and Matthew's recollection of what He said opened a new chapter in Matthew's understanding. "Before Abraham, I AM. Jesus replied. It's all making sense.

Yet it was our grief he bore,
our sorrows that weighed
him down.

Isaiah 53:4

God, speaking through the Prophet Isaiah, told of a servant God sent to save the people of the Covenant. Despite God's divine gift of grace, the people rejected the Servant. They simple couldn't accept the idea that any person will bear their grief and emphasize with their sorrow.

Jesus knew Abraham because Jesus was before him. The scriptures foretold Jesus as the suffering servant and God's plan, and the people's response

Most would reject him for whom there were simply too many obstacles to believe.

When did your salvation become clear to you? Perhaps it was in an instant. For most, it took a while, sometimes years.

Sadly, there are too many that have chosen not to accept God's gift of grace. If this describes you, I urge you to ask God to remove any obstacles that stand in your way.

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.

A reminder that we publish this newsletter that we call the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to connect@FlintAsbury.org or let us know when you send a message through our [website](#). We post an archive of past editions on our website under the tab, Connect - choose [Newsletters](#).

Pastor Tommy

Our series was inspired by and relies on content provided by Angela Hunt. *A Woman of Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2021.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kevin Croom
 Sylvia Pittman
 Jonathon Misner

Terrance Williams
 Mirium Watson



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard
 Nancy Elston

COMING UP THIS WEEK
NOVEMBER 6 - 12



Nov 6	Mon	2:00pm	Staff Meeting
Nov 7	Tues	10am-12N	Food Distribution
Nov 8	Wed		
Nov 9	Thu	1:00PM	United Women in Faith
		6pm-9pm	Fall Gala Event Honoring Pastor Tommy and Kevin Croom (see flyer on page 19)
Nov 10	Fri		
Nov 11	Sat		
Nov 12	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 "Words"

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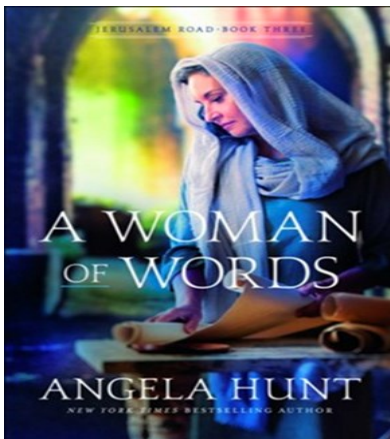
There is a plethora of metaphors that warn us about the impact of the words we speak. One that comes to mind is words are like toothpaste. Once you squeeze toothpaste out of the tube, you can't put it back.

And God said through the Prophet Isaiah that God's Word never returns empty, but always does whatever God intended.

We refer to the Bible as God's Word. We read Jesus is God's Word in the opening lines of John's Gospel.

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Book Club News



Our companion book for our new worship series is Angela Hunt's third book in her

Jerusalem Road Series.

A Woman of Words recounts the time after the Resurrection of Jesus when the church first takes root as His followers share the good news.

The narrators are two familiar characters. Matthew was a tax collector named Levi when he first met Jesus. One of the least likely candidates for ordination. But Jesus saw in Matthew what others could not.

and perhaps, least understood of all the persons who travelled with Jesus. Angela Hunt fills in the gaps using her imagination and an in-depth knowledge of scripture and speculation about scripture.

James, Peter and John ask Matthew to move to Jerusalem and help with the growing church. He dreams of preaching and performing miracles, but finds his dreams postponed after speaking with Mary, Yeshua's mother. Mary asks Matthew to help her write down the stories of Yeshua while the eyewitnesses are still available to be consulted.

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Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Kevin Croom	Executive Director/CDC
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Kim Sims	Finance Director
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
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	Sr Prog Mgr Local Foods
	South Flint Soup Kitchen

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is one of the most recognized,

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

Upcoming Worship Series — “Words” ..cont from pg 5

Speaking of scripture, do you ever wonder where the four gospels we have in our bibles came from? Did four of the apostles try to capitalize on their inside knowledge with a lucrative book deal?

Welcome to our worship series, *Words*.

Our Worship Series beginning in October will take us to Thanksgiving. I encourage you to follow along with our companion book for this series, *A Woman of Words*, by Angela Hunt. This is the third book in her series, *The Road to Jerusalem*.

In her book, the Mother of Jesus asks Matthew to help her record the story of her Son’s ministry. But Matthew is hoping to preach and teach like his colleagues do. Also, Mathew would not mind performing a few miracles.

However, he gets invited to help with the growing church in Jerusalem because Matthew has a head for numbers. After all, he was formerly a tax collector. A past Matthew would sooner forget rather than be defined by his former vocation.

Of course, Hunt’s creative imagination regarding the origin of the gospels is not based on verifiable facts. She invites us to imagine together while learning more about how the early church evolved.

In this series, we focus on what happened after the Resurrection of Jesus.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30am. We share our weekly episodes on our [YouTube channel](#). We go live at 10:30am. 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, *A Woman of Words*, Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2021

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

Because of all the trouble this widow is giving me, I will see to it that she gets her rights.

Luke 18:1-8

NOTES FROM WORSHIP**QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS**

1. Read Luke 18:1-8. Does this parable leave you with questions? In what ways is this a “feel good” story? How does this parable leave you feeling?
2. Read this week’s articles titled *Persistence*? Do you describe yourself as a persistent person? In what ways are you persistent? Have you ever hear God’s voice? Describe the circumstances. Where do you go to listen for God’s voice?
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”

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“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**

South Flint Soup Kitchen



Bottled Water Drive

ALL SUMMER 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
9:30am-Noon at South Flint Soup Kitchen, 3410
Fenton Road (3 blocks north of Atherton Road)
Flint, MI 48507

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

To donate: www.mightycause.com/feedflint



A photograph of a pig with brown and black fur, looking out from behind a metal wire fence. The pig's head is pressed against the bars, and its eye is visible. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the enclosure.

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
- www.flintfunder.com

Donate Now



More Information :



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Reluctantly, he agrees, although the two face numerous complexities. For one, Gaius Caesar, more commonly known as Caligula, decides to raise a statue of himself in the Holy Temple. And he is willing to kill every man in Israel if needed.

Matthew's attention turns to saving his people. Meanwhile, Mary encourages him to come to terms with his past. When they finally near the completion of their project, Matthew realizes that the job he reluctantly accepted might be his God-given destiny.

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?

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. Our Book Club does not meet as a group. However, our weekly messages reference that weeks chapters. You can anticipate spoiler alerts unless you keep up with the pace. I've purchased ten books but when they're gone you can still 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

Angela Hunt. A Woman of Words. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2021.

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

Surely, God must be in the wind, Elijah figured. After all, when we are desperate to make sense of everything falling apart, we look for signs and the more dramatic the higher our hopes may be. After all, does not God control the wind?" we might think to ourselves. But the Lord was not in the wind.

The writer tells us that after the wind stopped blowing, there was an earthquake. Our earth is a mass of soil and rock hurling through space while spinning, creating fissions in the super-structure that shakes all that is nearby with a deadly force. Surely, God must be the force behind earthquakes.

It makes sense that when our circumstances cause us to question whether we fit at all into God's plan for good. Again, Elijah looked for God, but the Lord wasn't in the earthquake.

It turned out the earthquake was neither a sign nor a message.

And then there was a great fire. Fire cleanses in a destructive way, consuming whatever gets into its path and leaving charred remains in its path. Yet new life eventually comes out of the aftermath.

Similarly, Jesus tells us that spiritual transformation requires a burning away of impurities,

leaving that which is Holy. Perhaps we go through fires and they leave us feeling charred and discarded at first, but we grow and new life comes out of us. Perhaps Elijah needed further refining before he was ready to hear from God.

However, the fire was neither a sign nor a message from God.

But after the fire, there was the soft whisper of a voice. Elijah was still hiding in the cave, but he was close enough to God to hear it, although he couldn't make out the words completely. Elijah covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

We all go through windstorms, earthquakes and fires of our own. Sometimes these events are like train wrecks, leaving parts, pieces, and bodies scattered and destruction in their wake.

Sometimes the windstorms, earthquakes and fires that we go through become distractions that keep us preoccupied and unable to hear God's whisper? They cause us to take cover in our cave afraid of what may happen next.

What if most of the things that distract us are more easily described as the ebb and flow

of life? Some mornings are so still that the leaves barely move, if at all. Other days, we need to hold on to our hat and lean into the wind.

Similarly, some days are calm while other days are full of turmoil. Like the difference between a loud shout and a gentle whisper, it seems easier to hear God's voice on days when our lives are more calm than on the days of turmoil.

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Our series was inspired by and relies on content provided by Angela Hunt. *A Woman of Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2021.



October 10, 2023

Dear Friends in Christ in the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church,

I greet you in the name of Jesus Christ, who is our peace and who encourages us to be peacemakers when he says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

Early in this century, an acronym to describe our changing world gained wide currency – VUCA.

The world moving into the future is likely to be volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.

This past weekend, the world again experienced volatility when Gaza Hamas fired thousands of rockets into Israel, and Hamas fighters from Gaza invaded nearby Israeli towns. Over 900 people have been killed, and over 2500 injured. There have been reports of rape and torture, and over 130 people, including women and children, have been taken hostage. Much of the world has expressed outrage over these actions, for which there is no moral justification.

Let me be clear, these actions are morally unjustifiable and deserve condemnation.

It is also true that the historical background is complex. While we cannot let that complexity blunt our moral outrage, we must continue to wrestle with the realities that make peace so difficult and elusive in Palestine/Israel. Among the realities that make this situation complex are the long histories of both the Palestinian and Jewish people. These histories include dispossession, oppression, and deep trauma. Deep injustices have often marked the history of Israel's policies toward the Palestinian people. Recent Israeli policies encouraging the ongoing formation of Jewish settlements in Palestinian territory have deepened resentment and injustice. One Israeli journalist described the current policies as "establishing a government of annexation and dispossession." Will the Israeli response to this Hamas attack be measured and proportionate? Thus far, retaliatory strikes have killed close to 700, and we mourn with those grieving in Gaza.

Prior invasions of Israel from nearby countries and terrorist bombings are part of this complex history. Among Israeli citizens are survivors of the Holocaust and family members of those who died during it. Regional politics add to this complexity, including the power struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran and its influence on Israeli and Palestinian actions.

I think we must seek to hold together an unambiguous condemnation of this recent attack, a recognition of the complexities of this region of the world, and a deep desire to achieve justice and peaceful coexistence. Our condemnation of these recent Hamas actions does not mitigate our concern for justice for the Palestinian people, a concern supported by our conference resolution last summer. In the name of Jesus, we remain committed to peace, a peace in which Israelis and Palestinians coexist and seek to flourish together. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church states: "We deplore war and urge the peaceful settlement of disputes among nations.... We yearn for the day when there will be no more war, and people will live together in peace and justice." Let us pray out of this deep yearning for peace, justice, and a better world.

As we pray deeply for peace together in this volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world, may we also pray for hearts and minds large enough to grapple with all the complexities that confront us as we "pursue what makes for peace" (Romans 14:19).

May we remain committed to hearing and following the call of Jesus to be peacemakers.

Grace and Peace

David Alan Bard, Michigan Area Bishop

This statement has been endorsed by the [Michigan Conference Board of Justice](#).

The United Methodist Church of Bishops has also released a statement which I encourage you to read.

A message from Michigan Conference Bishop David Alan Bard. We encourage you to share it with others this week.

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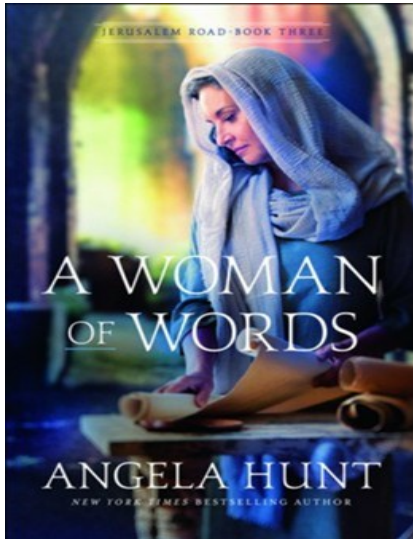
IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, PLEASE CALL THE ASBURY CHURCH
OFFICE 810-235-0016

PRICES ARE: 12 oz. \$4.99

24 oz \$8.99

THE GREEN SALSA WILL BE MILD.

THE RED SALSA WILL BE HOT.



Welcome to the first episode of our new worship series, Words. Each week there is a reading assignment in our companion book, *Woman of Words* by Angela Hunt.

Reading along with us is completely optional. I plan to recap each week's chapters and focus on one or more of the author's references to stories found in scripture.

Nevertheless, we chose this approach to our series based on experience. Those who read the companion book report a deeper connection to scripture.

We begin with the first four chapters. Matthew, an apostle of Jesus is asked by Peter and John, also apostles, and James, a brother of Jesus, to move to Jerusalem to help.

Here is the schedule for episodes two through eight:

Oct 8	Chapters 5 - 9
Oct 15	Chapters 10 - 15
Oct 22	Chapters 16 - 21
Oct 29	Chapters 22 - 28
Nov 5	Chapters 29 - 33
Nov 12	Chapters 34 - 40
Nov 19	Chapters 41 - 45

Cyndi and I are on vacation Sunday, November 26. The Season of Advent begins Sunday, December 3 with a new worship series.

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. I've purchased ten books but when they're gone you can still 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

Angela Hunt. *A Woman of Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2021.

Asbury CDC Fall GALA

Honoring Pastor Tommy and
new elect Kevin
Croom

THURSDAY
NOVEMBER

9th

AT INSIGHT AUDITORIUM 4800 SAGINAW ST
FLINT, MI. 48507

DOORS OPEN AT 06:30PM

TICKET

\$40

Per Person

RETIREMENT CEREMONY

GALA DINNER
ENTERTAINMENT

For more information: kim@flintasbury.org or
TEXT CDCGALA to 53-555



We know you would be here today
if heaven wasn't so far away

Gary Allward

Life Celebration

**Spaghetti Dinner | Bake Sale | Fundraiser | Auction & Raffles |
Accepting Money Donations**

4PM - 8PM

November 18th 2023

Asbury United Methodist Church | 1653 Davison Rd , Flint MI 48506

810 . 513 . 1983 | 810 . 235 . 0016 | youth@flintasbury.org