ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 1

May 1, 2022

Sacred Places (Stairway to Heaven)



Stairway to Heaven became the most requested song on the radio during the decade that I graduated from college and moved to Michigan. I was already a fan of Led Zeppelin after their first album. And an even bigger fan of poetry.

The original songwriter, Robert Plant, said that the song's intended meaning that he wrote and produced with Jimmy Page was about personal growth. This is enough for me. Add in the song's reference to one of my favorite biblical stories and a compelling guitar melody, and it's no wonder this song is powerful.

Of course, there were the conspiracy theories back then too.

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Please continue to wear your masks when in the building. If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you.



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Jiffy Plus (It's okay to be unfinished)



"I'll get that fixed in a jiffy," the plumber said. "That's great," I replied, "I can't afford to pay for a big project." Little did we know that a corroded water line was about to break just beyond our view.

So how long is a jiffy? I've learned to respond to requests that come with "this shouldn't take long" by pointing out that everything takes time. Nothing happens with human effort that takes zero time. And usually, something else has to give, be delayed, or not happen at all.

But how long is a jiffy? I turned to the internet library known as Wikipedia. I discovered that before jiffy was a muffin mix or a place to get my oil changed, a jiffy was sometimes used for units of measure elsewhere. For example, in quantum physics, a

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Jiffy Plus (It's okay to be unfinished) ...cont from page 1

jiffy is defined as the time taken for light to travel one fermi or about 3×10^{24} seconds to cross the diameter of a proton. That's really fast!

An oil change at a Jiffy Lube takes at least 15 minutes, even when there is no wait. Muffins made from Jiffy Mix need to bake for 15 to 20 minutes. So some jiffies take longer than others.

So how long is a jiffy? Perhaps a jiffy is fast enough that we're not annoyed by the wait. So how long are we willing to wait for something really important? Such as something that frees us from emotional harm that persistently interferes with our happiness?

According to Aundi Kolber, a licensed therapist living in Colorado, this sort of work takes a long time. Let's call this wait a "Jiffy plus" to represent anything we want to occur in less time than it actually takes. Long enough to push our buttons, cause us to sweat, and annoys us. A jiffy plus is how long it takes to accomplish something worth doing.

Creating a masterpiece takes a jiffy plus.

Welcome to episode one of our new series, *Masterpiece*. This series is about you and your work on the masterpiece that God created when God created you. You are a masterpiece that takes a Jiffy plus to make.

But how long is a Jiffy plus?

A long time. Long enough to annoy you, make you sweat, and create just enough anxiety and impatience that you'll want to find any shortcut you can. Spoiler alert! There aren't any shortcuts to creating a masterpiece.

In her book *Try Softer*, Aundi Kolber reminds us that in creating the masterpiece that is you 'the true work is slow and deep." Aundi shares her struggles with wanting to push through emotional pain rather than face the hard work of healing. However, she recommends that we let go of looking for the quick fix and try softer rather than trying harder to push through.

Psalm 13 offers a universal question that many of us want answered but are afraid to ask. The writer asks God, "How long must I endure trouble?" In other words, the writer of this Psalm asks God, "How long is a jiffy plus?"

There's a story in Isaiah about a time people were feeling the same way as the writer of Psalm 13. It's understandable. They were following the rules, showing up at church almost every weekend, and even fasting for the most part. But God didn't seem to notice, or so it seemed.

Their snide remarks and persistent whining got God's attention alright. But instead of coddling them, God called them out. God pointed out that they go through the motions without putting in the hard work of getting along with and taking care of each other. God put the answer to "how long" back into their hands.

"You tell me," God responded, "How long you'll fight with each other rather than doing the hard work that allows you to work together in harmony?"

There are plenty of reasons we struggle to get along with one another. But we don't need to agree on politics or solutions to work together. Unfortunately, however, arguments frequently break out after a response that seems out of place or unwarranted. And we take it personally, not knowing that what we said struck a nerve we didn't know existed. Nor can we know, mainly if our antagonist isn't aware that their outburst was caused by deep-seated hurt they chose to suppress.

It's complicated. This is why
God gives folks like Aundi Kolber the
capacities and passion for helping
folks like you and me deal with our
deep-seated emotional problems.
Our emotional and mental health is
just as important as brushing our
teeth.

The problems in our community are solvable. But the solutions require cooperation and finding common ground. Instead, I've witnessed continued bickering leading to personal attacks and threats over the past decade. Do you wonder what God is thinking?

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In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom Sylvia Pittman Shirley Craig Richard Oram Chris Freeman



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux

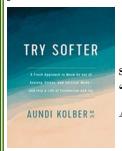
Norma Buzzard Mary Nations

PASTOR BOOK CLUB NEWS

Pastor Book Club is still meeting via Zoom. Please call the Church Office for more info 810-235-0016 as it changes.

Meanwhile, as a lot of you are already aware, sharp increases in new infections of COVID are pushing us back into isolation. While our regular attenders are vaccinated, we realize that a large number of persons are not vaccinated.

Therefore, we reinstated our policy to require masks in our building for all persons when not eating or drinking. If you don't have a mask, we can provide one for you, just ask the office.



This month's book series is called, "Try Softer", by Aundi Kolber.

Thank you and everyone stay safe!

COMING UP THIS WEEK

May 2 Mon 10:45am Grand Re-opening South Flint Soup Kitchen for in door service

May 3 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm

Food/Water Distribution

11am-12Noon Covid 19 Town Hall at

South Flint Soup Kitchen (limit of 49 quests)

May 4 Wed 12 Noon Pastor Book Club

Angel closet at South Flint Soup Kitchen (appointments needed 810–239–3427)

May 5 Thu 1:00pm United Women in Faith

(will meet in the Asbury Library)

May 6 Fri

May 7 Sat 12 Noon Food Not Bombs

May 8 Sun 10:30am

New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

(We are live on <u>Facebook</u> and our newly launched <u>YouTube</u> <u>channel</u>. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at <u>FlintAsbury.org</u>.)

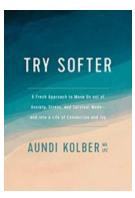
Asbury Worship Series "Masterpiece"



In Psalm 13 we find questions that everyone feels at times. "How much longer will you forget me, Lord? Forever? How much longer will you hide yourself from me? How long must I endure trouble? How long will sorrow fill my heart day and night? How long will my enemies triumph over me?" (Psalm 13:1-2).

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Book Club News



We began reading and discuss-ing *Praying with the Church* by Scot McKnight as the Season of Lent started in March. We

plan to finish our study next week and turn our attention to Easter. ¹

We chose this book as a study during the Season of Lent because of the importance of Prayer in the

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor & Exec Dir
Connie Portillo Office Manager
Sylvia Pittman Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig Board & Leadership Chair

lives of nearly every person on the planet. Even persons who don't believe in a God may turn to whatever power that may be greater than their circumstances in search of comfort, protection, and forgiveness.

On the Wednesday after Easter we start a new adventure into the slow but rewarding process of self-discovery.

In parallel to a new worship series, *Masterpiece*, our Book Club digs deeper into the process of self -discovery. But not as a burden to be endured. Rather, as an exciting exploration of who we are behind our layers of protection. Let's call it our un-doctored selfie.

We're in search of that divine image that reflects our Creator. We know it's there beneath the layers

Kevin Croom
Matt DePalma
Chris Freeman
Israel Unger
Kim Sims
Faxes Chef & Dir Opers
Farms Manager
South Campus Bldg Mgr
Finance Director
Connections Suprv
Terrance Williams
Arts Center Mgr

of past disappointments, hurts, and abandonments.

Whether you're a regular on Sunday mornings, only attend on an occasional holiday, or don't cross the threshold of a church building without coercion, there is something for everyone in this conversation.

The write-up found on Amazon has this to say about our next book:

In a world that preaches "try harder" gospel just keep going, hustling, keep keep pretending we're all fine-we' re left exhausted, overwhelmed, and so numb to our lives. If we're honest, we have been

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"Masterpiece"... Asbury Worship Series ...cont from pg 4

More often than not, we feint humility to cover up our feelings of despair. We wonder if God made some sort of horrible mistake while creating us. Perhaps a part was left out or a piece cross-threaded during our assembly.

Other times, we hypothesize that it isn't God's fault. It was our parents or caregivers that dropped the ball. Maybe it was that horrible thing that happened. That thing that we don't want to talk about lest we condemn ourselves by our own testimony.

The most damning theory of all is that we're somehow irreversibly flawed. It all started with a wrong decision that we can never take back. And no matter how hard we tried, we never really recovered. For years, denial worked best and would still work if it weren't for those voices that won't stop reminding us. "You know what you are!" they shout.

Welcome to our new series, *Masterpiece*. A series about you and your struggle for loving yourself as much as God loves you. Not just through rational logic or because the Bible says so, but because you actually believe you are a masterpiece.

Masterpiece is conceived as a trilogy. The first two parts are based on a book by Aundi Kolber. A licensed therapist who shared her own struggles and dedicated her life to helping others deal with their own brokenness. Her book is titled *Try Softer*.

John Li joins our series design team as a content expert. With advanced degrees in Psychology and Sociology, John brings academic rigor to this intersection between faith and science.

As Psalm 13 continues we read a recognition of God's saving grace at work. The Psalmist sings out to God "I rely on your constant love; I will be glad, because you will rescue me. I will sing to you, O Lord, because You have been good to me (Psalm 13:5-6).

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

² Aundi Kolber. Try Softer: A Fresh Approach to Move Us out of Anxiety, Stress, and Survival Mode--and into a Life of Connection and Joy. Carol Street, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020.

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Sacred Places (Stairway to Heaven) cont. from pg 1

Matt Trzcinski, in an article published by the *Showbiz Cheat Sheet*, credits a Michigan pastor with starting a conspiracy theory that *Stairway to Heaven* contained a "back-masking" message promoting satanic worship.

The possibility that some of us are more susceptible to believing debunked conspiracy theories than others has proven elusive to researchers. This subject took on an accelerated sense of urgency as the COVID pandemic became politicized. And conspiracy theories, such as The "big lie," are now the latest weapon in the arsenal of political pundits.

Benedict Carey summarized the results of a recent study in a *New York Times* article. The researcher's paper titled "Looking Under the Tinfoil Hat" was posted online in the *Journal of Personality*. While their study found interesting and somewhat predictable correlations, the research is inconclusive.

It is estimated that over half of us believe at least one debunked theory. Carey writes that "The advent of the pandemic, and its injection into partisan politics in the United States and abroad, lend an urgency to a deeper understanding of conspiracy theories, given that false beliefs — that the C.D.C. is politically compromised, one way or another — can lead millions to ignore public health advice."

Which conspiracy theories have accomplished. The problem is knowing which of our beliefs is based on solid facts and which are not.

Our imagination, for the most part, relies on our lived experiences. However, experts have discovered that even our dreams come mostly out of

reinterpreting stored memories, which come from our brain's cerebral cortex.

The information that our senses take in is interpreted by our brain based on pattern matching. For example, we recognize another person or a place because we have a stored memory that our brain uses to match what we see, hear, smell, taste, and feel with a past experience.

When we dream, this same process occurs, except that we're not receiving outside information. Instead, the brain works in reverse and reinterprets past experiences in new and often creative ways. And this makes dreams seem just as genuine as the real thing.

Perhaps this explains why I connect the imagery of *Stairway to Heaven* with the story of Jacob. Instead of satanic messages, I'm reminded of a biblical classic involving a highly dysfunctional family that God invited into the history of salvation. Jacob inspires all of us who realize that we're a long distance from being a masterpiece and that there is hope for us.

The stories of Jacob's dysfunctional family appear in the first book of the bible. Jacob's father, Issac, first shows up in the 17th chapter of Genesis. Issac marries his wife Rebekah in chapter 24, and their fraternal twin sons, Esau and Jacob, are born in chapter 25. But Jacob's dream of a ladder or stairs going up to heaven takes place while he is on the run and hiding from Esau.

We jump into Jacob's story in chapter 28. Jacob is on the run after a rue he pulled with the help and encouragement of his mother. As a result, his father gave Jacob his brother's much larger share of their inheritance. I'm sure that Jacob felt justified at the time. After all, the boys were twins, but Esau came out first, making him the oldest. In their culture, being the older brother was a much bigger deal than it has been since.

But Esau was a hunter, and he was furious. Also, given Esau's superior strength and abilities with weapons, Jacob wasn't safe staying home. Besides, his parents wanted him to find a suitable partner back in his mother's homeland. But on his way to Haran, Jacob has a dream.

In his dream, Jacob saw "a stairway reaching from earth to heaven, with angels going up and coming down on it. And the Lord was standing beside him" (Genesis 28:12-13). As Jacob's dream continued, God offered him a promising future and legacy. And he makes a deal with God. Jacob promises to remember that all he has comes from God, and he will always be generous with others.

...a stairway reaching from earth to heaven, with angels going up and coming down on it.

Genesis 25:12-13

There is good news. We are the ones we're waiting on.

Our Savior already came, offered each of us salvation, and gave us the power to choose for ourselves. Do we want heaven on earth? It's simple. Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.

The truth is ...you pursue your own interests... and you quarrel and fight. Do you think this ...will make me listen to your prayers"?

Isaiah 54:3-4

The question is, how much do you love yourself? And this is where hard work is needed.

In the first chapter of her book, Aundi Kolber offers a way to help us examine how we arrived at whatever point we find ourselves. Take a sheet of paper, place the paper on its side and draw a line across the middle. Label the left side of the paper "born" and write your birthdate. Next, label the other end of the line "Today."

Start listing significant events in your life, paying careful attention to place them in the order they occurred. Start with your favorites, such as the birth of a child or a wedding. Next, include other key events that significantly impacted your life. Finally, pay attention to how your body responds to the events. Are there a few things that you're not sure you can even write down?

Hold onto this. We're just getting started and it's going to take a Jiffy plus before we're done.

I invite you to join us each week for our series called *Masterpiece*. Our goal is to learn how to let God help us find joy, but not by trying harder.

You can join us each Sunday online by going to the button on the homepage of our <u>website</u> - <u>Click</u> <u>here to watch</u>. This button takes you to our <u>YouTube channel</u>. 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 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

¹ Aundi Kolber. Try Softer: A Fresh Approach to Move Us out of Anxiety, Stress, and Survival Mode--and into a Life of Connection and Joy. Carol Street, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020.

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| Life Group Questions & Notes: |
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| Jacob woke up and said, "The Lord is here! He is in this place, and I didn't know it!" |
| Genesis 28:16 |
| NOTES FROM WORSHIP |
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| QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS |
| 1. Read Genesis 28:10-22. In what ways can you identify with Jacob's experience? |

- 1. Read Genesis 28:10-22. In what ways can you identify with Jacob's experience? Where are the sacred places that you've been? Describe how a sacred space is different from other places.
- 2. Read this week's article titled *Sacred places*. How do you interpret *Stairway to Heaven* both the song and the story about Jacob's dream? How does your interpretation inform your life? How do your past experiences affect your interpretation?
- 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.





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



Angel Closet: May 4th & 18th,
Appointment needed! One client at a time
in the closet. Call 810-239-3427 for an appt!

Food Giveaways: May 11th & 25th, No Appointment needed! 11am-noon





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* CONVENIENT PICKUP AT ASBURY OR AT THE SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN *

But in the song, *Stairway to Heaven*, we meet the opposite persona.

There's a lady who's sure all that glitters is gold And she's buying a stairway to heaven.

Buying our ticket into heaven is a universal pursuit. The early church version was called indulgences. According to Wikipedia, indulgence reduces the amount of punishment for sin. But, of course, this idea presumes that heaven is the opposite of punishment and that tickets into heaven are available for sale.

Some translations jump ahead at the beginning of Jacob's story by referring to the place where he spent the night as a "holy" place. However, the word for holy doesn't appear in the text until after Jacob's dream, realizing he encountered God. And his experience causes Jacob to mark the place where he spent the night as sacred.

My first inclination was to use a different translation. But after further reflection, I realized that the translators have a point. Every place is sacred. The question is whether we actually notice and acknowledge God's presence.

And God doesn't sell tickets to sacred places.

In the 55th chapter of Isaiah, God makes this pronouncement: "Come, everyone who is thirsty—here is water! Come, you that have no money—buy grain and eat! Come! Buy wine and milk—it will cost you nothing!" (Isaiah 55:1-2).

Our brains are fascinating miracles that continue to bewilder scientists. Yet, the more we learn, the more we discover God's reminder that God doesn't see the world the way we do.

And this is critical to remember because when God speaks, things happen. Unfortunately, however, we often mistake God's thoughts and actions for our own.

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Pastor Tommy

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Matt Trzcinski. "Does 'Stairway to Heaven' by Led Zeppelin Include a Satanic Message?." © Showbiz Cheat Sheet, February 18, 2020.

Benedict Carey. "A Theory About Conspiracy Theories." © *New York Times*, September 28, 2020 over functioning for so long, we can't even imagine another way. How else will things get done? How else will we survive?

It does not have to be this way.

Aundi Kolber believes that we don't have to white-knuckle our way through life. In her debut book, *Try Softer*, she'll show us how God specifically designed our bodies and minds to work together to process our stories and work through obstacles. Through the latest psychology, practical clinical exercises, and her own personal story, Aundi equips and empowers us to connect us to our trust self and truly live. This is the "try softer" life.

According to her author biography, Aundi Kolber is a Licensed Professional Counselor (MA LPC), writer, and speaker in Castle Rock, Colorado. She specializes in trauma- and body-centered therapies and is passionate about the integration of faith and psychology.

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away, I encourage you to join us online 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, delighted when new people join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — <u>FlintAsbury.orq</u>.

Pastor Tommy

¹ Scot McKnight. *Praying with the Church*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2006.

² Aundi Kolber. Try Softer: A Fresh Approach to Move Us out of Anxiety, Stress, and Survival Mode--and into a Life of Connection and Joy. Carol Street, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020.





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UNITED METHODIST WOMEN IS NOW UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

We've taken a new name to better reflect how we answer our calling today. It's an exhilarating time, as we commit to even greater inclusivity, action, and impact in our mission to support women, children, and youth.

All Women of Asbury UMC are invited to join our monthly meetings on the 1st Thursday of the month at 1:00PM in the Library. Your friends and neighbor ladies are also invited, they don't have to be United Methodist any longer. Any questions, please call Michele Weston, our President, at 810-624-1184



<u>Save The Date!!</u> <u>Sunday, May 15, 2022 at Noon</u>, after Morning Worship, The Asbury United Women In Faith will be having a Brunch to "Celebrate Spring" and to "Thank our Farm Workers" for all they are doing to get our Hoop Houses planted for this growing season for Asbury Farms.

Watch for a flyer coming soon to tell you more about it, the cost, the menu and reservations etc... The most exciting part of this event is to finally have an Asbury gathering and meal together since we stopped when the pandemic began.



Hello friends! We are **so excited** to be reopening for indoor service May 2nd. We have a few things you will need to know before you come have lunch with us:

Doors will be open at 10:45am for clients to be seated, Monday through Saturday. If you are not seated or in line to be seated by 11am, you will not be able to come inside. Please make plans accordingly to be on time for lunch.

Once you are seated, there will be no one allowed to get up from their seat unless there is an emergency or someone needs to use the restroom.

We will no longer be doing buffet style meals; clients will remain seated for the entire time during lunch and will be served at their tables, restaurant style.

Per the Fire Marshal, our max capacity is 49 clients. We are a very busy facility and we cannot guarantee

anyone a seat, so please be on time to ensure we can serve you!

Please leave any toxic attitudes at the door, we are volunteers and we may refuse service to anyone who is disrespectful or not following the rules. Peace and love always!

Masks are not required, but if you are unvaccinated, we strongly suggest you wear a mask when not eating or drinking.

The most important thing: <u>ALL ARE WELCOME!</u> However you identify, wherever you are from, <u>you</u> <u>are loved and welcome in our facility!</u>

If you are interested in volunteering with us, we'd love to have you! Volunteers are asked to arrive at 9:30am and are usually done by noon/12:30pm. Give us a call at 810-239-3427 if this sounds like something you'd be interested in.

As always, please let us know if you have any questions or concerns and we will get back to you as soon as possible. We can be reached at 810-239-3427 or via email at southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com.

God bless and see you (inside) soon!

South Flint Soup Kitchen Management