

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 8

May 8, 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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Attached (It's Complicated)



In a post on pairedlife.com, Jeannie Marie writes that while social media has done a lot to help couples find that special someone, the "relationship status" option found on Facebook adds unnecessary drama and complication to dating.

In her article, Jeannie navigates the complicated process of choosing a Facebook status that best reflects and communicates your particular circumstances regarding your relationship with a special person. She shares an evident frustration when she writes, "Unless you are 12 years old, there shouldn't be so much drama behind it, but yet there is."

My favorite among relationship status options, and status, we find this morsel of

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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.

DONATE

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brutal honesty — "I need counseling, but instead, I air my dirty laundry on Facebook. It is therapeutic for me."

Relationships are a form of attachment with another person or thing. Attachments are a necessary and sometimes messy part of life. Nevertheless, the most basic building blocks of reality are relational. And we come out of the womb dependent upon other persons for survival. And this reliance that we had on our caregivers for food, water, safety, and dry diapers helped shape the Facebook status we chose decades later.

Sasha Jackson and Kristen Fuller write, "Emotional attachment is a normal part of development. You are driven to connect to those that provide a sense of protection, comfort, and validation." But there is a balance. "Attachment can become toxic if you rely too much on others to satisfy emotional needs."

Psychologists categorize how we approach relationships based on responding to others with whom we're emotionally attached. There are four basic attachment styles, and we generally fall into one of them.

A slight majority of us are said to be securely attached. In other words, for the most part, we're okay with relying on and getting close to other people. And we're comfortable that others depend on us.

However, this also means that we don't freak out when another person is not around.

It's comforting to have a close association with a person secure in their attachments. Unless I'm not secure. For example, if I'm anxiously attached, I constantly worry whether my friend really cares that much about me. And I am easily hurt or scared if I don't get enough attention. In fact, any separation feels like rejection or abandonment.

But what if I avoid closeness altogether instead of clinging to someone I care about? What if I avoid getting close to others and have an extreme need for self-reliance? What if I'm distressed by any thought that I'm dependent on someone else? The good news is that there is a name for this style — avoidant attachment.

And what if I can't make up my mind about the idea of being in a relationship? I feel secure on my better days, but I'm not really sure how I feel about my relationships? Therapists call your primary style disorganized attachment, which often occurs due to trauma.

Regardless of your dominant attachment style, Aundi Kolber reminds us that help is available, provided we decide we're willing to put in the effort. She calls this pursuit "earned secure attachment" because we'll need to do some work to reprogram how we respond to signals that are otherwise interpreted as threats.

Our attachment style comes out of our stories. Not the fictional stories we tell ourselves and others that keep our secrets away from scrutiny. Rather the non-fiction stories of our actual lived experiences, including those experiences that happened before we had any say in our relationships.

Content on the internet in general and social media, in particular, is more fiction than non-fiction. Setting intentional fraudulent statements aside, there may be more misinformation on the world wide web than helpful content. Nevertheless, who doesn't google "Who is Jeannie Marie" before making an important decision based upon her latest post?

While "fiction" is by definition not real, it is often based on stories of actual persons. And when Jesus told stories, His stories were likely based on actual persons as well. Fiction is most enjoyable when we find ourselves in the story. This is often the case with the stories told by Jesus because His stories are based on you and me.

Consider the story named for its main character, the prodigal son. The main characters are the father, the older son, and the younger son, who leaves home searching for adventure. While the gender of the characters is irrelevant, their roles are significant.



In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom
 Sylvia Pittman
 Shirley Craig
 Richard Oram
 Chris Freeman



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

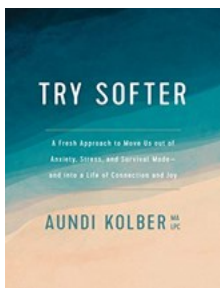
Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard Mary Nations

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 9 Mon 6:00pm Worship Team
- May 10 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm
 Food/Water Distribution
- May 11 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club
 11:00am-12Noon Food Give Away at
 South Flint Soup Kitchen (no appointments needed)
- May 12 Thu
- May 13 Fri
- May 14 Sat 12Noon Food Not Bombs
- May 15 Sun 10:30am
 New Beginnings
 Contemporary Worship
 12Noon Asbury United Women of Faith
 "Special Breakfast" for Staff/Volunteers
 Of Asbury (See Flyer on Pg 15)

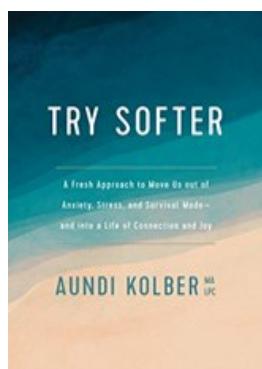
(We are live on [Facebook](#) and our newly launched [YouTube channel](#). You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).)

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).

Book Club News



We began reading and discussing *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

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

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

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

Asbury Staff

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

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



“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.

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

The younger son asks his father for his share of the family estate while his father is still alive. Jesus wasn't big on details, leaving us to fill in the blanks as we make the story ours. I'm not sure how such a request for his estate share even works. Families, at that time, were centers of production, and this particular family was successful enough to employ additional workers.

Family businesses are not usually that liquid. Making it difficult to write a check representing a substantial percentage of the total operation. Most of the estate was land, with perennial crops and livestock. A younger son's portion is substantially smaller than the oldest son's share. Somehow it works, and the younger son leaves town with his share.

What happens to the younger son's portion is mainly left to speculation, which biblical translators love to weigh in on. Perhaps based on their own stories or a fictional story they tell themselves. Nevertheless, the money runs out, and the younger son is left penniless and homeless.

The parable of the prodigal son is a rich to rags story that many entrepreneurs recognize and live through. As have numerous young adults. This is where you and I fill in our own details about finding ourselves, mistakes and mishaps, and trials and tribulations. The adventure we set out on when we chose to strike out on our own.

We're left to speculate on the differences between the two brothers in temperament and personality. Unfortunately, Jesus doesn't tell us about their attachment styles, although we can guess with the details we're given.

And what about their relationship with their mother, father, or other nearby caregivers who influenced their childhood? Was either of them securely grounded in their relationships? Were they "securely attached" as children and capable of healthy relationships? Again, this is a reasonable assumption since it's estimated that over half of us are fortunate enough to be in this category of relational health.

Perhaps neither brother benefited from a near-perfect childhood. A successful business demanded time from their parents, which pulled them away from their children. How many years separated their arrivals? I imagine the older brother as loyal and sticking close to home.

Author and therapist Aundi Kolber shares that she entered adulthood hindered by an "anxious ambivalent" attachment style. Shaped in large part by her parents' dysfunction, Aundi shared her suspicions that other people would eventually let her down. Fortunately, through therapy, she found the healing that helped her develop secure, healthy relationships with those closest to her.

Where are you in this story? In what ways is this your story? Are you feeling like you lost your course or your motivation to keep looking for where you fit?

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Jeannie Marie. "The True Meaning Behind Facebook Relationship Status Updates." © pairedlife.com, Feb 3, 2022.

Sanjana Gupta. Medically reviewed by Rachel Goldman. "What Is Emotional Attachment and Is Yours Healthy?" © verywellmind.com August 19, 2021.

Sasha Jackson and Kristen Fuller. "What Is Emotional Attachment & When Does It Become Unhealthy?." © choosingtherapy.com, February 12, 2021.

Life Group Questions & Notes:

For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.

Luke 15:24

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS


1. Read Luke 15:11-32. Which brother are you in this story? Have you ever been the parent welcoming a child, friend, significant other home after they returned from failure? What did you learn about yourself that might help you with your attachments?
2. Read this week's article titled *Attached*. Any idea which attachment style best fits how you respond to relationships? Are you secure counting on others and having them depend on you? Are you okay when they're not around? Does your emotional well-being depend on another person? Are you meeting with a therapist regularly? If so, thank you for taking care of yourself. If not, why not?
3. How can the members of your group help you this week and on-going to help you to be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.

“Feed Flint”



“Feed Flint”

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A meal goes a long way for a senior living alone, a family struggling to make ends meet, or a child fearful of empty shelves at home. But for the residents of Flint who carry the effects of lead-tainted water, nutrition is critical. Feed Flint provides locally grown, chemical-free, fresh produce to residents living in and around Flint. And we're hoping that you can help us provide 10,000 meals this summer.

Feed Flint includes takeout meals, produce boxes with recipes, and home deliveries as part of our work to guide and support families in moving to sustainable abundance. The reality is that Michigan's food insecurity levels got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this summer's recovery is leaving behind those at the most risk of having to miss meals.

Flint families continue to struggle with the ongoing effects of the water crisis.

We're bringing together the resources of the Asbury Community Development Corporation. This includes Asbury Farms, the South Flint Soup Kitchen, the Asbury Community Help Center, multiple food pantries, and our Sizzling Culture Mobile Food Trailer. Our plan is to care for our neighbors when they need it most. We accept all people as they are, and our doors are always open to anyone.

Asbury Farms provides locally grown produce used to create fabulous and nutritious meals. Our seed-to-table approach is community-based. This not only helps families make it through emergencies and crises. We help move families towards sustainable abundance.

Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated abundance.

Our work is also about food and justice. Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into active citizens. And all residents can enjoy safety, good health, and a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives. This summer, help us address food insecurity and strengthen Flint's budding local food system by supporting the Feed Flint campaign. Thank you for taking the time to see what we're doing and considering how you can help.

Donate to our Feed Flint Campaign by visiting:
flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate



**SOUTH FLINT
SOUP
KITCHEN
MAY
GIVEAWAYS**



**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**

**South Flint Soup Kitchen
3410 Fenton Road
3 Blocks North of Atherton Road
Flint, MI 48507**



*hello
Spring*



ASBURY FARM FRESH

- TRY OUR WEEKLY VEGGIE BOX FOR \$10.00 -

SIGN UP FOR A FREE ASBURY FARMS ACCOUNT TODAY

AND

Receive a \$15 credit on your account for your first purchase

CREATE YOUR OWN VEGGIE BOX

Select what goes in your box from each week's harvest. Get \$5 off your next order when you fill your box with \$15 of produce.

WANT US TO DECIDE FOR YOU?

Choose Veggie Box Subscription and we will fill your order with a variety of each week's harvest. Pay when you pick up your box. **A \$15 VALUE FOR \$10.**

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

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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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 — FlintAsbury.org.

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.

ASBURY UNITED WOMEN OF FAITH

(Formerly United Methodist Women)

WANTS YOU TO HELP US

CELEBRATE SPRING!!

God brings us New Beginnings every Spring with bright sunshine and warm rain, buds on trees and healthy plants in our gardens, so we want to celebrate all this with our Friends at Asbury.

We want to thank the Asbury Congregation, our Farm Staff and the Asbury Community Development Team with a ***“Special Breakfast”*** right after Church on **Sunday, May 15, 2022 (at 12Noon)**. We are so blessed to have staff, volunteers and Friends of Asbury to help us produce and harvest and distribute vegetables and other produce from our many Hoop Houses to share with our Community again this year.

There is no set price this time, but we are asking for a

Love Offering for your meal.

We'll have door prizes, a short program and even some fun!

We have a lot to thank God for this year. This will be the first time our Church has been able to get together in person for a meal since the Pandemic began more than 2 years ago. **So please join us!!**

We do need you to let us know if you are able to attend so we'll be sure to have enough food prepared.

So please let Norma Natrass know if you are able to attend by calling her at 810-235-1116.



United
Women
in Faith

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.



Save The Date!! **Sunday, May 15, 2022 at Noon**, 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.