

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 5

June 5, 2022

Self-Love (We need more empathy)



I can't wrap my head around the latest massacre this past week at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. Nineteen young children and two adults were lost to yet another school shooting.

The shooter used AR-15-style rifles. This style of weapon is known as a "modern sporting rifle." This label was created to separate it from the original military M16 version that it was designed after. It's a popular choice for individuals contemplating shooting large numbers of people. The weapon was easily purchased a couple of weeks earlier, along with enough ammunition to supply a small army of hunters.

Page 6



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

Inside this issue:

God-Art (This is my body)



Millions, perhaps hundreds of millions, of persons pray for peace in Ukraine. Yet, peace seems elusive. The same can be said for countless other circumstances bringing pain, suffering, and death from no more mass shootings to cures for cancer to an end to COVID.

Why, Lord, do you not intervene?

Cyndi shared with me the other evening, after watching an update on the latest attacks by the Russian military on Ukraine, that she doesn't understand. She prays every day for a miracle that would bring peace. And she knows that she isn't alone.

Why, Lord, is there no peace in sight

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God-Art (This is my body)...cont from page 1

We celebrate communion on the first Sunday of each month as part of our tradition. We don't have to wait until the first Sunday of each month to celebrate communion. Nothing is lost if we celebrate communion every Sunday. And nothing is lost if we celebrate communion during the middle of the week. This is our choice.

Russia didn't have to invade Ukraine. It was Vladimir Putin's decision. There was no mandate that Salvador Ramos kill innocent children, but he chose to do so nonetheless. Likewise, there is no divine ruling that the U.S. allow the proliferation of guns to continue. We choose this pathway one election and one vote at a time.

God chose to create humanity and give us an incredible gift requiring tremendous love. God gave us the freedom of choice. But like all good gifts, there can be a downside. In the case of choice, the downside is consequence.

Sometimes I forget some of the subtleties that come from God choosing to live as a person in history. A human body, mind, and spirit born in an ordinary way. Jesus was born to a poor family, raised by persons from His village, taught by teachers who tried their best to help Him learn, and parents who weren't prepared for the consequences of pregnancy.

Jesus had a body that needed fuel for energy, ached from over-worked muscles, and felt sorrow when others suffered. Just like us, Jesus laughed, cried, and experienced anger. And just like us, His body was God-art.

And Jesus made choices and suffered consequences. The most significant was His choice to allow His enemies to end His life in one of the most inhumane methods imaginable. An object lesson with eternal consequences.

What set Jesus apart from you and me was His divinity. We read in the opening of John's Gospel that Jesus wasn't created but was always and will always be the alpha and omega, the first and the last.

One day as Jesus was walking and talking with His followers, He noticed a blind man. "What horrible thing did this man or his family do that he was born blind?" His followers asked. "Nothing," Jesus responded. And with mud made from spit and dirt, Jesus applied a treatment to the man's eyes. "Go and wash off the mud," Jesus instructed the blind man.

Sight is a complex system of light, brain, and body. And the simple act of washing your face likewise engages complex systems that allow for motion, touch, smell, and taste.

Did you know that wetting your forehead is one way to help ground your thinking? According to Psychologist Michael Breus, splashing water on your face lowers your anxiety by grabbing the attention away from your sympathetic nervous system. This act activates your parasympathetic nervous system to counteract anxiety.

Each of our bodies is a work of art created by a God proud of creation. But unfortunately, most of us don't take good care of God's handiwork, whether referring to our body or the earth we depend on for life.

Jesus told him, "Go and wash your face in the Pool of Siloam..." So the man went, washed his face, and came back seeing.

John 9:6-7

One day Jesus was with His friends for supper. He knew that it was the last time His friends would see Him alive. So Jesus left them, and us, with a lasting memory. As supper began, Jesus took bread, broke it, and offered it to His friends after blessing it. And he provided this profound metaphor, "This bread is my body.



In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom
 Sylvia Pittman
 Shirley Craig
 Richard Oram
 Chris Freeman



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

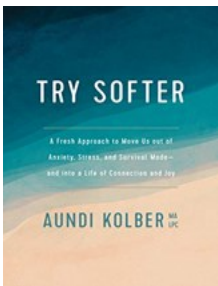
Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard Mary Nations

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
JUNE 6 -12



June 6 Mon

June 7 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm

Food/Water Distribution

June 8 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club

11am-12Noon Food Giveaway at South Flint Soup Kitchen (No appts needed)

June 9 Thu

June 10 Fri

June 11 Sat 12Noon Food Not Bombs

June 12 Sun 10:30am

New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

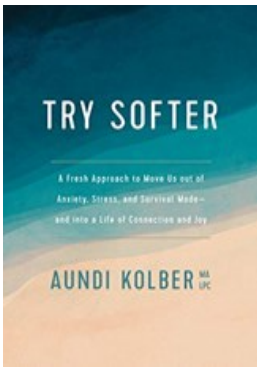
(We are live on [Facebook](#) and our newly launched [YouTube channel](#). You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).)

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.

Self-Love (We need more empathy).... *cont. from pg 1*

Christian tradition tells us that Salvador Ramos is destined for eternal punishment. But what about the persons who manufactured and sold him the killing machines? And what about the legislatures who defend easy access to guns and the lobbyist representing gun manufacturers? Also, what about persons who vote for candidates because they promise pro-gun support?

The honest truth is that we don't know. So we pray that God shows grace to ourselves and others by overlooking our transgressions and cutting us slack. And I believe that God listens, and I personally count on God's grace every day.

But grace shouldn't get us off the hook altogether. So what might motivate us collectively to force action by congress?

It's been almost three years since Bishop Frank J. Dewane reminded the assembly of Catholic Bishops of their long history of supporting changes to U.S. gun laws. There were approximately 40,000 deaths by firearms during the year that the Bishop gave his address. This number passed 45,000 the following year.

According to a small arms survey, there are approximately 120 firearms per 100 persons living in the U.S. This number is twice the number of firearms found in the country of Yemen — the next highest ownership rate for a country. There is an undeniable correlation between these numbers and gun violence. Yet debates over gun control continue with minimal progress.

The usual strategy used against gun legislation is to deflect attention away from guns toward the personal problems of the shooter. Often by suggesting, but seldom enacting, long-overdue mental health legislation. And while support for good mental health is a great idea, this isn't a solution by itself since persons with mental illness are no more dangerous than those of us without a diagnosis.

In his address, the Bishop reminded his listeners that "At the heart of this epidemic, there is a shooter. This shooter somehow, in some way, turned inwards on pain, or isolation, or illusions, that it became possible to become desensitized to others, losing all empathy."

What does it mean to "lose all empathy?"

Miles Howard writing for an NPR affiliate in Boston, notes the occasional emergence of "Proximal empathy." He writes that this is "the sort (of empathy) that one develops after they or someone close to them experiences something bad." And an influential person experiencing such an epiphany may be "enough to prevent a one-off disaster, but it's not nearly enough to sustain a just and peaceful society."

Most of us feel enough empathy to feel bad after listening to the evening news headlines. But, as a nation, we still fall short when it comes to voting for candidates who actually plan to enact changes that reflect an empathetic populace.

May was declared "mental health awareness month" in 1949 by Mental Health America. Each year providers and supporters of mental health offer numerous activities based on that year's particular theme. This year's theme is "Back to Basics?"

Like the bread that Jesus so easily broke into pieces, He knew that His body was no match for the violence that humanity can inflict on each other. Jesus knew that His body would stop functioning as life left Him. And some of His friends would watch Him die, helpless to do anything to prevent death from coming.

"As often as you eat bread, remember me," Jesus continued with His illustration of how to keep His memory alive. But, most important, Jesus wants us to know that death isn't the end.

We all have a body, and there is nothing more personal. And our brain is tightly integrated into every part of our body. A central nervous system helps us experience the world God created while taking care of necessary functions like breathing.

And then there is spirit. A mysterious glue that keeps body and mind integrated with the present and connected with God and all of creation.

The man who was blind since birth had a choice to make. Jesus applied a balm to his eyes and told him what to do next. He chose to do as Jesus instructed and was healed.

Aundi Kolber writes in *Try Softer* that "just as God can heal cancer through modern medicine, He can use tools like counseling to rewire

our brains." Medical science, doctors, therapists, and bridge builders are all incarnate examples of God-art. Persons lovingly crafted with skills and inspired to contribute to humanity.

Arguably choice seems like an option only for the privileged. Persons with access to resources and the power to decide. However, it is our collective choice to structure our communities in this manner. With each election and each vote, we choose to privilege a handful of people over the rest of us. We give away our choice to trust in their benevolence.

On the other hand, we don't choose our bodies. And, for the most part, we live with whatever consequences affect the only body we'll ever have. Sometimes out of choice, whether someone else or our own decisions. Regardless, our body is inseparable from who we are.

You can join us each Sunday online by going to the button on the homepage of our [website](#) - [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to our [YouTube channel](#). 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

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Life Group Questions & Notes:

Jesus told him, "Go and wash your face in the Pool of Siloam."... So the man went, washed his face, and came back seeing.

John 9:6-7

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

Handwritten notes area with horizontal lines.

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

- 1. Read John 9:6-7. Have you ever witnessed or experienced a miracle? In what ways are you a living miracle? What did Jesus ask the blind man to do? Why?
2. Read this week's article titled God-art. What choices are facing you about your body? In what ways are you disrespecting your body? What is motivating your choices? What choices about taking care of your body are you making? What are the likely consequences? In what ways do you treat the earth the way that you treat your body?
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
presents...

June Giveaways

Angel Closet - Saturday June 18th and 25th 10am-
Noon, APPOINTMENT REQUIRED call 810-239-3427

Food Giveaways - Wednesday June 1st and 8th,
NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED!!!

Located at 3410
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Flint, MI 48507





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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 ***

Next Tuesday is the last day for this year's push to raise awareness of the importance of good mental health. However, for us, this Sunday is the beginning of Part two of our series *Masterpiece*. For the next five weeks, we'll cover part two of Aundi Kolber's book *Try Softer*, which emphasizes taking care of our mental health.

Love the Lord your God... and love your neighbor as you love yourself...do this and you will live.

Luke 10:27-28

This week's theme is mindfulness which I'm calling "self-love" since even though they are not the same thing, being mindful and self-love are closely linked. Aundi reminds us that mindfulness is "a great entry point for treating ourselves with kindness."

Self-love falls far short of narcissist self-attention. In fact, narcissism isn't so much an indication of loving oneself too much as it indicates a lack of self-love.

Our brains are naturally wired for empathy. The same part of our brain that learns from watching others helps us feel similar emotions felt by a stranger after a tragic accident. This pathway in the brain, called the insula, sends information

may be tears welling up inside as we watch the news coming out of Uvalde.

Mindfulness helps us find a balance between the emotions we feel, whether caused by something happening to us or someone else. In this week's chapter, Aundi describes an exercise to help ground us as a way to help engage the thinking part of our brain. One suggestion is to look for beauty in the natural world. We're reminded that "When we hunt for beauty, we learn to pay attention. We keep our eyes open for goodness and for cracks of light."

Jesus was no stranger to the importance of grounding our thoughts by paying attention to nature. One way Jesus suggested we ground ourselves is bird watching. He said, "Look at the birds: they do not plant seeds, gather a harvest, and put it in barns. And yet," Jesus added, "God takes care of them!"

But there was a greater truth that this grounding pointed towards. You and I are worth much more than birds. Yet is this simple fact so difficult to believe at times? "That's because the birds don't ____." And we fill in the blanks with whatever shortcoming we believe to be true about ourselves that diminish our value.

Mindfulness focuses on a non-judgmental assessment of our feelings. Once the thinking part of our brain can focus on the present moment, we can come to an evaluation of what is helpful and what is not so beneficial.

The writer of Luke tells a story about a time when a teacher of the law tried to trap Jesus with a question about eternal life? His question was less about whether someone who shoots a child goes to eternal punishment and more about what actions are needed to get our ticket punched.

Jesus often answered questions by asking a question. So Jesus asked the lawyer, "What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?"

Since the man was an expert in the law, this was a fair question and one that he knew by heart. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, and Love your neighbor as you love yourself."

"You are right," Jesus replied; "do this, and you will live."

So what does Jesus mean when He says, "Do this, and you will live?"

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.

Providing a HOT MEAL and/or local, organic

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SATURDAYS starting around 12NOON

Asbury United Methodist Church

1653 Davison Rd, Flint (810) 235-0016

Food Not Bombs is a loose-knit group of independent collectives, sharing free vegan and vegetarian food with others. **Flint Food Not Bombs** believes that access of food among other necessities of life-should be viewed as a right, not a privilege. Yet in a nation with a military budget many times that of other nations, people continue to go hungry. This is immoral and unjust.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

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Twitter.com/flintfnb

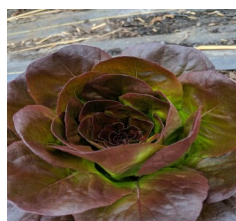
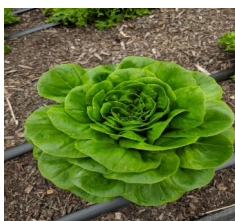
Email: flintfnb@protonmail.com

Website: foodnotbombsflint.wordpress.com

We're currently looking for volunteers so we can expand. If interested,

send us a message! Solidarity!

A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.—MLK



Elsewhere, Jesus reminds us that if we stay connected with Him, we're likely to do the right things and avoid doing the wrong things. Again, Jesus used nature to describe what happens when we stay connected.

Jesus says that "a branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine." Anyone who pays attention to plants, whether trees, bushes, or grapevines, knows this. Most plants receive water and nutrients through their roots which the branches depend on. Branches that are cut off wither and die.

Jesus concludes his lesson with, "In the same way, you cannot bear fruit unless you remain connected to me." And so, to live, we stay connected to Jesus, who, in this metaphor, is the vine that keeps us connected to God, our source of life-giving nutrients.

But there are two parts to what is required to live. Love God and love others. And scripture adds a quantifier that our love for others must be as much as we love ourselves. But if we don't practice self-love, loving others is impossible. Empathy is possible only when we love who we are.

Staying connected to Jesus Christ helps us realize that we are loved for exactly who we are, despite what we do or don't do. Divine grace comes out of this unconditional love that God has for each of us.

I honestly don't know what will happen to Salvador Ramos. He was shot and killed by an off-duty border patrol agent who responded to the emergency. Is this punishment enough? What I do know is that he inflicted great harm.

And with all due respect to the politicians who quickly claim that gun legislation wouldn't have prevented what happened. I believe that the massacre could have been prevented and this belief determines how I cast my vote even when others try to make it more difficult to do so.

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Pastor Tommy

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Miles Howard. "America's Gun Crisis Is A Crisis Of Empathy." © WBUR, October 04, 2017. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Bishop Frank J. Dewane. "Responses to the Plague of Gun Violence." © U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 11, 2019. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Kim Armstrong. " 'I Feel Your Pain' : The Neuroscience of Empathy." © Psychological Science, Dec 29, 2017. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Courtney E. Ackerman. "What is Self-Esteem? A Psychologist Explains.." © Copyright date. Retrieved from: [link](#)