

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 12

June 12, 2022

Hot Mess (Jesus wept)



Are you a positive person? For me, my attitude varies with the day. For example, one morning this week, I received a text from our farm manager Matt. He wanted to let me know about

the latest theft and vandalism incident on our farm the night before. These acts of violence feel very personal.

Since I receive similar texts on average, one per week, I'm somewhat numb to the news of violence in our neighborhood. I'm trying to remain positive while my stomach flip-flops and my anger simmers. Do we prevail by wearing our attackers

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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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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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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.



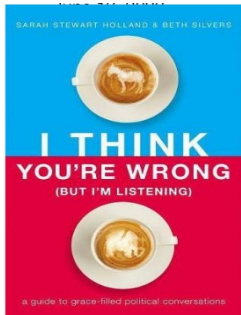
Asbury Worship Series "Masterpiece"



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

On the Wednesday after Easter, we began a new adventure into the slow but rewarding process of self-discovery assisted by author and therapist Aundi Kolber and her book *Try Softer*. In parallel to our worship series *Masterpiece*, our Book Club went deeper into the process of self-discovery.



Our journey, so far, is proving to be an exciting exploration of who we are behind our layers of protection.

We continue our exploration beginning in July, assisted by two friends with differing political views but somehow manage to stay good friends. How is this even possible in a world intentionally divided by political candidates into blue and red hats and t-shirts?

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.

Our book choice was written by two working moms from opposite ends of the political spectrum. And their hope is that we can learn that politics don't have to divide us. Instead, we can try to bring the same care and respect that we show at other times to discussions about policy.

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

Join us each Wednesday in July and find out as we read and discuss the book *I Think You're Wrong (But I'm Listening)*.

Asbury Staff

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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.

Hot Mess (Jesus wept) ... cont. from pg 1

down from their inability to stop our progress despite increasingly damaging attacks?

Do we remain positive?

I began my prayer journal that morning with an often quoted and ignored text from Paul's letter to the church in Rome. Paul reminds us that struggle builds resilience which strengthens character. But, most important, hope is never in vain.

But did Paul have to deal with senseless vandalism from within the community he was trying to help? Did Paul spend more and more resources on security that could be better utilized in helping others?

Actually, Paul dealt with much worse. So was Paul all-worship Mr. Positivity?

It's hard to be positive when life is a hot mess.

In an article published in the *Washington Post*, Allyson Chiu draws a startling conclusion. "Too much-forced positivity is not just unhelpful, they say — it's toxic." Who says that always being positive is toxic?

One source offered by Allyson is Natalie Dattilo, a clinical health psychologist with Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. Dattilo says we tend to undervalue

negative emotional experiences while overvaluing positive experiences. According to Dr. Dattilo, this tendency becomes toxic when we fall into the trap that "the best or only way to cope with a bad situation is to put a positive spin on it and not dwell on the negative."

Stephanie Preston, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, reminds us that toxic positivity is rooted in our culture. We value positivity as an attractive behavior in people. This may be caused by a belief that positivity makes us seem well adapted and more popular with the people around us.

But what about the persistent vandalism of our farm assets? Should we try to focus on the positive? Dr. Preston advises avoiding toxic positivity and concentrating on addressing the problem. Understandably, Matt is angry. And I'm not less of a pastor because I'm angry and feeling let down.

Jesus wept...

John 11:35

As a Christian, I try my best to model myself after Jesus, who didn't appear to hide His emotions. My favorite bible verse of all time and

the only verse I can consistently quote without forgetting parts, is also the shortest verse found in scripture. Jesus wept. For me, this verse is powerful because it reveals a very personal God who understands how it feels to be upset.

This verse comes from a story found in John's Gospel. In the story, the sisters of Lazarus are trying to cope with the loss of their brother. And although Jesus knew that the outcome would be joy and not sorrow, He allowed His emotions to bubble to the surface. Of course, we don't know whether Jesus was sad because of His friend's grief or upset because they projected some of their grief as anger towards Him. We do know that Jesus shed tears in the presence of witnesses.

Professor Brett Ford was the lead author of a study conducted at the University of Toronto that evaluated the effect of positivity on mental health in the face of adverse circumstances. Dr. Ford noted, "People who tend to not judge their feelings, not think about their emotions as good or bad, not try to avoid or put distance between themselves and their emotions, tend to have better mental health across the board."

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

Content for this series is based in part on? 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. Tehrene Firman. "Does Splashing Water on Your Face Really Help With Anxiety, or Is It Just Something People Do in Movies?." © WellandGood.com, October 16, 2018. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Life Group Questions & Notes:

Jesus saw her weeping, and he saw how the people with her were weeping also; his heart was touched, and he was deeply moved...Jesus wept.

John 11:33, 35 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

Handwriting lines for notes.

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

- 1. Read the story of Lazarus' death in John 11:1-44. How do you respond to grief? Which character do you most identify with in this story? Does the reaction of Jesus surprise you?
2. Read this week's article titled Hot mess. How do you handle your emotions? Do you try to hide your emotions or do your emotions play out in the public and in social media? What sort of things results in you shedding tears?
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,
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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 ***

Aundi Kolber, in *Trying Softer*, distinguishes between emotions, which refers to the sensations we feel in our bodies, and the labels we give various emotions, which she calls feelings. This subtle distinction is powerful because naming our emotions allows us to do something with them. Emotions that we consciously process are accessible to our rational brain.

Instead of burying our negative emotions, Aundi reminds us, "Emotions add texture to our lives. They are the feedback to our interactions. They are a response to our stories, physiology, and environments—those parts of our lives that make us who we are."

Peter Scazzero reminds us that to feel is to be human. And when we minimize or deny what we feel, we distort what it means to be created in the image of a very personal God. If we are unable or not allowed to express emotion, we impair our ability to love God, others, and ourselves.

I try to remember that whoever is vandalizing our farms is more damaged than the damage they're doing to us. And their cowardly actions represent the scum that sometimes accumulates around an otherwise delightful mix.

This is hardly positivity, I know. But at least I'm honest about my feelings.

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Allyson Chiu. "Time to ditch 'toxic positivity,' experts say: 'It's okay not to be okay'." © Washington Post, Aug 19, 2020. Retrieved from: [link](#).

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

Sarah Stewart Holland, along with Beth Silvers, cohosts *Pantsuit Politics* podcast, featured in the *New York Times*, the *Atlantic*, and named by Apple Podcasts as one of the Best Shows of 2021. Sarah and Beth speak frequently to universities, businesses, and civic organizations about improving political dialogue. Both attended Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky.

Sarah Stewart Holland received her Juris Doctors from American University. She began her career as a congressional staffer, campaign aide, and blogger and social media consultant. She lives in Paducah, Kentucky, where she served a term as a city commissioner and volunteers as a Court-Appointed Special Advocate for children. Beth Silvers received her Juris Doctors from the University of Kentucky. She lives in Union, Kentucky, and serves on several local boards of directors.

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

Sarah Stewart Holland and Beth A. Silvers. I Think You're Wrong (But I'm Listening): A Guide to Grace-Filled Political Conversations. Nashville: Nelson Books, 2019.

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!

Facebook.com/flintfoodnotbombs

Twitter.com/flintfub

Email: flintfub@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**

