

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 26

June 26, 2022

## Paradox (Stone of help)



Over the past two months, we've focused on ways to become more aware of ourselves. Listening to our bodies makes it possible for us to try softer. We try softer by giving ourselves enough grace to find balance in a world of competing pressures.

Trying softer means that instead of holding on tighter and pushing through our struggles, we slow down and take in the sensations felt throughout our bodies.

Trying softer means living out the idea found in Psalm 46, "Be still, and know that I am God!" And often, it means giving up controlling things we can't control. We conclude part two of our series with the subject of surrender.

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## My Bad (Your worse critic)



Last week I wrote about the importance of giving negative emotions enough space. Positivity, in this case, is highly overrated and can be toxic. But this week, I'm back on the positivity train again. That's because this week, we're not talking about something bad happening to us. Instead, this week we're focused on "My

bad" — when we do something bad.

We can often be our worst and least helpful critics.

Margarita Tartakovsky, in an article published by psychcentral.com, notes that we all have an internal critic. It's just that some inner critics are more subtle, and others are downright cruel. And our internal critics weigh in on most of our decisions.

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You may continue to wear your masks when in the building, if you feel more comfortable, but is not necessary.

**DONATE**

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According to Alyssa Mairanz, a psychotherapist based in New York City, "Those who develop harsh inner critics are raised in an environment where they are being directly or indirectly told negative things about themselves."

And inner critics can subconsciously disguise the source in a way that we operate as though their criticism is a given. This can lead to sabotaging our happiness in the choices we make, according to Mairanz, including who we choose as friends and partners.

Brené Brown differentiates between calling out bad behavior, which she calls guilt and an internal critic that claims that we are irreparably flawed. With shame, "My bad" presumes that bad behavior results from a bad individual incapable of doing good things.

Dr. Brown writes this about shame: "I define shame as the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging—something we've experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection."

Shame is neither productive nor consistent with Christian beliefs. Shame illustrates where we fail ourselves rather than an indication of factual evidence.

"Healthy guilt," on the other hand, writes Aundi Kolber in *Try Softer*, "allows us to recognize that we are loved and valuable even though we are imperfect." Love is the key. "No matter how hard we try, we can't hate or shame ourselves into change. Only love can move us toward true growth."

What does it look like to try softer with our internal critic? Recognizing that we're loved despite our imperfections is one way that we show compassion towards ourselves.

I have compassion for these people.  
Matthew 15:32

Jesus modeled compassion for us in his reaction to suffering. For example, we find a story in Matthew's gospel where a large crowd has been with Jesus for three days. Jesus recognized that they were hungry, and there was no place nearby to get food. We read that Jesus had compassion for the hungry crowds.

The origin of the Greek word translated as compassion describes a feeling one has in the pit of our stomach that takes us from a feeling to action. The original text uses a

verb to describe Jesus' reaction to the crowd. It wasn't enough to feel bad for the people. Compassion includes Jesus taking action to relieve their suffering.

In the same way, we show compassion towards ourselves when we recognize our suffering and take action that brings relief. In applying compassion towards ourselves as a way to deal with our inner critic, we first acknowledge that the message that we're flawed in some unrepairable way is a lie. While it's true that we make mistakes, sometimes repeatedly, our mistakes represent something we did wrong. Our mistakes do not define who we are.

One of my favorite songs by Christian vocalist and songwriter Lauren Daigle is *You Say*. Apparently, I'm not alone since she won a Grammy, among other music awards and recognition. While a Christian song, I often heard *You Say* playing among selections of secular songs. Her lyrics struck a chord with millions of us, with internal critics telling us that we're not enough and don't measure up.



In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom  
 Sylvia Pittman  
 Shirley Craig  
 Richard Oram  
 Chris Freeman



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE  
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

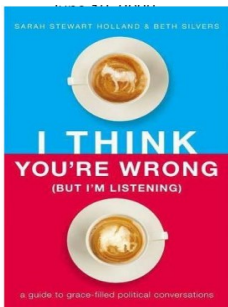
Nancy Elston      Elaine Lamoreaux  
 Norma Buzzard      Mary Nations

PASTOR BOOK CLUB NEWS

Pastor Book Club is still meeting via Zoom, but we are also gathering in the Asbury Library Conference Room at 12Noon every Wednesday, unless otherwise noted.

Please call the Church Office for more information, as things could change (810-235-0016).

July's month book series is called, "I Think You're Wrong (But I'm Listening)". A guide to grace-filled political conversations, by Sarah Stewart Holland & Beth Silvers.



Thank you and everyone continue to stay safe!

**COMING UP THIS WEEK**  
**JUNE 27 – JULY 3**

June 27	Mon	6:00pm	Worship Team
June 28	Tues	10:00am-12:30pm	Food/Water Distribution
		3:00pm	CDC Board Meeting
June 29	Wed	12Noon	Pastor Book Club
June 30	Thu		
July 1	Fri		
July 2	Sat	12Noon	Food Not Bombs
July 3	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"

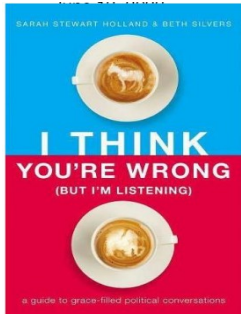


It's tempting to declare that we're beginning a new series on the first Sunday in July. It's tempting for many reasons, so why not just call our next several Sundays by a catchy title and announce a "new" topic? And I love new beginnings.

Instead, welcome to Parts three and four of a series we began the Sunday after Easter called

## 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?

read and discuss the book *I Think You're Wrong (But I'm Listening)*.

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

## Asbury Staff

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

- |                   |                       |
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| 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       |



## *Asbury Worship Series - Masterpiece ...cont from pg 4*

*Masterpiece.* The reason for not creating a more robust line of demarcation between then and now is that we're not finished.

Now that we've begun the work on ourselves that leads to better emotional and mental health, we deserve to feast on the benefits right away. Our rewards begin with taking our newly discovered truths about ourselves on the campaign trail. After all, it's summer, and COVID is finally becoming more of a bad memory than a current threat. In-person gatherings are returning so let's get together and debate the issues.

In parts three and four we continue exploring the masterpiece God is forming in us, assisted by two friends with differing political views but somehow manage to stay good friends. How is this even possible? After all, isn't the world intentionally divided into blue and red?

In our book club article, we learn that the book that parts two and three of our series is based on was written by two working moms from opposite ends of the political spectrum. And our hope is that we can learn that politics don't have to divide us. Instead, we can put what Jesus teaches us into practice in our debates about policy.

I promise that the next several weeks will be challenging. Even if for no one else other than your pastor. I'm a somewhat reluctant participant in this notion of finding agreement with the other side. I've spent most of my life competing in races for which there can be only one winner.

Nevertheless, I also long for a time when debate doesn't bring out the worst in people. So I'm all in for this next leg of our trip. And I hope you are as well.

We'll follow the outline of the book our series is based on. *I Think You're Wrong (but I'm Listening)* brings politics into the front door of the church. But not as a way to influence who you vote for. But, I hope you'll make sure you vote with the confidence that you know where you stand on the issues that matter most to you.

Our theme scripture for this next chapter comes out of John's Gospel. In chapter three we read the story of a Jewish leader named Nicodemus. The chapter begins by providing political context. Nicodemus belonged to the party of the Pharisees. And Jesus was more of an independent who understood both sides of the argument and loved even those with whom He disagreed.

Imagine that!

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](http://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.*

## Paradox (Stone of Help) .... *cont. from pg 1*

Aundi Kolber, in *Try Softer*, shares a story about making a breakthrough when she surrendered to the pain during childbirth. She writes that "This is when pain does its best work."

But surrendering seems paradoxical because giving up control feels like a threat rather than a solution. And this is one of our biggest challenges regarding our faith. We say we trust God, and then go on to prescribe what we want from God usually in great detail.

In an article in *Psychology Today*, therapist Nancy Colier points out that we surrender only after every coping strategy we know fails to offer relief. She writes that "Surrender begins here, where all other strategies end. But surrender is not a strategy; it is the profound absence of strategies."

In John's Gospel, Jesus compares Himself to a shepherd who cares for His sheep so profoundly that the sheep thrive. He says that God's purpose for living among humans was motivated by love so strong that once we're aware of its power, we live with abundance. God's promise lies at the center of what every human ultimately wants but too often fails to live into.

We gain more by giving up control. This idea is paradoxical. But what is a paradox?

A paradox is a contradictory statement of two mutually exclusive facts claiming to be true simultaneously. So, for example, God, the Creator of the universe living as a human, is paradoxical. And the gospel stories contain one paradox after another.

Few paradoxes are more confusing than the idea of surrender. Generally, we surrender after every option fails. But, Nancy Colier writes, "Surrender isn't something that our minds can accomplish." In fact, our minds resist surrender with every fiber because surrender feels like an attack on our very survival.

But surrender isn't about giving up altogether. Instead, we surrender trying to control things we don't have control over.

There is a story passed down through the generations about a time when God's people were under attack. The Philistine army was advancing towards them, and the people were afraid because they were outnumbered and outgunned.

As I read this story, I couldn't help but think about the Ukrainian people preparing to defend their country from the impending Russian invasion. I wondered if when their story is

told hundreds of years from now, will their story end in a similar way to this story from 1 Samuel? I wonder if it will be a story of heroism and faith in God ending in triumph?

I have come in order  
that you might have life  
in all its fullness.

*John 10:10*

As the Philistine army approached, the prophet Samuel called out to God for help on behalf of his people. And God responded by throwing the Philistine army into chaos.

I thought back to the earlier weeks of the war in Ukraine when Russian tanks were stalled along the roads leading toward Ukraine. I thought about the news report of the Russian military in chaos. But since then, the Russian army regrouped, and Putin showed that there was no cost too high for the appetite of his ego.

The motivation to hold onto power is always destructive. Arrogance and power are deadly combinations, as we witnessed in our nation's capital last year on January 6.

"My bad" should be an admission of guilt where we take responsibility for a mistake. It is not an admission of character flaw.

Try this exercise for dealing with your harsh inner critic. First, think about someone you're connected with and feel empathy towards. Better yet, picture your younger self.

Pay attention to the source of the sensations you feel as you picture the younger you. Now imagine this younger version of you struggling with the same issues that cause you to worry that you don't measure up. What would you say to them? What advice would you give?

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](mailto: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](#).

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.

Margarita Tartakovsky. "What to Do with a Cruel Inner Critic." © psychcentral.com, May 20, 2016. Retrieved from: [link](#).

Brené Brown. "Shame vs. Guilt." © Brené Brown, January 15, 2013. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Life Group Questions & Notes:

*The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness. I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep.*

John 10:10-11 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

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QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read what Jesus says about His role as a Good Shepherd in John 10:1-21. What does this mean for you? What does surrendering to God’s will look like for you? In what ways do you say you trust Jesus but don’t show your trust in your actions?
2. Read this week’s article titled *Paradox*. *Do you know any examples of paradoxes in your own life? In what ways does surrendering control feel like a paradox? What does it mean for you to be still? What things are you trying to control that you really can’t? What would it mean for you to surrender control?*
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](https://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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THRIFTING





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

The people were saved, according to scripture, and in recognition of God's intervention, Samuel placed a stone marker. The transliteration of the Hebrew name for this stone marker is Ebenezer — which is translated as the "stone of help." God's people surrendered their well-being into God's hands and God came to their rescue.

Surrendering, in this context, is not about giving in to evil or harmful temptations. Instead, we surrender our attempts at controlling that which is not within our power to control. And we turn to God as our deliverer and anticipate that God will intervene in ways that are ultimately just and in our mutual best interest.

When I see the faces and hear the voices of the Ukrainian people, I don't perceive any thoughts of surrendering to Vladimir Putin's will. Instead, I hear their resolve to cede control to God's will. And I see God's intervention in the world's collective response in support of Ukraine. God brought help to Ukraine through the other nations of the world, but time will tell whether the help given is sufficient.

Ultimately, we do not know what will happen. Instead, we see the massive destruction caused by the ruthless onslaught of violence. Meanwhile, our legislatures debate how to

keep killing machines out of the hands of killers. All the while dealing with the pressures put on them by powerful forces funded by huge profits disguised as cries for freedom. And we the people allowed these influences to contaminate our supreme court through our inaction.

These are hefty issues that affect every one of us. There is much to talk about. Are you willing?

Next week we begin part three of our series, *Masterpiece*. Over the next nine weeks, we take what we learned in the first half of our series and apply it to one of the most challenging situations in our nation's history. Politics historically leads to debate because policy matters. But there is a vast difference between debate to discover solutions and the divisive attack ads and speeches that overwhelm our public discourse.

There are subjects we need to discuss, decisions to weigh against our values and votes to cast. I pray that you will be a part of the conversation.

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Pastor Tommy

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Nancy Colier. "When It's Time to Let Go of Control and Surrender." © Psychology Today, May 4, 2016. 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](http://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.

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**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**

