

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 2 Issue 21

*August 21, 2022*

## Figs (Love and manure)



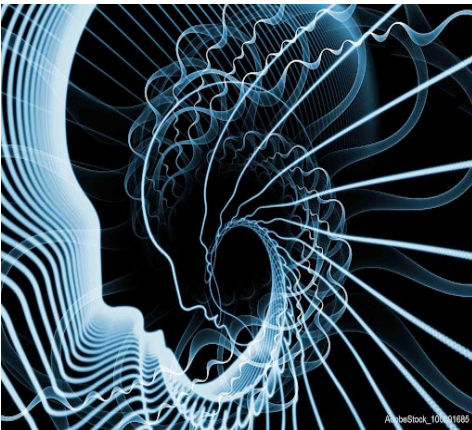
What is your take on recycling? Do you put out a bin each week labeled so that the waste removal crews know to put the contents into the "to be recycled" truck?

Some things recycle better than others. Styrofoam, for example, has very little use after the product it protects during shipment arrives and is unpacked. Scraps from fruits, vegetables, and other plants, on the other hand, are natural fertilizers. They break down quickly and become fertile soil. Talk about recycling.

Whether you compost, recycle, or just generate a lot of waste, we all need nutrients to stay healthy. Add in air, water, and plenty of love, and we have a good combination for yielding fruit.

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## And (Living with discomfort)



Discomfort is one of those words that requires a scale to explain. In particular, there is a point where discomfort and pain intersect. But it's essential to be discriminant in using these terms and recognize that they are both very personal.

Doctors and healthcare professionals try hard to help us communicate using a common scale for pain so they can better prescribe a course of action that offers relief. Nevertheless, I can't know for sure if you describe your discomfort as a "five" that you're feeling the same level of discomfort as me when I use the same number.

Nevertheless, since communication our level of discomfort is so personal, we are in control, to a large

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



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extent, of what gets written on the prescription pad to help us deal with our pain.

I'm tired of using the word "epidemic", but what else do you call it? Overdoses in Michigan are ten times higher than they were in 2000. And overdoses from opioids took the lives of nearly 47,000 people in the U.S. annually through 2018. The data is still being analyzed, but experts anticipate that this number has doubled since the COVID pandemic began.

In their book, *I Think You're Wrong (But I'm Listening)*, Sarah Stewart Holland and Beth Silvers write, "The trouble with opioids is that they are both life-giving and life-taking at the same time." An opioid can be a drug prescribed for a patient to ease physical pain. And a drug known to be dangerous to our wellbeing, heroin, is also an opioid.

Opioids are an example of a paradox. Painkillers can be life-saving for many patients, but all opioids can take a life when abused. Beth and Sarah note that "27 percent of opiate abusers get the drugs by prescription, and 49 percent get them from friends and family." But too often, opioid abuse begins with a prescription to ease suffering.

Most, if not all, health insurance plans willingly pay for opioids while limiting access to physical therapy. And insurance coverage for non-medical pain management techniques is rare. So the alternatives for managing pain are limited.

**This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.**  
**1 Corinthians 2:25**

My choice of "And" as a title for this week's message is a recognition of paradox. A paradox is a situation where two things are valid at the same time that we ordinarily would choose "Or" as the proper connecting word. With a paradox, either this is true, or that is true becomes this is true, and that is true.

John's Gospel begins with just such a paradox. Jesus is divine, and Jesus is human. This statement defies the traditional experience that humans cannot be divine. Similarly, God is Spirit and invisible, concrete and visible. Our belief that God's essence is three in one may be life's ultimate paradox.

The concreteness and directly relevant life and teachings of Jesus Christ resonate with our humanity. We know that Christ gave His life out of love so powerful that its intensity seems beyond reach. We identify His finiteness and take comfort in His infiniteness.

God represents the power it takes to create everything. A source of energy that boggles the mind. An infinite power that is incomprehensible.

And the fluidity of the Holy Spirit is both comforting and frightening at the same time. A paradox in its own right, God's Spirit is everywhere at once. In the beginning, the Holy Spirit was the arbiter of God's creative power. And yet the Spirit is as personal as our very breath that allows life to continue.

God is a paradox beyond our abilities to grasp, leaving us in a perpetual state of discomfort. Yet God asks us to rely on divine grace as the only reliable hope. And too many of us find this commitment to be too much. So we turn elsewhere to ease our discomfort and our pain.



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

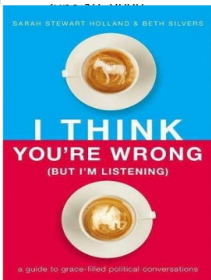
PASTOR BOOK CLUB NEWS

➔ BOOK CLUB WILL RESUME ON  
 WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31st,

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).

This month's 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  
 AUGUST 22 –AUGUST 28**

- Aug 22 Mon
- Aug 23 Tues 10:00am-12:30pm  
Food/Water Distribution
- Aug 24 Wed **No Book Club due to Pastor on Vacation**  
Angel Closet by appointments only at South Flint Soup Kitchen
- Aug 25 Thu
- Aug 26 Fri
- Aug 27 Sat 12Noon Flint Food Not Bombs
- Aug 28 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"

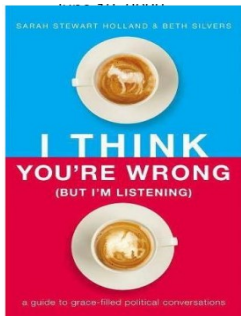


It's tempting to declare that we're beginning a new series on the first Sunday in July. It's tempting for many reasons, so why not just call our next several Sundays by a catchy title and announce a "new" topic? And I love new beginnings.

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?

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)*.

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.

## 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
- Katelin Maylum                  Sr Prog Mgr Local Foods
- South Flint Soup Kitchen

## Leadership in Worship & Service

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

## 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.*

One day Jesus was telling stories to a crowd.

"A man planted a fig tree in his garden and came, again and again, to see if there was any fruit on it," Jesus began, "but time after time, no figs!" the man was always disappointed and frustrated, so finally, he said to his gardener, "I've waited three years, and there hasn't been a single fig! Cut it down. It's just taking up space in the garden."

Can you identify with the man's frustration? You plant an apple tree or raspberries that you paid good money for. But time after time, you check on its progress with little sign that fruit is coming. You could almost taste the apples the day you found the tree at the local nursery.

Jesus continued, "The gardener answered his boss pleading on the side of keeping the tree. "Give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I'll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer."

Wait! This is feeling sort of personal. I wonder how many times someone has stood up for me that way? Have you ever needed a second chance?

And the gardener adds this final point of assurance to his boss. "If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can cut it down."

Bosses like to know that there is a limit. But on the other hand, the gardener may find herself pleading on the fig tree's behalf again. Meanwhile, love and manure are the best paths forward.

But what about the fertilizer?

Professor Cory Driver writes in a reflection on Jeremiah's call to prophesy that "I believe the tasks for which God called Jeremiah and for which God calls us as well are the work of a master gardener who is deeply in love with creation and expects humans to produce good fruit" (Jeremiah 1:4-10).

Driver shares a story about growing tomatoes in the Arava Desert in southeast Israel. He shares that each tomato requires around 20 cube centimeters of organic fertilizer. And each season brings the ripping up and composting of the plants after their season is over to make fertilizer for the next season of tomato plants.

Candace Simpson writes in her book *Who Can We Be Together?* that "It's not easy to build and sustain communities, especially when there are forces that drain us, exhaust us, and even push us to act uncharacteristically. And yet, we are called to act on the most ethical principles of our faith so we can witness the kin-do of God on earth."

But working together requires a functioning connection between us. And we share the gifts and graces given freely by a God who loves us. In her commentary on the Parable of the Fig Tree, Simpson asks, "How do you know when to pursue a relationship and when to distance yourself from it?"

In answering this question, the author challenges us to consider the context of the communities we serve compared to the community hearing this parable when told by Jesus. Who holds political, economic, and social power in our community? In other words

who decides whether the fig tree is given more time to produce?

How do the religious leaders fit into the social order in our community? What role should the church play? Who are the fig trees in our community? Are we willing to argue for more time and to ensure adequate resources are available to the oppressed?

One of the decisions facing our city is how much longer water distribution should continue. The Flint City Council approved a portion of the funding from the American Rescue Plan Act to allow water and food distribution to continue at the three community help centers through June of next year. But, is one more year enough time?

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website's](#) homepage - [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](#).

Pastor Tommy

Content for this series is based in part on: Candace Simpson. *Who Can We Be Together? A Biblical Exploration of Luke 13*. New York: United Methodist Women, 2022..

Prof Cory Driver. "Journeying with God." *The Upper Room Disciplines 2022*. © Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2021.

Since God made all that there is, God's creative energies underwrite the various substances that ease pain. From the poppies harvested to create natural opioids and their laboratory cousins, God's creative power makes opioids, alcohol, tobacco, and other substances we turn to ease our discomfort possible.

Opioids affect how we feel pain offering relief. What a wonderful creation for persons suffering from chronic pain. However, this same benefit leads an increasing number of persons toward an early grave, wrecking lives and relationships.

Sarah and Beth remind us that "We don't like that there is no one person or group to blame for the problem." However, "politics is not a collision of good and evil; it's a painstaking analysis of valid, competing priorities. Whether we are discussing policy goals or philosophical ideas, let's allow space for the ways in which this difficult issue can seem to point to contradictory and competing truths."

Not all discomfort is bad. Ask anyone training for the CRIM. But pain is usually a sign of a problem to be acknowledged, researched, and a solution put into motion. It is important to recognize the difference.

As we conclude our *Masterpiece* series it is my prayer that each of us recognize that we are created by a loving God as a work of beautiful art. And that we strive to work together so that each of us has the opportunity to share God's art for the good of all.

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Pastor Tommy

Content for this series is based in part on: 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.

"About the Epidemic." © State of Michigan Website, 2022. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Life Group Questions & Notes:

Give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I'll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer. If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can cut it down."

Luke 13:6-8 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

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QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read the Parable of the Fig Tree found in Luke 13:6-8. Which character in this story best fits you and your life experiences? Have you ever been the fig tree? Or the gardener? Or the owner? Share your experiences and reflection.
2. Read this week's article titled Figs? Do you recycle? Why or why not? Do you have plants or trees that you care for? Do any of your plants or trees bear fruit? Have you ever found yourself frustrated and ready to give up on your plants or tree? Tell the others in your group about your experiences.
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

## AUGUST FOOD GIVEAWAYS AND ANGEL CLOSET DATES

FOOD GIVEAWAYS - AUGUST 3RD & 31ST - NO  
APPOINTMENT NEEDED, 11AM-NOON

ANGEL CLOSET - AUGUST 10TH & 24TH -  
APPOINTMENT REQUIRED

SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN  
3410 FENTON ROAD  
3 BLOCKS NORTH OF ATHERTON ROAD  
FLINT, MI 48507  
810-239-3427

[WWW.MIGHTYCAUSE.COM/FEEDFLINT](http://WWW.MIGHTYCAUSE.COM/FEEDFLINT)

FOOD IS A HUMAN RIGHT AND IS AN IMMEDIATE AND  
TANGIBLE WAY TO HELP SOMEONE. EVERY  
DONATION OF FOOD CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!!





**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 \***

*Sunday, August 21, 2022*

**WELCOME EVERYONE TO OUR  
UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH SUNDAY SERVICE!!**



*Our Asbury United Women in Faith President, Michele Weston, will share some changes in the former United Methodist Women and lessons about Figs and Manure from the Book of Luke, in Chapter 13!!*

*Please join us after Worship in our Café area  
for some coffee and Fig Newtons!*

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  
PRODUCE weekly.**

**SATURDAYS starting around 12NOON**

**Asbury United Methodist Church**

**1653 Davison Rd, Flint (810) 235-0016**

**Flint 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**



Summer is getting into full swing at the farm!!!

Coming soon, the farm's new twist on a  
CSA Food Box!!!!

Bring home only the veggies you love!

First Pick-Up Date: Saturday, July 16th, 11am-1pm and until further notice. We will post if anything changes.



Want more information??  
Email: [kelly.jewett@outlook.com](mailto:kelly.jewett@outlook.com)

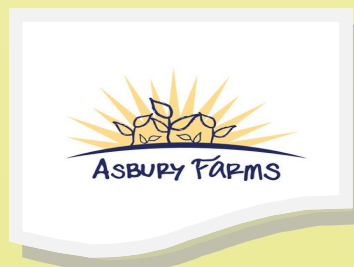


We were stoked to be kicking off our very first Asbury Farms Sliding Scale Food Box Program last week! Get the most local, organic, delicious produce!! Grown on the East Side!

Pick what veggies you want, how much you want and pay what you can between \$12.00 — \$24.00.

Every Saturday from 11:00am to 1:00pm  
1601 Jane Ave Flint MI

Look for the big banner that says "SALE" ...





What would you do if you could do one project to improve our community that benefits all of us? Would your project take care of blight by removing abandoned and dilapidated buildings and houses? Would you enhance or eliminate streets where all of the homes are gone? Perhaps you would plant flowers on every street corner.



What resources would your project require? For example, would you need special equipment or knowledge? How many people will need to work together, so your project is possible?

We can do a lot together. But it takes cooperation and resources. And some of our dreams may require a miracle. But building a community of abundance and opportunity requires that we work together.

We have a dream for community here at Asbury, And we strive to connect our neighbors to God, to each other, to our shared earth and to each person's created purpose.

Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into citizens who contribute to building and maintaining a vibrant neighborhood, and all residents are able to enjoy safety, good health, a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives.

If your vision for our community is captured in this ambitious statement we hope that we can find a way to work together for our common good.

Our new series takes us through September. In *Together* we'll read parables told by Jesus in Luke chapter 13. We begin our series on August 21 with the Parable of the Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9). And we ask the question, what does this story tell us about growing together?

After all, we're at the peak of harvesting at Asbury Farms. How did our farm team manage to grow so much?

Over the next few weeks, we'll explore the parables in Luke 13, looking for clues and inspiration that help us discover, plan, and accomplish great things together.

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