ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER



Friends (Working with Kingdom partners)

If Jesus entered Flint in a parade today every church in town would be there to cheer His entry. We are not the only faith community in the Kingdom who hopes that more persons choose to worship with us. God is equipping and resourcing many faith communities to be at work multiplying the Kingdom of God. How can we be a better partner to others with the same mission?



Sylvia's home church is Fairhaven Seventh Day Adventist Church on Flint's north side. Asbury, along with a local Mosque, a local Synagogue and other Christian churches representing different views of God and different Christian denominations were Christian denominations were recognized during their Saturday worship service for our work in social justice. The representatives from the various faith communities were given a beautiful momental of the celebration that they dedicated to the pursuit of religious liberty. Certainly, this act of reaching out is a good illustration of one way to be a better partner in multiplying God's kingdom.

Cyndi and I attended their worship service which consisted of several rituals that seemed quite familiar with traditional rituals that we have both experienced in faith communities that we have been a part of. I felt like I was part of a much larger movement that was bringing together people who see God differently than I do. Instead of threatening it felt comforting. Instead of challenging my own beliefs I felt like my beliefs were being affirmed. Not because others were agreeing with me but because we all believed that divine justice would prevail even in our time.

Jesus entered a diverse city on His way into Jerusalem. Although the prominent beliefs of the Holy City was Judaism, the city was occupied by Roman authorities and citizens who shared many of the ideas that were prominent when the Greek Empire was in power. The language of the common people, Aramaic, was a blend of Hebrew and other Middle Eastern languages. Judaism had travelled to numerous other places where local customs, language and rituals had enriched the held beliefs of the masses. The Temple only represented the religion of Jesus' ancestors in its shared history and not as much in the specifics. The religious leaders then, like the religious leaders today, did not agree on the specifics.

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Volume 19 Issue 21 April 21, 2019

Special points of interest:

HAVEA
WONDERFUL
EASTER
SUNDAY!



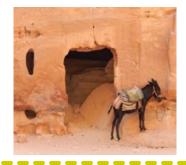
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Generous—Dusty III (Believing God's Abundance)

Easter is the ultimate conclusion to what it means to be generous. God gave His only Son that w can live but God didn't stop there. God then resurrected Jesus Christ and gave Him power over death to share with all of His followers. We are the adopted sisters and brothers of Jesus. And we should naturally be generous ourselves particularly

given that we realize as Christ followers that all we have is a gift from God. It is not ours to bury and save for the afterlife. It is ours to



share with other and God promises that if we do so we will never be lacking.

The story of Dusty continues with Dusty III premiering on Easter Sunday. In the original musical titled *Dusty seeking his destiny*, we told the story of Mary's donkey that she rode on to Bethlehem while pregnant with the Christ child.

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Generous-Dusty III (Believing God's Abundance)...cont. from page 1

Dusty II premiered on Palm Sunday to bring the story of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem from the vantage point of the donkey Jesus road into the city. Now Jesus is gone. At least this is what the authorities are hoping for and His followers fear. But Dusty isn't convinced. Without the human weakness of believing only what he sees Dusty is there, at least in our telling of this story, but isn't able to tell his new friends the good news. They have to see it for themselves.

Three days after Jesus was executed and His body placed in a tomb, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb to see for herself that Jesus' body was no longer there. Mary understandably cried and wondered who could have done such a horrible thing as to steal a dead body. Perhaps it was ordered by the Chief Priest who turned

Friends... cont. from page 1

But Jesus entered Jerusalem with a unique insight that had never been present in the flesh before. His actions would make history in a way that no individual had ever made history. And every recorded word that Jesus spoke would be translated, studied and argued over for centuries to come as would each action that He took. In particular, Jesus choice of transportation has been a part of preached messages shared with faith communities in every part of the world. Why a donkey? Why was a specific donkey chosen?

Here at Asbury we never grow tired of hearing God's Word through fresh perspectives. Scripture only offers us what we have translated into whatever version of Bible that we read. But God created us with imagination and God offers us the Spirit of truth that challenges us to explore

over Jesus to the Roman authorities insisting that He be executed. Perhaps it was Roman soldiers ordered to do away with this troublemaker once and for all. Mary's tears is our tears when we believe that we could be wrong that God is truly with us.

The presence of angels must have startled Mary, at least to a point, although her belief that Jesus was who He said He was surely prepared her for being in the presence of the divine.

Who is it that you are looking for?

John 20:15a

But Mary's expectations fell short of God's intentions for the world. So Mary cried in her feelings of scarcity. For Mary on that first Easter morning, God was apparently unwilling to save the One whom Mary had trusted to be the Messiah. And Mary wept for herself and for all of us when we feel as though even our restrained expectations were simply too much for God to deliver.

When Jesus appears to Mary, at first she does not recognize Him. Mary mistakes Jesus for a gardener. Someone with limited power and authority. Mary makes the same mistake that we all make when we come to accept that scarcity is God's intended outcome for our lives. We hold onto a worldview that is limited by what can be accomplished by people like us or even by people we perceive to hold power over us.

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in creative ways these ancient words that we will not only be inspired afresh, but we will learn new insights about God and God's creation.

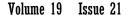
Our Christmas Eve musical retold the Christmas Story from the vantage point that the donkey that Mary rode on to Bethlehem was chosen specifically for this divine appointment. While there is little in scripture to supports our choice of dialogue we were careful only to interpret what might have been rather than argue what must have been. Most of all, we heard the greatest story ever told in a new way and God's Spirit moved among us. And we all moved a little closer to the God who lives with us.

As we recall the events that lead up to and celebrate the resurrection of Jesus we will "dust off" (pun intended) our script and have a cameo appearance by none other than Dusty

Himself. Only this time, it is Jesus who is riding Dusty into the Holy City of Jerusalem. Jesus knows Dustys whereabouts and sends disciples to find him. The last time Jesus rode on Dusty's back He was in Mary's womb. Once again Dusty will be a metaphor of a humble kingship based entirely on love as Jesus rides on a beast of burden rather than ride into the city on a beast of battle.

"Teacher", they said, "command your disciples to be quiet!" Jesus answered, "I tell you that if they keep quiet, the stones themselves will start shouting."

Luke 19:39b-40



Friends..cont. from page 2

Yet there is a battle raging. The enemy has dreaded this day but has prepared many hearts to fight in opposition to divine truth. The enemy has cleverly infiltrated the inner circle of Jesus even as it has planted its darkness within the very walls of the Holy Temple. This battle scene should sound familiar to you for this battle continues to be waged today. The enemy only retreats to appear at another opportune time (Luke 4:13).

Whenever the enemy can focus our attention on fixing and fighting each other and questioning each other's motives rather than joining together to multiply the Kingdom of God, disharmony spreads rather than unity. When Jesus chooses to ride a donkey He enters as a servant leader. Jesus did not come to condemn the world but to save us. But the subtly of His choice of entry should not get lost in the pageantry that we are accustomed to with leaders who look to raise attention fo themselves rather than pointing us to God as the source of their lives and power.

As Jesus enters the Holy City the crowds cheer His entry. There is something about this humble servant that feels right and familiar. Jesus does not enter in a chariot of war and His followers are not dressed to do battle with the Roman soldiers. This is not a show of violent power.

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In Our Prayers

Curtis Young Rachel Bastine Norma Buzzard Virginia Bigger Barbara McIvor

Christopher Lewis Sarah Tanner Elizabeth Wright Judy Tanner Mary Lyons Austin & Mary Suffle Merle Supernaw

Shirley Craig

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Sharon George Elaine Lamoreaux Mary Nations

Mary Russell

Generous-Dusty III...cont. from page 2

But our expectations are limited to the likes of an empire based on violence and the machinery of war. Power that can kill our bodies and take away all that we have. But power that falls short when it comes to abundance for all.

And Mary comes face to face with a power that is beyond any power that she can imagine. She has seen what people in power can do when she saw Jesus hanging on a cross. Perhaps this image of Jesus' painful death all but erased her memories of Jesus' power to heal. Even His power to restore life. Perhaps the image of death cast such a dark

The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of abundance and the Light that eradicates the shadows and illuminates injustice.

shadow over Mary's images of life that she could not recognize the face of the One whom she had come to love and to follow. Mary is you and I. We allow the image of death to mute the images of life that God has shown us since we first believed.

Jesus begins their post Resurrection conversation with a powerful question. A question that Jesus asks us over and over again when we look at the world and see the machinery of violence everywhere. Whether it be as visible as the tables of moneychangers who exploit our lacking or as obscure as the economic systems that keep us impoverished and add to the wealth of the few, a dark shadow is cast over our field of vision. And this dark shadow can keep us from

recognizing the One whom we confessed to be our Lord and Savior even when He is standing right in front of us.

Easter is a great time to celebrate that God always delivers and God's generosity endures even in the shadows of people and systems that take life away rather than give life. The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of abundance and the Light that eradicates the shadows and illuminates injustice. During this season of preparation that brought us to the celebration of the Resurrection we turned our attention to multiplication. Double-digit multiplication which happens when an entire community faithfully follows Jesus.

When Jesus says her name Mary recognizes Him. "Who is it that you are looking for?" Can you hear Jesus calling your name? Will you give with a spirit of abundance, your presence, gifts, service, prayers and testimony? Will you risk going without trusting that God will provide for your needs? Will you respond to God's generosity with a generous and giving spirit?

Pastor Tommy

Dusty Seeking His Destiny, Dusty II - the Crossroads of Destiny and Legacy, and Dusty III -Journey to the Cross, were written by Terrance Williams, Sylvia Pittman and Rev Dr Tommy McDoniel. Used with permission.

Asbury Worship Series Multiply Be Fruitful and Multiply

We move from our February worship series, Love does, into the Season of Lent. A time when we prepare for our Easter celebration. The Season of Lent is generally a time of reflection. Winter will soon come to an end. The Asbury Farm team is busy germinating

transplants in anticipation of longer and warmer days. The Spring flowers will soon emerge from overwintering as bulbs. We associate the Season of Spring with new birth when creation seems to *Multiply*.

Jesus was a *Multiplier*. He multiplied in his "doing". Jesus equipped His followers to do the same. And then Jesus sent them out to tell others and to multiply the Kingdom

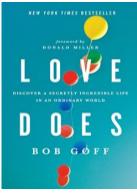
of God. Jesus often used metaphors in His teaching that are found in the multiplication of creation.

> I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit.

> > Page 5

Book Club News

Our next book for discussion at our weekly Book Club is *Love Does* by Bob Goff. This book is an easy read and a great joy that is hard to put down. Bob's view of life comes through the pages and his literary skills allow his readers to feel a part of the action. And a part of the life lessons.



See Pastor Tommy, contact the office, or just show up for Book Club to receive a copy. A donation of \$10 is encouraged for each book and we appreciate any help with purchasing books for those unable to pay for

one. Please refrain from taking a copy if you don't intend to read and discuss the book with us. Copies are readily available through Amazon and other sellers.

Bob writes that he keeps his office on Tom Sawyer Island at Disney World. Sporting a season pass he spends time in a place where many people who visit Disney World don't bother. One travel guide listed Tom Sawyer Island as an oasis within the madness of long lines, crowds and the hot sun. But our writer uses this getaway as a metaphor for missing out.

Tom Sawyer Island is no amusement ride. You bring your imagination to the attraction. And apparently it is one of those attractions that most visitors to Disney World leave on their "if I get around to it" list and they are fresh out of "round tuits" and pass — and miss out on an adventure. "Tom Sawyer Island is like most people's lives, I think: they never get around to crossing over to it" writes Bob Goff.

In his assessment of "people" the writer brings the words and stories of Jesus into his analysis as well as his own journey that began with a couple of believers who seemed to live out their faith to a relatively unimpressive high school student. While Jesus told parables and stories to illustrate truth Jesus also spoke plainly about a lot of very important topics. For one, Jesus made

it clear to the people around Him that it isn't enough to just look like you love God. Instead, Jesus pointed out that the way to tell how much we love God is by how well we love people.

Let's face it. People can be hard to love at times. But if we truly believe that God created us and wants what is best for us, this makes God rather easy to love. And I suspect a lot of people — most people stop there. They love God but not so much God's people. And let's face it, church people can be hard to love. But this isn't the point.

Perhaps this is one of the challenges for those who don't believe that God lived among people as Jesus Christ. They may even like Jesus but they don't care much for what Jesus told them they needed to do. In one of the stories Jesus tells a young man with a lot of belongings that he needed to get rid of his stuff. It must have been getting in the way of the young man loving others. He went away sad we read. Most of us go away sad at the thought of giving something up.

Bob takes the Gospel seriously by living whimsically. A contradiction? Not really. We can never quite know what God is up to so even our best laid plans may get interrupted by a God request. Are we willing to drop everything, or sell everything, or just change our mind about what we plan to do tomorrow? This is how love does.

Since God is insistent that we love one another, this state of feelings toward another person we call "love" must move from a noun to a verb. We do because we love. We go because we love. We respond because we love. This all looks quite whimsical to the world outside the Kingdom of God. But this is how love does.

Leadership in Worship & Service

Welcome Team Tony, Mirium
Ushers Anthony, Jim
Production Team Mark & Jonathon
Children Patrice & Mirium
Worship Leaders Cyndi
Café Christine & Norma

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor
Connie Portillo Office Secretary
Mark Vorenkamp Children & Youth

Sylvia Pittman W
Jim Craig L
Kevin Croom F
Israel Unger B

Worship Arts Leadership Chair Farm to Table Business Operations

Asbury Café

Plan to meet outside the sanctuary each Sunday before worship for coffee, tea, snacks, conversation and so on. The music will start when it is time to wrap up and head in for worship.

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Asbury Worship Series- Be Fruitful and Multiply ... Cont. from page 4

In John chapter 15, Jesus says "I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will bear much fruit" (John 15:5). Within each seed exists an entire field. An entire orchard. Jesus teaches us to think of multiplying Himself through us into others.

This Seasons of Lent we will prepare for our Easter celebration by reading and studying a few of Jesus' teachings on farming. Our theme scripture begins with Jesus as the vine and each of us branches. We will work along with the Asbury Farm team in sowing seeds that will produce the nutrition that we need to live. And perhaps we will find that we are all farmers who follow Christ. For each of us is an orchard that produces fruit which results in still more fruit.

Join us each Sunday. Easter is right around the corner and our Empowerment Arts team is working on a special presentation for Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. More to come. Let's Multiply the Kingdom together. Let's sow seeds of love together. And we will become a movement that continues to multiply and to flourish.

Pastor Tommy

- Coming up this week -

Apr 22 Mon 5pm Youth Choir

6pm Worship Design 7pm Flint Jubilee

Apr 23 Tues 10am-2pm Water Distribution

7pm Community Gospel Choir

Apr 24 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club

6pm Beginners Bible Study

Youth Group 6pm

4:30-6pm Gaming as Education Apr 25 Thu

> 6pm Worship Band Practice

Apr 26 Fri 10am-2pm Asbury Cafe Open

> 6:00pm Asbury Youth Group

Apr 27 Sat 10am-12N Japanese Jiu Jitsi

Apr 28 Sun 8am-10am Japanese Jiu Jitsi

Apr 28 SUNDAY

9:30am Café Opens 10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Last Week for Worship Attendance 41 Offering \$ 724

Book Club News.. Cont from page 4

Author Donald Miller, writes this about his friend and colleague, "Bob Goff loves people with a force that is natural, and by natural I mean like nature, like a waterfall or wind or waves on the ocean. He loves effortlessly, as though love packs annually in snow on a mountain, melting and rushing through him in an infinite loop. There's no explanation for a man who can love this well save God. I think Bob Goff knows God, and I think God's love flows through him."

The review on Amazon writes that "When Love Does life gets interesting. Each day turns into a hilarious, whimsical, meaningful chance that makes faith simple and real. Each chapter is a story that forms a book, a life. And this is one life you don't want to miss. Light and fun, unique and profound, the lessons drawn from Bob's life and attitude just might inspire you to be secretly incredible, too."

Jason Russell, Co-founder of Invisible Children writes "If all people loved the way Bob Goff loves all people, the world would change overnight. In this book, he reminds us of the truest virtue the kingdom calls us to practice: Love Does. It's active. The Jesus we serve is surprising and subversive. Bob knows this because he himself is both paradoxically wise as a wizard and as joyfilled as a toddler."

We encourage you to come to our Wednesday gatherings. Our small group hopes to widen our circle and so we hope that you will join in on our discussion. We meet each Wednesday at Noon. Come join us for a light lunch, fellowship and discussion. Our food selections have been fantastic and we always have plenty to share. And we are always on the lookout for our next book, video lesson or topic. Your participation and suggestions are greatly appreciated.

Pastor Tommy

* Goff, Bob. Love Does: Discover a Secretly Incredible Life in an Ordinary World. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2012.

CELEBRATE SPRING WITH US!

The United Methodist Women Church invite you to join the

of Asbury United Methodist Asbury Congregation in

kicking off Spring and getting the Asbury Farm planted for this season.

Saturday, May 11, 2019 from 11:30AM ~ 1:00P

Special menu prepared by our own Chef Kevin!

Vegetarian Lasagna - Garlic Bread

Asbury Fresh Garden Salad - Light Homemade Desserts

Hot and Cold Drinks

Program includes a special Testimony Speaker - Door Prizes and Fun! Price is only \$7.00 (\$4.00 for children 4-8 and 3 and under are free)

Reservations must be made in advance by calling <u>Norma Nattrass at 810-235-1116 before</u> <u>Tuesday, May 7, 2019</u>, in the Asbury Fellowship Hall.



Asbury Farm to Table



While turning blight into beautiful and productive landscape is good on its own, transforming a food desert into abundance is life giving. But Asbury wants to make sure that produce is available on the tables of our residents. Our culinary arts and nutritional education programs offer residents the know how just as our farms offers nature's bounty. In addition, the Asbury Café is a culinary experience accessible to our neighbors and anyone with an appetite. Our "pay what you can" approach means that no one is turned away. Those who can help either on the farm or in the café are offered special MyFlintStones tokens that can be used either in the Asbury Café or in exchange for produce to prepare at home.

We proudly accept MyFlintStones

The Asbury Café is open Fridays 10am to 2pm & Sundays 10 am to 12 Noon



ASBURY CAFÉ MENU

Open Fridays 10am to 2pm

Pay what you can

DELI SUBS

Lettuce, onions, tomato plus choice of ham, turkey or beef

GARDEN SALAD

Local grown greens & vegetables. Ham, turkey or beef upon request

MUFFINS

Chef Kevin's special recipe with fruit, love and other delights baked in.

STIR FRY

Local grown garden vegetables sautéed with love and herbs

WRAPS

Lettuce, onions, tomato plus choice of ham, turkey or beef

SMOOTHIE

Assorted flavors of the day

COFFEE

Regular or decaf

Volume 19 Issue 21

Life Group Questions & Notes

Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. "Woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who is it that you are looking for?"

John 20:11-15 GNT

NOTES FROM WORSHIP		

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

- 1. Read John 20:11-15. What images come to mind? In what ways does this text appeal to you? Where do you see yourself in this text?
- 2. Why do you suppose that Mary did not recognize Jesus? What were Mary's expectations and how were they not met at first? Have you had similar experiences where you expected something different and it took a while before you realized that something better had taken place? What did you learn from your experience? What did you learn from this text?
- 3. How can the members of your group help you this week and on-going to help you remove obstacles that stand in the way of your witness?

Welcome to the Asbury Community

1653 Davison Rd Flint, MI 48506

Phone: 810-235-0016

Fax: 810-235-0016 (call first when faxing) E-mail: FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com CircuitRider@FlintAsbury.org NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
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PERMIT #151



Neighborhood Connection



We envision a community in love with God, each other, and our neighbors evidenced by the transformation of ourselves and our neighborhood. We are a center for worship & spiritual growth, a center for connections and a center for health & wellness.

Our goal 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.

We believe that such an ambitious goal can never be attained without God's grace and abundance and Christ calls each of us to be disciples willing to share our witness through words and acts.

Friends..Working with Kingdom partners cont. from page 3

Yet the religious leaders ask Jesus to tell the crowds to be silent. This is the voice of the enemy disguised as authority. The voice of the enemy can be recognized because its goal is to silence the voices of a suffering people.

But Jesus knows that their voices cannot be silenced. Jesus remembers how God had redeemed His ancestors from slavery in Egypt because God heard their sighs when they were too beaten down to cry out. "I tell you that if they keep quiet, the stones themselves will start shouting" Jesus responds to the leader's call for silence. Creation does not keep silent even in the face of oppressive force. All of creation conspires to restore justice to the land and its people.

Meanwhile, the enemy had been hard at work on one of Jesus' closest allies. Deceit seldom happens in a loud, visible response. Deceit begins with subtle justification. We look backwards knowing the outcome lead by writers who likewise also knew the outcome when we evaluate the character of Judas. We don't know what Judas' mother knew, or what his classmates knew. We don't know if he was introverted or extroverted. We don't know if he was abused, if he was a bully or if he was bullied. We don't try to justify his actions and scripture allows us to simply dismiss them as his fate.

But we don't have to. We can spend a little time with Judas. Particularly, if we are willing to see ourselves in his reflection.

Ouch, I touched a tender spot. What if Judas is not simply an antagonist in a story that needed one? Someone had to turn Jesus into the authorities in order for the story to play out as it did. Why not Judas? Why not you?

This is the problem with Judas. He is a more extreme version than Thomas whose only flaw was doubt. We can identify with Thomas. Judas is a more extreme version than Peter who denied Jesus when it suited him. We can identify with Peter. But we are talking about degrees of denial, doubt and betrayal. All three of these men are guilty of betrayal and scripture suggests that all of Jesus' followers failed Him on more than one occasion. The problem with the reflection of Judas is that he represents our own failures that we hope to keep hidden away from view.

We read that Judas would help himself to the common purse. Our translations are more apt to cast Judas in the light of condemnation. And perhaps rightfully so. Stealing is forbidden by the fifth commandment. But to Judas, was it stealing, or had Judas justified to himself this his access was warranted. After all, he had given up a lucrative position to follow Jesus. And he had needs. Perhaps it began with the purchase of a new pair of sandals so that he could go out with the others as Jesus had requested. Perhaps new sandals led to a new coat which led to buying gifts for friends. We simply don't know the whole story.

Perhaps Judas, in addition to his starring role as the one who betrays Jesus, has another very important role. Perhaps Judas, like Jesus' other followers who are named in scripture, plays each of us when we betray Jesus.

What if Judas is just as important as a stand-in for you and I? What if Judas is a metaphor for what can happen to us, even when we are close to Jesus, if we are

The problem with the reflection of Judas is that he represents our own failures that we hope to keep hidden away from view.

caught, at a more opportune time, by the enemy in a moment of weakness? Once the cloud lifts, will we go to Jesus with our confession or will we continue as if it never happened?

Jesus, we read in John 3:16 came to save and not to condemn the world. And His examples illustrate a life of humble service that we are to offer to each other. Not simply within our own inner circles, but outwardly, in a show of collaboration, partnership and harmony grounded in love for our neighbors, including those with which we do not have agreement. When we fail, we betray Jesus. Oh its not a betrayal that will make the news or be written about for centuries. But, our betrayal can be an entry into our inner-child by an enemy that seeks to sow seeds of doubt and disharmony. An enemy looking for an opportune time.

April 14 is Palm Sunday. A celebration of Jesus coming into the city to save its people, riding on a donkey that we decided to call Dusty. It is not likely that it was the same donkey that His mother rode on but it could have been. Come join us on Sunday for Dusty II as the journey continues and let us celebrate Easter together with our imaginations, our voices, our worship and our praise for the Messiah — the Savior of the world.

Pastor Tommy