

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

T'is the Season!

Volume 19 Issue 8

December 8, 2019

Matt 2:1-6 / Micah 5:2

What are you searching for this Advent season? Are you celebrating the birth of the Christ child? The Creator King of the universe who took on the form of humble humanity to dwell among us in the flesh. Jesus the gift that keeps on giving generously and extravagantly. The only gift that fits everyone that will receive Him!

By the time I was in middle school I realized that I was a child of privilege. My dad was a

General Motors manufacturing engineer and a member of the Beecher School Board. My mom worked because she wanted to and while most of my friends parents were divorcing. My parents were actually "happy together".

The holidays were filled with family and friends gathering at a designated home. Mom had two sisters in Detroit and one here in Flint so they would take turns hosting Thanksgiving and Christmas. All four

sisters would contribute to the feast and there was always an abundance of "homemade from scratch" everything.

I was in 7th grade when I figured out that I didn't always get what I wanted, but I always had what I needed. This discovery firmly planted my feet on the narrow way that leads to life, light, and love. My parents by their example taught me the importance of seeking the right things for the right reasons.

Sylvia Pittman

Special points of interest:

>>> Worship Design will meet on Monday, December 9th at 6pm in the Asbury Library.

>>> Way Academy Graduation will be Tuesday, December 10th at 5:00pm.

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

>>> Leadership Team will meet on Monday, December 16th at 6pm.

>>> Plan to attend our Holiday Concert, Friday December 13th at 7:00pm. (see page 10 for flyer)

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Tipping Point (What does it take?)

This series was inspired by a poetic statement, an article about balance, and Psalm 144. These inspirations were made more potent by research that I was doing for ushering in the New Year. Traditionally, people will attend church on Christmas Eve, even if a church is not a part of their tradition at other times. And this year at Asbury, we are anticipating a lot of first-time visitors. Who does not want to hear the

greatest story ever told in song and in a fresh new way? And we want everyone who comes to leave with a good



reason to return the following Sunday.

A while back, I was asked whether I believe that our community is on the road to recovery. While I wanted to respond with a convincing yes, I hesitated. I am usually an optimist. I know how to choose words that inspire confidence. But I'm also helplessly honest. I prefer the raw truth over a cover-up. Although I chose my words carefully, I that it was essential, to be honest.

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Tipping Point (What does it take?)...cont. from page 1

Our neighborhood is struggling on whatever road we are on, and the truth is, we are on a lot of different routes. There is an overpowering sense of scarcity. Our focus is much more on need than on possibilities. Even our most optimistic perspectives, when we are honest, are colored with shades of gray, and our rainbows are not as bright as we hoped.

"What is missing?" she asked. "A tipping point," I responded. Malcolm Gladwin defines "tipping point" as that mysterious point in time when "the moment of critical mass, the threshold, and the boiling point" occurs. The tipping point is that a place where momentum changes quickly and dramatically. It is a breakthrough. While tipping points can be bad news, such as in climate change caused by the warming of our planet, this article is about a good tipping point. In other words, an event where momentum changes from scarcity to abundance.

In Psalm 144, we find promises of abundance. Barns full of produce, livestock multiplying, shipments full, reduced crime, fewer arrests, and overwhelming joy. Psalm 144 describes the other side of a tipping point. An intersection where beauty overcomes violence, emerging all around. A point where there is a shift from scarcity to abundance.

Pono" is a word from the indigenous language of Hawaii. Pono is an attitude, a statement of cohesion, a balance of self-care, and hospitality. Pono is a way forward that leads to a tipping point. During this season of Christmas, we reflect on a particular time when God delivered a tipping point for all of humanity. A time when God illustrated in the flesh what pono looks like, amid a violent reception.

The birth of Christ was, in my opinion, the most breath-taking example of the intersection of violence and beauty that the world has ever known. In the middle of a Roman-occupied village, ruled by violence, a child is born. But, not just any

child. While all births are miracles, this birth would usher in a tipping point that would change the relationship between humanity and God forever.

May our barns be filled with crops of every kind.
Psalm 144:13

But before we celebrate Christmas Eve, let's begin with where we are today. Asbury is part of a community that desperately wants to redefine itself, but doesn't have the resources to pull it off. Or do we?

Michal Mather, in his book, *Having Nothing, Possessing Everything*, begins with a confession. As a pastor, he saw his role as bringing good news to people who were lacking. A prophetic voice of hope in a community of scarcity. What Pastor Mike discovered, however, was more powerful, sharing that, "Now I often feel overwhelmed by the abundance I see, riches where I had thought there was nothing."

This change of attitude became a tipping point for Pastor Mike. A game-changer. No longer did my friend only see scarcity and violence. He could now see the beauty that was too often hidden by layers of systemic injustice and neglect. Pastor Mike discovered that the violence of systemic injustice could never annihilate beauty.


There is no denying the aftermath of violence that we witness every day. Streets littered with trash from plastic packaging that once offered barriers to consumption, now discarded and adding to the camouflage that hides the land. Houses that were once homes for families left for the weather and vandals to rip at their flesh until they are no more than piles of trash. The list of blemishes and scars is exhausting.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

DUSTY 2.0 THE DONKEY IS BACK !!

CHRISTMAS EVE!

...






In our Prayers

Curtis Young	Miriam Watson
Rachel Bastine	Shirley Craig
Norma Buzzard	Christopher Lewis
Mary Lyons	Sarah Tanner
Barbara McIvor	Elizabeth Wright
Austin & Mary Suffle	Judy Tanner

FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Mary Nations	Mary Russell
Elaine Lamoreaux	


Coming up this week

Dec 9	Mon	5:00pm	Youth Choir
		6:00pm	Worship Design
		7:00pm	Flint Jubilee
Dec 10	Tues	10am-2pm	Water Distribution
		4:30-7pm	Way Academy
			Graduation/Service
		6:00pm	Community Gospel Choir
Dec 11	Wed	12Noon	Book Club
		6:00pm	Beginners Bible Study
Dec 12	Thu	6:00pm	Worship Band Practice
Dec 13	Fri	11am-2pm	Asbury Cafe Open
		7:00pm	A Holiday Concert
			"Love at Christmas"
Dec 14	Sat	10am-12N	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
Dec 15	Sun	8am-10am	Japanese Jiu Jitsi
		9:30am	Café Open
		10:30am	New Beginnings
			Contemporary Worship

Asbury Worship Series Pono Coming December 8, 2019

According to Wikipedia, the word Pono is from the native language of Hawaii. A common English synonym for Pono is "righteousness." For example, the motto of the state is *Ua Mau ke Ea o ka 'Āina i ka Pono*. This motto is

translated as "The sovereignty of the land is perpetuated in righteousness."



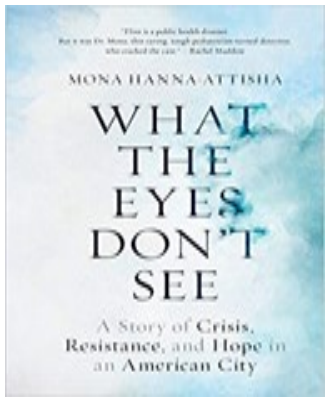
The word righteousness is not used that much anymore. The

word is steeped in religiosity. To be righteous is to be obedient to God's will. To be free of sin, or at least, trying our best not to sin. For that matter, sin is another word that comes out of religious dogma. The word sin is not commonly used, except for describing a particularly tasty dessert that is so good it must be sinful.

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Book Club News

On November 13th our group started discussing a book written by a local hero. Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha is the courageous, children's doctor who risked her reputation and her career to bring to light that our public water was poisoning us. Being a whistleblower in the midst of desperate people willing to destroy anyone who disagrees with them requires



courage, and other people willing to stand with you. This is Dr. Mona. What the Eyes Don't See is a story about all of us. It is a personal story. We know the names in the book, or at least most of them. We know a lot that is not in her book. And we can feel the anger, helplessness, disgust, and regrets, that Dr. Mona shares in her testimony. More important, we have an opportunity to learn from the past, and to work together for a stronger Flint. But what does this look like to you? Dr. Mona's book will challenge you to get involved, just as we challenge each other. And as we

reflect on the events that rocked our community, you can anticipate new ideas and discussions that could shape how you view our circumstances. And what you may feel called to do about it. I encourage you to come to our Wednesday gatherings. Our small group is a diverse group and we are delighted when new persons join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion. We meet each Wednesday at Noon. There are a couple of books available. You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — FlintAsbury.org. Please consider making a donation to cover the cost of books.

Leadership in Worship & Service

Welcome Team	Tony, Mirium	Jim Craig	Leadership Chair
Ushers	Anthony, Jim	Kevin Croom	Operations
Production Team	Jonathon, Terrance	Blair Neifert	Farm Manager
Children	Patrice & Mirium	Israel Unger	Function to Funding
Worship Leaders	Cyndi		
Café	Christine & Norma		

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel Pastor
 Connie Portillo Office Secretary
 Sylvia Pittman Empowerment Arts

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.

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

Asbury Worship Series—Pono... Coming December 8th... Cont. from page 4

Our next series takes place during the Christmas season. A time of anticipation, celebration, deep discount sales, generosity, parties, and remembering God's grace. At Asbury, we will be performing the musical, *Dusty*, again this year. I'm sure there will be some tweaks to the lines and the songs, along with some new faces and voices. Think *Dusty 2.0* — even better than version 1.0.

While our series title is a Hawaiian word for righteousness, our subtitle may seem like a different direction — *The intersection of violence and beauty*. I read this phrase, which I believe to be poetry, in a book which inspired this series.¹ Once again, God is working through other people and through art. I was so moved by this line of poetry that I stopped reading immediately and went to prayer. Thank You, Lord, for inspiring me. Your mercy and love never end.

What does this phrase even mean? I instantly felt an urge to explore this poetic line, deeper, before reading on. I didn't want the author to tell me what it meant before I had a chance to reflect on what it meant in prayer. Perhaps a habit I picked up in seminary. I want to know what God has to say to me about essential subjects before the writer tells me what God told them.

The intersection of violence and beauty. This poetry speaks to me because I feel it. It right away. I'm feeling it right now. The intersection of violence and beauty sounds like a title for a play or a book. Perhaps the title of a song or a poem. Maybe the title for a Christmas season worship series? Lord, what do You want us to know about this observation of Your city? Help us to see this intersection through Your eyes, Lord. I see violence when I see the blight in our neighborhood. I see violence

perpetrated by weather, by fire, and by people. I also see beauty. I see potential in the people. I know that God loves them dearly. I know that God has uniquely gifted them for work in the kingdom. But what work? While there is beauty in the gifts of our neighbors, there is violence in the lack of employment. Violence comes out of scarcity. Beauty comes out of gifts. As does abundance.

I once came across a man tearing the siding off of the walls of what was once a home. He was using a snow shovel. I wondered if there was something deeper going on in the ripping off of the siding. Anger, I understand, is a kinetic feeling. We dissipate anger by physical movement. I wonder whether the man was less angry after he had finished taking off the siding.

This is where the word *pono* came from. Well, not directly. I read an article in *Psychology Today* about anger. The article used this word *pono*. But instead

May our barns be filled with crops of every kind. Psalm 144:13

of righteousness, perhaps the more common translation, the writer focused on the results of *pono*. The beauty of finding balance in the community. Hurt and hopelessness finding forgiveness and abundance. Giftedness finding purpose.

The story of Christmas is a tale that offers insight into this poetic line. We imagine the beauty of pregnancy. The miracle of a tiny egg and seed becoming a child carried in the womb of His mother until the time is right for His birth. We imagine the violence of an empire requiring this family to travel from their village, tucked away in the northern highlands. Only to arrive in a place where they would not find shelter other than a stable. It was in that intersection of beauty and violence that a Savior was born.

But the violence wouldn't end. Nor would the violence be replaced by beauty. Not yet. Shortly after the child's birth, after the shepherds went back to tend their flocks, and after the travelers from the far east had returned to their native land, the holy family was in danger. Unimaginable violence was taking place around them. They were not safe. Even the Son of God could not escape the violence of the city.

Dr. Matt James writes, "Pono is when you feel centered and comfortable in your own skin. You feel connected to nature, your community, your friends and family, and yourself. You feel at peace. You feel balanced and a sense that all is well. When you feel *pono*, your decisions and actions are driven by integrity and awareness of what is good for the whole. And when you feel *pono*, you feel energetic, focused, and effective."¹

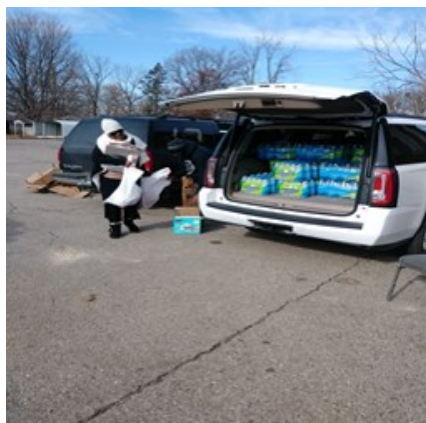
May the Christmas season give you feelings of *pono*. May you feel more connected to your community and to the earth. May your decisions and actions be driven by integrity and awareness of what is right for our community.

I pray that you will join us during this season of Christmas each Sunday. And on Christmas Eve, when we will unwrap the gift of Christmas by sharing a unique retelling of this story at the intersection of violence and beauty.

Join us each Sunday and invite your friends and neighbors. I lead a short Bible study in the Asbury Café at 9:30 am. *Dusty*, the musical, will be performed on Christmas Eve at 6 pm. Auditions are coming very soon, so be sure to get involved. You can find more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

Pastor Tommy

THANK YOU, THANK YOU TO KIM GOOCH, GOOCH FOUNDATION!!



Kim Gooch, along with Edward and Garrett Gooch, Darnell Butler and Mister Wayne were at Asbury on Saturday, November 23rd, to deliver 20 Thanksgiving baskets to families within our surrounding area including Potter School and Way Academy.

Kim also donated 30 extra turkeys to families that showed up and they were given out on a first come first serve basis, along with a 40 count case of water!

Overall the families walked away very happy for the baskets that they received!

Asbury UMC, the families at Potter School and Way Academy thank you SO much!



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 11 am to 2 pm and
Sundays 10am 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

STIR FRY

Local grown garden vegetables
sautéed with love and herbs

GARDEN SALAD

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

WRAPS

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

MUFFINS

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

SMOOTHIE

Assorted flavors of the day

COFFEE

Regular or decaf

Like us on Facebook~ under "Asbury Farms"



Life Group Questions & Notes

May our barns be filled with crops of every kind.

May the flocks in our fields multiply by the thousands, even tens of thousands, and may our oxen be loaded down with produce. May there be no enemy breaking through our walls, no going into captivity, no cries of alarm in our town squares. Yes, joyful are those who live like this! Joyful indeed are those whose God is the Lord.

Psalm 144:13-15 (NLT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Psalm 144:13-15. What images come to mind? Can you imagine living in such a time? Why or why not? What may be keeping our neighborhood from experiencing such abundance?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Tipping point*. Does this idea make sense to you? On a global basis, scientists fear that we are reaching the point in the warming of our atmosphere where there will be nothing that can stop the progression. This is a negative tipping point. What is a positive tipping point that could be a game-changer for our neighborhood? How might we get there?
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?



But our tipping point is not found in following each other with trash bags. Nor is our game-changer found in the latest funding to remove blighted housing, although these are all essential tasks for us to do. But if they were themselves, a tipping point, we wouldn't still be writing grant proposals and gathering neighbors together to clean trash out of abandoned lots. These are important tasks that we must do, but we also need something else that has escaped our grasp.

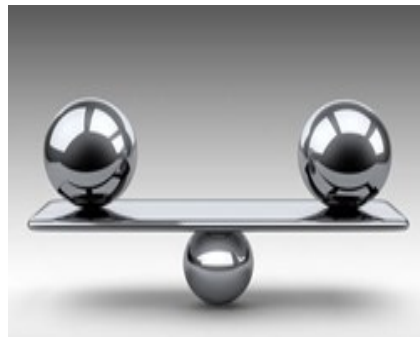
God's presence is always a game changer, but God knows not to do things for people who can do things for them-

People of faith anticipated the arrival of the Christ child for Thousands of years. Prophets, such as Isaiah, made God-inspired pronouncements that we believe pointed to this holy tipping point. For example, the Gospel of Matthew references one such prophecy that "a young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). This child will be called "God is with us" is a very provocative statement. If God is actually with us, a part of our clean-up team, attending our block club meetings, and at our neighborhood planning meetings, this is indeed a game-changer. Enough of us realizing God is with us is a tipping point.

God's presence is always a game-changer, but God knows not to do things for people who can do things for themselves. Avoiding

doing things for others that they can do for themselves is a critical lesson that my friend, Pastor Mike, shared with me when I first met him in 2011. "Don't do things for people that they can do themselves," my friend blurted out when I asked about responding to the overwhelming need in our community. Mike's advice is not a "never" statement, but a guiding principle for offering assistance to a community of people who see their community through the eyes of scarcity.

But what if this Christmas we unwrap a gift that is a game-changer that we can use right away. This gift does not require batteries, nor is some assembly required. This gift is powerful. It is like X-ray glasses that allow us to see past the trash, to see past the systems that put our community into the tailspin that caused us to crash. It is the gift of seeing beauty where violence once ruled the moment.



Simple logic tells us that a newborn child in itself cannot be a tipping point. Yet, God's presence and participation in transforming our community is arguably just the game-changer that we need. Sometimes, perhaps most times, the tipping point comes after a small, incremental change. Or at least,

the amount of movement seemed insignificant at the time. But the consequences are enormous.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday as we explore the intersection of violence and beauty. Be sure to make your calendar for Christmas Eve at 6 pm. Dusty 2.0 promises to be an enjoyable time for all. Check with Terrance if he has any parts in the play still available if you are willing to participate on stage. Dusty 2.0 is truly a neighborhood event.

Since we are speaking about game-changers, we will kick off the New Year with a community-wide program that is commonly called the Daniel Plan. On December 29, we will begin by preparing our resolutions for the New Year. Have you tried to keep New Year's resolutions before and failed. When we depend on our willpower to succeed in making significant changes, we may succeed in the short term, but we ultimately fail. Join us and learn how God can be a part of your success plan.

Here at Asbury, we worship each Sunday at 10:30 am, and I believe that God is calling you to join us. Come and participate in worship, not as a spectator, but as someone who belongs to God. I lead a short Bible study in the Asbury Café at 9:30 am. You can find more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

Pastor Tommy

Welcome to the Asbury Community

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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.

The Sounds of Gospel Presents "Love at Christmas"

100 STOCKINGS WILL BE GIVEN AWAY FILLED WITH LOTS OF WONDERFUL GOODIES INSIDE!!

PLAN
TO
ATTEND
THIS
HOLIDAY
CONCERT!

