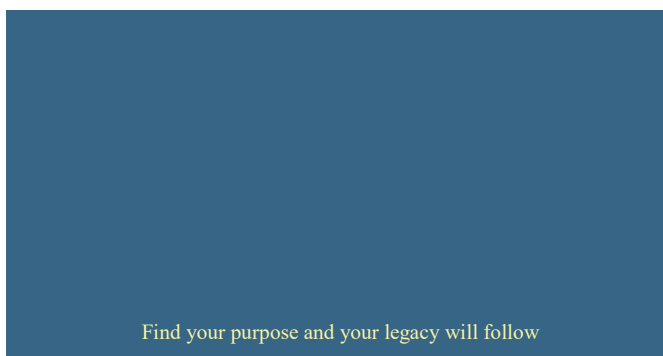


ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER



Legacy (What is your purpose?)

Legacy is for old people. This is what I thought when I was a young adult. It was not that I was not ambitious. Quite the opposite. And my ambition determined the legacy that I was building. It always does. Your legacy is what people say about you when you are not around. As legacy ages, it becomes more narrowly focused. The details fade away. Only the headlines remain until, eventually, there is only one headline left. Your legacy.



There is a thought that we should not worry about legacy. Indeed, our beliefs about Jesus Christ may lead us to conclude that following Him is all that matters. Could this be our legacy? What we are remembered for. "What was Sally like." "Sally? Oh, she

Was a Christ-follower. That's what you need to know about Sally." This sounds like enough, doesn't it? I can end this article right here. Be a Christ-follower.

But first, I need to write about you and I. You know? Those of us who

Page 2

Emerge (The power of beauty emerging)

There are times when it can take days before a single verse of scripture rises above the rest to lodge in my spirit for a coming Sunday's message. I use a process of prayer, reading scripture, and reflection and this process became the emerging metaphor for this week. Imagine an early spring flower poking its head through a layer of snow, finding the sun, and sharing its beauty with the world. Like the flower, God's Word rises out of

the clutter and anxiety of my state of mind. Beauty overtakes the aftermath of violence just as the ashes of yesterday's dreams give way to new ideas.



And so it has been since humankind first began sharing God's love for creation with others. A few sentences about beauty emerging recall a text from Isaiah. Like the flower bulb sensing that the days are getting longer even while it is covered by soil and snow, the light from above is pervasive. The flower's desire to share its beauty is inherent in what God created the flower to be. Anything less is oppressive.

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Volume 19 Issue 22

December 22, 2019

Special points of interest:

SEE EVERYONE ON CHRISTMAS EVE FOR THE RETURN OF DUSTY 2.0, THE MUSICAL STARTING AT 6PM!



gg56754144 www.gograph.com

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Emerge (The power of beauty emerging) ...cont. from page 1

Anything more is God showing off, which God often does. The Lord seems to take great joy in showering God's creation with abundance.

I wrote in my prayer journal one morning that should I ever see God's glory in its fullness, I would surely die. I recalled Moses sharing similar thoughts. I imagined the creation of the stars and planets. Whether a big bang or a slow, gradual progression, the energy that was released when God began creation would have been beyond anything that life could ever withstand. Yet, all of it carried the raw material for life. Life is because God is love. And God so loves the world that God's light shines bright, not just in the heavens, but onto a flower anxious to share its beauty. Not only on a flower but on all of God's creation.

We are God's flowers being called out of our slumber. God summons us from whatever covers our beauty, that we might also flourish and experience the joy of God's peace and love. Emerge — to move away from or out of something, to rise to significance, to recover from an unfortunate circumstance. To emerge is to allow our beauty to be seen.

"But I'm not beautiful," he says, "I'm rather plain." So emerging may begin with seeing ourselves the way that God sees us. Like the flower emerging out of the snow-covered ground, God sees our beauty waiting to emerge from its cover. And we often cover our beauty with our own deceptive thoughts.

We are God's flowers being called out of our slumber.

God, speaking through the Prophet Isaiah, declares an emergence from darkness to light. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light," shouts the Prophet (Isaiah 9:2). God declares that the faithful will emerge out from whatever darkness is surrounding us. Like the flower, covered by snow, we need not allow layers of guilt, regret, doubt, or anything that keeps us from emerging into the light, to prevail.

We exist at the intersection of violence and beauty at any given moment. We notice that someone decided to leave a mark on our truck. We wonder who would do such a thing. A shut-off notice shows up in the daily mail. A sudden feeling of panic overtakes us. We watch as a group of teenagers throw their paper on the ground. We wonder if it matters that the packaging could still be there when their children

walk by. We see the aftermath of violence.

We are frequently confronted at the intersection of violence and beauty. We noticed the wind brought down a large limb that wrecked our shed. We hear the screeching of tires, the crash of metal, and the breaking of glass. We know that lives will be changed in an instant, and broken bodies will be left behind from a split-second, wrong decision. And we wonder what good can come out of catastrophe.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Isaiah 9:2

We make decisions every day at the intersection of violence and beauty. We notice that our clothes no longer fit, and try to remember the last time we took a walk or skipped a second trip to the dessert table. We notice a door hanger announcing a musical performance, and we contemplate if we may decide to watch reruns on TV instead. A voice tells us our decisions don't really matter. But voices often lie.

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Legacy (What is your purpose?)....cont. from page 1

want to be Christ-followers, but we mess up from time to time. We lose sight of Jesus at times and wander off the path that we last saw Jesus on.

What is our legacy? "Jeffrey? Oh, he was sort of a Christ-follower. You know? I think he tried. But, he was really more of a...what's the word? Oh, he was more of a poser." In other words, Jeffery pretended to be what he wanted to be but couldn't quite be.

Are you a poser? Too personal? I know that at times, I am a poser. I try to follow Jesus, but something gets in the way. I may point to other people when this happens. « It's their fault, » I say to myself. « They pushed too far. » But I feel blessed that there is a voice in my head telling me that I simply turned the wrong way. It is not a condemning voice, It seems to be an understanding voice. A voice that was full of grace. This is how I know that the voice comes from Christ.

Of course, there are other voices. The one that agrees with me is the loudest. "Yeah! Your right. It's their fault. You stand up for yourself. We're not taking the fall." But when I consider that the loudest voices do not sound like the one I long to hear, and I listen more intently, I hear it. Sometimes it is only a whisper, but it is always there.

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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	

ON CHRISTMAS EVE

STARTING AT 6:00pm

DUSTY 2.0

THE DONKEY IS BACK!

SO INVITE YOUR FAMILY,
FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS!

SEE YOU ON
CHRISTMAS EVE!

Coming up this week

Dec 23	Mon	5:00pm	Youth Choir	
		7:00pm	Flint Jubilee	
Dec 24	Tues	6:00pm	Dusty 2.0 is Back Today!!	
		6:00pm	Community Gospel Choir	
Dec 25	Wed	12Noon	Book Club	
		6:00pm	Beginners Bible Study	
		6-8:00pm	Rec Nite	
Dec 26	Thu	10am-2pm	Water Distribution	
		6:00pm	Worship Band Practice	
Dec 27	Fri	11am-2pm	Asbury Cafe Open	
Dec 28	Sat	10am-12N	Japanese Jiu Jitsi	
Dec 29	Sun	8am-10am	Japanese Jiu Jitsi	
		9:30am	Café Open	
		10:30am	New Beginnings	
			Contemporary Worship	

Asbury Worship Series Pono

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."



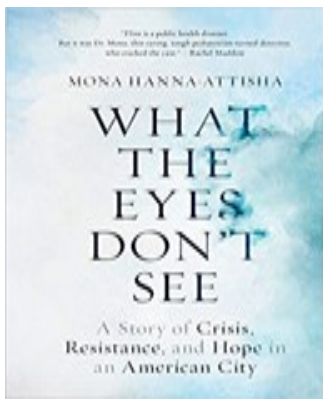
The word righteousness is not used that much anymore. The

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

Jim Craig	Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Operations
Blair Neifert	Farm Manager
Israel Unger	Function to Funding

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

Legacy (What is your purpose?) ... cont. from page 2

One of the most read books this century is *The Purpose Driven Life* by Pastor Rick Warren. If the name sounds familiar, this is the same writer who co-authored *The Daniel Plan* that inspired our worship series for the start of 2020. But before we write a New Year's Resolution as part of the Daniel Plan, we should take in the Christmas season. We should let God speak to us about what is essential about each of us that we should know.

Most of us are aware that the birth of Jesus was foreshadowed in ancient scripture, centuries before His birth. These Biblical prophecies led the descendants of the people of the Exodus to anticipate the birth of a Messiah. While we can look at these prophecies from our comfortable position long after, there was a lot of uncertainty in what God had in mind.

Isaiah spoke about the birth of a child who will be called Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 7:14). And Isaiah also includes information about a "suffering servant" who would be with and for the people (beginning with Isaiah 52:13). God promised through this prophet, and others, that this child will lead with perfect fairness and justice, and bring true justice and peace to all the nations of the world (Isaiah 9:7).

In the Gospel of Luke, Mary sings a song that has roots in Isaiah's prophecy (Luke 1:46-55). But Mary knew very little about the details. Only that she was pregnant and the promises made by an Angel. This became Mary's purpose in life. She would be the mother of Jesus. The Messiah. This would be her purpose. This would be her legacy. This is what the world would say about her long after her purpose in this life was

done. But did Mary know how to be a mother to Jesus?

A young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him Emmanuel. Isaiah 7:14

Mary was unique. But so are you. Mary's purpose was foretold in ancient scripture. And so was yours. But you don't know for sure what this may mean for you. Never did Mary. Some of us are blessed to see our children grow older and have children of their own. Mary watched her son be executed. I don't think she was expecting this. I like the first ending better. And fortunately, so does God. This is why Jesus came, died, and is forever with us.

The very best possible legacy for any of us to leave begins with our divine purpose. Find your purpose, and your legacy will follow. Legacy is not about leaving behind an estate or having a building named after you, although these are examples for a small few of us. Your legacy is what you leave behind as you fulfill the purpose that God created you to do. A legacy that endures comes out of calling.

One of the most frequent objections I hear when I ask for someone to step up and take on a project for our community is, "I don't know how." This is 2nd only to "I have never done anything like that before." I get it. When it was clear that following Christ for me required me to go back to school, and later to move to Flint, I had not done anything like this before. I did not know how to do or even what to do.

I've learned that this is precisely where God likes to take me. This is when my only reasonable course of action is to turn to Christ and say, "Lord, I'm in. But I don't have a clue where to begin." And this is the sort of reply I get in return, that helps me to know that it is His voice. "I know." "OK?" I sometimes say out loud in response. "But now what?"

One time, the response that came back made me a little angry. It was not an audible voice, but it was a voice, alright. Loud enough for me to hear and clear enough for me not to misunderstand the point. It went something like this, "Remember when you took your first job at a software company? You left the technical side of the business to accept a position opening a new sales office. You did not know how to begin, so you asked people who had done it before. Do that."

What? I left an industry that took me years of school and more years of working my way up so that I could go back to the beginning and start over? This is what made me just a little angry. Worse, it took me years to realize that software wasn't my purpose. I was not doing what God created me to do. I was miserable most of the time. I don't want to go back.

"But I created you for such a time as this," Jesus said. I did not worry that you had moved so far

THE DANIEL PLAN

GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR YOUR HEALTH

Coming December 29, 2019

Why the Daniel Plan is so important ...

I have never met Pastor Steve Willis. But there is something that he said that is haunting me. And I hope that it will haunt you too. Pastor Steve's call to action is powerful, timely, and the shoe surely fits our community. We were poisoned by our public water system. But we can recover. Our children can recover. But the problem, at this point, is not someone else's problem. It is our problem. We have the solution and Pastor Steve's challenge is a call to step up and do something about our health.

The fight for good nutrition was never more real to me than when I watched my kindergarten-aged son struggle with adapting to his physician-prescribed, mind-altering drugs. Lucas had been having discipline problems in school, would frequently struggle with the ability to focus on tasks at hand, and found himself well below grade level in many academic areas...This is more than a health issue; it is a social justice issue. Millions of our children are not reaching their God-given potential because we, as adults, won't take the steps necessary to get them the nutrition they need. For the church, this problem has to be seen as a moral issue. For the sake of our children and our nation's future, we have to do better.¹

I agree. We have to do better. Teachers, healthcare professionals, counselors, clergy, and others are anticipating the first part of Pastor Steve's story to be a common story. Children with higher concentrations of lead in their bodies are prone to exhibiting behaviors that are not conducive to learning, including lower cognition. The only known solution is available to us. But not in a drive-through or at a liquor store.

But how is a community that sits in the middle of one of the least healthy counties in Michigan going to be able to regroup and move forward with the necessary changes to help ourselves and our children?

First, we are going to admit that we are incapable. We are going to stop making excuses for ourselves. We are going to quit pointing to some other power, whether it is the force, the ineffective excuse, "I'm spiritual, but I don't go to church" and the hundreds of other absurd claims that I hear every year as to why I don't see people on Sunday mornings. We are going to repent — that is, we are going to change. Our lives matter. Our children's lives matter.

The Daniel Plan
Faith, Friends, Fitness, Food and Focus

I found myself making a declaration this past week that I have declared before. I wrote and said that responding to God's will for our lives is a human right. And as a human right, we need to treat this right in the same way that we protect other human rights. But it is very difficult to respond to God's purpose for us when our health is less than it needs to be. The Daniel Plan is not the solution on its own, but it is a roadmap that points to and can help us pursue the solution. But the solution begins with God. Without God's power any plan is a non-starter.

By the way, Pastor Steve's son, Lucas, soon was off the drugs and today he is an A student. This story is not a one-of-a-kind, never to be repeated miracle. It is the sort of miracle that God offers every one of us. It is the miracle of making better choices. It is the miracle of taking care of ourselves and each other.

We will begin on Sunday, December 29, by writing down a resolution for 2020. For most of us, our resolution will begin in the same way. "In 2020 I will make my health and well-being a priority by participating in the Daniel Plan." And then we will write down a goal for each of the five areas: faith, food, friends, fitness, and focus. During the first five weeks of 2020, we will learn about each of the pillars of success, possibly modify our goals, and meet regularly with others who have made this same New Year's Resolution.

Make a New Year's Resolution for 2020 to commit to The Daniel Plan.

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 2.0*, the musical, will be performed on Christmas Eve at 6 pm. We are praying for a big turnout, and that most of our visitors will return to participate in the Daniel Plan.

Pastor Tommy

¹ Warren, Rick. *The Daniel Plan*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan;



Life Group Questions & Notes

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. They lived in a land of shadows, but now light is shining on them. You have given them great joy, Lord; you have made them happy...

Isaiah 9:2-3 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Isaiah 9:2-3. What does this scripture mean to you? Ancient scripture has relevance that is specific to the time and place that it was first said or written. Yet we claim that scripture is also relevant today. How do we defend this claim?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Emerge*. What violence have you witnessed or seen the after affects? How did it make you feel? What happened afterward? In what ways can beauty emerge out of the after affects?
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?



Jesus said, "Aren't five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one sparrow is forgotten by God. You are worth much more than many sparrows!" (Luke 12:6-7). What if we imagine that God is with us each time we arrive at the intersection of violence and beauty? What if God reminds us that even before the shut-off notice comes, or the cars crash or the buffet is set, God knew about the intersection we faced. And what if God is there, at each intersection we face, regardless of our next step?

When Mary learns from an angel that she will become the mother of Jesus, Mary is troubled by the angel's pronouncement. Perhaps remembering Mary's age and innocence, the angel leaves Mary with a reminder. "For there is nothing that God cannot do" (Luke 1:37).

There is nothing that God cannot do. How easily we forget. God created all that there is, including sparrows, you, and I. God is apparently in love with creation. There is much violence in scripture. The tiny baby that Mary delivers will one day face horrible violence. A reminder of the violence that humankind is capable of doing to each other. Yet, light overcame the darkness. Beauty overtook the violence.



The Wednesday after this Sunday, we celebrate Christmas. The evening before, we remember. We remember a time when God was so near that a young mother kissed his face. An expectant father held God in his arms. Beauty emerged out of the violence of systemic oppression, terror, danger, and ironic inconvenience. Beauty that shined so bright others could not miss the opportunity to see for themselves.

"Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people," announced angels to day-workers tending to livestock in the field (Luke 2:10). I can only imagine the daily lives of these shepherds. Social outcasts, most likely. Living in the elements with the animals outside of the villages where families are resting.

Sometimes I imagine a sudden light illuminating a dark field like a football field, only brighter. The sudden emergence of glowing lights is more apt to signal danger rather than a peace-filled invitation. Sometimes violence is imagined when beauty emerges. Sometimes violence is real, like the birth of a star. But beauty overcomes the violence and emerges into the light.

My prayer for all of us is that we will emerge from whatever keeps us from sharing our beauty with each other. God so loves the world, that each of us is special. A reflection of God's love. We are made in God's image. We reflect God's love for creation as the light of the world illuminates our beauty.

I hope that you will join us for Christmas Eve at 6 pm to celebrate the light of the world. The Asbury Players will perform the original musical, *Dusty*, that retells the story through the beauty of creative storytelling, drama, and music. This is a family event. The nursery will be available for use by caregivers with children 0-3 years old, but no attendant will be on duty. Plan ahead.

On December 29, we kick off our new, community-wide program and worship series based on *The Daniel Plan*. Be sure to read the articles introducing this program. More important, join us for a life-changing experience. The Daniel Plan can help you emerge. I promise.

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



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