

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 3 Issue 31

DECEMBER 31, 2023

Dreams (A better tomorrow)



We end our series, *Letters*, on the last day of 2023, realizing that 2024 is a presidential election year. On January 7, we begin our new series, *Country*, based on a book titled, *Ours was the Shining Future: The Story of the American Dream*. We transition from Hall Mark movie to the cold, hard reality of life in the 21st century.

The American Dream, depicted in subtle ways by Hall Mark movies, is the promise of a happier, healthier, more prosperous future. This dream of a better tomorrow is part of our national identity.

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EVERYONE
HAVE A
WONDERFUL
AND SAFE
NEW YEAR!!

DONATE

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Emerge (The beauty within)



This week's chapters from our companion book, *Letters to Santa*, ends with Polly's arrival on Christmas Eve. Polly loves the store, but she did not go to Evergreen to buy a store. Instead, she offers Lisa and Oliver jobs in Boston. Her offer further complicates the emerging relationship between Kevin and Lisa.

Will Kevin accept the job offer in Maine? Will Lisa return to Boston to work for Polly? Well, it is a Hallmark story!

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Dreams (A better tomorrow) *cont. from pg 2*

In the final chapters of our companion book for Letters, Lisa and Oliver reach their dream of owning their own store while living in their choice of places they call home. Thomas expands on his dream of expanding his business. And moves to Evergreen to pursue his romantic interest in Michelle. The town of Evergreen recovers from the loss of traditions that set them a part as a perfect place to raise a family.

It's a Hallmark movie, after all, where short-term setbacks evaporate by the end, and dreams come true.

Dreams are a common media for illuminating a better tomorrow. In dreams that inspire us, we're unencumbered by what could otherwise be impassable obstacles.

Luke tells us that the Holy family took Jesus to the temple for dedication shortly after His birth. While at the temple, two prophets affirm Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. From Jerusalem, the family made their way back to the home in Nazareth. But Matthew focused on a different part of their story.

In Matthew's telling, a group of visitors travel in search of the newborn King. Stopping first by the royal palace, they raised the curiosity and jealousy of Herod, the reigning king of the region. After the visitors departed, by another route, Joseph is warned in a dream to flee.

The Holy family immigrates to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod, where they stay until his reign ends. We don't know a lot about their time in Africa. But Egypt was a center of learning for that part of the world, and Jesus likely had access to this center of knowledge.

Joseph's dreams continue to guide his family, and they eventually return to Nazareth. These events unfolded in accordance with ancient prophecy.

Do you have dreams about a different tomorrow? If so, did actual dreams help shape your hopes? What hopes do you have for the New Year?

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 [YouTube channel](#). You can find more information about us on our website at [FlintAsburyChurch.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 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 [Newsletter](#).

Pastor Tommy

An angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and told him to take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt.

Matthew 2:13

Parts of our series was inspired by Nancy Naigle. *Christmas in Evergreen: Letters to Santa*. Hallmark Publishing. © Crown Media Family Networks, 2019.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kevin Croom Jonathon Misner
Sylvia Pittman Terrance Williams
Kim Sims



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux
Norma Buzzard Nancy Elston



COMING UP THIS WEEK - DECEMBER 31-JANUARY 7

Jan 1	Mon	HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!!	
Jan 2	Tues	10am-12N	Food Distribution
Jan 3	Wed		
Jan 4	Thu		
Jan 5	Fri		
Jan 6	Sat		
Jan 7	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](#).)

Upcoming Worship Series "Country"

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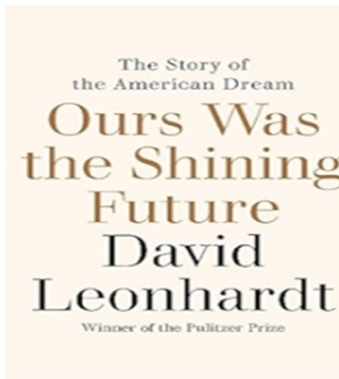


What does the "American Dream" mean to you personally? A common description of the American Dream "Was the ability of people to rise above the circumstances of their birth." Does it still exist?

So far this century, campaign slogans promise to restore the American Dream, implying that it is no longer relevant for the current generation. Thousands cross our borders every day in pursuit of just such a promise that seems impossible in their native land.

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Book Club News



Our companion book for our new worship is David Leonhardt's book, *Ours was the Shining Future: The Story of the American Dream*.

Amazon's website describes his book this way:

Two decades into the twenty-first century, the stagnation of living standards has become the defining trend of American life. Life expectancy has declined, economic inequality has soared, and, after some progress, the Black-white wage gap is once again as large as it was in the 1950s. How did

this happen in the world's most powerful country? And what happened to the "American dream" - the promise of a happier, healthier, more prosperous future—which was once such an inextricable part of our national identity?

Drawing on decades of writing about the economy for *The New York Times*, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer David Leonhardt examines the past century of American history, from the Great Depression to today's Great Stagnation, in search of an answer.

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Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony & Mirium	Welcome Team
Cyndi	Worship Leader
Anthony & Jim	Ushers
Jonathon & Terrance	Production Team
Yasheah & Mirium	Nursery
Christine & Norma	Cafe

Upcoming Worship Series — “Country” ..cont from pg 4

On Valentine’s Day in 2012, Trigger Coroneos posted a brief article that suggested a reshaping of the American Dream is emerging. “Instead of declaring the death of The American Dream, perhaps it is changing from one that uses traditional economic parameters to gauge its health, to ones that instead gauge the happiness and fulfillment of the individual.”

But what does the American Dream, country music and scripture have in common? The answer is not just politics. However, politicians use all three in their pursuit of votes. Did I mention that 2024 is a presidential election year?

Welcome to our new worship series, Country.

Over the next six weeks, our messages will consider the intersection of scripture, the American Dream, and country music. We’re using David Leonhardt’s recently published book, *Ours was the Shining Future: The Story of the American Dream*, as a companion. See our Book Club News article for a reading schedule.

In his book, Leonhardt retraces the history of the American Dream and explores the somber news of our shared dream’s demise. In the first two decades of the 21st century, we’re experiencing the stagnation of living standards, a declining life expectancy, and rising economic inequality.


And the vast majority of us are feeling the loss.

Scripture tells us that God chose the Israelites as a starting point for reconciling the world with God’s divine plan for peace and prosperity. And our salvation story reflects our shared dream as Americans. So what went wrong?

“Feed Flint”



“Feed Flint”



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**

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

An angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and told him to take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt.

Matthew 2:1-23

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Matthew 2:1-23. What images come to mind as you read this text? Do you sometimes feel like you're walking in darkness? Describe your feelings. What brings light for you? In what ways does this prophecy remind you of the Christmas Holidays?
2. Read this week's articles titled *Dreams*? What are your dreams for the future? What must happen for you to live your dream? What obstacles stand in the way? Where did your dream come from? An actual dream?
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.



South Flint Soup Kitchen ...

BOTTLED WATER DRIVE

All Year Long!

Our clients need bottled water for cooking,
going with sack lunches, to bathe and brush
their teeth with, and MORE!

Donations are accepted Monday-Friday

11:00am-12 Noon at South Flint Soup Kitchen,

3410 Fenton Rd (3 blocks north of Atherton Rd)

Flint MI 48507

Any questions, please call 239-3427 or 235-0016 or

Email us at southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

To donate: www.mightycause.com/feedflint



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How You Can Donate

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More Information :



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funding@flintasbury.org

To make sense of the rise and subsequent fall of the American dream, Leonhardt tells the story of the modern American economy as an ongoing battle between two competing forms of capitalism: one that envisions prosperity for most, and one that serves the individual and favors the wealthy. In vivid prose, *Ours Was the Shining Future* traces how democratic capitalism flourished to make the American dream possible, until the latter decades of the twentieth century when, bit by bit, the dream was corrupted to serve only the privileged few.

Ours Was the Shining Future is a sweeping narrative full of innovation and grit, human drama and hope. Featuring the trailblazing figures who helped shape the American dream—Frances Perkins, Paul Hoffman, Cesar Chavez, Robert Kennedy, A. Philip Randolph, Grace Hopper, and more—this engaging history reveals the power of grass-roots democratic movements from across the political spectrum. And though the American dream feels lost to us now, Leonhardt shows how Americans—if they commit themselves to transforming the economy, as they did in the past—have the power to revive the dream once more.

We have a limited number of copies of David Leonhardt's book. His book was recently published and is available in hardback and electronic formats. The book is 528 pages. And, while Leonhardt is a gifted writer, the subject matter presumes foundational knowledge regarding politics and economics. Fortunately, the writer is able to explain complex topics at a level using language most of us can understand.

Here is the schedule of chapters for our *Country Series*:

Jan 7	Chapters Intro - 1
Jan 14	Chapters 2 - 3
Jan 21	Chapters 4 - 5
Jan 28	Chapters 6 - 7
Feb 4	Chapters 8 - 9
Feb 11	Chapters 10 - 9 + Conclusion

Our Book Club does not meet as a group. However, our weekly messages reference that week's chapters. You can anticipate spoiler alerts unless you keep up with the pace. You can purchase your own copy or visit your local library.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question or enter a prayer request on our website's homepage — FlintAsburyChurch.org.

Pastor Tommy

David Leonhardt. *Ours was the Shining Future: The Story of the American Dream*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2023.

Cash or checks can be sent to/dropped off at South Flint Soup Kitchen, 3410 Fenton Road, Flint, MI 48507. Please make checks out to South Flint Soup Kitchen!

Online at www.mightycause.com/feedflint

Donations can be dropped off Monday-Friday 11am-12Noon. Calling ahead is not necessary, but our needs change frequently, so calling ahead of time is a good idea!

Give time! We need volunteers!!! Volunteers arrive at 9:30am and are done by 12:30pm. Tasks include handing out lunches, assisting in the Angel Closet, light cleaning, putting together items to pass out to clients, and more.

Refer people!!

Questions??? Call 810-239-3427
or email southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

God assured the exiled Israelites, through the Prophet Jeremiah, not to give up their dreams for a better life. God has a plan.

I along know the plans I have
for you, plans to bring you
prosperity and not disaster,
plans to bring about the future
you hope for.

Jeremiah 29:11

Dreams show up in art. The artist pours out their heart on canvas, in their movements, through their instruments, voices, writings, and other means of expression. Art, at its best, is the voice of God speaking through ordinary creatures.

I believe Triger is correct in his assessment that “Music is the weapon of the great awakening, and the bullhorn in the reshaping of the American Dream.” And clearly the country music genre is a rather large bullhorn. According to CMA, approximately reaches approximately 139 million. A survey by ARPA found that 40% of those surveyed listen to country music.

This year, our country elects our president for the next four years along with a myriad of other public officials. While we do not intend to tell you who to vote for, we hope to highlight some of our common struggles and issues that should influence our choices.

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](#).

Pastor Tommy

David Leonhardt. *Ours was the Shining Future: The Story of the American Dream*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2023.

Kyle “Trigger” Coroneos. “Music, and the Reshaping of The American Dream,” © [SavingCountryMusic.com](#)., February 14, 2012. Retrieved from: [Link to Article](#)

Before Polly's arrival, Kevin surprised Lisa with a second Christmas tree in the center of the store. He does not try to fully decorate the tree, however, knowing that decorating is Lisa's specialty. Kevin was against the idea when Lisa first wanted a second tree. His focus was on the critical repairs that were not as visible but could stop them in their tracks if ignored. He criticized the idea arguing there wasn't time for a lot of extra decorating with so much to do.

Kevin learned something else about working with Lisa. The secret to a beautiful display is not balanced perfection. Instead, Lisa leaves something slightly askew that makes her design more interesting.

Also, Kevin realizes something about himself. He focuses on what's left instead of experiencing the beauty found in each moment. He notices how much Lisa enjoys her work and makes the most of each moment.

Perhaps we can all learn something from Lisa about beauty.

On the other side of the balance between beauty and askew is violence. And the intersection between beauty and violence is often too close for comfort.

We celebrate Christmas living in a violent world. The death toll in Gaza is staggering. And the violence perpetrated against Ukraine is heartbreaking. Also, the shooting at Prague University the week before Christmas causes flashbacks of violence in our own backyard. Not to mention flooding and the persistent threat of devastating weather.


These events mirror the violence found in scripture. God is aware and present at the intersection of beauty and violence.

Scripture is full of violence. Scripture is full of violence because there is violence in the world. And scripture is about the world. A world full of stories of violence and darkness.

The story of our faith began when God first revealed God's self to Abraham. This introduction set off a history of emergence for Abraham, for his family, and for the world.

But Abraham's peace wouldn't last for long. Instead, a time comes when brothers turn against brother and the youngest is taken away, only to emerge later as a powerful leader who saves his family.

Generations later, the descendants of Abraham become slaves in Egypt. But God calls a leader to emerge out of the violence and lead his people through the wilderness to a promised land. A land of beauty. The rhythm between beauty and violence continues.



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

Isaiah 9:2-7

The people of the covenant take part in violence and are victims of violence. And from time to time, darkness settles over the land and people. But beauty always emerges, God, speaking through the Prophet, Isaiah, says, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."

God's prophecy is a promise that God's light calls forth beauty once again and the people emerge from the darkness so we see their beauty. This prophecy was relevant when it was first spoken, but also points to a more powerful event when God spoke and beauty emerged from the aftermath of violence.

A young woman, her story foreshadowed by this prophecy and others, is visited by a messenger from God. She is puzzled by the sudden attention. Shaken by the interaction and perhaps doubtful that the angel's message could be true. Mary is left with a statement of divine insight. "There is nothing that God cannot do." How easily we forget!

The Son that Mary carried within her body was none other than God living among us. He knew that we creatures forget that violence never has the last say. That just as the violent beginning of the universe gave way to planet earth where God placed creatures who carry God's image, the light will overcome the darkness.

At the time of His birth, we read that there were shepherds tending to flocks of sheep in a field outside of Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. Common day-workers perhaps. Living with the animals they were hired to watch over and to protect.

But God's message is for all people. No creature is left out. No person is excluded. It does not matter what job we do, where we sleep, or who we sleep with, God's love is pervasive. God's light overcomes the darkness.

We read that God's messengers also came to these unnamed and unlikely persons. I can only imagine what it may have been like. Was the area lit up like a stadium, or was it just the glow from the messenger's demeanor?

Luke tells us, "The glory of the Lord shone over them, and they were terribly afraid. But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people." ALL PEOPLE!

On Monday, 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 brightly others could not miss the opportunity to see for themselves.

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. They made us in God's image. We reflect God's love for creation as the light of the world illuminates our beauty.

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Pastor Tommy

Parts of our series was inspired by Nancy Naigle. *Christmas in Evergreen: Letters to Santa*. Hallmark Publishing..© Crown Media Family Networks, 2019.



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