

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

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Leaders (Living by example)



Country music singer Jason Aldean finally had a song make it to the US Billboard Hot 100, thanks in large part to a controversial video. Aldean did not write the lyrics for "Try That in a Small Town," but he took the heat for filming a video in front of the Maury County Courthouse in Columbia, Tennessee. A site

known for the 1927 mob lynching of an 18-year-old Black man, Henry Choate. CMT quickly pulled the video once the controversy started.

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EVERYONE
HAVE A
WONDERFUL
AND SAFE
WEEK!!

DONATE

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Humble & Kind (ancient wisdom)



Lori McKenna captured the essence of wisdom passed on by parents, grandparents, and guardians in her hit song, "Humble & Kind." She won a Grammy for best Country Song, "Song of the Year" at 2016 CMA Awards and "Country Song of the Year"

at 2016 American Music Awards.

Oh, how I wish more folks actually followed this ancient advice. Particularly those running for political office. But, on the other hand, it is voters who decide whether they believe humble and kind are desirable characteristics for leaders.

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Aldean defended the lyrics, the video and his decision to be a person willing to speak up after seeing news coverage of protests turning violent. In a New York Times article by Livia Albeck-Ripka, Aldean says "I know that a lot of us in this Country don't agree on how we get back to a sense of normalcy where we go at least a day without a headline that keeps us up at night."

The two chapters from our companion book for this week describe the major contributions to a cultural shift that began in the 2nd half of the last century. Preceding the shift and likely contributing to the coming change, crime increased dramatically across the county.

As crime increased, so did feelings of insecurity, along with a major shift in political alliances. White fright became a political strategy and blue collar Americans changed party affiliations in large numbers. The increase began during a time of relative economic stability, contradicting conventional thinking that crime rises because of increases in poverty.

Instead, crime started rising prior to the breakdown in cooperation between business, government and labor that correlated with rising living standards. During this cultural shift, business leaders organized around unregulated free enterprise influencing legislators through lobbying. And the balances that made democratic capitalism possible were systematically eliminated.

David Leonhardt writes "Just as the 1930s started a new political era, so did the 1960s. It was the decade when the coalition that had built democratic capitalism and allowed millions of families to achieve the American dream unraveled."

One correlation explains increased crime, however. Social discord. When political consensus falls apart, when people question whether society is fair and, in particular, when the trust of our fellow citizens fades, crime increases. Similarly, in times of cohesion and patriotism, and when people view the social hierarchy as legitimate, crime usually falls.

Elijah Anderson explains that once citizens question the justness of systems, many of its policies, laws, and rules seem illegitimate. Social trust is like the air that people breathe. A lack of trust affects how people respond to disagreement with neighbors, how willing they are to steal, and more.

In a recent article for *The Atlantic*, Anderson explains some ways that affirmative action, recently obliterated by the US Supreme Court, helped rectify some of the systemic racism embedded in our culture, laws, and practices. "Too many people forget, if ever they knew it, what a profound cultural shift affirmative action effected," Anderson writes. "And they overlook affirmative action's crucial role in forestalling social unrest."

The complexity of interactions between policy, culture, and laws requires a mixture of wisdom, imagination and intellect mixed with diplomacy to govern effectively. Leadership matters. And God weighs in on leadership's obligation to govern responsibly.

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

JANUARY 29 – FEBRUARY 4

- Jan 29 Mon 2:00pm Staff Meeting
- Jan 30 Tue 10:00am Food Distribution
- Jan 31 Wed 11am-12N Angel Closet open at
South Flint Soup Kitchen
(3410 Fenton Rd—3 blocks north of Atherton Rd)
- Feb 1 Thu
- Feb 2 Fri
- Feb 3 Sat
- Feb 4 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings
Contemporary Worship

**** PLEASE KEEP SYLVIA
PITTMAN AND KIM SIMS
IN YOUR PRAYERS AS
THEY BOTH RECOVER
FROM SURGERIES ...**



(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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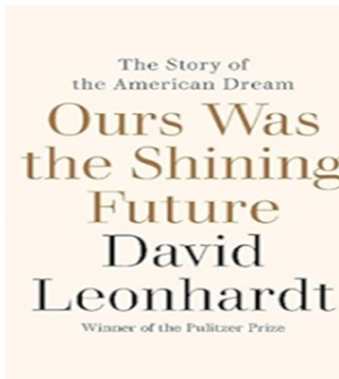


What does the "American Dream" mean to you personally? A common description of the American Dream "Was the ability of people to rise above the circumstances of their birth." Does it still exist?

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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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”

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A meal goes a long way for a senior living alone, a family struggling to make ends meet, or a child fearful of empty shelves at home. But for the residents of Flint who carry the effects of lead-tainted water, nutrition is critical. Feed Flint provides locally grown, chemical-free, fresh produce to residents living in and around Flint. And we're hoping that you can help us provide 10,000 meals this summer.

Feed Flint includes takeout meals, produce boxes with recipes, and home deliveries as part of our work to guide and support families in moving to sustainable abundance. The reality is that Michigan's food insecurity levels got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this summer's recovery is leaving behind those at the most risk of having to miss meals.

Flint families continue to struggle with the ongoing effects of the water crisis.

We're bringing together the resources of the Asbury Community Development Corporation. This includes Asbury Farms, the South Flint Soup Kitchen, the Asbury Community Help Center, multiple food pantries, and our Sizzling Culture Mobile Food Trailer. Our plan is to care for our neighbors when they need it most. We accept all people as they are, and our doors are always open to anyone.

Asbury Farms provides locally grown produce used to create fabulous and nutritious meals. Our seed-to-table approach is community-based. This not only helps families make it through emergencies and crises. We help move families towards sustainable abundance.

Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated abundance.

Our work is also about food and justice. Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into active citizens. And all residents can enjoy safety, good health, and a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives. This summer, help us address food insecurity and strengthen Flint's budding local food system by supporting the Feed Flint campaign. Thank you for taking the time to see what we're doing and considering how you can help.

Donate to our Feed Flint Campaign by visiting:
flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:

I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep...I will look for those that are lost, bring back those that wander off, bandage those that are hurt, and heal those that are sick...

Ezekiel 34:1-19

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Ezekiel 34:1-19 and reflect on what it means in today's context. Do you notice any similarities to our current governmental leaders or candidates? Explain.
2. Read this week's articles titled *Leaders*. Do you feel that social discord is rising? Give some illustrations to support your opinion. What do you look for in leaders you choose to follow? How do your preference for leaders affect your vote?
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 ...

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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

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How You Can Donate

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- Scan QR Code

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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 Trigger 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](#)

It was Tim McGraw's recording of McKenna's song that propelled it to the number one spot. And according to a Time Magazine article by Charlotte Alter, this country artist works hard at living up to the advice he sings about. One of his goals, according to his "Person of the Week" interview, is for country music to help unify our country.

McGraw shared what he hopes can happen. "I want what's best for our country. I want what's best for most people in our country. I think everybody deserves the right to live their life in the best way that they possibly can and to soar in the best way."

Perhaps being raised by a single mother helps McGraw put things into a more realistic perspective. McKenna notes that "His audience is a true cross-section of the American electorate."

Here's the paradox. Our standard of living and life expectancy steadily increased after the Great Depression thanks, in large part, to a partnership of business, government, and organized labor. Since then, we are allowed our leaders to move us toward different ideas.

People are mostly unpredictable. Tim Palmer explains humans are "non-linear." In other words, outputs are not in direct proportion to inputs. Like forecasting weather, humans are nonlinear systems and difficult to predict. He explains that if we win big in the lottery, we're ecstatic. However, if we win four times as much, we're not four times as ecstatic.

We're non-linear and life is unpredictable. "Life seems to progress smoothly and predictably for much of the time. Indeed, it seems one of our biggest concerns appears to be getting stuck in a rut. But then, seemingly out of nowhere, our world is turned upside down," notes Palmer.

We often say that hindsight is 20/20. Afterwards, we look back and we see the problems that were not so visible when it was happening. David Leonhardt describes in this week's chapters from our companion book for this series, the clarity we now have regarding systemic racism that continued long after emancipation.

Statistically, African Americans benefited economically from the New Deal policies that Leonhardt describes as democratic capitalism, despite their exclusion from programs intended to improve the lives of working Americans. He writes that "Lawmakers in Congress and state legislatures, as well as police officers, school administrators, business executives, and citizen vigilantes around the country all played a part. Trying to prevent Black Americans from joining the middle class was government policy, sometimes written into law and other times... enforced by government officials."

The policies and practices put in place after the Great Depression benefited everyone. Even black Americans who were systemically discriminated against. It took courage and an awakening before some of our discriminatory practices were eliminated.

But there's a lot of work left to do. Despite the advances made in the last century, people of color continue to experience discrimination in the workplace and in the streets. Meanwhile, the blurred focus of our national leaders seems self-serving.

According to Luke, Jesus was asked one day to weigh in on a dispute between two brothers. One brother asked Jesus to tell his sibling to divide the property with him. Avoiding the likely trap set for Him. Jesus moved the subject from property to human relationships.

“Watch out and guard yourselves from every kind of greed,” Jesus said, “Because your true life is not made up of the things you own, no matter how rich you may be .”

Watch out and guard yourselves from every kind of greed; because your true life is not made up of the things you own, no matter how rich you may be.

Luke 12: 13-15

I believe that pursuing humble and kind is more reflective of our true life than we realize.

Lori McKenna, Tim McGraw, and others reflect both the hopes and disappointments for a large cross-section of Americans. They write and sing both for fame and in the hope of a better future.

But a better future is ultimately up to you and me. We may not vote on bills that come to the floor in congress, but we can cast a vote for those who represent us. Humble and kind seem like biblical attributes that deserve priority in our decisions.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website's](#) homepage - [Click here to watch.](#) This button takes you to our [YouTube channel!](#) You can find more information about us on our website at [FlintAsburyChurch.org.](http://FlintAsburyChurch.org)

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

Charlotte Alter. “Tim McGraw on How Music Can Heal Divisions in America.” © Time Magazine, November 2, 2023. Retrieved from: [link](#).

Tim Palmer. “Why the world feels so unstable right now.” © BBC, 5th February 2023. Retrieved from: [link](#).

God called on the Prophet Ezekiel to denounce the leaders of Israel for not governing effectively. The powerful not only kept the best for themselves, they failed to make sure that all had equal access to resources.

God criticizes the existing leaders with poetic artistry. "My other sheep have to eat the grass you trample down and drink the water, you muddy!" It was time for new leadership.

I, myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. I will look for those that are lost, bring back those that wander off, bandage those that are hurt, and heal those that are sick ...

Ezekiel 34:1-19

I suspect that most of us can identify with God's frustration. And we clearly do not all agree on which leaders are more likely to lead effectively. But this is the beauty of a democracy. We each have a voice and a vote.

And while those of us who claim allegiance to Jesus Christ also find a lot to argue about, we at least refer to the same source of authority.

We know through scripture that God chooses love and grace over all other alternatives. And God knows the difference between empty words intended to win your vote and effective policy.

You and I are also called to lead through example. We look to the teachings and illustrations of Jesus Christ and model our own lives accordingly. And we should expect that our leaders to do the same. They don't have to believe what we believe, but their intentions should be the same.

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Taijuan Moorman. "Jason Aldean defends 'Try That in a Small Town' song." © USA Today, Oct 19, 2023. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Elijah Anderson. "Black Success, White Backlash." © The Atlantic, November, 2023. Retrieved from: [link](#)

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