

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 4 Issue 16

Prayer (Metaphors & Hyperbole)

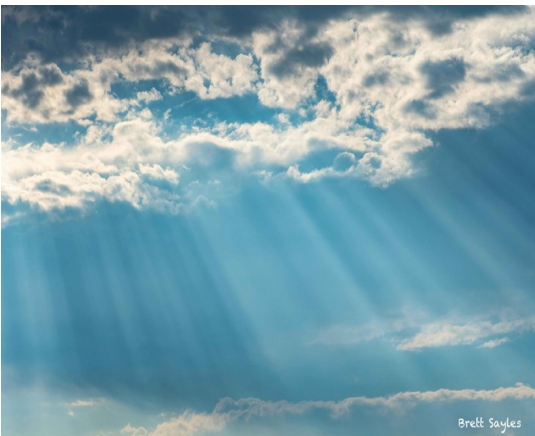


If I have told you once, I have told you a thousand times you don't seem to know enough to come inside when it's raining cats and dogs.

When someone says it's raining cats and dogs, we don't run out hoping for a free kitten from the heavens.

We grab an umbrella, raincoat and galoshes because it's raining hard. But if someone says the rain drops must be at least 10 millimeters, we first may need to ask google how wet we will get if we go outside. Page 2

Heaven (Rabbit Holes)



It makes little sense that a pastor should struggle to find what to say about heaven. After all, heaven is our ultimate goal, our reward and God's promise for eternal life free from pain. It simply does not make sense.

This week's message finds support from chapter four of

Adam Hamilton's book. But I needed more.

I'm thankful for Lewis Carol's *Alice in Wonderland*. Her classic serves well for conundrums like heaven, and one of the many life lessons from her book includes the idiom "down the rabbit hole."

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JUNE 16, 2024

EVERYONE
HAVE A
WONDERFUL
WEEKEND!

DONATE

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And mom didn't really mean she counted that many times she told you. Rather, she's showing her annoyance that more than one time wasn't enough.

Using hyperbole and metaphors conveys meaning in a more memorable way than stating facts.

Jakob Straub, an expert storyteller, writes in a blog post, "Hyperbole is one of the literary devices such as simile, metaphor, personification, or euphemism which use figurative language to create meaning beyond the conventional definition of the individual words, deviating from the literal meaning."

As a writer and storyteller, Straub knows that keeping our attention isn't easy. And attention spans are shorter than ever. For effective writing, Straub recommends the careful use of literary devices to make content more interesting. For example, using powerful metaphors is more effective for longer term impact.

So should we use literal devices in prayers? Doesn't God see right through them? Is praying a contest where the winner's prayers get answered? The short answers are maybe, yes and no.

First, prayer may as well be honest. God already knows where we're headed before we do. Why not start a prayer with "Lord, if I've asked you once, I've asked you a thousand times," if this is how you feel? God knows how often and how sincere you've been.

But let's get to the main point marked by Adam Hamilton's label for this week's chapter from his book, "When Prayers Go Unanswered."

I'm convinced that God answers prayers. But thankfully, God doesn't answer all prayers. At least, not in the way we hope. Nevertheless, frustration, because of God's inaction, is a common experience.

Does this distress call sound familiar? "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? I have cried desperately for help, but still it does not come. During the day, I call to you, my God, but you do not answer; I call at night, but get no rest" (Psalm 22:1-2).

Who hasn't felt this way when we want and need God's intervention but there is no sign God is even listening? When our prayers, particularly our most desperate prayers, go unanswered, it can feel like God isn't interested in our problems.

Yet, elsewhere in scripture, Jesus encourages us to ask for everything we need. And it's often easier to rationalize that God provides what we need, but not necessarily our wants. This rationalization leaves us unsatisfied, since desperation usually feels like an absolute need that God ignores.

One of the more confusing stories shared by Matthew about Jesus regards an encounter with a fig tree. It is hard not to read the story literally when you have experience similar frustration. Jesus is leaving the temple when he spots a fig tree. Matthew tells us Jesus was hungry for a fresh fig but couldn't find a single fig on the tree. Frustrated, Jesus condemns the tree, and it dries up.

Amazing by what they saw. His followers asked Jesus how it was possible the tree dried up so quickly. Jesus responded by telling them, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer."

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kevin Croom Jonathon Misner
 Sylvia Pittman Terrance Williams
 Mirium Watson



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
 HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard Nancy Elston



COMING UP THIS WEEK
JUNE 17 - 23



June 17	Mon	2:30pm	Staff Meeting
		6:00pm	Leadership Team
June 18	Tue	10:00am	Food Distribution
June 19	Wed	11am-1pm	Angel Closet at South Flint Soup Kitchen
June 20	Thu		
June 21	Fri	8:30am-till gone	Food Distribution at SFSK
June 22	Sat		
June 23	Sun	10:30am	New Beginnings Contemporary Worship

* For those of you that did not know Norma Nattrass passed away Friday, June 7th. Her memorial service will be Saturday, June 29th at 11am here at Asbury, followed by a dinner downstairs. Please keep Norma's family in your prayers.
 Connie

(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 — “Doubt” ..

“We want certainty, but God gives us mystery,” writes Adam Hamilton in our companion book for this series, titled *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith* (see Book Club News). Hamilton argues doubt is both natural and healthy. As long as our doubt is motivated further reflection and a search for truth.

Here is the outline if you want to read the chapters from our companion book as we progress through our series:

May 19	Is there a God?	Chapters Intro-1
May 26	The Good Book?	Chapter 2
June 2	Are all non-Christians going to hell?	Chapter 3
June 9	Is Heaven real?	Chapter 4
June 16	When prayers go unanswered	Chapter 5
June 23	Why do the innocent suffer?	Chapter 6

*The heavens tell about the
glory of God. The skies
show that his hands
created them. Day after
day they speak about it.
Night after night they
make it known.*

Psalm 19:1-2

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes on [Facebook](#) and 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 [FlintAsburyChurch.org](#).

Pastor Tommy

Adam Hamilton. *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith*. Nashville: Abington Press, 2023.

“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:

You will even be able to say to this hill, “Get up and throw yourself in the sea,” and it will. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Matthew 21:18-22

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Matthew 21:18-22 and Psalm 22. Which of these texts fit your experiences with prayer? In what ways?
2. Read this week’s articles titled Prayer. Are you familiar with this story? What was fruitless religion? What makes religion fruitful?
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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Our clients need bottled water for cooking,
going with sack lunches, to bathe and brush
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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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More Information :



(810) 235-0016



funding@flintasbury.org

We'll have a limited number of copies of *Personhood*. But copies are available through most book retailers and libraries. The price on Amazon as of the publication of this article is \$13.99 for paperback, published in 1986. Used copies are available for under \$10.00. The original hardcover, published 10 years earlier sells for just over \$6.00.

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

June 30	Chapters Intro-I
July 7	Chapter II
July 14	Chapter III
July 21	Chapter IV (through Connectiveness)
July 28	Chapter IV & V

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

Leo Buscaglia. *Personhood: The Art of Being Fully Human*. NY: Random House, 1986.

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

The rabbit hole is a place where you make unexpected discoveries during an adventure you hadn't planned on taking. As is often the case, I didn't see the rabbit hole in front of me. It started with googling a few keywords and phrases that came to mind as I reflected on Hamilton's question that labels this week's chapter, "Is Heaven Real?"

Well, heaven is real, isn't it?

Join me in the rabbit hole where we run into cognitive dissonance. We will call her dissonance for short. This is where our brain struggles to hold on to two ideas where we can't imagine a way for both to be true. When we experience dissonance, it's annoying. Think toothache.

Dissonance reminds me of Mary meeting Jesus outside the tomb where His body was placed after the crucifixion. She did not recognize Him, not because Jesus had changed. Rather, Mary's way of viewing the world needed to change.

Mary was stuck. Either she stayed in the comfortable past where dead people are not alive or she struggles through to a new truth. Jesus is alive.

In the middle of my conversation with dissonance, another stranger shows up called neuroplasticity. What an awesome fellow. Neuroplasticity is the ability of our brains to get unstuck. It brings hope to persons who suffered trauma. Think reprogramming.

I learned, however, neuroplasticity has a personality quirk. As our brain reprograms itself repetitive experiences, imagined or real, creates a new neural path which may insist on its way. We're stuck in a different rut.

The upcoming presidential election has me worried. By some guesses we're more divided than at anytime in our country's history, including the time leading up to the civil war. I'm concerned that the plasticity of too many brains is stuck.

Meanwhile, this past week, we remembered the sacrifices made 80 years ago on the beaches of Normandy. Our country was divided on whether our country had any business supporting a war in Europe. A group calling themselves "The America First Committee" argued against U.S. involvement. Fortunately, the isolationist didn't prevail. And one of the remaining veterans reminded us in an interview, "Freedom isn't free."

It took several nations working together to stop the atrocities perpetrated by ordinary people following a tyrant. A person who rose to power by convincing enough supporters that anyone who disagreed was an enemy. The people rallied around the ideals of hatred, labelling and Germany first, believing the lies and joining the cult of a popular politician. Eventually, the rigidity of their collective consciousness frozen in place.

So how are these topics connected? That's the fun of rabbit holes. There's no restriction on subject matter, so nothing seems related, at first. But Alice can tell you if you hang in there, pieces fall into place.

One night when Jesus was with His followers for supper. He knew it was time for a farewell conversation. Scholars call this His "farewell discourse." I am thinking His friends wondered if Jesus was spending time in a rabbit hole. It was a lengthy monologue that included explanation, prayers and promises.

Jesus said, "There are many rooms in my Father's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so. And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to myself, so that you will be where I am" (John 14:2-3)

I often share these words when officiating memorial services, hoping to comfort those in attendance. These words are part of a promise that heaven is real. Sometimes I wonder if they're said so often we're immune to what Jesus was saying.

So we don't look at the troubles we can see now. Rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

2 Corinthians 4:18

I'm guessing Mary was at supper that night. Likely, waiting on the others. I wonder how much she heard of what Jesus said about what to expect?

Perhaps Mary heard just enough, but the idea lay just outside range of her imagination. But then something happened. Jesus

said her name and the neurons in her brain discovered a new path. It was Jesus speaking to her. Jesus is alive.

Jesus promised He would come back to get her. And His promise is not just for Mary, Matthew, James, John and the others. Paul discovered it was him also, when his brain was reprogrammed.

Paul shared his new way of seeing life with the people in Corinth. "For we know that when we die and leave this earthly body, we will have an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands" (2 Corinthians 5:1). Paul wanted his friends to know Jesus' promise was also for them.

I did not meet heaven while in the rabbit hole. But I remember a young girl named Heaven and how she explored everything that caught her eye, as though it was her first time seeing a flower or a stone. She reminded me of the way William Young described the Holy Spirit in his 2008 novel *The Shack*.

Her name was Sarayu, which means "a common wind" because she seemed to be everywhere at once. And everything was awesome for Sarayu.

I can't tell you what heaven is like, nor can I promise you it's real. But my promises aren't what matters and neither are the promises of anyone else relevant when it comes to heaven.

Jesus promises to return and take us to be with Him. This is all we need to know that whatever heaven might be, it is real. And this is what I choose to believe.

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](#).

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Pastor Tommy

Parts of our series was inspired by Adam Hamilton. *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith*. Nashville: Abington Press, 2023.
William P. Young, *The Shack*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Windblown Media 2008.

And as though He needed to punctuate the power of prayer, Jesus told them, “You will even be able to say to this hill, ‘Get up and throw yourself in the sea,’ and it will” (Matthew 21:21-22).

You will even be able to say to this hill, “Get up and throw yourself in the sea,” and it will. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.

Matthew 21: 18-22

Now that’s really a powerful prayer. So if I ask God to move a gigantic pile of dirt left over from excavating for our driveway, can I save the cost of labor and equipment to spread the dirt for us? Likely not.

But I’m guessing that if I pray God will watch over me as I spend the hours it takes to move the dirt pile, God will do it.

If you’re following me, you should be confused by now. Jesus told His followers Jesus would move a hill of dirt if they asked. Do they get insider consideration and I don’t?

The contradiction began when I interpreted the story literally. Scripture is full of metaphors and Jesus, a master storyteller, used hyperbole and metaphors generously. Otherwise, the limitations of language would limit the power of the stories He told.

I believe the same Spirit Jesus was talking about empowered the writer of Matthew. And within the constraints of the language Matthew knew, but beyond the capabilities and capacities Matthew possessed, we’re left with divine insight into prayer.

Eugene Boring in the New Interpreters Bible draws attention to what happened before and after this story. Jesus left the temple after turning over the tables of the money changers and reminding us “fruitless” religion was never God’s intention.

The fig tree, like fruitless religion, withers. The story isn’t about kicking the vending machine when your selection doesn’t drop. Using hyperbole and metaphors, Jesus contrasts the fruitfulness of trusting God as we go about utilizing the gifts given to us to serve others.

In this week’s chapter from our companion book, Adam Hamilton introduces pray and work. We pray for those things we’re actively working to resolve.

Jesus says we can move mountains through prayer and work. We pray for what we both need and want while taking action.

I believe God answers all prayers. But not necessarily with the response we want.

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Pastor Tommy

Parts of our series was inspired by Adam Hamilton. *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith*. Nashville: Abington Press, 2023. Jakob Straub. *“Hyperbole: What Is It and How to Use It in Your Writing.”* © Jakob Straub, April 4, 2024. Retrieved from: [*link*](#)



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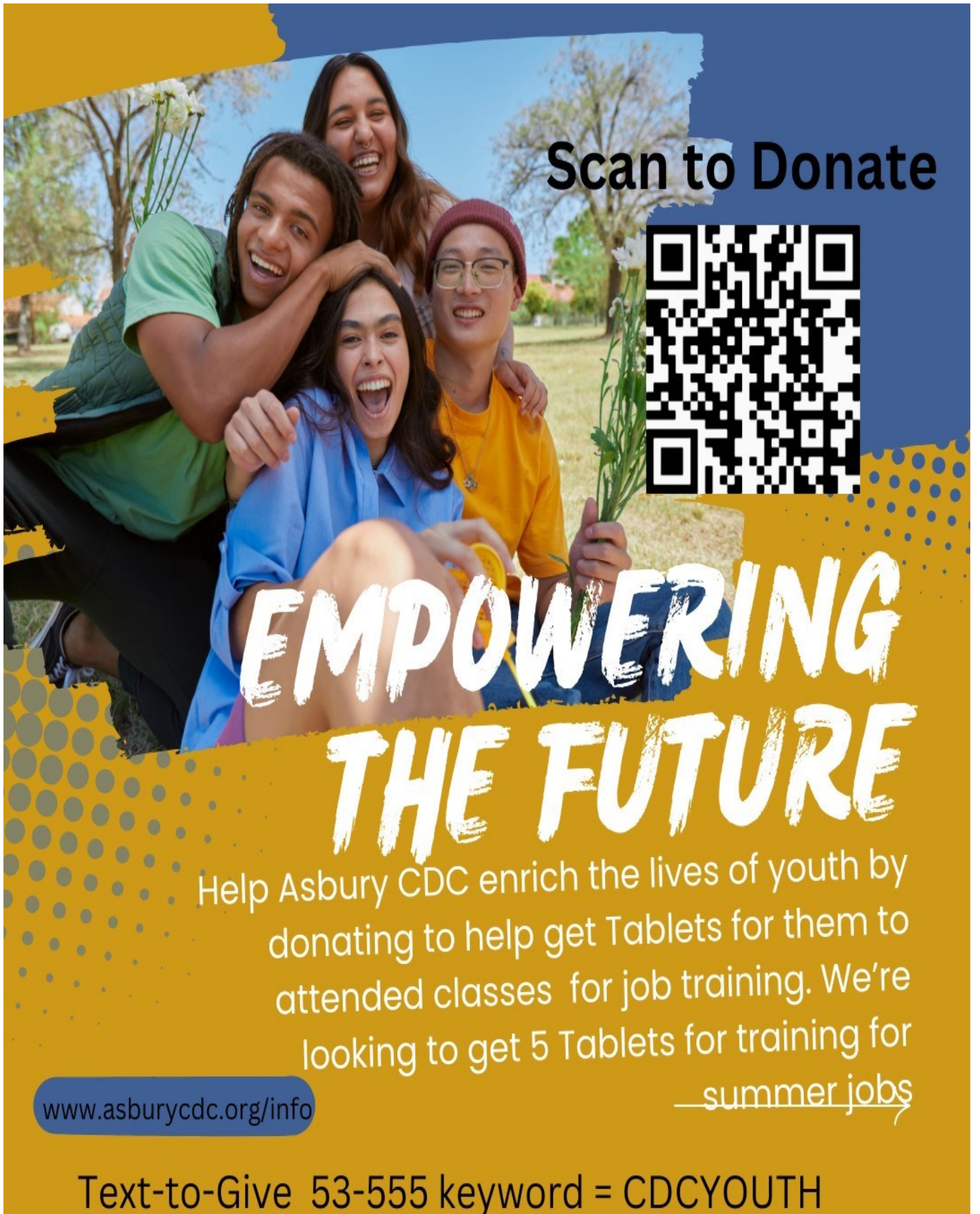
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