

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 4 Issue 23

Prayer (Metaphors & Hyperbole)



Zaid Ahmed

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.

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Suffering (Why?)



Clement Prout

In Psalm 91 we read God's promise to put angels in charge for protection wherever we go. And These angels will hold us up with their hands to keep us from hurting our feet on the stones. This promise applies to anyone turning to God for safety.

If this is true, why is there suffering?

Adam Hamilton writes in our companion book for this series, "When life does not align with our assumptions about God, we can lose faith altogether." Certainly, when we hold God accountable for everything bad that happens, we're likely to question God's goodness. And this may cause us to miss out on the peace and joy that comes from a close relationship with God.

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JUNE 23, 2024

EVERYONE
HAVE A
WONDERFUL
WEEKEND!



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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 24 - 30



| | | | |
|---------|-----|---------|--------------------------------|
| June 24 | Mon | 2:30pm | Staff Meeting |
| June 25 | Tue | 10:00am | Food Distribution |
| | | 3:00pm | CDC Board Meeting |
| June 26 | Wed | | |
| June 27 | Thu | | |
| June 28 | Fri | | |
| June 29 | Sat | 11:00am | Norma Natrass Memorial Service |
| June 30 | 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 "Personhood"



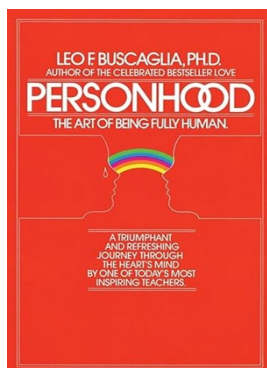
Next Sunday we begin a new series based, in large part, on *Personhood: The Art of Being Fully Human*, by Leo Buscaglia, PhD.

We often talk about salvation as beginning with spiritual rebirth. More importantly, the results of spiritual rebirth is seen by others as we change our focus from ourselves to others.

A downside emerges when our enthusiasm results in losing ourselves. However, while Jesus often asks us to leave our baggage behind, He never asks us to leave who we are behind.

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Book Club News



We finish our current worship series, *Doubt*, on Sunday June 23. We were guided along the way by Adam Hamilton's book, *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith*.

Being Fully Human, by Leo Buscaglia, PhD.

Felice Leonardo Buscaglia (March 31, 1924 – June 12, 1998) spent his early childhood in Aosta, Italy, according to Wikipedia. But as an adult, he was known as "Dr. Love."

Education at the University of Southern California.

The Professor was known for introducing himself on elevators. With his back to the door he would say something like, "This might be the only chance I'll ever get to meet you and I don't want to miss this chance."

Our companion book for our new worship series beginning on Sunday, June 30, is *Personhood: The Art of*

Professor Buscaglia earned this title by his passion for offering insight to others as an author, motivational speaker, and professor in the Department of Special

In *Personhood*, Buscaglia offers an historic view of the ethical principles guiding our common humanity. He emphasizes our individual responsibilities, through our own uniqueness, for completing our contribution to a vast universal tapestry. The full actualization of the world depends on yours and my self-actualization. Therefore, the challenge facing all of us is to work at being fully human.

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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 |

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Upcoming Worship Series — “Personhood” ..

Dr. Buscaglia’s life passion was for all of humanity to reach our full potential of personhood. Because of his focus and training, the context he knew was psychological science. The foundational understanding for much of his view of humanity came from the works of Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

Buscaglia writes in his book’s forward:

Loren Eiseley describes our world as a place “where even a spider refuses to lie down and die if a rope can still be spun to a star.” Like the spider, there are those of us who refuse to stop spinning, even when it would appear to be far more sophisticated to be without hope. Our rope, though perhaps frail, can still be spun with optimism, curiosity, wonder, love and the sincere desire to share a trip to the stars. Our goal is worth the struggle, for in this case, the star to which we aspire is full humanity for all.

My context comes from my knowledge and passion for following Jesus Christ. My own experience of rebirth is direct correlation between spiritual awareness and self-actualization.

No one can see the Kingdom of God without being born again ...

John 3:3

Our theme text for this series comes from the 3rd chapter of John’s Gospel which begins with the story of Nicodemus. He is confused when Jesus begins their conversation with the idea of spiritual rebirth.

Likewise, I’m guessing that most persons are confused by the idea of self-actualization.

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

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

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

“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:

We will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild, large and small.

Genesis 1:20-31

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Genesis 1:20-31, Exodus 20:7 and Psalm 91. What parallels can you draw from these three texts? In what ways is Psalm true for you? What does it mean
2. Read this week's articles titled Suffering. In what ways are you or someone close to you suffering? What is the cause of the suffering? Do you feel God's presence in your suffering? What can you do to take better care of our planet?
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.



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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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More Information :



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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

So, who's at fault here? Does God break promises?

First, who's at fault depends on the circumstances. There is no doubt humans are responsible for a great deal of suffering. The most obvious example is climate change. The suffering caused by climate change is the fault of human unwillingness to manage our planet as God intended.

Isn't it interesting that Satan quotes Psalm 91 to Jesus while coaxing Him to jump off the top of the temple? Of course, Jesus didn't fall for it. And neither should we.

Last week, our message lead us to the harmony found in pray and work. Instead of treating prayer like an order for what we want, we use the gifts and capacities God provides to do the work needed to meet our desires.

The obvious answer to climate change is to adjust our lifestyle to reduce our carbon footprint. Of course, frustration comes when we realize one person changing isn't enough. But it's a start. And voting for candidates running for public office with track records and promises to work for legislation that broadens our collective impact is another monumental step.

But not all suffering comes from climate change, nor is all suffering directly caused by human failure. However, suffering, because of climate change, is echoed with daily news reports of record-breaking temperatures, rainfall, violent storms and massive fires.

Health concerns rank near the top in causing suffering. Of course, climate change also negatively affects our health. According to Priya Joi, a science journalist, climate change directly affects our health. Her list includes: greater spread of insect-borne diseases, water and food scarcity, poor air quality, displacement and migration and mental health.

I have no doubt that our failure to care for our planet is sin. I also believe God isn't punishing us with bigger and badder storms. But God isn't shielding us from the consequences of our actions.

Hamilton writes, "Every act of unkindness, neglect, abuse, and violence; every act of cruelty and inhumanity and every war is a reflection of our brokenness and sin as human beings, and the failure of our rule over this planet God has given."

Unkindness, neglect, abuse and violence all create suffering. War, in particular, causes vast suffering. None of this is part of God's plan for us. Rather, the fault is human failure to live as God intended.

Louisiana shocked the nation by passing legislation requiring that schools post the Ten Commandments in every classroom. The arguments for this action vary, as do the arguments against. Displays must include language that the commandments were a part of classroom curriculum for three centuries.

We will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us. They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild, large and small.

Genesis 1:20-31

As I read the articles and listen to the proponents explain their justification I'm skeptical. How about posters to promote care of our planet instead? Obviously, three centuries of focus wasn't effective for our generation of leaders.

But on this topic, Hamilton points us to number 3 on the list that's often obscured by common interpretation. I grew up with the belief that God did not want us to curse and that using God's name for impact was strictly forbidden. While God may feel this way and this may be a good idea, it's important not to miss the bigger picture.

The Good News Translation translates the Hebrew text this way: "Do not use God's name for evil purposes." When we blame God for human acts that cause suffering for others, we're on the wrong side of this directive.

Of course, natural disasters occurred before the damage accumulated enough to change our climate, but with less frequency. And humans don't cause every storm. Nor are earthquakes the result of human failure. Some suffering happens when there's simply no one to blame.

For example, the complexity of our individual existence is mind-boggling, as 30 trillion cells work cooperatively to sustain life as we know it. It's no wonder that breakdowns happen. And most of the time, our bodies adapt, fight off infections and restore order.

However, sometimes a damaged cell replicates and cancer emerges. Fortunately, medical science continues to discover ways to assist our bodies with healing. A lot of human suffering comes because of health concerns that may not be directly attributable to anything we did or didn't do.

Nevertheless, I would be remiss if I didn't point out that cancer is oftentimes the result of human abuse of our planet's resources and our bodies.

Our bodies are not indestructible and were not built to last forever. But our souls do.

And this is where our series on doubt begins and ends. God promises to be with us through it all and forever. Matthew tells us the birth of Jesus fulfilled the promise God made through the prophet Isaiah that a son will be born and named Immanuel, or "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Jesus is God living among us.

God's Spirit is present everywhere and always. So even though suffering comes, it is never the last word. Jesus lived, died and lives again. Death is not the last word. God lives on and so do we. Amen.

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.

Priya Joi. "Five key links between climate change and health." © Priya Joi, March 22, 2023. Retrieved from: [link](#)

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

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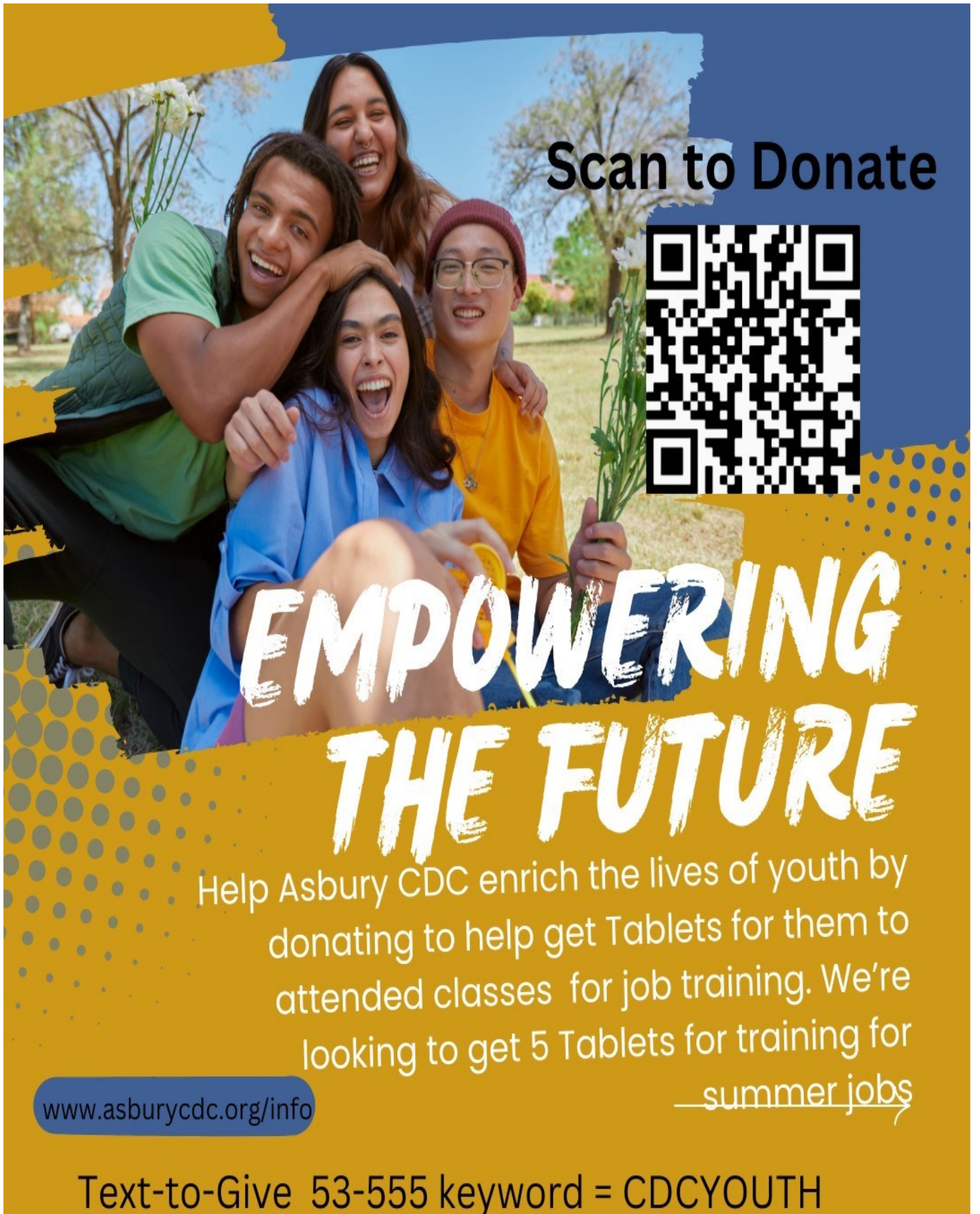
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Flint Asbury Community Development Corporation

South Flint Soup Kitchen

3410 Fenton Rd. Flint, MI 48507

Meet up

Eat up!



Ages
0-18

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Breakfast

9-10am

June 17 - Aug 30

Lunch

12-1pm

www.SouthFlintSoupKitchen.org
www.FlintAsburyCDC.org