

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Unafraid (Living fearless despite uncertainty)



OzAsia Festival kicked off in reflective-then-dramatic style with *Red Sorghum*, an epic

Is it possible to live fearlessly when surrounded by uncertainty? Do old age, sickness, and death have to threaten us? It is said that only the good die young, but when the young die it is seen as an awful tragedy.

The reality of existence is that death offends us. We know at the core of our being that we were created for living, but in the garden incident in Genesis, the first humans believed a lying snake instead of trusting their Creator. Death

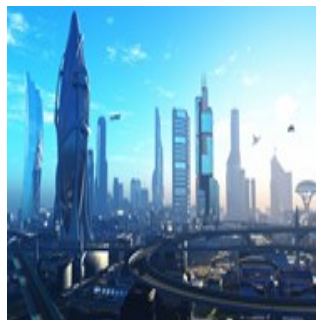
slithered into paradise and we have been ashamed and afraid ever since.

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Now What? (More is never enough)

Are you worried that the world is headed towards some awful disaster? The tone of much of the political rhetoric continues to throw out frightening "what-ifs" that lead a lot of us in this direction. Our country hasn't faced a president refusing to accept the results of an election. In particular, a president supported by a few members of Congress, a handful of journalists, and groups of armed protesters.

pating in drills in the unlikely event that the U.S. should come under nuclear attack. This makes the speech given by airline attendants about seat cushions and water landings seem less threatening by comparison.



It was a long time ago, but I remember as a child partici-

Dystopia, the opposite of utopia, is a word that tries to capture this sense of the world coming to a terrible end. The term "dystopia" comes from ancient Greek. When we have these terrifying feelings, we share in a feeling also held by our ancestors who lived thousands of years before us.

Yet the world is still spinning—perhaps out of control, or at least our control. And the odds are the

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Volume 20 Issue 29

November 29, 2020



You must wear a mask while in the area and to enter church office. If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you.

Thank you & Stay safe Everyone!

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Now What? (More is never enough) ...cont from page 1

world will continue to turn, at least for the next hundred years or so. And the world will spin even if democracy, as we know it, is replaced by an authoritarian form of government. Which isn't very likely despite temper tantrums and conspiracy theories.

Granted, there is a lot to be alarmed about—big problems like racial injustice, pandemics, global warming, wild-fires, and destructive weather patterns. Several alarms are going off all at once. And each alarm, if we decide we're going to do something about it, spells change with a capital "C." in other words, the kind of change that most of us fear.

So most of us shut-out the noise when it comes to challenging problems. After all, we have enough worries and fears. Even if somehow we manage to reverse global warming, vaccinations become readily available, racial injustice somehow gets resolved, and power transfers smoothly to a new administration.

Even when all of these big problems get solved without our help or

worry. Which they won't, by the way, without all of us participating. But let's say they do get solved. We're still left with our personal fears.

For example, how about the fear that we're missing out on something that we really shouldn't miss? Every Facebook post. Every Instagram picture, every share of a friend's escape for a dream vacation, or even a new truck, leaves us feeling just a little bit envious.

And we no more than catch the latest commercials pitching those things we just shouldn't have to live without, and we open a bill that exceeds the money we have to pay it.

Do any of these fears describe you? During these months of isolation and worry about the coronavirus, politics, and social unrest, are you finding yourself vacillating between your personal worries and your fear that the world is about to crash?

You know we actually have quite a bit of control over some of these fears. None of us have the power, on our own, to reverse decisions to sell oil drilling rights in pristine, Alaskan land preserves. But we can choose to ignore the commercial showing the coolest tailgate on a pickup you ever saw.



We can choose to show gratitude that we woke up this morning, almost in our right mind, and we have enough sense to know that there are actually things worth worrying about. We can set aside a little money for the future. We can also choose to set aside a little bit of whatever money we do have as an offering to God for all that we do have going for us. And we can have hope.





In Our Prayers

Lisa Bohnsack

Miriam Watson

**FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE**

Nancy Elston

Elaine Lamoreaux

Shirley Craig

Norma Buzzard

Mary Nations



(Pastor Book Club will be via Zoom until further notice—call the church office for more info 235-0016)

The COVID-19 pandemic is still serious and the number of new cases in Genesee County is rising again.

We are now meeting for Pastor Book Club in person at 12Noon in the downstairs Wesley Conference Room.

Masks are a requirement while not eating or drinking. If your health conditions prevent wearing a mask plan to stay away for now for your protection and the well-being of others.

For now, you must bring your own lunch. We are not having a potluck lunch due to health concerns. But, please, do wear your masks.

Pastor Tommy



★ Coming up this week ★

- Nov 30 Mon
- Dec 1 Tues 10am-2pm
Water / Food Distribution
- Dec 2 Wed Pastor Book Club
(Via Zoom until further notice)
- Dec 3 Thu
- Dec 4 Fri
- Dec 5 Sat
- Dec 6 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings
Contemporary Worship

Join worship online

Sunday, November 29th -10:30am

Facebook Live
or Webinar



Join by Phone

+1 929 436 2866

Meeting ID: 324 841 204

Join online

[HTTPS://ZOOM.US/J/324841204](https://zoom.us/j/324841204)

Asbury Worship Series Incarnate (Coming December)

This year has pushed us near our limits of endurance. We need each other now more than ever. And yet we are divided as a nation. Segregated by red and blue, we have allowed ourselves to be manipulated by ideology and selective fear. Some of us fear people who think differently than we do regarding political issues. Some of us

fear giving others coronavirus or getting infected ourselves.



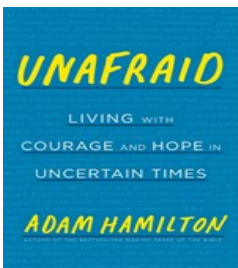
Cyndi and I are hanging out together this Thanksgiving. In past years, we spent time with extended family that we only get to see occasionally.

We haven't hugged our grandchildren in months. We visit with our children wearing masks and sitting outside. The mask that Cyndi made me is holding up much better than I am. I suspect that it saved my life more than once. But I can't know for sure since lack of visibility is the nature of this virus and authoritarian politics.

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Book Club News

We finished our discussions of *Finding Peace in an Anxious World* this past Wednesday. If you haven't read this book you may want to consider reading it at some point.



The Serenity Prayer is a reliable source of inspiration for millions. And this book

offers additional spiritual practices to help us cope with our anxiety.

"Fear is the great thief. It steals our peace. It quietly deprives us of one present moment after another, without our even knowing. In *Unafraid*, Adam gives us a thoughtful, literate, faith-filled guide to re-claiming our minds and our lives."

Adam Hamilton acknowledges that fear is "the emotion that profoundly shapes us." After all, everyone worries about something, and there is plenty in this world to fear. Dig deeper into the causes of depression and you are likely to discover fear as a root cause. The same holds true for addictions. Fear also drives prejudice and hate.

Our next book is titled, *Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times*. This book was written by Adam Hamilton, Sr Pastor at Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City. John Ortberg, senior pastor of Menlo Church in Menlo Park, California, offers these remarks —

The reality is that we often fear something that will never happen. It's amazing how much power something that never happens can have over us. Fear can become debilitating, leading to panic attacks or anxiety disorders.

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

Kevin Croom	Dir. Operations
Blair Neifert	Farm Manager
Matt Dee	Farm Operations
Israel Unger	Function to Funding
Kim Sims	Connections
Karl Collyer	Production
Katelin Maylum	Production
South Flint Soup Kitchen	

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Leadership Chair

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.

Fear can be helpful in keeping us safe and out of trouble. Some fear is understanding. Such as, the fear that comes out of facing life-threatening illnesses, the likely death of someone close, or money issues.

A few of us meet in person each Wednesday downstairs for lunch and conversation. Be sure to follow social distancing practices. This means wearing a mask when you are not eating or drinking. We're also online for those who cannot meet in person, are not ready to meet in person, or who do not want to wear a face mask.

Unfortunately, the virus is still a threat and in-person gatherings quickly become super-spreaders if precautions are ignored. Bring your own lunch or coordinate with others to purchase carryout or share meals. Potlucks are suspended for now.

I encourage you to join us either in person or online for our Wednesday gatherings. You can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others are saying by calling (929) 436-2866, and entering the meeting ID, 482458815#.

We are a diverse group and we are delighted when new persons join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website's homepage — FlintAsbury.org.

Incarnate (Coming in December)...Asbury Worship Series

And now Christmas is only a few weeks away. I never cared for seeing decorations show up on store shelves months in advance, but in some way, this year, their appearance offers hope. Perhaps the number of new cases will be going down by Christmas. But right now, I'm fearful that the virus is spinning out of control, and hospitals are overflowing. Some Christmas this is shaping out to be.

But wait. There's more. There's the good news that comes with Christmas every year. The news that promises to overcome our struggles, our grief, our losses, and our indifference. A lot depends on what you believe Christmas is about. There are at least a few things about Christmas that neither a pandemic nor partisan politics can destroy.

I believe that over two thousand years ago, God gave us the greatest gift imaginable. A gift that does not require batteries, we don't have to put it together, and no one can take this gift away. And this gift goes by many names. This Christmas, I plan to share what I have learned about these names and why despite all that is going on, there are parts of Christmas that are ours forever.

As this Thanksgiving holiday comes to an end, we begin a season leading up to Christmas Day. We buy and wrap gifts, decorate our homes and offices, and we occasionally drop a few coins in a red bucket, beacons by a ringing bell. Let's do this again this year.

During the first week of December, I'm hoping that we can think about Kings and presidents from a different perspective. Who knows what the news will be that week as it comes to world leaders and the office of president. What I know is that there is only One True King.



God chose to live among us. We call this incarnation. To be incarnate with us is to live in our neighborhood. Living incarnate means seeing each other at the store, eating at some of the same places, and suffering many of the same struggles.

And we expect our leaders to sacrifice for our safety and well-being. And they disappoint us, so we elect new leaders. Fortunately, this is not the case when we turn to God as our King. On Sunday, December 6, our theme will be *Kings and Presidents*.

During the second week, preparations for Christmas turns our focus turns towards lifesavers. Both the candy circles and the kind that genuinely saves us. In ancient prophecy, we find the promise of a Messiah — a Savior. A person living among us, capable of doing what human leaders fail to do. Our message on December 13 is titled *Lifesaver*.

In week three, we turn our attention to the more personal side of incarnation. If God lives among us, then where do we look to find God? The promise in scripture is called *Emmanuel*, which means God with us. God will no longer be distant and invisible. Instead, God will be flesh and bone, tears, and laughter.

We end this week on December 20th with our Sunday message, Good company. Sharing in an ancient ritual is given to us to remember that God is near called communion.

In week four, we build to our dramatic conclusion. Even though this is a story told over and over, the excitement we feel is warranted. On Christmas Eve, you are invited to a candlelight service to celebrate the birth of Jesus as the *Light of the World*.

He will be called Emmanuel, which means "God is with us".

Matthew 1:23

We don't know at this point if any of us will actually be in the same location together. So let's plan ahead. Let's plan a candlelight service in home, wherever we may be on Christmas Eve. Each home will light our own candle and share it with our neighborhood by placing a luminary in the front window, on our porch, or in our yard — at the same time.

Over the coming weeks you will learn more about this new season series called *Incarnate*. We have a special gift for every household so that everyone can participate. Supplies are limited, so be sure to sign-up now on our [website](#), so we know where to send your gift.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am this December. We plan to be live on both Facebook and YouTube. 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. And especially, I look forward to being with you, wherever you are, on Christmas Eve at 6 pm.

Pastor Tommy

¹Adam Hamilton. *Incarnation: Rediscovering the Significance of Christmas*. © 2020. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House.

Unafraid ... cont. from pg 1

Pastor Adam Hamilton, in his book, *Unafraid* suggests that it is possible for us to coexist peaceably with our fears. If we examine them in the light of faith while trusting the promises of God to be true.¹ I believe in the goodness of God even when my circumstances and situations disagree with my belief. Psalm 27 encourages me to be unwavering in my faith.

The Lord is my light and my
salvation: I will fear no one.

Psalm 27:1

We can count on the words of the Psalmist who writes, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" (Psalm 27:13 KJV). God promises to reveal His goodness to us in the middle of whatever distress or mess we find ourselves in. He has given His Angels charge over us.

Psalm 91 is true and its promises are sure. Our Heavenly Father will protect, defend, and provide for us if we will trust, obey, and believe Him!

It simply isn't possible for you and I to follow the steps offered by Pastor Adam in his book on our own. Fortunately, God is always near. And God proved His love for us by living among people, teaching through His words and acts, what it means to live courageously. And this idea of *Incarnation* is the subject of our December series. I invite you to join us each Sunday online at 10:30 am.

We have a new button on the homepage of our [website - Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to a viewer to allow you to join live or watch later in the week. We're also live on [Facebook](#). We start at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.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 info@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 [Newsletters](#).

Sylvia Pittman

¹Adam Hamilton. *Unafraid: Living with Courage and hope in Uncertain Times*. © 2018. New York: Penguin Random House.

Pray at all times, be thankful in
all circumstances.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18



Asbury Farms offers fresh produce every week!

Go to our website, FlintAsbury.org to place your order for a Veggie Box, or sign up for a subscription. You can also call our office at 810-235-0016 to place your order. We accept EBT and Double-up Bucks for a limited time only!!!

Call By Noon on Wednesday for Thursday delivery.

Life groups question & notes

The Lord is my light and my salvation; I will fear no one. The Lord protects me from all danger; I will never be afraid. I know that I will live to see the Lord's goodness in this present life. Trust in the Lord. Have faith, do not despair. Trust in the Lord.

Psalm 27:1, 13-14 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Psalm 27:1, 13-14. How are you doing with fearing no one? There is much to be fearful about in the world. Where have you seen the goodness of God around you this week? What are you thankful for this week? Do you see God in these blessings?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Unafraid?* Do you agree with Sylvia that we are "offended" by death? Why or why not? What is there about growing old that worries you? In what ways does death frighten you? What assurances do you feel you have from God regarding eternal life? What do you imagine eternal life to be like? Does this calm your fears?
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.

In the book, *Unafraid*, Adam Hamilton writes, "This hope is not meant to lead us to apathy or indifference about the very real problems facing our world. The Bible calls human beings to work to address the world's problems. But we do so as people who have hope that regardless of what happens, ultimately, God will prevail."¹

Jesus had a way of breaking down the complexities of life into simple ideas that any of us can follow. But, there are times when I find His advice to be too simple. At times, I want to make His instructions more complex. This allows me to rationalize what I want to do instead of taking His advice and living worry-free. I've grown attached to my worries, and I'm quite fond of my ideas. I still want that bigger truck and with that really cool tailgate.

Have you ever found yourself thinking, "Jesus, it's easy for you to say — you didn't drive a truck? You walked everywhere — you didn't have a mortgage or even pay rent. Have you seen the new commercial for that dishwasher with separate top and bottom drawers? A dozen or so monthly payments, and it can be mine." How great could life be if I had these things? But would any of these prevent the world from crashing?

Honestly, I'm blessed that somewhere along this line of thinking, I feel a nudge to step back and wonder, "How much is enough?" Research suggests that the answer to this question eludes all of us. And those of us who have more want even more. Possession is addictive.

The simplicity of Jesus' teachings has a lot of competition from commercials. With every connection I make with companies that demand my email address, my information is added to a dozen more lists. And these lists are managed by marketing companies paid to make sure that I see their ads several times a day. And sometimes, it feels like a request to be removed is accepted as validation that I'm actually reading my emails. Which moves me to their more frequent email list rather than remove me from the list I'm on.

The writer, known as Matthew, shares a story about Jesus, giving what must have been a full-day seminar on better living through doing what God says to do. At one point, Jesus said, "You cannot be a slave of two masters; you will hate one and love the other; you will be loyal to one and despise the other" (Matthew 6:24).

Makes sense. Most of us tried this. Sooner or later, we realize that unless we are really clear on our values, we quickly find ourselves making decisions or going

along with the findings of others. This leaves us feeling empty and frankly a bit betrayed. Betrayed by our own failure.

*You cannot serve both
God and money.*

Matthew 6:24

Jesus wanted to get to the heart of the matter for you and me. Like I said, Jesus had a way of simplifying that which we purposely make complex. Jesus goes on to say, "You cannot serve both God and money" (Matthew 6:24). But what does it mean to "serve" money?

Here's one take on this question. Jesus also says, "This is why I tell you: do not be worried about the food and drink you need to stay alive, or about clothes for your body. After all, isn't life worth more than food? And isn't the body worth more than clothes?" (Matthew 6:25). Well? Of course, life is more than these, but we need to eat. And without clothes, we get arrested, and our sanity is questioned.

Apparently, Jesus knew what most of us learn the hard way. More is never enough. The problem is not whether we need food and clothing. The problem arises when we can't get enough—even

Now What? (More is never enough)...cont from pg 9

the basics like food and clothing. Jesus is getting at the heart of the matter. That is, where is our heart in this matter? Which "masters" do we choose to serve?

Adam Hamilton's ***book*** offers a reference guide for dealing with fear:

- F** — Face your fears with faith;
- E** — Examine the facts that are the source of your fears;
- A** — Act on ways that can alleviate or at least reduce your fears; and,
- R** — Release your fears to God after you've done what you can do. ¹

The bottom line is that we can let go of our need to control and trust that God is still in charge. And that God cares about our well-being even more than we do, or at least more than we show that we care.

Pray at all times, be thankful in all circumstances.

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

There was a time when I paid lip service to Paul's guidance to the church in Thessalonica to "pray at all times."

The steps offered by Pastor Adam are daunting on our own. This is where the idea of incarnation comes to our rescue. While ***Incarnation*** is the subject of our December series, God's persistent presence in our lives makes all of the difference. When fear has us hiding under the table, it is both comforting and wise to call on God. After all, God promises to be nearby.

Coming up

This month's series is called ***Naked and unafraid***. If you're fearful about the present or the future, this series is for you. You can read about our series in our ***newsletter*** or ***online***. I pray that you will join us online or in person over the next four Sundays. Make it a habit.

After Thanksgiving, our theme moves to God living among us. Our next series, ***Incarnation***, explores the importance of God among us in the aftermath of an intense election. The Christmas season is guaranteed to be different this year. God's presence is our greatest hope for the future.

Thank you for your patience as we implement technology changes that promise to substantially improve our broadcast quality. We have a new button on the homepage of our ***website*** - ***Click here to watch***. This should take you to a viewer to allow you to join live or watch later in the week. We're also live on ***Facebook***. We start at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at ***FlintAsbury.org***.

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Incarnation Celebration



This Christmas season promises to be quite unique, unless we ignore the CDC warnings and put the lives of others at risk. Which is not very loving.

So our worship team decided to create Christmas celebration gift kits for each household. Each celebration gift kit contains eight items along with a “What’s in the box?” explanation of the meaning of each of the eight items.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we celebrate the Christmas season for four weeks beginning right after Thanksgiving. This year, Christmas Eve falls toward the end of the fourth week.

There are two symbols for each week. One symbol is more personal. The second symbol points us toward the community. For example, in week one our theme is “Kings and presidents” as we compare and contrast Jesus as our only true King with human leaders who may exert power over us. We included a small bottle of oil and a nail as symbols for week one.

Oil has been used throughout history in a symbolic ritual that signifies a person who is recognized as created for special purpose. For example, oil was used to anoint kings as a symbol of their role. This is for your personal use so that each member of your household can be anointed for the special purposes that God had in mind at your birth.

We also included an antique box nail for week one. This nail symbolizes our working together to rebuild our community. We seldom use square nails any more in construction. We chose an antique replica as a reminder that we are a continuation of generations, each contributing to the building and rebuilding of our city. What will be our legacy?

The Lord is my light and my salvation: I will fear no one.

Psalm 27:1

Our celebration reaches its triumphant conclusion on Christmas Eve when each household lights the candle included in your celebration kit and places it in the white, luminary bag provided. The candle represents your personal light. Each of us is a light to the world. The luminary bag symbolizes our community. Together we are and even brighter light.

Be sure to sign-in online at 6:00 pm on Christmas Eve, December 24, when we will celebrate together with music. Be sure to light your candle, place it in the luminary bag, and put them where others can see your light. If it's not raining, you can place it in your yard or driveway. You can also place it in your front window or on your porch.

We will conclude our Christmas Eve celebration by singing a couple verses of Silent Night together. A candle-light celebration wherever we find ourselves.

Signup for your Christmas Celebration Gift Kit online on our website, FlintAsbury.org. Please plan to pick up your kit at Asbury Church or the South Flint Soup Kitchen. You can signup a neighbor or family member as well and deliver their kit to them. Please, only one per household. We have limited supply so sign up right away.

We have a new button on the homepage of our [website - Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to a viewer to allow you to join live or watch later in the week. We will also be live on [Facebook](#) and our [Youtube Channel](#).

Pastor Tommy