

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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Kings and Presidents (Anointed)



Just under 160 Million people voted in this past presidential election. In fact, more of us voted in the last election than any election in history. This is twenty million more voters than the previous record. And people showed up to vote despite the risk of a pandemic.

Many had to overcome obstacles created by leaders already in office to discourage voting. And over seventy million voters are likely disappointed in the outcome. In fact, the out-going president is yet to concede that he lost the election. And stress

levels are high everywhere. We are a divided nation, intentionally segregated by blue and red. And this is taking a toll on our mood, our health, and our joy.

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Volume 20 Issue 6

December 6, 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!

(Covid Testing—please see page 3 for more info)

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Kings and Presidents (Anointed) ...cont from page 1

A presidential election happens every four years. But this year, we need a break more than ever from worrying about who's in charge. Fatigue has us in its grip. And Christmas is just what the doctor ordered. According to a recent article, shoppers are buying up live Christmas trees earlier than ever. Most of us can't wait for Christmas.

Christians sometimes call this time of the year leading up to Christmas Advent. We use this word because of its meaning. Advent means to wait in anticipation. Most of us have some version of what we think that Christmas will be like this year. Christmas is too prominent to be ignored. From Black Friday to Cyber Monday to Giving Tuesday. We are globally hooked on Christmas. It occupies a piece of our consciousness, whether invited or not.

As a pastor, part of my job is to persistently remind us that our anticipation should be bigger than parties, great deals, and gift-giving. And to offer encouragement to those for whom Christmas is a time of gloom. Whether you see Christmas as joyful or as a sad reminder, Christmas is much bigger than whatever thoughts you and I have about its significance.

Our December series is called *Incarnation*. It's based on a book by Adam Hamilton.¹ Incarnation is another strange word that does not get used a lot in the nightly news or in song lyrics. Incarnation does not roll off your tongue. Yet incarnation, or the idea of incarnate, is critical to our understanding of Christmas.

The origin of incarnate is the word flesh. The idea is an embodiment. Incarnate is more than just resembling something else. To be incarnate is to be present in the flesh. It's challenging to be incarnate using Zoom, Facebook, or Instagram.

Incarnation is the notion that God chose to live among humans in the flesh. In Jewish tradition, there is this idea of a long, awaited Messiah. Interpretations vary since the specifics found in holy scriptures are vague. The origin of this word, messiah, is one that is anointed, anticipated, and set apart by God for the very purpose of being a different kind of leader.

In harmony with several other prophecies found in scripture, the Prophet Ezekiel declared that God intended to take charge at some point (Ezekiel 34:15). God had no intention of leaving this job to anyone we choose. Humankind has a track-record of getting caught up in power, politics, and self-enrichment. Even the best leaders throughout history had some rather dubious flaws. And the worse? Well, let's not go there, but humans are prone to following leaders that lead them to no-so-wise places.

I, myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will find them a place to rest.

Ezekiel 34:15

Campaign promises are, more often than not, full of sizzle with no steak. And politicians frequently exaggerate, stretch the truth, and occasionally lie. And a few seem entirely unfamiliar with any notion of truth.



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



BUS TRIP TO BETHEL UMC

There will be a bus trip going to Bethel United Methodist Church on Thursday, December 10th at 12:30pm., leaving from the Asbury parking lot..

This trip will be for anyone wanting to get a Covid test.

There is limited seating of just 8 people on the bus, so it will be on a first come, first serve basis.

If you would like to get tested that day, please be here in our parking lot before 12:30.

If we fill the bus on this trip, there will be another day scheduled, for those that didn't make it here on the 10th.

There is no charge for the test.



Coming up this week



- Dec 7 Mon
- Dec 8 Tues 10am-2pm
Water / Food Distribution
- Dec 9 Wed Pastor Book Club
(Via Zoom until further notice)
11am-12Noon Food Giveaway at South Flint Soup Kitchen **(See page 10)**
- Dec 10 Thu 12:30pm—Bus trip to Bethel UMC
- Dec 11 Fri
- Dec 12 Sat
- Dec 13 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings
Contemporary Worship

Join worship online

Sunday, December 6th -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

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.



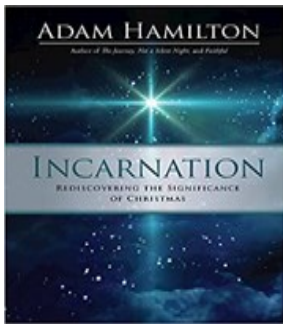
Cyndi and I are hanging out together this Thanksgiving. In past years, we spent time with extended family that we only get to see occasionally.

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 *Unafraid*. There are a couple copies of this book around if you haven't read it. Members of our group learned about facing our fears with courage and in the confidence that we are never alone.



This month our attention turns to the Christmas story. We're taking a month off from reading and utilizing a small group study available through a library service we have access to. If you want a copy of the actual book it is available through numerous online retailers.

Each week we watch an episode lead by author and pastor Adam Hamilton. Join our meeting via Zoom if possible, so that you are able to watch the

video. If you call in by phone, you should be able to hear the audio well enough to participate in the discussion that follows.

I encourage you to join online for our Wednesday gatherings. Alternatively, 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.

Pastor Tommy

Leadership in Worship & Service

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Tony, Mirium | Welcome Team |
| Anthony, Jim | Ushers |
| Jonathon, Terrance | Production Team |
| Miriam | Children |
| Cyndi | Worship Leader |
| Christine & Norma | Cafe |

Asbury Staff

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Rev. Dr. Tommy McDaniel | Pastor |
| Connie Portillo | Office Secretary |
| Sylvia Pittman | Empowerment Arts |
| Jim Craig | Leadership Chair |
| Kevin Croom | Dir. Operations |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Matt DePalma | Farm Manager |
| Kevin Croom | Farm Operations |
| Israel Unger | Function to Funding |
| Kim Sims | Connections |
| Karl Collyer | Production |
| Katelin Maylum | |
| South Flint Soup Kitchen/Production | |

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.

Incarnate ...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

I, myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will find them a place to rest... 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... I will bless them with showers of rain when they need it. The trees will bear fruit, the fields will produce crops, and everyone will live in safety on his own land.

Ezekiel 34:15-29 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Ezekiel 34:15-29. This prophecy sounds a lot like a promise of a messiah, don't you think? In what ways does this sound like Jesus? What does this prophecy mean to you?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Kings and presidents?* Are you weary from the events of this year? Were you anxious about the election? Disappointed or satisfied? What does it mean for you to use the title "King" for Jesus? In what ways is Jesus a different sort of King?
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.

Jesus is the incarnation of God. He is God in the flesh. And "King" is one of several titles or names that we find in scripture for Jesus. This title often creates confusion when we think of human kings. The very notion of God actually living as a human is provocative. And when we think of kings, it's hard not to consider both the good and bad traits associated with kingship.

If you want an idea of what a good King is like, examine the life of Jesus closely. Listen to His promises and contrast them with the campaign promises that motivate us to choose one candidate over another. Through the Prophet Ezekiel, God promised to "Look for those that are lost, bring back those that wander off, bandage those that are hurt, and heal those that are sick" (Ezekiel 34:16). Does this sound like any of the campaign promises we hear from candidates for president?

There are two items in your Christmas Celebration Gift Box for this week's theme. One is a small bottle of olive oil, chosen because of its familiarity and ties to the Holy Land through scripture. We also added a small amount of frankincense to connect us with the Christmas story. Most importantly, this oil is for anointing.

Oil appears in scripture in holy acts and in somewhat recent history. A tiny bit of oil was used in a ritual to anoint Elizabeth Alexandra Mary as Queen of England in 1953. On that day, the Archbishop of Canterbury made the sign of a cross using oil on the anointed Queen's forehead. This act is considered so sacred that it could not be recorded on video.

Oil appears in news articles, legal agreements, treaties, and less holy acts. Oil is used in numerous sacred rituals, from baptism to anointing the dying to declaring a person to have particular and sometimes frightening power over other people. Our gift of oil is intended for you to anoint yourself and those around you. Each of us is set apart by God for a particular purpose.

The other item in your gift box is a nail. We chose an antique box nail to link us to the past. A nail is also rich in both symbolism and practicality. We use nails and other fasteners in construction. There is a lot of work waiting for us to come together to rebuild our neighborhoods. May this nail inspire you to accept your anointing to be a part of a new, revitalized community.

Symbols by themselves have little power. Yet symbols that inspire us to action result in powerful accomplishments. May these symbols inspire you.

I will give them fertile fields and put an end to hunger in the land.

Ezekiel 34:29

God is always near. And God proved His love for us by living among people, teaching through His words and acts. *Incarnation* is the subject of our December series. I invite you to join us each Sunday online at 10:30 am. Be sure to order your Christmas celebration gift box on our website [homepage](#).

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](#). You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](#).

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Pastor Tommy

¹Adam Hamilton. *Incarnation: Rediscovering the Significance of Christmas*. © 2020. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Food Giveaways at South Flint Soup Kitchen



South Flint Soup Kitchen will be hosting their next Food Giveaways in December on the following dates:

South Flint Soup Kitchen
3410 Fenton Road
3 Blocks North of Atherton
Flint MI 48507

December 9th—11am-Noon

December 23rd—11am-Noon

Questions? (810)239-3427
southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

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