

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Lifesaver (Good News for all)



Analyzing what is behind the deep ideological divisions in our country is keeping researchers busy. In particular, the threats of violent responses from persons claiming to be justified in their anger. At no point in our history has a presidential election been so contentious.

Worse, numerous public officials continue to speak out in support of baseless claims of voter fraud.

State officials have certified election results. Georgia counted their votes three times with the same outcome, and the courts have thrown out over fifty baseless

lawsuits. My surprise is not that our soon-to-be former president is throwing such a temper tantrum. I'm surprised by the support he's getting from otherwise smart people.

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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 13

December 13, 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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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

★ **Coming up this week** ★

Dec 14 Mon

Dec 15 Tues 10am-2pm

Water / Food Distribution

Dec 16 Wed Pastor Book Club

(Via Zoom until further notice)

Dec 17 Thu

Dec 18 Fri

Dec 19 Sat

Dec 20 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Join worship online

Sunday, December 13th -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)



*(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 continues to rise.*

**PLEASE CONTINUE TO WEAR
YOUR MASKS WHEN
COMING INTO THE ASBURY
BUILDING.**

Pastor Tommy

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.



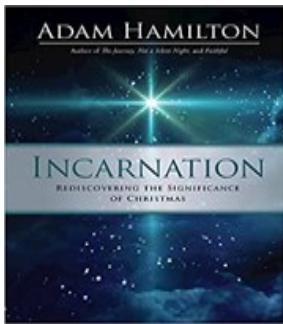
Cyndi and I are hanging out together this Thanksgiving. In past years, we spent time with extended family that we only get to see occasionally.

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.

Lifesaver (Good News for all) ... cont. from pg 1

This is turning out to be quite a Christmas season. People losing their job, businesses closing, an out-of-control pandemic, racial unrest, and destructive weather patterns. When I set out to research this week's topic, the question that arose, "What do we need to be saved from?" is clearly a multiple-choice, check-all-that-apply sort of question.

He has sent me to proclaim that the time has come when the Lord will save his people.

Isaiah 61:2

We all need saving from something. This week we turn our attention to the very meaning of the name given to God living with us — Jesus.

The name "Jesus" is derived from its Greek equivalent, *Yeshua*. Tracing His name back to Hebrew, we find the ancient name for God, *Yahweh*. Which means "God saves." His name and mission were chosen by God, and His mission includes saving us. And God's offer comes to all persons willing to be saved.

Most of us are understandably skeptical when we hear a claim that sounds like it could be too good to be true. Imagine a young teenager, Mary, telling her older fiancé before their marriage that she is pregnant. While this could be a scene in almost any town, keep in mind that Mary and her fiancé, Joseph, had not had sex.

And get this — Mary tells Joseph that while it is not his child, she hasn't had sex with anyone, ever! Of course, Joseph didn't believe Mary. Adam Hamilton, in his book *Incarnation*, notes that Joseph became the first person to doubt Mary's story, but he would not be the last.¹ Fortunately for Mary, her story was corroborated in a dream Joseph had that evening.

In Joseph's dream, an angel appeared and told him that the child Mary carried would save His people. Joseph's role was as important as any person agreeing to become a step-parent. He was to be as much of a parent to his adopted child as if it was his own. No exceptions and no excuses.

I know what it is like to be a step-parent. It's frightening and just a bit overwhelming—a lot like becoming a biological parent. I remember my father giving advice to my older brother about becoming a step-parent. "They are now your children — no exceptions and no excuses." My father was a step-son himself, and he knew the bitter taste left when a step-parent doesn't parent in this way.

Mary's story didn't stay between her and Joseph. Eventually, her story became headline news that rocked the world and continues to rock the world today.

After the birth, the story spread quickly. The writer of Luke shares the story of shepherds keeping watch over a flock of sheep. Ordinary, working men, in a thankless job that most people looked down on. Shortly after the birth, angels visited these shepherds to tell them the news.

"I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Savior was born—Christ the Lord!" (Luke 2:10-11). The shepherds didn't wait around. This angel announced a winning lottery ticket waiting for them, and the evidence was there to see. So they went to check out the story with their own eyes.

What did it mean to these working men that their "Savior" was born? We don't know much about them, other than their vocation. Perhaps one of them knew some of the stories about a long-awaited Messiah promised in ancient scripture. Perhaps the light show that accompanied the angel's message convinced them it was worth finding out for themselves.

We don't know if one of them stayed behind to keep an eye on the sheep. Did they walk away from their job? Perhaps they took the sheep with them into the village. Wouldn't that be a sight?

What we do know is that these men witnessed the beginning of a divine promise. A promise that God intended to deliver on at just the right time. God showed up to save humanity. And it's worth dropping everything to be a part of God's unfolding story.

Our symbols this week are lifesaver candy and a face mask. Symbols by themselves have little power. Yet symbols that inspire us to action result in powerful accomplishments. Enjoy the candy or share it with someone else. Use the face mask to be a lifesaver yourself. I hope that these symbols inspire you.

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](#) and our newly launched [YouTube channel](#). 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](#).

I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. Luke 2:10



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 am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people. This very day in David's town your Savior was born—Christ the Lord!

Luke 2:10-11 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Luke 2:10-11. Try placing yourself with the shepherds when they learned about the birth of Jesus? What is going through your mind? Are you anxious to go and see for yourself? Can you see a comparison between this announcement and when you learned about Jesus?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Lifesaver*? How has the birth of Jesus made a difference in your life? What does being saved mean to you?
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](#).

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Pastor Tommy

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

Food Giveaway at South Flint Soup Kitchen



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

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

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