

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.

Page 6

Good Company (A Stranger on the Bus)



Joan Elizabeth Osborne is an American singer, songwriter from a suburb just outside of Louisville, Kentucky. Born in 1962, Joan is best known for a song she recorded written by songwriter Eric Bazilian titled "One of Us" from her album, *Relish*, released in

1995. The song captured listeners' imagination around the globe with its provocative question, "What if God was one of us?"

What if God was one of us? The obvious answer to this question for Christians comes too quickly for its impact to

affect us in the way that it should and needs to impact us. So let's first frame this question.

It would take 93 billion light years to travel across the entire universe from

Page 2

Volume 20 Issue 20

December 20, 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!



gg56754144 www.geograph.com

Inside this issue:

Lifesaver	1
Good Company	1
In Our Prayers/Coming up this Week	3
Asbury Worship Series	4
Pastor's Book Club	4
Leadership in Worship & Service	4
Asbury Worship Series	5
Lifesaver	6
Asbury Veggie Boxes	7
Small Group Questions & Notes	8
Brighter (The Light of the World)	9
Food Giveaways at SFSK	10
Incarnation Celebration	11

Good Company (A Stranger on the Bus)..cont from page 1

edge to edge by some calculations. Since light travels almost six trillion miles in one year, the distance across the universe is incomprehensible. The universe contains somewhere between two hundred billion and two trillion galaxies, each containing billions of stars. This makes my head hurt when I try to imagine the immenseness.¹

God created it all. Every star, every planet, every galaxy. And God sits outside of it all while also permeating, animating, and sustaining every last molecule. Now try and answer this question:

What if God was one of us?

What if God was a stranger on the bus, just trying to make His way home? What if God were able to feel what I feel, taste what I taste, and get angry the way I get angry? What if God knew what it was like to feel rejected, left-out, passed over, and reduced to insignificance? What if God knew what it was like to fall in love or to have a broken heart?

For me, this realization means that when I pray, I'm not praying to an invisible power that I can never be sure is listening. Instead, I'm praying to a God I know something about. And a God who knows everything there is to know about me. It means I can be real in my prayers, knowing that the God I pray to knows the pains and pleasures of what it means to be human.

Centuries before the birth of Jesus, God made a promise through a prophet by the name of Isaiah to people under attack. Two hundred years earlier, their neighbor to the north was part of the same nation, called Israel. Civil war tore the country apart, and two separate nations emerged. Now the Southern Kingdom of Judah was threatened by a war they couldn't win.

God offered a sign to Judah's king that if he refused to join their alliance

and held his ground, his enemies would not prevail. The sign was the birth of a child to a young woman. The prophecy was that before the child came of age, the threatening nations would be conquered by a much larger superpower. And this is what came to pass.

This prophecy inspired each generation that came after as a reminder that God is not distant and uninvolved. Instead, God is active and nearby.

Several centuries later, in a small village in the hill country of that same nation, now suffering under Roman occupation, this same prophecy comes alive. A young girl is pregnant, and her husband-to-be hears a similar prophecy in a dream.

The meaning of this ancient prophecy is replayed in Joseph's dream. He will adopt this child and faithfully wait to see what God has in mind. Knowing that God promises to save humanity through this child.

God is still a "stranger on the bus" to a lot of people. But this won't always be the case. There is no time like the present to introduce yourself to the God who already knows you.

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

Matthew 1:23

Joan's song poses another question for our consideration. "What would you ask if you had just one question?" And would you call God by name? If so, what name would you use?

This week's theme is *Emmanuel*. One of the names that we use to refer to Jesus. This week we focus on the nearness of God.

Our symbols are a packet of seeds and a communion serving. Open the communion serving during a quiet time.

As you do, think about what God has done by living among humanity. Think about what this means to you. As you eat the wafer and drink the juice, know that the God of Creation knows and loves you.

The packet of seeds is a symbol of community. From tiny seeds comes beauty and nutrients that help sustain life. Consider how we can all grow together as a community. Ask God to guide and 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 and pickup 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***.

Pastor Tommy

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



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 continues to rise.

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

Pastor Tommy

★ **Coming up this week** ★

Dec 21 Mon

Dec 22 Tues 10am-2pm

Water / Food Distribution

Dec 23 Wed Pastor Book Club

(Via Zoom until further notice)

11am-12N Food Giveaway at the

South Flint Soup Kitchen (see page 10 for more info)

Dec 24 Thu 6:00pm Christmas Eve Service online

Dec 25 Fri **MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL**

AND TO ALL A SAFE NITE!!

Dec 26 Sat

Dec 27 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

Join worship online

Sunday, December 20th -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 Hope in an Unstable World (Coming January 3)

There are many ways of characterizing the year 2020, but the word stability doesn't belong in the final cut. The words uncertainty and unstable are more accurate choices.



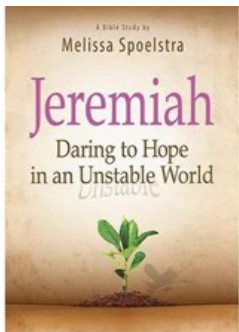
Another word that kept try-

ing to emerge, like the sun peeking through a cloudy and rainy day, was hope. As the coronavirus spread last spring, we all hoped that our precautions would help us recover quickly. And they did — or at least they did in the places where safeguards were implemented.

Page 5

Book Club News

We complete our discussion of the book and videos by Adam



Hamilton, *Incarnation*. Our group utilized the study group videos available on a new resource that is available to all of us called

Amplify. This library of study materials is accessible online. More information will be coming if you want to start your own study group or do some learning on your own.

This month our attention turns to Hope. But we realize that hope can be harder to hold onto when there is so much turmoil. The availability of a vaccine offers hope that life will eventually return to some form of normal. But there continues to be a lot of reasons to feel dismayed.

In January our group will take a deeper dive into the Book of Jeremiah. We plan to use a book written by the wife of an Ohio pastor, Melissa Spoelstra. The title of her book is *Daring to Hope in an Unstable World*.

Each week we watch a video featuring the author as she takes us through Jeremiah, not page by page, but theme by theme. 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, 282 039 5568#.

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.

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

Hope in an Unstable World...Asbury Worship Series (Coming January 3)

But by the fall, just in time for Thanksgiving, the numbers began to surge, just as healthcare experts warned they would without cooperation lead by stable, consistent, and competent leadership. By Christmas, my hope focused on what it means when I tell people that Jesus saves, in light of so much instability.

On January 20, our country will witness the swearing in of our 59th President. His administration faces the daunting task of reuniting our divided nation together. Yet tens of millions of voters are worried that their aspirations for our country will fall by the wayside. And depending on the outcome of Senate races in Georgia, we could see a prolonged stalemate in congress.

So how do we find hope in an unstable world? For me, I look for stories in scripture that reflect the issues of our present time. My experience is that I can find assurances that God isn't sitting on the sidelines, waiting to see what happens in any particular election. I believe that God continues to move us toward reconciliation with each other and with God, regardless of who we elect. The question is whether we are open to divine guidance or want to go it on our own. Talk about instability.

As we move into 2021, we begin the New Year with a series that opens our minds to the ideas found in the Book of the Prophet, Jeremiah. This book tells about God's urging the people of his time to have hope amid instability. Jeremiah was known as the "weeping prophet" because of his role in sharing God's divine warnings to a people distracted by materialism, economic crisis, and politics. Yet, we find great hope in God's love for humankind.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. 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*](http://www.FlintAsbury.org). And especially, I look forward to being with you, wherever you are, on Christmas Eve at 6 pm.

Pastor Tommy

¹Melissa Spoelstra. *Jeremiah: Daring to Hope in an Unstable World*. © 2014. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

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

Now all this happened in order to make come true what the Lord had said through the prophet, “A virgin will become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel” (which means, “God is with us”).

Matthew 1:22-23 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Matthew 1:22-23. This prophecy was first spoken by Isaiah centuries before under totally different circumstances. This time an angel tells Joseph a similar prophecy. What does this prophecy mean for you?
2. Read the article in this week’s Circuit Rider, *Good company?* Imagine the immensity of the universe. Reread the description in the article. Now imagine that the Creator chose to live with us. Are you able to wrap your head around the significance of this? In what ways does this change the way you pray?
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.



A favorite tradition for Christmas Eve is to sing together by candlelight. Whether holding an actual candle, or one powered by a battery or enjoying burning candles from a safe distance, the soft glow of candlelight creates a reflective mood. Each year I look forward to this tradition, but this year the experience will be different.

This year, most of us will remain in the comfort and safety of our own homes. Safe distancing continues to be the most effective way to help each other stay healthy and alive. While a few of us will gather in the Arts Center at the Asbury main campus and in the South Flint Soup Kitchen parking lot, most of us will participate from home.

But circumstances don't change the significance of the evening. Each Christmas Eve, we remember the birth of a child. Referred to by many names and titles, including Jesus of Nazareth, Yeshua, Yahweh, Christ, Messiah, Emmanuel, King, the Word, and the Light of the World.

We learn from scripture that Jesus is God's autobiography. And in God's revelation of God's self, Jesus represents the parts of the story that are most relevant. The details that mean the most to you and me. Jesus is the King that all human rulers

answer to, regardless of election outcomes, incompetence, corruption, and partisan rhetoric.

Jesus is God's gift to humankind. He is present with us amid pandemics and storms. And because of this gift, we can do more than endure. We can flourish.

Over the past several weeks, the days have grown noticeably shorter. In mid-December, this reverses, and the days grow a bit longer each day. According to the Julian calendar, the winter solstice occurs on December 25, which is why we celebrate Christmas on that date each year. But in the 16th century, the western world adopted the Gregorian calendar, moving the winter solstice to the 21st.

Although both celebrations deal with light shining in the darkness. And our theme for Christmas Eve is Jesus as the Light of the World. Together our individual lights shine even *Brighter* than when we go it alone.

We often refer to Jesus as the Light of the World, so our symbols include a candle and a luminary. The candle represents each of us, and the luminary represents our place in the community. Our lights shine both individually and within the community where we work together with others.

The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to people. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out.

John 1:4-5

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 online on Christmas Eve at 6 pm. Be sure to order and pickup your Christmas celebration gift box. Go to 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](#).

Pastor Tommy

Food Giveaway at South Flint Soup Kitchen



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

December 23rd—11am-Noon

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

**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

It's time to pack up our decorations, put away the Nativity set, recycle the Christmas cards, and store or discard our Christmas trees. Christmas is over, and the New Year is right around the corner.



Not so fast. Christmas isn't the end of a story about a birth. Christmas is the beginning of a story. You see, the message of Christmas is that Jesus is King, Messiah, Savior, Emmanuel, and Light. Christmas is the beginning of a life that matters, and that is satisfying.

After Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary, following the customs of their culture, traveled to the temple in Jerusalem to have their child dedicated to God. Just one problem. According to custom and tradition, an offering is required as part of a mother's purification ritual. The standard was one lamb and one dove (Leviticus 12:1-8). But these were expensive animals.

A poor family raising lambs couldn't afford to give one up. This family traveled for days without livestock. Fortunately, the rules allowed those unable to afford the preferred offering to instead offer two pigeons. So Mary and Joseph purchased two pigeons as part of their adherence to this tradition.

On the day of Jesus' dedication, Mary and Joseph cannot get in and out of the ceremony unnoticed. As they walk into the temple, they meet a man named Simeon, who came to the temple that day at the urging of the Holy Spirit. Simeon took Jesus in his arms and prayed, thanking God that he had at last seen God's salvation and revelation for the Gentiles (Luke 2:29-32). I'm guessing that this encounter unexpected, but then this couple was getting accustomed to the unexpected.

But then Simeon tells Mary that her Son is destined to meet opposition because He will reveal people's inner thoughts, and His fate will break His Mother's heart. This is intense. Suddenly, we discover that Christmas is both a celebration of the birth of Jesus and a recognition of what comes next.

The old prophet's prediction is followed by yet another prophet, Anna, who tells the parents and anyone in the temple who would listen that this child would redeem Jerusalem (Luke 2:38). Redemption is a payment for the freedom of another. This tiny baby, Jesus, will be a ransom for our salvation.

According to the story told by Matthew, sometime after the birth of Jesus, visitors from Persia arrived with gifts, appropriate for who Jesus will be, but not so suitable for a newborn. Gold, for a King; frankincense that a priest offers to God; and myrrh used for burial.

This group traveled over 1,200 miles across the ancient highways of the Fertile Crescent. A trip lasting over 100 days each way. They did this because they believed that the star they discovered would lead them to the long-awaited Jewish Messiah.

They arrived with gifts, but not gifts for a child, but gifts with enough street value that the family could leave town. Sometime after the visitors leave, the Holy Family has to flee to Egypt. It turns out that King Herod feared that he could lose power, and his paranoia got the best of him. It didn't seem to matter how many or who needed to die as long as he held power. This makes me think about what's going on today.

So, the Holy Family became refugees in a foreign land, offering even more foreshadowing. We live in a world today where millions are forced to leave home and country due to famine, political unrest, violence, religious persecution, and war. From places like Central America hoping to find refuge in our country, entire families, uprooted through no fault of their own. Hoping to be shown hospitality wherever they end up.

For our last week of December, we remember that Jesus is Lord of lords.

"Lord" is the title most frequently used by the early church for Jesus the Christ. Lord appears over 600 times in the New Testament regarding Jesus. And another 100 times in a broader sense to refer to God, or as a title of respect for individuals. Lord is an ancient title that refers to the highest authority of a house, community, or nation. This person is the "distributor of bread" who holds power over resources. The Lord is the person in charge.

*He will be a sign from God
which many people will speak
against and so reveal their
secret thoughts.*

Luke 2:34-35

When we pray, addressing God as Lord, we acknowledge that Jesus is the primary authority over us, and we submit entirely to His will. We recognize that we belong to Him; we express our relationship to Him; we yield our life to Him; and we live as though Jesus is Lord.

God is always near. And God proved His love for us by living among people, teaching through His words and acts. We end our series, titled *Incarnation* on December 27. I invite you to join us 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* 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*.

Pastor Tommy

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



Church can inspire people of all ages, but for senior citizens, church attendance holds particular importance. Not only is church a place to find peace and strength in the later years, but attending religious services also offers valuable benefits to senior health. Here are three ways that churches promote good health in the later years.

1. Church fights social isolation

Social isolation is one of the greatest threats to senior health. A senior who is socially isolated has limited contact with the outside world. This happens when a senior has health issues that make it difficult to get out of the house, and is magnified as spouses, friends, and family members pass away. According to A Place for Mom, the resulting [social isolation](#) can lead to poor physical and mental health, hastened cognitive decline and increased risk of death. Social isolation also leaves seniors vulnerable to elder abuse.

Social isolation often comes hand-in-hand with loneliness. Seniors who are lonely tend to lack meaningful relationships with others. The result is an increased risk of [depression](#), a serious mental illness that has far-reaching health effects for older adults.

Church isn't merely a place to mingle with others. It's a place where seniors can forge deep connections with fellow community members, not just shallow acquaintanceships. These friendships can extend to activities outside of church as well. For example, seniors can get together to visit fitness facilities that participate in the SilverSneakers program, which provides [free access](#) to exercise centers with a Medicare Advantage plan. Additionally, seniors can [create book clubs](#) or other positive activities that help them remain social.

Furthermore, the messages of faith and optimism can help seniors push through feelings of [loneliness](#), while the community-oriented approach ensures that seniors have somewhere to turn in times of need.

2. Church promotes positive choices

It's easy to write off unhealthy behaviors by older adults. Perhaps you think Grandma has lived so long, she deserves that extra drink or cigarette. Or, maybe you feel like there's no point in convincing an elderly person to change their ways. However, after so many years, those bad habits are probably set in stone, right? But the truth is, it's never too late to make positive changes. And when you're reaching the twilight years, healthy choices are more important than ever.

Abusing drugs and alcohol is never wise, but in the [senior years](#), the health threats become more imminent. Aging bodies are less able to metabolize drugs and alcohol, which means seniors become intoxicated faster and experience more ill effects from substance abuse. Not only that, but intoxication makes seniors more likely to suffer a fall, thereby increasing the risk of disability or death.

Churches not only promote positive behavioral norms, they also provide support during times when people might otherwise turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms. The result? Churchgoers are [less likely](#) to drink, smoke, and use recreational drugs than non-churchgoers.

3. Church doesn't charge

Not everyone heads into their golden years with a comfortable nest egg under them. According to the National Council on Aging, more than 25 million Americans aged 60 and older are [economically insecure](#). When medical care and prescriptions tie up hundreds of dollars every month, it's hard to find spare funds for a healthy dinner, let alone exercise classes, social clubs, or other activities. This furthers social isolation and makes it difficult to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Churches today offer more programming than ever. You can find no-cost food pantries, senior fitness classes, memory care groups, crafting clubs, and more, all within the four walls of a local church. This makes church an incredible resource for seniors with limited disposable income. And when it's getting to church that's the problem, seniors can get [help with transportation](#). An increasing number of churches offer volunteer driving programs, so seniors who can't drive are able to attend church services and events.

Whether a senior has lifelong religious beliefs or is seeking grace for the first time, there's hope, support and comfort to be found at church. If you're a senior struggling with the changes of old age, reach out to a local congregation. And if you know a senior in need, offer to bring them along next Sunday. We can't promise it's right for everyone, but seniors may find what they're looking for at church.

Image via [Unsplash](#)

(Written by Jason Lewis, who is a personal trainer specializing in senior fitness . If you would like to reach out to Jason, you may by going on [Strongwell.org](#))