

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

(Hand) Picked—Giving in to God's Plan

I suspect that most of us have a story or two about a time when we weren't picked to be part of a group that we really wanted to join. For a lot of us we didn't get picked to be on a team, or we got picked last when it came to picking sides. For others, we didn't get a part in a play. Perhaps for you it was a club. Rejection is among the worse fates imaginable.

And there are a few situations where not being picked is preferable. I'll



never forget the relief I felt when my number didn't come up for the draft. The need for more soldiers to send to the war in Vietnam was greatly reduced just in time for me to finish college rather than leave for basic training. My older brother was drafted and served a few years before I was old enough for the draft.

Life is full of choices. Whether to go to college or look for a job that doesn't require a post-high school education; getting married and who to marry; whether to have children and how to raise them when and if we do have children; what to prepare for supper; which movie to see. The list is endless. It can be difficult, at times, to remember that having choices is a blessing.

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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

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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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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



**THANK YOU FOR ALL THE
WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS CARDS
AND GIFTS FROM SO MANY
OF YOU!!**

**AND, WHAT A YEAR 2020
HAS BEEN ...**

**BUT HERE'S HOPING 2021
IS A MUCH HAPPIER, HEALTHY
SAFE YEAR FOR US ALL!!**



CONNIE

★ **Coming up this week** ★

- Jan 4 Mon
- Jan 5 Tues 10am-2pm
Water / Food Distribution
- Jan 6 Wed Pastor Book Club
(Via Zoom until further notice)
- Jan 7 Thu
- Jan 8 Fri
- Jan 9 Sat
- Jan 10 Sun 10:30am New Beginnings
Contemporary Worship

Join worship online

Sunday, January 3rd -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.



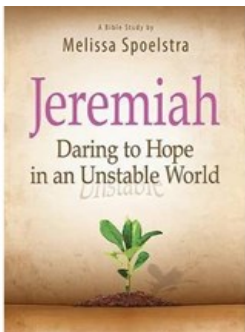
Another word that kept try-

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.

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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#.

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.

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 46th 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.

(Hand) Picked—Giving in to God’s Plan ... *cont. from pg 1*

A lot of us turn to God when it comes to our more difficult choices. The hurdle for whether we look for God’s input on a decision varies. Some of us figure God is too busy except for the most life-changing decisions. Others go to God before they head out of the house each day. Most of us grow impatient when we aren’t sure if God plans to offer a divine perspective on a particular matter of importance to us.

Where do you fit? What decisions are you hoping God will help you make?

The heaviness of any particular decision is influenced most by the consequences of the decision. Whenever I’m having difficulty deciding what to have for supper I try to remember that I eat meals everyday. But decisions like whether to move to another state have considerably higher stakes. My children live in Michigan because this is where they grew up. Michigan is home for them. Yet, I chose to move to Michigan as a young adult. My choice had consequences spanning generations.

Our series for January focuses on the stories of the prophet Jeremiah. He lived during a time of economic, political, and religious instability. During his lifetime, the country where Jeremiah lived was invaded by a world power and most of the people taken into exile. It’s no wonder that Jeremiah was known as the “weeping” prophet.

During this series we learn from Jeremiah by examining several themes that characterize the stories of his time. Our first episode of this month’s series deals with life-changing, big consequential decisions that we hope God will weigh in on. Jeremiah, decided to let God choose his career for him. And at times, he regretted his decision, got angry with God, and threatened to quit.

Jeremiah’s story begins with his first encounter with God on the subject of his career. Jeremiah was young — likely a teenager when God asked him to take on a high-risk assignment. Jeremiah would face criticism, rejection, death-threats, and risk dying in prison or worse. This is not the sort of job that most of us aspire to when we plan our careers.

First, you may find it helpful to know that God doesn’t speak to us in an audible voice very often. At times, I wonder whether this ever really happens at all. I know that when I say “God spoke to me” I’m not referring to a voice coming out of the clouds, or a burning bush, or that I heard an audible voice at all. But when I realize that God is speaking I’m overwhelmed with emotion and awestruck.

Jeremiah’s assignment was to tell the people in his community that God’s patience had run out. The economic, political, and religious instability that prevailed were consequences of ignoring God’s expectations.

And if they were too thick-headed to stop, bad things were going to happen. It’s frightening to compare what is going on in our country with the situation of Jeremiah’s time. The parallels are close enough that we can learn a great deal from their mistakes.



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 chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I selected you... I don't know how to speak; I am too young...But the Lord said to me, "Do not say that you are too young"... Then the Lord reached out, touched my lips, and said to me, "Listen, I am giving you the words you must speak.

Jeremiah 1:4-9 (GNT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Jeremiah 1:4-9. Can you identify with Jeremiah in his dialogue with God? What may God be asking you to do? Do you feel unequipped to do that which you believe God is asking you to do? Considering the capabilities that you do have can you see a fit to the tasks God is asking you to do?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Chosen*. What experiences have you had with wanting to be chosen for something but instead you were rejected? What decisions are you facing that are causing anxiety for you? Can you imagine yourself surrendering your decision to God's will? If not, make this a priority for your prayers over the next few days.
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.



Our Asbury's Ambassador Youth Program were busy last week. They got together and made holiday cookies! Each youth made their own cookie dough.



They baked half one day and saved the other half to take home to make with their families.

Asbury's Ambassador Youth Program is a youth led after-school program. Sizzling Culture co-created by Alexis Edmontson and Desiree Duell with John Li, AmeriCorp Youth Coordinator. Our Program Supervisor is Kevin Croom. Sizzling Culture is an after school program that is family centered + incorporates intergenerational activities using food as our expression.

(Hand) Picked—Giving in to God’s Plan ... *cont from pg 6*

I need to take a few sentences to talk about free-will. I chose to use language that suggests choice for a reason. We do have a choice whether we accept God’s input, considering it to be advice, or we recognize that while God’s input is “technically” advice, ignoring God comes with dire consequences.

It’s a good idea not to walk out in front of a truck, but we have a choice. We can live another day or end our life as roadkill. God’s will is more than just “advice” because God actually knows which choice is good for us. Ignoring God’s will is like walking out in front of a truck.

God said to Jeremiah, “I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I selected you.” And Jeremiah responded, “Well, when You put it that way, of course I’ll do what You ask.” Of course not! Jeremiah was a teenager. He had his own idea of what he wanted to do. God was intervening into his well planned life. Jeremiah, using logic to prove his point, replied, “I don’t know how to speak; I am too young.”

Jeremiah, like so many since him, was blessed to learn quickly that each of us have a choice. We can do things our way, and accept the consequences of a less satisfying life; or we can surrender our will to God’s plan. The plan that came with our “user manual”. And this choice lets us live knowing that

whatever life gives us, we are much better off than had we chose to ignore God.

**I chose you before I gave you life,
and before you were born I select-
ed you. *Jeremiah 1:5***

By the way, God knows our ready-made excuses before they leave our lips. As Jeremiah pondered his next response, God touched Jeremiah’s lips and said this, “Listen, I am giving you the words you must speak.”

The reason that God’s plans for our lives suit us so well is that God blesses us with all that we need to do what we’re asked to do. Sometimes these are abilities that come natural to us. Other times, God intervenes when we are confronted with resistance from persons who chose their own path. Melissa Spoelstra, in her book, *Jeremiah: Daring to Hope in an Unstable World*, writes that making a decision to seek and follow God’s plan for us is “not a ‘one-time’ salvation experience.” Rather, each day we are faced with decisions that can derail our faithfulness to God’s plan.¹

Our nation is ideologically divided. The extremists on both sides insist that we choose sides and fight against the others who chose the other side of any particular arguments. God takes sides also. Just as God did when Babylon attacked Jeremiah’s country. God took the side of allowing Jeremiah’s community to suffer the consequences of their

choices.

Scripture isn’t silent on the political, economic, and religious issues of our time. And many of the arguments that we hear come out of individuals reading what they want to read because it confirms what they choose to believe. This doesn’t make it God’s will or God’s choice. It’s their choice, but it’s God’s truck. And Jeremiah’s job was to warn them that they were about to get run over.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday at 10:30 am as we learn together from the successes and mistakes of Jeremiah’s community. 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](#).

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Pastor Tommy



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 go on [Strongwell.org](#))