

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Volume 3 Issue 10

DECEMBER 10, 2023

## Evergreen (Leaving exile)



Can you believe it's December already? Retailers started stocking their shelves with decorations a couple of months earlier.

People everywhere are recalling and replaying Christmas traditions from Black Friday shopping to adorning their homes with lights and a variety of decorations. One of my traditions is watching Christmas movies during Thanksgiving break.

We titled our series for this year's Christmas season *Letters*. And Nancy Naigle's book, *Letters to Santa*, from her *Christmas in Evergreen* series, seems like a good starting point for discussing letters. Sticking with tradition, I first watched the Hallmark movie version of her story.

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## Preparations (Ready or not)



How is it going with your preparations for Christmas? Do you decorate your house inside and out? Do you have a tree up and decorated? Have you finished your Christmas shopping? Have you started?

Preparations come with anticipation. The point of preparations is that which we're expecting to happen.

In framing a home, we use chalk lines a lot. They're part of the preparation for a step to follow. The lines soon fade and disappear, but as we lay them down, we do so in expectation of the wall, siding, shingles, or whatever the chalk-line is there to guide. While a perfect chalk-line is good and necessary, it is not the final result.

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**EVERYONE HAVE  
A WONDERFUL  
AND SAFE  
WEEKEND!!**



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## Evergreen (Leaving exile) *cont. from pg 1*

Lisa Palmer lived an unsettled life. As a child of military parents, she claimed to feel at home in her unsettledness. Traveling to different towns to help store owners reorganize was her specialty.

With no particular plans for the Christmas holidays, she decides to spend time in the town of her birth, Evergreen. Lisa had not been back since her family moved away when she was seven. One place, particularly meaningful to Lisa, was Daisy's Country Store.

Discovering the store closed and its owner deceased, Lisa recalled her last day in Evergreen. She wrote a letter to Santa that day asking that every Christmas be in Evergreen. Daisy, after reading the letter, suggested a subtle, yet powerful change. How about asking Santa for every Christmas to be "like" Christmas in Evergreen?

Of course, how we view and celebrate Christmas depends as much on each of us as it does on others. But it helps when others around you are of the same mind. For a lot of us, fresh snow adds a touch of magic to the holiday.

We each have memories that triggers our recollection of Christmas past. For many of us, the spirit of Christmas represents an abundance of goodness. Good food, deeds, decorations, parties, and gifts. All in greater abundance than at other times.

However, while the Christmas season may invoke tradition, we don't all view the holidays from the same vantage point. We're more often in a different place with different circumstances than the Christmas stored away in our imperfect memories. Sometimes our lives are unsettled. Other times we may feel exiled from the places where our traditions took root.

In the Bible, Babylon is a persistent metaphor for exile. And the idea of exile is less about a physical place than the emotional space we occupy. While our views of exile are as varied as our traditions, the consistent cause of emotional distress is the absence of God.

The most prevalent story of exile in the Old Testament centers on the people of Judah after the siege of Jerusalem. Ancient prophets warned of a time of darkness because of the people turning their attention towards other priorities and away from God. The result was exile.

There will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy!

Isaiah 35:2

However, God never gives up on us. And for most of us, the Christmas season is a reminder of God's love for humanity.

The Prophet Isaiah casts a vision of what it is like to return from exile. There will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy! It will be as though all of creation is celebrating. Our outlook turns from darkness to light from gloominess to joyfulness. God is coming to save us!

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kevin Croom                      Jonathon Misner  
Sylvia Pittman                    Terrance Williams  
Cyndi McDoniel



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE  
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux  
Norma Buzzard                    Nancy Elston



COMING UP THIS WEEK

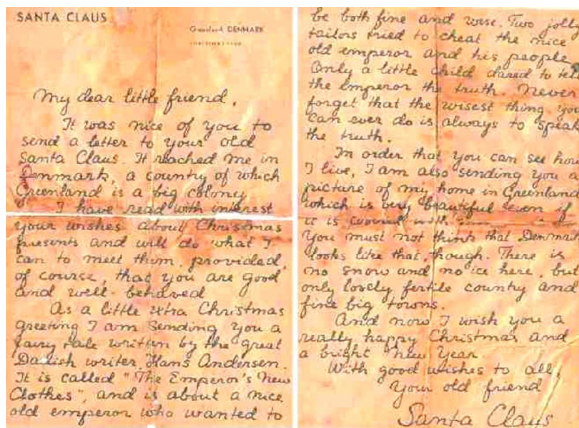
DECEMBER 11 - 17

Dec 11	Mon	2:00pm	Staff Meeting
Dec 12	Tues	10am-12N	Food Distribution
Dec 13	Wed		
Dec 14	Thu	1:00pm	United Women in Faith
Dec 15	Fri		
Dec 16	Sat		
Dec 17	Sun	10:30am	New Beginnings Contemporary Worship



(We are live on [Facebook](#) and our newly launched [YouTube channel](#). You can find these

## Upcoming Worship Series "Letters"



One of my favorite activities to do the week of Thanksgiving is to watch movies with a Christmas theme. Hallmark produces most of the movies I choose. There are more choices than time to watch them all, but the commonality between them reminds me of the similarities of messages found among greeting cards. A man or woman is in a place where they would not ordinarily be. Some obstacle or challenge presents itself. They meet someone, and somehow pieces fall into place and they live happily ever after.

## Book Club News



Our companion book for our new worship series is Nancy Naigle's book,

*Christmas in Evergreen: Letter to Santa*. Also a Hallmark movie, her book tells the story of how Lisa Palmer finally receives a

gift asked for at age seven in a letter to Santa.

The author's website describes her book this way:

When Lisa takes a last-minute Christmas trip to her hometown of Evergreen, she finds that the historic general store has been closed. Using her skills as a professional retail designer, Lisa decides to keep local tradition alive and help the good people of

Evergreen bring the store back to life.

Lisa charms a local contractor named Kevin into working with her, and the pair find themselves facing one surprise after another as they restore the store to its former glory. When the staff at the Kringle Kitchen temporarily accept the store's beloved 'Mailbox to Santa' for safekeeping, the townspeople find and rally around a mysterious 25-year-old letter that never made it to the North Pole.

## Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel      Pastor  
 Kevin Croom      Executive Director/CDC  
 Connie Portillo      Office Secretary  
 Kim Sims      Finance Director  
 Sylvia Pittman      Empowerment Arts  
 Jim Craig      Board & Leadership Chair  
 Mike Sampson      Farms Manager  
 Terrance Williams      Arts Center Mgr  
                                  Sr Prog Mgr Local Foods  
                                  South Flint Soup Kitchen

## Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony & Mirium	Welcome Team
Cyndi	Worship Leader
Anthony & Jim	Ushers
Jonathon & Terrance	Production Team
Yasheah & Mirium	Nursery
Christine & Norma	Cafe



## Upcoming Worship Series — “Letters” ..cont from pg 4

I have often thought of creating a worship series based on one or more Hallmark movies. After all, many of their themes remind me of the ups and downs of many stories found in scripture.

Christmas is a time of anticipation. Most of us have preferences for how the season should play out based on imperfect memories of past holidays. And although we can picture the expected outcome, life happens in ways we had not anticipated.

Welcome to our series *Letters*. If you prefer books to movies, I encourage you to read along with me as our imagination wanders from the pages of Nancy Naigle’s book to ancient times, when persons and communities also faced life-altering decisions.

Weeping we sat beside  
the rivers of Babylon  
thinking of Jerusalem.

Psalm 137:1

Of course, the movie, *Christmas in Evergreen: Letters to Santa*, is available from the Hallmark Channel if this is your media of choice.

As I searched through Hallmark’s library, reading dozens of summaries, Babylon kept popping up in my subconscious. In scripture, Babylon is a city, a region, and an empire. Most of all, Babylon is a place of exile.

Abram and Sarai, better known as Abraham and Sarah, were originally from Babylonia. It was in Babylon that the community attempted to build a tower tall enough to reach heaven. The people of Judea were exiled in Babylon.


As with most movies, biblical stories are about specific people. While, at the same time, the stories reveal things about ourselves. We’re not only invited to take on roles as we experience the story, we are the story.

As the daughter of military parents, Lisa Palmer lived an unsettled life. And as an adult, she wanted to return to Evergreen, the town where she was born, to spend Christmas. Lisa’s family left Evergreen when she was seven. Before her family left, Lisa put a letter to Santa in the box at Daisy’s General Store asking that she could spend every Christmas in Evergreen. Daisy, the store owner, suggests she make a slight, but subtle change to her letter that every year be “like” Christmas in Evergreen.

“Feed Flint”







A meal goes a long way for a senior living alone, a family struggling to make ends meet, or a child fearful of empty shelves at home. But for the residents of Flint who carry the effects of lead-tainted water, nutrition is critical. Feed Flint provides locally grown, chemical-free, fresh produce to residents living in and around Flint. And we're hoping that you can help us provide 10,000 meals this summer.

Feed Flint includes takeout meals, produce boxes with recipes, and home deliveries as part of our work to guide and support families in moving to sustainable abundance. The reality is that Michigan's food insecurity levels got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this summer's recovery is leaving behind those at the most risk of having to miss meals.

**Flint families continue to struggle with the ongoing effects of the water crisis.**

We're bringing together the resources of the Asbury Community Development Corporation. This includes Asbury Farms, the South Flint Soup Kitchen, the Asbury Community Help Center, multiple food pantries, and our Sizzling Culture Mobile Food Trailer. Our plan is to care for our neighbors when they need it most. We accept all people as they are, and our doors are always open to anyone.

Asbury Farms provides locally grown produce used to create fabulous and nutritious meals. Our seed-to-table approach is community-based. This not only helps families make it through emergencies and crises. We help move families towards sustainable abundance.

Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated abundance.

Our work is also about food and justice. Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into active citizens. And all residents can enjoy safety, good health, and a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives. This summer, help us address food insecurity and strengthen Flint's budding local food system by supporting the Feed Flint campaign. Thank you for taking the time to see what we're doing and considering how you can help.

Donate to our Feed Flint Campaign by visiting:  
[flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate](https://flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate)

## LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:



*I will send my messenger ahead to open the way. Someone is shouting in the desert, "Get the road ready for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel!"*

Mark 1:1-8

## NOTES FROM WORSHIP

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## QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Mark 1:1-8. What images come to mind as you read this text? In what ways does this prophecy remind you of the Christmas Holidays? What do you hear someone shouting? What does a "straight path" look like for you?
2. Read this week's articles titled *Preparations*? What preparations are you doing for Christmas? What new stresses come about as you prepare for Christmas? How do you deal with them? What can you do to prepare yourself internally for the Lord coming?
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.





South Flint Soup Kitchen ...

## BOTTLED WATER DRIVE



All Year Long!

Our clients need bottled water for cooking, going with sack lunches, to bathe and brush their teeth with, and MORE!

Donations are accepted Monday-Friday

11:00am-12 Noon at South Flint Soup Kitchen,

3410 Fenton Rd (3 blocks north of Atherton Rd)

Flint MI 48507

Any questions, please call 239-3427 or 235-0016 or

Email us at [southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com](mailto:southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com)

To donate: [www.mightycause.com/feedflint](http://www.mightycause.com/feedflint)



## Show Your Support For Your Local Farm

We need your help to purchase fencing to keep our furry friends from eating up all our crops and not sharing with us.

### How You Can Donate

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- Text "FARMCDC"
- to 53-555
- Scan QR Code

Donate Now



More Information :

 (810) 235-0016

 [funding@flintasbury.org](mailto:funding@flintasbury.org)

As old traditions are made new again, Lisa finds herself falling for Kevin, the traditions, and the town of Evergreen.

We have a limited number of copies of Nancy Naigle's book. It is no longer in print but there are used copies available along with the local library. The movie is available via the Hallmark Channel, Amazon, and other media outlets. The scenes from the movie parallel the chapters in the book.

Here is the schedule of chapters for our Advent Series:

Dec 3	Chapters 1 - 5
Dec 10	Chapters 6 - 10
Dec 17	Chapters 11 - 15
Dec 24	Chapters 16 - 19
Dec 31	Chapters 20 - 23 + Epilogue

Our Book Club does not meet as a group. However, our weekly messages reference that weeks chapters. You can anticipate spoiler alerts unless you keep up with the pace. I've purchased ten books but when they're gone you can still purchase your own copy or visit your local library.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question or enter a prayer request on our website's homepage — [FlintAsburyChurch.org](http://FlintAsburyChurch.org).

Pastor Tommy



Cash or checks can be sent to/dropped off at South Flint Soup Kitchen, 3410 Fenton Road, Flint, MI 48507. Please make checks out to South Flint Soup Kitchen!

Online at [www.mightycause.com/feedflint](http://www.mightycause.com/feedflint)

Donations can be dropped off Monday-Friday 11am-12Noon. Calling ahead is not necessary, but our needs change frequently, so calling ahead of time is a good idea!

Give time! We need volunteers!!! Volunteers arrive at 9:30am and are done by 12:30pm. Tasks include handing out lunches, assisting in the Angel Closet, light cleaning, putting together items to pass out to clients, and more.

Refer people!!

Questions??? Call 810-239-3427  
or email [southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com](mailto:southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com)

The people of Judah’s exile in Babylon came because of turning to other gods and losing their connection with the One True God. While in exile, they longed for holidays like they had when God was an everyday presence in their lives.

Christmas is particularly situated as a time of longing for God’s presence. Anticipating what might be possible when God lives among people, beginning as a helpless baby born in a place that new parents would not choose.

May your holiday be like Christmas in Evergreen. May your Christmas be filled with the peace and joy that Christ alone brings to all believers.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes on our [YouTube channel](#). 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](#).

Pastor Tommy



NEW  
CHRISTMAS TRADITION!!

Beginning December 1st, read one chapter  
Of the Book of Luke in the Bible each evening.

There are 24 chapters.

On Christmas Eve you will have read an entire account  
Of Jesus's Life and wake up  
Christmas morning knowing WHO  
And WHY we celebrate!

Michele Weston, President  
United Women in Faith





As Charles Schultz said through his character Linus in one of my all-time favorite movies, "And that's what Christmas is all about Charlie Brown!"

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website's](#) homepage - [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to our [YouTube channel](#). You can find more information about us on our website at [FlintAsburyChurch.org](http://FlintAsburyChurch.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 [connect@FlintAsbury.org](mailto:connect@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

Parts of our series was inspired by Nancy Naigle. *Christmas in Evergreen: Letters to Santa*. Hallmark Publishing. © Crown Media Family Networks, 2019.



In our companion book, Letters to Santa, the town of Evergreen is preparing for Christmas. Meanwhile, Lisa and Kevin are preparing the Country Store to show to a prospective buyer. As the two gather materials for the store, they come across a mysterious key that they give to Thomas' son, David, to search for the lock it opens.

One building that gathers attention from several residents is a local church. They held the annual Christmas festival there year after year. Kevin remembered when you could hear the church bells from anywhere in town. Unfortunately, the bells stopped working years ago and no one could figure out how to get them going again.

Sadly, the prospective buyer decided against purchasing the store. And this week's chapters ends with Lisa feeling responsible for the sadness felt by both Ezra and Kevin. All of her preparations and hopes seemed in vain.

According to ancient prophecy, preparations would come before the Messiah. A voice in the desert would call all people to repent for their past mistakes and move forward in anticipation of the One coming.

Christians believe this voice was John the Baptist, a relative of Jesus, born a short time before Him. John's father was told before his birth that his son was the fulfillment of a prophecy.

John was a strange man by ordinary standards. For example, John dressed differently than others and ate different foods. Most important, John was certain of his role in the salvation of humanity. He was to call others to prepare for the arrival of the Messiah.

Jesus and John first met while still in their mother's wombs when Mary visited John's mother, Elizabeth, while pregnant herself. Mary knew the plans God had for her Son, although short on detail.

I will send my messenger ahead to open the way. Someone is shouting in the desert, "Get the road ready for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel!"

Mark 1:1-8

Jesus and John would meet again as adults, but we're getting ahead of ourselves. Before this happened, we celebrate the birth of Jesus. And we choose Christmas for this celebration.

But Christmas is still a couple of weeks away. Meanwhile, we prepare for the celebration. Decorations are great and pleasing to the eye. But they are external. And bulbs burnout, live decorations dry out, and we put them all away after Christmas.

However, our preparations on the inside are eternal. How will you prepare your heart for celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? He is the main reason we choose to celebrate. He makes joy possible.

You can join us each Sunday in person or online by clicking the button on our [website's](#) homepage - [Click here to watch](#). This button takes you to our [YouTube channel](#). You can find more information about us on our website at [FlintAsburyChurch.org](http://FlintAsburyChurch.org).

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Pastor Tommy

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ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BUYING  
HOMEMADE SALSA .... HOMEMADE SALSA???!  
WOULD YOU AT LEAST LIKE TO TRY IT??



IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, PLEASE CALL THE ASBURY CHURCH  
OFFICE 810-235-0016

PRICES ARE: 12 oz. \$4.99

24 oz \$8.99

THE GREEN SALSA WILL BE MILD.

THE RED SALSA WILL BE HOT.





# TOY DRIVE

## South Flint Soup Kitchen

December 20th 2023

4 pm - 6 pm



## Taking Donations !

We are open daily 11 am - 12 pm Monday - Friday

Contact us @ [youth@flintasbury.org](mailto:youth@flintasbury.org) 810 235 0016

3410 S Fenton Rd , Flint , 48507 | 810-239-3427 |

<http://southflintsoupkitchen.org/>