



ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER



Volume 4 Issue 8

DECEMBER 8, 2024

Promises (Let's connect)



The Christmas Season comes at a good time. As we approach the shortest day of the year and temperatures stay near or below freezing for days at a time, the Christmas spirit reminds us that there is joy in the world.

This reminder does not affect everyone the same way, which is one reason there are so many versions of Hallmark

Christmas movies.

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Preparations (Honesty)



There's no place like home," said Dorothy in the classic *Alice in Wonderland*. This mantra paved the way for Dorothy to return home. Alice recognized that all she hoped for was within reach of whatever space she occupied as long as she remained true to herself. Alice was preparing for adulthood.

In preparation for adulthood, Alice confronted the bizarre and often unpredictable world lying outside the only world she knows. There's something safe about a world found only in our imagination. Most of all, we're in charge of the unpredictable.

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EVERYONE HAVE
A WONDERFUL
WEEK!!



DONATE

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Some of us, the lucky ones, can get into the spirit and feel the joy of Christmas from Thanksgiving through Christmas Day.

Some fall on the opposite side of the emotional scale, dreading a holiday filled with feelings of loneliness and despair.

Most of us likely fall somewhere in between, with each year being different from the last. And with some welcomed changes and a few differences, we would rather not happen.

I suspect a lot depends on how connected we feel. Are we surrounded by family and friends? Are we regularly with others with whom we feel emotionally connected?

In an article for *Psychology Today*, Dr. Dianne Grande explains that emotional connections are based on three critical questions. The first question is, "Are you accessible to me?" In other words, am I important enough to you to get your attention when I need it?

And when I do get your attention, are you responsive to me? When I'm anxious, sad, lonely, or afraid, will you comfort me? Last, and perhaps most important, are we engaged

in each other's lives enough that you seem to know what brings me comfort and joy when I'm afraid or feel hurt?

The more connected we feel to others, the more likely the Christmas Season brings us joy as we look forward to celebrating the holidays.

An often-used expression among Christians is the phrase, "Jesus is the reason for the season." While the clever rhyme and meaning-packed implication help these words to easily roll off the tongue, what this means for each of us also varies.

The expression has both historical and practical limits. Historically, Christians co-opted a secular holiday celebrating the winter solstice. Practically, giving and receiving gifts with persons we're emotionally connected to grabs much more of our attention than the birth of Jesus. After all, Jesus may not have actually been born on December 24.

How we live out this expression, however, has a lot to do with our emotional connection with Jesus. That is, how does our connection with Jesus answer the three questions posed by Dr. Grande?

Jesus often quoted from the Book of Isaiah, and the prophecies contained in it tell us a lot about God's promise of a Messiah. Among the most significant is the first of four poems, known as the Songs or Poems of the Servant. Throughout the centuries, the church has claimed this text as one of the many prophecies pointing to Jesus Christ as the long-awaited Messiah.

The poems were likely written for a fractured community. The community, with one part living in style along the banks of the Euphrates River, although held in Babylonian exile. The others were still living in the neighborhood and were struggling just to scratch out a meager living.

Those who were taken away by the Babylonians and no longer part of the neighborhood managed quite well. Despite their captivity, they were free to pursue a reasonable living and, for the most part, to come and go as they pleased.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Virginia Bigger
 Sylvia Pittman
 Mirium Watson

Jonathon Misner
 Terrance Williams



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
 HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux
 Nancy Elston

Norma Buzzard



COMING UP THIS WEEK
DECEMBER 9 - 15

Dec 9	Mon	2:30pm	Staff Meeting
Dec 10	Tue	10am-until gone	Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice
		12N-2pm	Flint Mission Zone—meeting in Library
Dec 11	Wed		
Dec 12	Thu	1:00pm	United Women of Faith Christmas Luncheon at Michele's
Dec 13	Fri		
Dec 14	Sat		
Dec 15	Sun	10:30am	New Beginnings Contemporary Worship

(We are 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.)

Upcoming Worship Series "Life"



On the Sunday before we celebrate everything scary for Halloween, we begin a new series titled *Life*. Speaking of everything scary. The debate is long over, and the consensus is that climate change is real and taking an increasing toll on our lives together. The time for Christians to be a part of the solution is long overdue.

One other scary note is that the election is coming up fast. While climate change may not be visible on the ballot, as voters, we need to know where the candidates stand on this issue and what they plan to do about it. We owe this to ourselves and to future generations.

Book Club News



We finish our current worship series, *Life*, on Sunday, November 24. We used *Following Jesus in a Warming World* by Kyle Meyaard-

Schaap for this series as our companion book.

We're trying something a little different in preparation for Christmas this year. Instead of chapters to read in preparation for Sunday's message, we'll have a short reflection to read each day.

Daring to Connect is a daily devotional for the four weeks of Advent. Each day, we'll read a reflection that explores faith through daring stories of risk, birth, and radical trust. Dr. Week's stories can help revitalize our connection

to faith, community, and personal transformation.

The Season of Advent offers opportunities each year to consider the stories we know as part of our faith: stories of risk, birth, and trying again. Moreover, these are stories of mutual, radical trust between God and God's people, trust manifested by God sending Jesus to live among us.

In *Daring to Connect*, we will read contemporary versions of similar stories experienced by members of Pastor Dawn Darwin Weaks' congregation. A church totally focused on

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Anthony & Jim	Ushers
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Upcoming Worship Series — “Life”

Our next series looks at our changing climate, assisted by a book written by a fellow Michigander, Kyle Meyaard-Schaap. *Following Jesus in a Warming World* will be the companion book for our new worship series beginning on Sunday, October 27th. We will spend the weeks leading up to Advent looking at what Scripture says about our role in caring for our planet.

Then the Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it.

Genesis 2:16

Millions of Christians took a stance they claimed to be pro-life. Honestly, while their position is understandable, the focus was more on decisions that shouldn't be theirs to make. More important, climate change is taking away life. Taking action to care for our planet is a pro-life position.

Here is the outline of our series and each week's reading assignment if you want to read our companion book as we progress through our series:

<u>Title</u>	<u>Sunday</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Reading</u>
Neighbors	October 27	Luke 10:25-37	Intro & Ch 1
A Love Story	November 3	John 1:1-18	Ch's 2 & 3
Good News	November 10	Luke 4:16-22	Ch's 4 & 5
Habits & Idols	November 17	Matthew 6:24-34	Ch's 6 & 7
Investing	November 24	Matthew 25:14-30	Ch's 8, 9 & Epilogue

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


Pastor Tommy

Kyle Meyaard-Schaap. *Following Jesus in a Warming World: A Christian Call to Climate Action*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2023.

“Feed Flint”



“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**

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS & MORE:



God is merciful and tender and will cause the bright dawn of salvation to rise and shine on all who live in the dark shadow of death, guiding our steps into the path of peace.

Luke 1:68-79

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Luke 1:5-25 as background, and then read Luke 1:68-79. What images come to mind as you read this week’s text? What is Zechariah telling those of us living now?
2. Read this week’s article titled Preparations. How are preparations coming for celebrating Christmas? How about your preparations for meeting your Lord someday? Are you being honest with yourself?
3. How can your group members help you be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God this week? Pray for each other to have the Holy Spirit bless you with more courage.





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

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personal transformation through mission in their community. Beginning with the first Sunday of Advent, each day's devotion includes an Advent scripture, reflection, and prayer. Candle-lighting moments for each Sunday and Christmas make *Daring to Connect* an engaging Advent experience.

Rev. Dr. Dawn Darwin Weaks received her B.A. from Baylor University, her M. Div. from Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, and her D. Min. from St. Paul School of Theology. Initially ordained in the Southern Baptist Church where she served as an associate minister, Pastor Weaks answered a call to become a Disciples of Christ minister in 1999. She is now the co-pastor of Connection Christian Church in Odessa, Texas, with her husband, Rev. Dr. Joe Weaks.

A frequent speaker at events nationwide, she has her writing published in various venues. Her three passions are her family, her relationship with God, and helping others hear and live out the calling God gives them.

Pastor Weaks offers this insight in her introduction:

Sometimes the weight of the world can bog us down. Everything can feel so heavy, it's hard to move. Yet Advent, this season of waiting for the coming of Christ anew, is meant to be an adventure. It's right there in the word! Within the pages of this devotional are stories of playfulness, courage, trying again, laughter, and radical trust- from God and us. After all, our story as Christians centers on God's outrageous risk of sending Jesus to us in the first place.

We'll have a few books available for purchase, but copies are available through most book retailers and libraries. As of the publication of this article, the price on Amazon for a new paperback edition is \$4.99, and the Kindle version is also \$4.99.

Our Book Club does not meet as a group. However, our weekly messages reference that week's chapters. You can anticipate spoiler alerts unless you keep up with the pace. You can 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.

Pastor Tommy

Dawn Darwin Weaks. *Daring to Connect: Advent as Adventure*. Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2024.

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

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

Alice learns that adults need rules to live by. We learn them as children by watching the adults in our lives, often without questioning why. Of course, this leads to confusion when we observe inconsistency between the words we hear and what we see. We also discover that we don't all see the world through the same lens.

Like Alice, most of us struggle with how to respond when asked who we are. The process is complicated by constant change, both within and around us.

In the first act of Shakespeare's play Hamlet, Polonius, chief minister to King Claudius, offers advice to his son, Laertes, who is preparing to leave for college. "This, above all, to thine own self be true," he says.

Parents and mentors often reuse much of this father's advice. For example, he reminds his son to be careful before speaking out and to avoid lending or borrowing money from friends.

The problem is the source of the advice. Polonius often does things that illustrate an inherent dishonesty in his advice. The father wears the t-shirt, declaring himself a good person, but lives out a less authentic identity.

Nevertheless, many parents borrow his words as their children prepare for adulthood and search for their own place in the world. His story makes me wonder how my children accepted my advice as they prepared to strike out on their own.

Speaking of preparations, I'm thrilled with the Christmas decorations adorning many of the houses I pass by each night. I'm grateful that so many other people's Christmas preparations add interest to my dark drive home each evening and remind me to see the joy in the midst of cold temperatures and slippery roads.

Also, on the topic of preparations, God promised a messenger would prepare the way for the Messiah through the Prophet Malachi. God also warned us to be prepared and expect big changes in ourselves.

During the time of Malachi, the people questioned God's claim that humility and honesty paid off. The opposite seemed to be the reality. The arrogant boasting amplified the lack of justice and accountability. God's claim that honesty and being true to ourselves were not the truth people were experiencing.

But God knew better.

Luke tells us that an elderly Priest named Zechariah is visited by an angel while he is burning incense in the inner temple. After questioning the validity of what the angel told him, Zechariah is unable to speak. God's message through the angel sounded impossible, and he simply wasn't prepared to believe what he was told to expect.

Our text for this week begins with Zechariah's declaration after his extended silence. Zechariah's voice was restored after he confirmed that his and Elizabeth's son would be named John. It appears that during his months of silence, Zechariah concluded that the angels prophecy could be trusted. As foretold in ancient prophecy, his son would be a messenger preparing the way for the coming Messiah.

God is merciful and tender and will cause the bright dawn of salvation to rise and shine on all who live in the dark shadow of death, guiding our steps into the path of peace.

Luke 1:68-79

What does it mean for Zechariah's son to "prepare the way?" A little later in Luke, after

Meanwhile, those living in the neighborhood struggled in the aftermath of the war. Vandals had plundered the land, the residence little to work with. The neighborhood was devastated economically and spiritually.

It was as though God had abandoned them altogether, or at least it seemed that there were other gods in control of their destiny with more power and influence than the God that they had known as children.

This description should also sound familiar. Scripture is unique in its relevance to all generations. Whenever we feel disconnected from the familiar, disoriented by our surroundings, and devastated by struggles, we hope for good news.

Here is my servant... He will not lose hope or control. He will establish justice on the earth.

Isaiah 42-1:9

Advent can be a time of reflecting on the good news of Jesus Christ. We need only allow the Spirit of God to work in our imagination and hearts.

This Sunday begins the Season of Advent. The subtitle of our companion book for our Advent Series suggests that we

can approach Advent as an adventure. One way to do this is to work on our emotional connection with Jesus. Pastor Dawn Darwin Weak's book of daily devotions can help by helping us spend a few minutes each day practicing the expression, "Jesus is the reason for the season."

Advent reminds us of God's promise that suffering never has the last word. In the days leading up to Christmas Eve, suspense builds both by the wrapped gifts under trees to be revealed when Christmas arrives and by allowing ourselves to remember the greatest gift of all, which began in stark conditions among livestock. Jesus spent His first night sleeping in a feeding trough as the world waited in anticipation of being fed.

Whether you choose to read Pastor Dawn's book of devotions, *The Upper Room*, or some other collection, spend a little time each day connecting or reconnecting with Jesus Christ during Advent this year. Perhaps you'll arrange five candles, lighting one as the first week begins as you begin your time of connecting. Light the same one again as the second week begins and add one more. By Christmas Eve, you will be ready to light the last candle and spend quiet time in the glow of all five candles.

Pastor Dawn offers a short devotion just for this purpose, and there are plenty of free options available online.

Advent is an adventure for all who open their hearts to connecting with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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.

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Pastor Tommy

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John becomes an adult, we discover that his call for repentance turns our attention to rule-following. But John was not a conservative. He was more of a progressive. John told the people that it was not enough to declare their goodness. They needed to live out their faith by bearing the fruits of goodness. Ideas like sharing your clothing and your food. Be honest and fair in your business, and not cheat others.

Were the people confused about what it meant to be faithful to God? Apparently, they identified as followers. They owned the logo, but they were focused on the entitlements of claiming faithfulness rather than living a life that reflected faithfulness.

Spiritually, they were children, but it was time for them to grow up. Rules are important, but they can seem downright silly when blindly followed.

Perhaps home is the place where we don't need to sport a team logo for others to realize we're authentic. I remember my mentor from seminary, Dr. Jim Perkinson, walking with the graduates. The school had to loan him a robe to wear over his jeans, t-shirt, and sandals.

Pomp and circumstance weren't his thing. He focused on living out the spirit of John's call to faithfulness.

Sometimes, I think we need a different word for faithfulness. How about honesty? I like this word. We need to be honest with ourselves about our own preparations.

Preparations imply a process that begins with raw materials and a vision. Preparations aren't perfection. Perhaps there is a plan, but a plan sure to change.

It's as though we're God's Christmas decorations, along with the snow and all of creation. Some of us are twinkling, while others are always on until we run out of energy and crash. None of us are perfected. Instead, we're all preparing for that day when we return home and meet the One we celebrate at Christmas.

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Give online at

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www.southflintsoupkitchen.org

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