

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

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JULY 13, 2025

Busted? (Heaven)



Cyndi and I could barely talk as we watched the horror that unfolded in Texas early Saturday morning from the safety of our family room. The loss of life was overwhelming. And the tragedy of losing children overloaded our senses. The disaster was unimaginable.

I suspect that even the more faithful among us can't help but ask,

"Where was God in all of this tragedy?"

Page 2

Manna (Heaven)



A lot has happened in our companion book this past week. Author Mitch Albom is expertly building the drama of the miracle phone calls, orchestrating several threads at once, including background on the delivery mechanism. The telephone.

Albom shared that one time, when a magazine interviewed Edison, he told the journalist about a project he was working on called a "spirit phone." His invention might enable people to communicate with the dead. Edison explained his motivation. People want to talk to those who went before us, and his new invention will at least offer that possibility.

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HAPPY GROWING!!



DONATE

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The primary focus is, as it should be, on caring for the survivors and searching for the missing. Cleanup and rebuilding will come in time, as will investigations into whether more lives could have been saved. The lessons learned will likely be identified and hopefully lead to preventive measures for the future.

Of course, opinions are already circulating as investigative reporters uncover who did or didn't do what should have been done. Officials have labeled the tragedy a "perfect storm" given the combination of factors involved. It was also called a 100-year flood, considering the historical frequency of floods of this magnitude.

In his newsletter published by the New York Times, writer David Wallace-Wells raises questions that the broadcast media seem to want to skip over. First, floods, even those once labelled 500-year events, are happening with greater frequency.

The president, who insists climate change isn't real, ordered the retirement of the database of billion-dollar disasters long maintained by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. But hiding history doesn't keep it from

repeating itself. The price tag of ignoring climate change, both in terms of dollars and the loss of life, is increasing rapidly. Wallace-Wells noted that nearly two-thirds of climate-related disasters over the past couple of years came from unspectacular-sounding storms.

My answer to the question regarding God's presence in the midst of a storm is that God is always nearby. And I believe God weeps with us. But does God ever calm the storm?

First, we can't be sure that God didn't take some preventive action. We can't be sure whether God's fingerprints were on proposals for warning systems that were occasionally implemented and more often ignored. Nor can we be certain whether God's voice was heard by first responders trying to warn residents.

One thing is sure. God is trying to warn us that climate change is real, and to ignore God's warnings is to ignore God and put our faith in other gods. We are quickly becoming a pagan nation led by people who try to say the right words but don't put love into action.

Both Mark and Luke tell a story about Jesus calming a storm in time to prevent the storm from sinking the boat carrying Him and His disciples. Jesus was asleep when a storm suddenly began to cause their boat to fill with water.

Jesus stood up and commented the wind, "Be quiet?" and he said to the waves, "Be still?" the wind died down, and there was a great calm. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Why are you frightened? Do you still have no faith?"

Luke 8:22-25

The disciples awoke Jesus in a panic. "We are about to die," the disciples said as they cried out to Jesus. In Mark's telling, one of the disciples asked Jesus, "Don't you care?" But the storm ended on Jesus' command, and they were all safe. "Where is your faith?" Jesus asked them.

Is this all it takes to avert potentially disastrous storms? Yes, but there's more to the story. We also have work to do. Faith looks a lot like love in action, more so than empty words.

IN OUR PRAYERS

Virginia Bigger
Sylvia Pittman
Mirium Watson

Fred Hans
Jonathon Misner
Terrance Williams



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE
HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Dean Lamoreaux Norma Buzzard
Nancy Elston

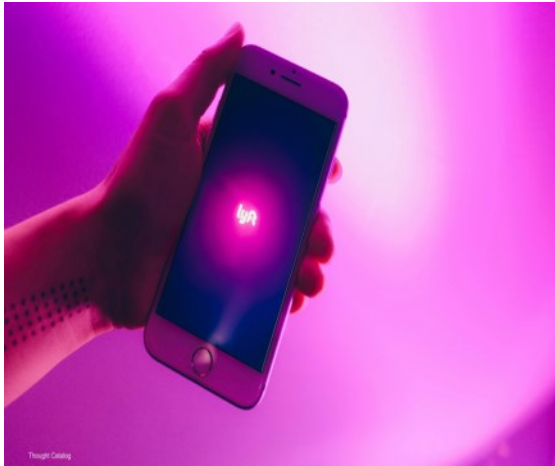
COMING UP THIS WEEK:

JULY 14—20

July 14	Mon		
July 15	Tue	9am-until gone	Produce will be available each week, along with canned goods, until further notice
July 16	Wed		
July 17	Thu		
July 18	Fri	9am-12Noon	
			Court Street UMC Youths—Volunteering at the Farm
July 19	Sat		
July 20	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 "Heaven"

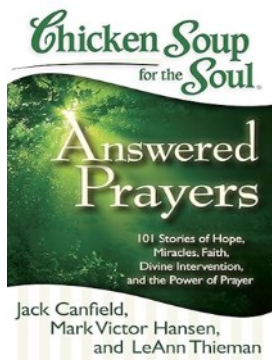


In our worship series, *Lifeboat*, we learn about a group of people desperately clinging to life after the yacht they were on sank. Three days after the accident, after drifting a considerable distance from where the boat went down, they pull a stranger into the lifeboat. The stranger claimed to be the Lord.

In this series, *Heaven*, we turn to another of Mitch Albom's best-selling novels, *The First Phone Call From Heaven*. In this mystery, Albom takes readers on a rollercoaster ride of mystery and hope.

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Book Club News



There are hundreds of books under the umbrella title *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. So many that this title is now its own publishing

company. Out of the hundreds of options, we've chosen one special

edition of our new series, *Prayer*.

According to their website, motivational speakers Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen started in 1993 with the idea that people could help each other by sharing stories. The two had shared stories told to them over the years, and their audiences kept asking if any of the stories had ever been published.

But when the two tried to get their first book published, they were turned down by every single big publisher. Fortunately, the book was published by a small health and wellness publisher in Florida named HCI. After the owner, Peter Vegso, read some of the stories, he decided to give the book a chance.

Since then, more than 100 million copies have been sold in the U.S. and Canada, 400 titles, and translations into more than 40 languages. Their goal is to spread happiness, inspiration, hope, and wellness across the globe, "changing your world one story at a time."®

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Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDoniel	Pastor
Kevin Croom	Executive Director/CDC
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Kim Sims	Finance Director
Terry Kinze	Ops Manager/CDC
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
Israel Unger (Izzy)	Business Service Mgr
Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
Venus McBeth	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	Cafe

Upcoming Worship Series — “Heaven”

“Miracles happen quietly every day,” writes Albom, but “They are rarely tallied. No one keeps score. Now and then, a miracle is declared to the world. And when that happens, things change.”

And the miracle Albom writes about is a phone call. Calls happen every day with little notice. But a call placed to a member of Harvest of Hope Baptist Church was different. And so were the other seven. In the case of Katherine Yellin, the call was from her dead sister, Diane. She said she was calling from heaven.

Were these miracles or the result of a cruel prank? Stay tuned, and we will uncover the truth together. Albom’s book offers a creative and thought-provoking illustration of the reality of heaven. However, we will turn to scripture as our primary source of truth, supplemented by tradition, logic, and our own experiences.

*The Lord builds his
home in the heavens.*

Amos 9:6

Our series follows Mitch Albom’s book but adds our own concerns and relevant stories from scripture. His book is inspirational and should cause us to reflect on our beliefs about heaven and the afterlife.

The Book Club article in our weekly newsletter, the Circuit Rider, includes a reading schedule. All relevant articles and past issues of our newsletter are on our [website](#).


“Feed Flint”

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“Feed Flint”

Page 7



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:

Jesus stood up and commanded the wind, “Be quiet!” and he said to the waves, “Be still!” The wind died down, and there was a great calm. Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Why are you frightened? Do you still have no faith?”

Luke 8:22-25

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS:

1. Read Luke 8:22-25. Pray for the families in Texas and New Mexico suffering after severe flooding. What are your thoughts after reading Luke’s story and praying for the victims of severe weather?
2. Read the article in this week’s Circuit Rider titled Busted? How do you think that finding out that what you thought was a miracle was a hoax would affect you? How do severe weather disasters affect your faith? Where do you see God in the storms?
3. How can your group members help you be more receptive to hearing and understanding the Word of God this week? Pray for one another to be blessed by the Holy Spirit with greater courage.



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More Information :



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funding@flintasbury.org

Miracles happen all the time and became a major theme from our last series. The stories in our companion book for the new series of answered prayers are sure to leave you in awe. We hope these stories will not only inspire you but also strengthen your faith and hope.

These stories offer testimony that God is actively involved in our lives. And that God hears our heartfelt hopes and needs. The stories include miraculous true accounts of healing, divine appointments, angels among us, signs from above, timely gifts, and other answered prayers.

Since each story exists independently of the others, you can choose to read all of them or just a few. Perhaps read one story each day as part of a daily devotional routine. For our series, we'll select one or two stories from a specific chapter in case you want to read ahead.

If you choose to follow along, I suggest using the following schedule:

<u>Sunday's</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Chapters</u>
July 20	4 - 45	One
July 27	116 - 153	Four
August 3	182 - 217	Six
August 10,	252 -293	Eight
August 31	294 - 327	Nine
September 7	328 - 351	Ten

We'll have a few books available for purchase. New copies of the paperback edition are available through Amazon for \$11.60, and used copies in good condition are usually under \$6, including shipping. This book may also be available at the local library.

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

Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, LeAnn Thieman. *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Answered Prayers: 101 Stories of Hope, Miracles, Faith, Divine Intervention, and the Power of Prayer*. Cos Cob, CT: *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, 2011.

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

This is our final episode of our Heaven series and the conclusion of our companion book, *The First Phone Call From Heaven*. Mitch Albom left us with a creative, surprising, and heart-warming ending.

In a nutshell, Sully's investigation into the mysterious phone calls from heaven came to the conclusion he had hoped for. Busted! Well, that's the way it seemed at first. Albom shares numerous philosophical insights throughout the story he tells. The one that best fits the story's end is "Desire sets our compass, real life steers our course."

The big day arrived in Coldwater with all the fanfare of a well-orchestrated major event. The world was watching. The producers were prepared for the wait. The longer it took, the more advertising dollars poured into the networks covering the event.

Those hoping to maximize profits were disappointed when, too soon into the extravaganza, several phones began ringing at once.

Meanwhile, the mastermind behind the plot was being exposed. An expert in all the capabilities needed to pull off such a believable scam had

moved to Coldwater after covering up his son's disastrous mistake that resulted in the Hornet FA-18, flown by Scully, clipping a twin-engine Cessna headed for the same runway where both aircraft had clearance from the tower to land.

Once the media caught onto the story, the critics' reactions were fast, furious, and a bit condescending. "I told you so" sums up their collective response.

As Coldwater returned to its usual rhythms, Albom writes, "The world absorbed the Coldwater phenomenon the way a shaken snow globe lets its white flakes settle to the bottom. As happens with all miracles, once life goes on, those who believe retell them with wonder. Those who do not, do not. No one seemed to notice how, in their own way, the calls had steered people to just what they needed."

This included answered prayers as local pastors saw a rise in church attendance.

As the story comes to an end, Scully's seven-year-old son, Jules, awakened by a noise, puts a toy phone to his ear and smiles.

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)

This is a reminder that we publish a weekly newsletter called the Circuit Rider. You can request this publication by email by sending a request to FlintAsburyUMC@gmail.com, or let us know when you send a message through our [website](#). We post an archive of past editions on our website under Connect - choose [Newsletters](#).

Pastor Tommy

Our series was inspired by Mitch Albom. *The First Phone Call from Heaven*. New York: HarperCollins, 2014.

David Wallace-Wells. *"We Can Adapt and Prepare for Floods. But Will We?"* © New York Times, July 9, 2025. Retrieved from: [link](#)

Not surprisingly, the story sparked a backlash, including 600 letters to the editor and numerous requests for the device. Nearly a century later, in the town of Coldwater, Michigan, Edison's quest became reality. Except people were receiving calls from heaven on ordinary cell phones.

The day was set for the Friday before Christmas. Each of the chosen planned to receive a phone call while sitting on stage in front of a packed stadium and numerous news cameras. The whole world would witness the miracles firsthand. All would now know for sure that heaven is real.

But not everyone was on board with the plan. In front of a crowd of 600-plus attendees, Pastor Warren chose a story from the Book of Exodus to share for the weekly bible study at Harvest of Hope Baptist Church. It was a story about miracles and how people respond.

After God freed the Hebrew slaves, they traveled for years through the wilderness in search of the promised land. Shortly after leaving Egypt, the group started complaining bitterly as they crossed the desert. Provisions were a constant challenge. How do you feed so many people?

God heard the people's complaints and provided for the people's needs with something that resembled bread each morning. We translate the ancient Hebrew word as "manna," which means "What is it?" In the evening, they were provided quail.

God's instructions were clear. Food was provided for six consecutive days. Each family was to gather only what they needed each day. Leftover food would spoil if not consumed. However, on the 6th day, they were instructed to collect enough for two days. God didn't provide food on the 7th day, but the extra day's portion from the 6th day wouldn't spoil. The 7th day was a day of rest.

"Do you know what happened?" Pastor Warren asked the large crowd. A small, older woman raised her hand. "They went out to get the manna anyway?" she answered. But when the people who went out to look for food on the 7th day found that God hadn't provided it. Just as they were warned.

You must gather food for six days, but on the seventh day, the day of rest, there will be none. On the seventh day, some of the people went out to gather food, but they did not find any.

Exodus 16: 26-27

Pastor Warren continued, "Here you had a people who were being given the most amazing thing. Food from God. It tasted good. It satisfied them. It was the perfect nutrition. But what happened? Some people still didn't trust God's Word. They went out on the Sabbath, even though he told them not to. Remember, manna was a miracle. A real miracle!"

All the commotion over the miracle calls from heaven was bothering Pastor Warren. Something wasn't right. While there was a lot of good that resulted, who would have thought that 600 people would attend a Bible study? "Even with this gift from God, they wanted more," Pastor Warren told them. "And what did they get?" "Nothing?"

"We cannot demand miracles," Pastor Warren concluded. "We cannot expect them! What is happening here in Coldwater, dear friends, is wrong." The pastor wasn't referring to specific miracles, but to the expectation that God's grace comes on our schedule and for our entertainment.

Joel Furches explains in an article titled "Atheism and the Psychology of Doubt and Belief" that while faith was once synonymous with trust, it is now more commonly used in the context of religious belief. As a result, he concludes that faith is often thought of simply as "blind trust," and belief is essentially a form of faith.

Psychologists generally agree that the human mind evaluates new information using an unconscious bias. In other words, we're quick to believe whatever confirms what we already believe. And we're more skeptical about information that disputes what we believe to be true.

For all Christians, what we believe as a Church is based on the holy scripture we call the Bible. A collection of books which, we believe, was inspired by God and contains both the history and everything necessary for salvation.

We're reminded in the Book of Genesis that God created the heavens and the earth. God created humankind to be caretakers of God's Kingdom. The land and its bounty do not belong to any of us. And God provides everything we need. This is a miracle we experience every day. But is it ever enough?

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

Our series was inspired by Mitch Albom. *The First Phone Call from Heaven*. New York: HarperCollins, 2014.

Joel Furches. "Atheism and the Psychology of Doubt and Belief."

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Here is the outline of our series:

<u>Sundays</u>	<u>Episode</u>
June 8	Heaven calling
June 15	Is this real?
June 22	Go tell
June 29	Validation
July 6	Manna
July 13	Busted?

The Prophet Amos tells us that the Lord builds his home in the heavens. And Jesus promised that He would prepare a place for each of us. Whether or not anyone has ever received a phone call from there, heaven is real.

Please join us each Sunday at 10:30 a.m. We share our weekly episodes on [Facebook](#) and our [YouTube channel](#), and go live at 10:30 a.m. You can find these links and more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website](#), [FlintAsburyChurch.org](#).

Pastor Tommy

Mitch Albom. *The First Phone Call from Heaven*. New York: HarperCollins, 2014.

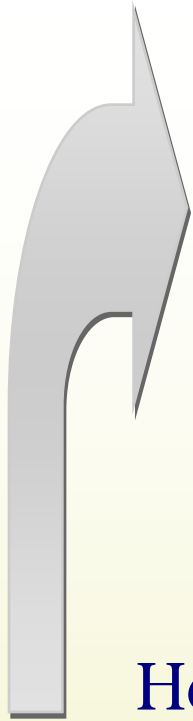
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Image via Pexels

If you're like most parents, you want everyone in your family to lead happy and healthy lives. But too often, maintaining optimal health can feel like an overwhelming task. How can a busy family like yours find the time to ensure everyone eats well, exercises often, and gets enough sleep? And even if you're running on all cylinders trying to meet these health goals, you'll never get time to relax and practice some much-needed self-care. Good health is about moderation and balance. If you want your family to maintain healthy habits in the long run, stick to approachable health strategies that can easily be incorporated into your everyday life. Here are some tips from [Asbury](#) to get you started.

Take Charge of Your Family's Health Care

Taking charge of your family's health means being proactive about managing your medical care. Keeping your family's [medical files and documents](#) organized will help you understand important information and gain a better picture of your family's health. If you need to share these files with doctors or other healthcare providers, PDFs are often the preferred format. If you find that some of your PDF pages need to be rotated to portrait or landscape mode, you can easily do this with a PDF rotator – [go here](#) to learn more! By taking an active role in your family's health care, you can optimize their health outcomes as patients in the medical system.

Sign Your Kids up for Sports

Signing your kids up for sports can be a great way to promote their physical health and social development. According to Health direct Australia, sports can help children [develop important life skills](#) such as teamwork, communication, and sportsmanship, as well as build self-confidence and self-esteem. Encouraging your children to participate in sports can also help them establish healthy habits and a positive relationship with physical activity that can last a lifetime. Look for sports options that match your children's interests and abilities.

Start the Day with a Healthy Breakfast

Starting every morning with a healthy breakfast will set the stage for a productive and energized day. [Eating a nutritious breakfast](#) provides the body with essential nutrients and energy needed for the physical and mental activities to come, and can also regulate appetite and help you avoid overeating later on. When planning breakfast, aim for a balance of protein, whole grains, and fruit or vegetables. [Some healthy breakfast options](#) include oatmeal with nuts and berries, Greek yogurt with fruit and granola, or whole-grain toast with avocado and scrambled eggs.

Avoid Screen Time in the Evening

Avoiding screen time in the evening can be beneficial for both the physical and mental health of your family. Teladoc Health explains that the [blue light emitted from screens](#) can disrupt sleep by suppressing the production of melatonin, the hormone that regulates sleep. Exposure to screens before bedtime can also increase alertness, further delaying the onset of sleep. Instead of screens, encourage your family to engage in calming activities before bed, such as reading a book, taking a warm bath, or practicing relaxation techniques such as deep breathing.

Keep Your Home Clean and Cluttered

A cluttered home can really contribute to rising stress levels, so do what you can to keep your home clean and organized. The trick is to do a little at a time so that the mess doesn't become overwhelming. Try putting on some music and cleaning just a few minutes a day – you'll be shocked at the difference it makes! There are plenty of useful tips out there; click here to [find out more](#).

Encourage Enjoyable Hobbies

Engaging in hobbies [that are enjoyable and fulfilling](#) can help reduce stress, improve mood, and enhance overall well-being for everyone in your family. For children, hobbies can help with the development of important life skills, such as problem-solving, creativity, and self-expression. Hobbies can also promote physical health by encouraging regular exercise, improving motor skills, and enhancing cognitive function. Plus, engaging in hobbies as a family is a great way to bond and strengthen your relationships!

Prioritizing the health and well-being of your family doesn't have to be an overwhelming task. By implementing approachable health strategies like organizing your family's medical files, signing up for sports, and starting the day with a healthy breakfast, you can help your family establish healthy habits that last a lifetime!

[Asbury](#) is here to help the Holy Spirit as it works through our community. [Click here](#) to get involved!

This article was submitted by Jason Lewis (jason_lewis@strongwell.org) - Image via Pexels

Mid-Summer HEALTH & WELLNESS CHECK

19 JULY, 2025 11:00 – 3:00 PM

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