



God With Us

What if our theology could get up out of our armchairs and into the real world? That would be something worth talking about. This is The Armchair Anabaptist podcast.

*Father, we've forgotten
that you've called us together
to bear each other's burdens
and worship you as one.*

“Community loneliness - that might be the great evangelistic opportunity of our time, the great wound in the world that needs healing.”

“Mixing our faith with a political party is like mixing ice cream and horse manure. It doesn't do much damage to the manure, but it really messes up the ice cream.”

“It's very early. It's very primal. It's very deep within the human community, is that we are people who do not want to be alone.”

“I'd love to see us stand more in solidarity with one another, not looking down on one another, but together finding that level ground at the foot of the cross of Jesus and sharing in the hope of the resurrection.”

*One church,
One light,
One body,
Found in Christ.*

Introduction

Jesse Penner: You're listening to the Armchair Anabaptist. I'm Jesse Penner.

Andrew Dyck: And I'm Andrew Dyck. This is episode five, God with us.

JP: I'm going to let you all as listeners in on a little bit of inside baseball here. Insight into how the sausage is made.

We are recording this episode at the beginning of December and Andrew and I are both pastors and our churches have launched into, as churches across the world have launched into, a period in the Christian calendar known as Advent.

And I think for the EMC, churches have a variety of levels of adherence to the Christian calendar in general. But pretty much every church, I would imagine takes this time, these four or five weeks, to dig into this concept of Advent, this time of anticipation leading up to Christmas, to the coming of the Messiah as a baby.

AD: So, when we use phrases like God with us, we talk about the incarnation. All of this is a very Christmas-oriented way of thinking, though of course, it's not the season that we're mindful of.

The reason that that season exists, the reason why we bother to highlight it every year the way that we do is because of how foundational it was that the Creator God, would truly come down to our level and make his tent, and as Eugene Peterson would paraphrase, move into our neighbourhood.

It was just a foundational, life-changing, history-changing thing that happened. And of course, there's nothing that we can really say or do about community, and talk about community and live out community, unless we unpack what it meant for God to really be part of our community.

JP: Absolutely. I think there can be a risk with Advent about making it a little bit too cute and cuddly and focusing in on some very specific things.

We tend to focus on the humility of the moment, and we tend to focus on the peacefulness and the hope that comes and draw parallels to new life. And of course, many of us who are parents can picture those moments holding a baby in our arms and the joy and the warmth and the hope, and we associate these things with the coming of Jesus. And that's beautiful. And that's a part of it.

But there is something fascinating about the way in which God chose to go about this rescue plan through Jesus, the way God chose to bring about his ultimate plan for restoration, for a way for us as humanity to get back into right relationship with God. Because, of course, God wasn't limited to this one specific way to bring about the salvation that we would find in Jesus. But He did.

He did it through a baby, through a human that was born into a specific time and a specific place and a specific family and a specific community. And so it's fascinating to try and wrestle through some questions that we don't always get to during Advent and ask, what does this mean for us as we think about our call to engage in a specific time and a specific place and a specific community? Because I think there's lots to learn there.

AD: And our panel could take this in so many different directions. So it will be exciting to see how Stuart Murray, Patrick Franklin and Beth Stovell and Betty Pries weigh in on what it means for our communities that Jesus is God with us.

What does the Incarnation teach us about community?

JP: We're going to start off here with Dr. Stuart Murray. He's the co-founder of Urban Expression and the Anabaptist Mennonite Network, as well as director for the Center for Anabaptist Studies in Bristol. He is the author of about 20 books, including *The Naked Anabaptist* and a new book that came out in January titled *The New Anabaptists: Practices for Emerging Communities*.

We asked Stuart about the incarnation and the nature of the incarnation and what that teaches us about community. He pointed back to one of the early Anabaptist forefathers and his views on this topic.

Dr. Stuart Murray: If I had to choose a favourite 16th-century Anabaptist, I'd probably go with the Pilgrim Marpeck. He is often, I think, regarded as the acceptable face of Anabaptism by outsiders. I've read lots of his writings and I'm very attracted by his vision of community, which he bases on the incarnation. I think that among all the early anabaptists, he makes the strongest link between the incarnation of Jesus and the nature of community.

And that was set in the context of discussions with the group known as the Spiritualists, those who were unconcerned about physical gatherings, unconcerned about material things. It was all to be a religion of the heart, and Marpeck, on the basis of the incarnation says, no, you're missing something really important—matter matters. This is an embodied spirituality. We need to be together. Bread and wine are important. The water baptism is important. The incarnation says to us that God was enfleshed and that we need to have flesh to communities. We need to be with one another in real ways.

I think also there's something about the particularity of the incarnation, that Jesus came at a particular time in history into a particular culture. He spoke a particular language, or maybe one or two languages. He was a first-century Jewish carpenter probably, and then a travelling rabbi.

And so there's something here about community needing to be contextual. That we need to be rooted in the community that we're part of, the wider neighbourhood, and we need to find ways of contextualizing the good news in that context. And for me, that means holding together two dimensions of incarnation.

One of those is being culturally attuned so that we make sense in our context, and the other is being countercultural so that we have something different to say. And it seems to me that's what Jesus models, that he was someone who was fully immersed in his culture. He was a guest at a table. He was a guest at parties. He was fully involved in the conversations and activities of his day.

But he brought a specific challenge as well. He kept on questioning what his culture was saying, was requiring. So for me that's where the incarnation really begins to have some bite in terms of what does it mean to be both culturally attuned and countercultural.

JP: Next up, we'll hear from Betty Pries. Dr. Betty Pries has over 28 years of experience in mediation and coaching. She's the co-founder and CEO at Credence and Co and the author of the book *The Space Between Us: Conversations about Transforming Conflict*. We asked Betty the same question: what does the nature of the Incarnation teach us about community?

Dr. Betty Pries: So, one of the ways that I think about this question is to go back to what do we mean by incarnation. And sometimes when we use a word that is sort of cloaked in religious experience, we can forget what the word means.

And incarnation means to enflesh something, to enflesh, right? Like “carne” is flesh. Right. And so to incarnate is to enflesh something. And what is being enfleshed at Christmas? What's being enfleshed at Christmas is God's presence in the world. So Jesus is enfleshing God's presence in the world or incarnating God's presence in the world.

And what I find so intriguing about incarnation is that when I think about Christmas, for example, what is being incarnated at Christmas? I mean, yes, officially Jesus, but it's 2023 or 2024 or whatever it is. And right now, God is seeking to be enfleshed by you and by me.

What that means is that Christmas is the annual celebration of the incarnation of God's presence through us. Yes, there's a baby that we're celebrating, but I think we're being invited at Christmas to see the birthing of God's enfleshment in our own bodies and our own beings so that we become God's presence in the world.

Or we maybe said differently, we become the conduits of God's presence in the world is more accurate, I suppose. But to me, incarnation then teaches us something quite profound about community insofar as... Well, let me say it this way: if I am incarnating God's presence in the world, then I need to see the world through God's eyes and hear the world through God's ears.

And what that means is I have to... What does the text tell us? To care for the orphan, to give sight to the blind, to practice the year of Jubilee, to free the oppressed. All of that stuff is part of incarnating God's presence in the world.

So, for community to incarnate God's presence in the world is to relate to others in the community, to others in the world, through how God would want to be relating to others in the world. And that's always a story of liberation. And you and I contributing to that liberation, to God's presence in the world. I incarnate, I am meant to enflesh, God's presence in the world. Does that make sense as a way of thinking about community?

AD: Dr. Beth Stovell has been involved with a variety of ministries over the years and is an Old Testament professor and the Chair of General Theological Studies at Ambrose University. When I asked her about how the nature of the Incarnation teaches us about community, this is what she had to say.

Dr. Beth Stovell: So when we think about Genesis in relationship to John 1, one of the things that I find really interesting is the way that John's gospel introduces the incarnation in a way that's really different than the other gospels.

So Matthew and Luke, they start with Jesus as an itty bitty baby and all the stuff that happens before that. And that's where we get all of our advent stories, our Christmas stories, they're all from those two gospels. And Mark's gospel has John the Baptist

announcing repentance in the desert, whereas John's gospel begins at the very beginning of all time and links back to Genesis 1.

In Genesis one, God speaks and creates the world. And if we think about that in comparison to other Ancient Near Eastern myths, around the same time-period, the stories of creation in those other stories, whether we're looking at Mesopotamian stories or Egyptian stories, generally speaking, those gods couldn't create through speaking. And why that is, is because they generally created in some other way.

So sometimes it's like a sexual description, which I will not say for your listeners, and other times it's a description of forming something, like physically forming something.

Our God who speaks and creates becomes the foundation for why, when John's gospel at the beginning, John 1, starts speaking about the incarnation, he says this word, this word creates with God in the beginning, the word was God, but also the word then becomes flesh.

And so this speaking of God, God who speaks, becomes this God who is now in flesh with us.

In the culture that John's gospel writes into there was actually an intense amount of dehumanization of people's bodies. The culture of the time was Roman. Greek and Roman culture had very high level of mistreatment of human beings and the misuse of people's bodies for a wide variety of things. Whether you're looking at how they enslaved people or you're looking at the way that they use people for sex or for violence, they would put people into war.

And this idea that John is speaking about God who comes and joins us in our bodies, honours the body and really points to this idea that our bodies matter. And so that Genesis story where bodies are created, human beings are created, and it's good, very good then reflects back again as we see Jesus who chooses to take on flesh to be with us.

Something that I like to point out is that in Christianity we have this history of, I think, misreading Paul and his idea of the flesh versus the spirit. And then we make the flesh evil. But actually, that's not what Paul's trying to do. He's talking about that whole context of what I was talking about before, of the mistreatment of each other around the flesh, the desires that come out of that, and those misshapen desires, not our physical bodies themselves, but the world's way of engaging our bodies.

And so when you think about Jesus choosing to become flesh, one of the things it does for us is it actually honours how we treat each other's bodies, how we treat each other as human beings, that we don't just see people as only spiritual things. We see them also as people who are in physical experiences in front of us. And it means that we then also have implications for things like how we think about lust, how do we think about how we look at another person.

If I look at another person in a way that treats their body as though it's mine and I get to do with it what I want in my own mind and in my own desires, I am actually disregarding the power of the incarnation. If I look at someone else and I treat them like, that person's here

to bring me food, they're not really human. I don't have to treat them like real people. They're just ringing up my groceries, they're not a real person. If I act that way practically, I might not think that way, I might not in my head think that, but I might treat the person in front of me like that's what they are.

And so this ability to say Jesus became flesh to be with us, but he also showed us what it meant to live in the flesh, what it meant to live in our bodies, in relationship to each other, in community. And it extends how we think about who's included in the same way that we think about Genesis 1 and we are all made in the image of God.

AD: Dr. Patrick Franklin was also asked about how the incarnation impacts our understanding of community. Patrick Franklin is an experienced pastor and church planter who serves as the president of the Canadian Scientific and Christian Affiliation and is also an associate Professor of theology at Tyndale University. Here's what he had to say about the incarnation.

Dr. Patrick Franklin: Oh man. And there's so much we could say here, right? So many things. I think, and you just began with John and the indwelling. John 1:14 that God comes to be with us to Tabernacle. So one of the things about incarnation is divine presence, that God is present amongst us.

I mean, that mixes imagery between incarnation and the dwelling of God within the temple and things like that. So God's presence, God's dwelling, God's solidarity with humanity, when Christ becomes one of us, He enters into solidarity with us. And we remember too, that by entering into solidarity with us, Christ is not just the one who establishes community outside himself, but it's actually in him that we have community.

And so he comes into solidarity with us so that we in him can find unity with each other. I think there's another aspect, too, though, and this goes all the way back to thinking about Genesis and so forth, remember, Christ is the second Adam.

So, I think this is an incarnational aspect too. Christ comes as the second Adam, the second human, the true human in a sense. And the church then, Paul discusses the church in Ephesians as the new humanity, you know, remade through Christ. And the way that Paul talks about that and he says, in Ephesians 2 you've got these disparate, alienated groups, Jews and Gentiles. But through Christ, they are made into one human being, one new humanity in him.

So, I think that's an important incarnational link too, that Jesus is the new humanity or he's the new human being. The church is the new humanity in Christ. And in that is a call toward reconciliation as well.

AD: I was struck by the idea that Dr. Patrick Franklin brought forward of Christ coming down to earth in solidarity with humanity. And for me, solidarity has often been a term that's almost been exclusively used in relation to social justice. And so I wanted Dr. Franklin

to explain a little bit more what he meant with Christ coming in solidarity with us. And here's how he explained it further.

PF: I think solidarity is one of the ways in which we can see the Divine exchange theme at work. This is a theme that's pervasive in the early church, and it's pervasive in Scripture too.

Things like, he who was rich became poor for your sake, so that you and your poverty could become rich in him, or he who had no sin became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God. I think there's another bit where it's he became forsaken and alienated so that we could find communion with God, oneness with God, reconciliation, atonement with Him, but also with one another.

And so these divine exchange themes that he came to offer us something and draw us into what he has, taking from us our alienation and giving back to us, our oneness, our reconciliation in God. And the reconciliation bit is a big theme, right?

It's in that new humanity theme. It's also in places like Colossians 1 where all things are reconciled in Christ. And it says through the shedding of his blood. And he couldn't shed his blood if he wasn't incarnate. Right?

So the Incarnate Christ comes and reconciles all things. So it's sort of like there's this notion in the Father is where what happens to him happens to us, and he comes and suffers alienation so that we might enjoy communion, the kind of communion he enjoys with his father.

AD: There's been so much said about this truth that Jesus came down to our level. God himself would come down to earth or, as they say down south, what in carnation?

JP: Oh Andrew...

AD: I know, it was even worse than the baseball joke.

JP: And here I thought we were past it, I thought we were over the hill on this.

AD: No, not at all.

JP: No. It is.... There is a lot to say about this, though. It's one of those things, again, that I think is sometimes, as we maybe talked about a bit in the intro, it's deceptively complicated or nuanced. There's more going on here than we sometimes cover in our nativity plays or messages on hope and peace and joy.

I like the way that Betty Pries put it, where she speaks about the fact that we can't get overly spiritual or precious or abstract about this word. It would be a huge fault to make the incarnation abstract because it was anything but. It was specific and real and fleshly. Right? It was an enfleshing, I think, is the word that she used, of who God is.

And so we need to take that seriously, that this was something that happened in a time and a place, in a moment and this is the way that God chose to act out this plan for us.

AD: Yeah, for as complicated as it can be, it also stays relatively simple. The truth of the matter is it's a very physical and visceral thing that happened and Jesus stepped into human history, which of course is very important. It affects how we can relate to the world around us. We needed this event to happen in reality, in history, in physicality as we know it.

We also heard from our guests here a very significant impact on what it meant for Jesus to have a body and the fact that our bodies matter—matter matters. Then, to continue to unpack that, then other people's bodies matter as well.

And this is a clear theme throughout the rest of the scriptures, for sure the New Testament, how we treat each other, how we treat our own bodies when it comes to our sexuality, how we treat other people when it comes to anger and potential violence and force.

All of that becomes much more poignant in our relationship with Jesus because he took on a body and he gave a body value. He gives our bodies value and those around us. And so, yeah, I think this call to leave behind the abstract and to ground our theology of the incarnation in an embodied form is just right in line with what Jesus was doing in that moment.

JP: I think there's also a sense that we can learn that just like Jesus, we have been placed in a specific context in a place. And Stuart Murray talked about this a little bit, this concept that Jesus being a part of the culture that he was in, both allowed him to connect with people in a meaningful way that would have been otherwise impossible. And it also gave him the authority and ability and the grounding to speak into that culture in a way that may have otherwise been impossible.

And so there too, we start to see hints of how it is that our understanding of incarnation and the way Jesus came to earth, the way he lived and taught and interacted with people starts to inform the way that we need to think about interacting with those around us, too.

AD: Absolutely. And there's so many different ways that God could have chosen this rescue plan for humanity. But he chose a very specific one. And it can't be any other way because that one, again happened in history in an embodied form. And so I'm excited to see how our panel is going to continue to give us more food for thought and how this view of God's ultimate plan really impacts or changes our community. Right now.

Our conversation continued here. Both Patrick Franklin and Stuart Murray had more to add when they were thinking about this concept of the incarnation and community and how these things are tied together. And they actually took it in quite different directions. But we want to certainly include both of those answers here. Let's start with Stuart Murray and his thoughts about how the incarnation transforms the way we think about community today.

SM: One of the things that I've noted over the last 20 years, I work a lot with church planters and pioneers, is the importance of food and hospitality. It seems that almost every church that I know that's been planted in the last 20 years has majored gathering around food in a whole variety of settings and contexts.

I think for many of them it's been instinctive. For some of them, at least, it has been reflecting on the Gospels and discovering just how much Jesus said about food and hospitality, how often he was the guest at tables, sometimes the host.

So something about table fellowship seems to me to be a very practical way of working with this, and very often they were boundary-breaking meals. The wrong people were invited, people were in the wrong places and had to move.

So, the stories that he told and the way that he modelled... I'm intrigued that Jesus was accused once of being a glutton and a drunkard. and now I don't believe that he was either of those things, but he was clearly at table enough for people to think that, certainly by comparison with John the Baptist, that that might stick as an accusation. That Jesus, the party animal, was really that kind of accusation.

So there's something about hospitality, about sharing food together, particularly in a context where people are unusual table companions, that I think is an outworking of this.

In terms of how Jesus taught, I'm certainly impressed by the number of questions he asked rather than the answers he gave.

Again and again, I think you find Jesus asking questions. And even when people ask him questions, he often asked them a question in return. He must have been quite irritating actually to be around because you want an answer from him, but he simply asked you a question that you don't fully understand, and it pushes you into a deeper understanding.

So, stories, dialogue, encouraging reflection, which is very different, I think, from the approach that says we have the answers, that we just need to get people to stop talking long enough so we can get our answers in. I think the approach that Jesus has is very different from that. It's drawing people into conversation, into reflection.

A fairly obvious thing perhaps, is his concern for the outsider, for those who are on the margins. That seems to me to be clear throughout the Gospels. He hangs out with the wrong people and he has little tolerance, it seems, for religiosity and for stifling traditionalism.

And so Jesus just doesn't fit into the religious boxes that people wanted him to fit into, but constantly reaches out to the outsider. There's the very challenging statement that the tax collectors and the prostitutes are getting into the kingdom ahead of the religious people. Again, that must have irritated people and annoyed them, but it was a way of challenging the status quo at the same.

AD: I asked Dr. Franklin how our view of God's ultimate plan that was embodied in Jesus Christ changes our community today, and this is what he had to say.

PF: Yes. So, this is a question about eschatology in a way, right? That the vision of the future and how it shapes the present. And I think one of the things I want to emphasize is that it's not just a vision of the future. It's that whenever we talk about eschatology, we're talking about the spirit because as Moltmann says, the spirit is the spirit of the future. The Spirit is the one who, in his coming being manifest with us makes the future dawn in the present.

And so, when we think about things like sharing in the divine life or being in Christ, who's in the Father, it's the Spirit who makes that a reality for us. When we talk about being united deeply with each other in Christ, it's united in the Spirit that we are those things.

So, I think when I think of the Spirit, I think of the future, I think the already, the not yet, and how the Spirit is a down deposit of that, he makes a little bit of heaven real for us in the present. And that includes our experience of community.

It always means our experience of community is going to be somewhat incomplete. Right. I think there's a bit of realism in that the Spirit makes it real and truly deep, but not yet fully consummated. We still aren't going to be fully understood in community. We still are going to have to work at conflict, right? Work through conflict in a productive way.

So, community does not mean conflict avoidance. It actually means that through the Spirit we're going to be shaped to be the kind of people who deal with conflict well. And that takes real effort and time.

So, I think the spirit comes to initiate us on this journey, really, and point us in this trajectory. And the blessing, I guess, is that we as the church then can be this sign and foretaste of what God's future is to the world.

There's another piece, perhaps too, where I think being future-oriented by the Spirit's power means that we don't simply operate the way the world works. The church is not a worldly institution or organization. It has a different politics, it has a different economics.

It's not like dominoes, locked into cause and effect. One of the things about the future is that the Spirit comes from the future with the power of resurrection, right? Christ's resurrection is the beginning of the new creation. And there's nothing within the causal connections of creation that come before the resurrection—like it's a complete breaking and in-breaking from the new—from the future.

And I think that's the beginning of what the church is called to be, people of the spirit, not predictable. You know, John says like the wind, but also not subject simply to the way things work. We're called to envision what God is doing, to reach out and join him in that and to be creative and imaginative in the midst of all that. Called to do things that we can't do in our own power and strength.

AD: In a follow-up conversation, Dr. Franklin and I talked about fighting against idealism and presenting ourselves to each other and to God in an ideal but yet false way, and how the transforming nature of the Kingdom of God, the transforming power of Christ, requires our naked, authentic selves. Let's listen to what Patrick Franklin said about this.

PF: Yeah, the idealism really just hurts people because it leads people into shame. It leads them to hide. It leads to a kind of exclusion. And it's a bit of a make-believe thing. It's sort of like, okay, God, I don't want the people you've actually given me. I want these ideal people.

And, you know, even on the individual level, I remember Henri Nouwen even saying things like that, right? He says, you know, one of the things that happened to him when he moved into the community working with people with disabilities, he said, suddenly I was faced with my naked self like my Harvard experience and all my degrees and my publications, none of this meant anything. And I was forced to address this question like, Well, who am I?

And then he sort of said, God really has no interest in your ideal self. Can't work with that person. It's not they're not real. He wants your actual self and that person he loves and that person he can redeem and move forward and transform. And if that's true, like, what does that mean on a community scale, that we meet ourselves and we meet others as they are and allow room for God to do his work, not to expect that he's already done it before anybody even arrives.

JP: It's a fascinating thing again, how especially in the second part here where we had these two responses, how they took it in very different directions. Patrick Franklin talked in sort of a big theological sense about what it means to be an individual and what it means to be in relationship with God and how it is that we present ourselves to God and what the Incarnation could teach there.

Stuart Murray, on the other hand, went really, really sort of practical, very simple kind of advice that he takes out of this, which is simply: Jesus liked to be with people. He engaged with people. He was in real relationship, He ate with people. And the incarnation teaches us that these things matter.

We heard earlier in the episode from Beth about this concept that our bodies matter as a result of the incarnation. And to me, this statement from Stuart is in some ways an extension of that, which is the way we use our bodies with people matters and these little practical things, things like sharing a meal, having a conversation, being willing to be engaged and ask good questions of those around us, being willing to be in relationship with people, those kind of feel like sort of earthy, simple things.

But his belief, and I believe it's a true one, was that that is a meaningful and real way in which we continue to show the value of the incarnation of Jesus in our walks of faith today.

AD: Hey, anytime someone can bring up food, it's a good time in my books. I mean, I think that's wonderful to be able to see that. But we know it's one of those things that has almost superseded culture. Every culture and every expression of hospitality has involved food since the dawn of time, and there is something really significant about that.

And of course, it's not just the food, it's not even what you're eating or why you're eating it. It's this gathering around a table that has become and continued to be and always been a significant expression of hospitality and therefore community.

And to there I think these ideas aren't maybe as disconnected as they might first appear, because if we're going to gather around a table, if we're going to gather in community, it definitely needs to be with some honesty and some authenticity.

And that is something that I know we're going to talk about even more as the season continues and something that we've just scratched the surface with here in our conversation of the Incarnation and how this transforming power of Christ in the Kingdom of God that he's now inaugurated, that's coming to completion one day.

It requires our honest selves and therefore the community that we have with each other in this already, but not yet kingdom also requires our honest and authentic selves. And so there can't be idealism and pretense. If we do that, then we're already doomed to fail at the outset.

JP: One of the things that I think I'm taking away as we go through this episode is that although Christmas becomes the time in which we tend to focus on the incarnation and really zero in on this, it shouldn't be something that is isolated to a very specific part of the calendar year or a very specific part of our thinking about what it means to be a Christian.

The incarnation and the reality of Jesus coming to earth, being in flesh, having an earthly body and living out in that way really does impact every part of how we understand what it means to be somebody in a body, in a place, what it means to be in relationships with other people, and what it means to be in a relationship with God.

Now I see that our theology of the Incarnation or thinking about this shouldn't be limited just to Christmas. But of course it's true that a lot of our Christmas music speaks beautifully and pointedly to what it means for God to come and be with us. One hymn that paints this picture in a beautiful way is *Lo, How a Rose Ere Blooming*. Here's a rendition from Poor Bishop Hooper.

Lo, How a Rose Ere Blooming

Lo, how a rose ere blooming
From tender stem hath sprung
Of Jesse's lineage coming
By faithful prophets sung
It came, a flowe't bright
Amid the cold of winter
When half-spent was the night
Isaiah 'twas foretold it
The rose I have in mind
With Mary we behold it
The virgin mother kind
To show God's love aright
She bore for us a saviour
When half-spent was the night

AD: If we are to look at how the incarnation matters to us in the way we live today, I think it's a matter of theology that demands to be made practical. That's exactly what Jesus did when he took on flesh and dwelt among us.

And so the fact that our bodies and our flesh matter—to me, this is huge in how do we take care of ourselves, How do we take care of our health? What's our sexual ethic looking like? And then as an extension of that, how do we treat other people? Do we empower and beautify them physically, emotionally and spiritually? And so there are so many direct implications of this in our community and in the way that we live our life. What do you think?

JP: Yeah, I completely agree with that. And there's always a danger in kind of I don't know what to call it, evangelical Gnosticism, this separation of the spiritual and the physical and to go “I'm not worried very much about the physical needs. I'm going to more care about sort of evangelism and ministering to the spiritual.”

This has been something that we've seen sometimes in soup kitchen ministries, where it's you only get a meal if you listen to the message sorts of things. And I understand the heart behind that and the reason why that's there. But something about the incarnation speaks to the fact that giving that hot meal is a nourishing thing for the Spirit as well as it is for the body, because these things are deeply and truly connected and see that most clearly in Jesus.

Closing

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There's also a brand new resource available on our website for Sunday school classes or small groups that want to dig a little bit further into this, we've broken down the episode into bite-sized chunks and provided questions to spark further discussion or engagement around these topics. So if that's interesting to you, go to our website and check it out. They're releasing each week along with the new episodes.

A special thanks to our guests who have joined us today. We spoke with Stuart Murray and Betty Pries, Beth Stovell and Patrick Franklin.

Our intro song is Making Us One by Shades, and our closing song is Lo, How a Rose Ere Blooming by Poor Bishop Hooper.

Our executive producer is Erica Fehr. Our producer and audio engineer is Jesse Penner, and our administrative assistant and social media manager is Betty Ramones.

I'm Andrew Dyck. And I'm Jesse Penner and we have been your hosts for The Armchair Anabaptist. We certainly hope that what you have heard today will do more than stay as

merely food for thought, but that it can help inspire each of us to get up out of the comfort of our armchairs and translate into living more like Jesus.

Join us next time as we talk about the early Church's expression of community in episode six: Everything in Common.

Edited for clarity.