

ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Nurture and Nature (The contradictory role of mothers¹)



Cyndi and I watched an episode of the dramatic series, *The Good Doctor*, which featured two mothers finding love for their sons to be a stronger bond than their

differences. Their lives intersected at a demonstration - on different sides of an argument. The writers were vague on the women's differences except for footage

of a make-believe demonstration about Proposition 266.

Page 6

Faith, Fear and Neighboring (Whosoever local food¹)



ONE OF 17 HOOP HOUSES LOCATED ON ASBURY FARMS CAMPUSES GROWING NUTRITIONAL FOOD WITHOUT CHEMICALS

Family farms make up almost 90% of the total farms in the U.S. The average small family farm is just over 200 acres. This is quite a difference from Waggoner Ranch, located in Texas, estimated to be well over

500 Thousand acres. This ranch was acquired by the niece of Walmart's founder and her husband a few years ago.

An article posted by Michigan State University's School of Agriculture

answers the question, "Does size matter?" when it comes to the size of farms. But what grabbed my attention was a claim that consumers are becoming increasingly more interested in where our food comes from? This is encouraging, except the article was posted in 2013.² Are we still interested?

According to the Center for Disease Control, six out of ten adults in the U.S. suffer from chronic disease -4 of 10 have at least two

Page 2

Volume 2 Issue 16

May 16, 2021



You must wear a mask while in the area and to enter church office. If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you

Thank you & Stay safe Everyone!



Inside this issue:

Nurture and Nature	1
Faith, Fear and Neighboring	1
In Our Prayers/Coming up this Week	3
Asbury Worship Series	4
Pastor's Book Club	4
Leadership in Worship & Service	4
Asbury Worship Series/Living Water	5
Nurture and Nature	6
Asbury Veggie Boxes	7
Small Group Questions & Notes	8
Nurture and Nature	9
SFSK May Dates	10
Faith, Fear and Neighboring	11
Coming Out	12

Faith, Fear and Neighboring (Whosoever local food¹) ..cont from page 1

chronic diseases. In order of prevalence, the leading chronic diseases include heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, Alzheimer's, diabetes, and kidney disease. These diseases are mostly preventable. The behaviors that result in so many of us suffering from chronic illness including smoking, poor nutrition, a lack of exercise, and alcohol consumption.³

Thanks in large part to U.S. policies controlling food production in cooperation with the profit motives of fast food and supported by our general lack of willpower — the vast majority of us are overfed and undernourished.

If most of us are willing to die younger and live lesser lives so we can eat whatever satisfies our lust for quick, easy, and cheap, are you sure we really care where our food comes from?

Our addictions to various unhealthy foods in larger quantities cause to mistake our body's craving for nutrition with a craving for more McDonald's chicken nuggets.

And the wager, "I bet you can't eat just one," is a safe bet for any of us that crave the salt and fat that comes from eating snack foods. Potato chips are best known for two things: salt and fat. Eating salty food triggers the release of dopamine — a chemical messenger that triggers our brain's pleasure center. Once we get that first reward hit, we crave more.

It's like a drug pusher betting that you can't stop after trying whatever they're selling. We get hooked on the release of dopamine when we eat salty snacks.

Imagine a group of us decided we wanted to start a business. It doesn't matter the product we plan to sell — we just want to make sure that our product has broad appeal, is cheap to

make, and once people try it, they crave more of whatever we're selling.

This lies at the heart of fast food — this lies at the heart of most of the food we're offered and that many of us provide our children — setting them up for their unfair share of chronic disease. Are we really interested in where our food comes from?

In an annual church meeting, Asbury Church leadership voted unanimously that our church would pursue a status known as a "reconciling church." The core value that this designation stands for is inclusiveness. That is, all persons are welcomed.

But what does this have to do with where food comes from?

Joel Salatin, in his book, *The Marvellous Pigness of Pigs*, writes that "If we would apply a litmus test of inclusive vs. exclusive to the food and farming system like we do access to God's grace, it would paint a fundamentally different food system than the one patronized by most Christians."

We believe that God's grace is available to all without exception. No one is excluded from God's grace. But our food system, complete with policies, laws, practices, and thousands of attorneys, favors huge industrial farm enterprises. Farms where profits take precedent over nutrition, requiring safety measures to reduce the risk of sickness caused by industrial farming practices.

According to Joel Salatin, industrial farms make lousy neighbors, and they are a nuisance to anyone living in the vicinity of one. Their chemicals cross boundaries, and their lawyers place claims against other farms where their chemicals land. The stench of overcrowded livestock is an affront to our sense of smell and creation.

Should those of us who claim to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ care about where our food comes from? Does it matter that our policies and practices favor large farms specializing in growing thousands of acres of the same crop? Does it matter that these farms require large quantities of deadly chemicals to keep them going?

**Love God and neighbor.
It's as simple as that.**

Luke 10:27

There is an often-quoted story in the book credited to Luke about neighboring. This story is best known as the story of the good Samaritan. Like a lot of stories about Jesus, this one begins with a question asked by an antagonist. The question was straightforward enough. What does God expect of me? What are the minimal requirements to pass God's test of goodness?

And also, like a lot of stories found in the gospels, Jesus responds with a question. "What do you think the answer is?" Jesus asks in response.

"Love God and neighbor. It's as simple as that!" the interrogator answers. There! We have our answer! "Now go and do just what you said we ought to do," Jesus responds. "Next question?"

In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom
 Sylvia Pittman
 Shirley Craig



FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES WHO ARE HOMEBOUND OR IN NURSING CARE

Nancy Elston Elaine Lamoreaux
 Norma Buzzard Mary Nations

★ **Coming up this week** ★

Pastor Book Club will still be via Zoom until further notice—but will slowly start to meet in person, depending on how the next few weeks/months will go. Please call the Church Office for more info 810-235-0016.

Please continue to wear your masks when coming into the Asbury building and use hand sanitizer that is placed throughout the building.

Thank you and everyone stay safe!

- May 17 Mon
- May 18 Tues 10am-12:30pm
 Water / Food Distribution
- May 19 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club
 11am-12Noon
 Food Giveaway at South Flint Soup Kitchen
- May 20 Thu
- May 21 Fri
- May 22 Sat
- May 23 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.)

Asbury Worship Series Living Water April 25th-May 30th



Book Club News

We finished our study of *Be the Bridge* by Latasha Morrison and completed our worship series, *Bridges*.



Racial reconciliation is a work in progress that comes with a great sense of urgency for Asbury. Our community superpower is diversity. But equity takes intentional effort, as does reconciliation. My prayer is that each of us continues the work of bridge-building that God called us to do.

Our next book offers us a glimpse into reconciliation with the earth that sustains us. The creation stories in Genesis offer humanity the blessing of earth stewardship. Again, our community is blessed beyond measure. Asbury Farms is within walking distance from our main campus on Davison Road. This offers all of us insight and opportunities to experience the presence of God in new and more profound ways.

Leadership in Worship & Service

Tony, Mirium	Welcome Team
Anthony, Jim	Ushers
Jonathon, Terrance	Production Team
Miriam	Children
Cyndi	Worship Leader
Christine & Norma	Cafe

Asbury Staff

Rev. Dr. Tommy McDaniel	Pastor & Exec Dir
Connie Portillo	Office Manager
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Board & Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Exec Chef & Dir Opers

Joel Salatin, in his book, *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs*, compares eggs from Polyface Farm with a typical egg purchased at the local supermarket and coming from a factory farm. The most notable difference was the measure of folate present in the comparison. Approximately 1,200 mcg for eggs from free-range hens and 47 mcg for the factory eggs. So what?

According to the Mayo Clinic, folate (vitamin B-9) is essential in red blood cell formation and healthy cell growth and function, crucial during early pregnancy to reduce the risk of

Joel Salatin is a self-proclaimed member of the Christian community that we more progressive thinkers struggle to cozy up to — the conservative Christian right. Yet Joel writes that when visitors come to his farm that he has the “uncanny ability to irritate both the conservative and the liberal.” How? Let’s discover this together.

The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs challenges us to put belief into action.¹ Racial inequality, global climate change, food insecurity, and a lot of diseases are human-engineered. We too often use our ingenuity and energy in ways that harm our earth which ultimately harms you and me. The solution is to live out our faith rather than just declare our faith. Put our actions in sync with our words.

In his book Joel challenges the pursuit of increased profits by farms that confine pigs in cramped, dark pens, injecting them with antibiotics, and feeding herbicide-saturated food. According to Joel’s interpretation, such practices do not respect pigs as a creation of God. By not allowing pigs to express their *pigness* as God intended, we choose profits and convenience over our claims of faithfulness to God.

Matt DePalma	Farms Manager
Chris Freeman	South Campus Bldg Mgr
Israel Unger	Finance Director
Kim Sims	Connections Suprv
Terrance Williams	Arts Center Mgr
Katelin Maylum	Sr Mgr Local Food
Jose Trejo	<i>Enlace de Idioma Español</i>

Asbury Café

Plan to meet outside the sanctuary each Sunday before worship for coffee, tea, snacks, conversation and so on. The music will start when it is time to wrap up and head in for worship.

birth defects. Folate (folic acid) is also listed as an essential vitamin for excreting lead from our bodies.

This is not the first time I have come across science that reminds us that healthy bodies are not manufactured in factories. God created us within a complex system of connectedness. And scripture offers insight into how this connectedness brings abundant living when we live out a faith-based on honoring God’s plan for creation.

In his book, we discover some overlooked ethical instructions found in scripture that should guide how we eat, shop, think about how we work together to end food insecurity. Stewardship of God’s creation rather than exploitation offers proven solutions that work.

Joel’s personality comes through in his writing. His warmth and humor help deliver what can be received as piercing criticism of our current food systems. I pray that you join us on this fascinating journey from seed to table.

A few of us meet in person each week. With new cases of the coronavirus raging in Michigan I encourage diligence. Most of our regular attenders are vaccinated. However, each person has an obligation to practice safety to protect others.

We each make our own arrangements for lunch at this point. We look forward to a return to pot-luck lunches, hopefully by this summer.

Suppose you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away. In that case, I encourage you to join us online for our Wednesday gatherings. Alternatively, you can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others are saying by calling (929) 436-2866, and entering the meeting ID, 282 039 5568#.

We are a diverse group, and we are delighted when new persons join us. I hope that you will join in on our discussion.

You can contact our office with questions, by phone or simply type your question on our website’s homepage — FlintAsbury.org.

¹ Joel Salatin. *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs: Respecting and Caring for All God’s Creation*. New York: FaithWords, a Division of Hachette Book Group, 2016.

Living Water (April 25th-May 30) ... Asbury Worship Series

We are each connected to each other, to our own identity, to the earth, and we are connected to God. The world is an interwoven tapestry. The pandemic illustrated for us that we suffer when we cannot depend on each other.

Our next series, *Living water*, begins April 25. Our series is based, in large part, on Joel Salatin's book about the connection between scripture and organic farming. Each episode explores topics that make a difference in our lives. God's plan is for you and me to live healthy, happy lives. But we're often misled by profit motives and false promises.

Lest you leave this article thinking that our entire focus is on free-range chickens or enhanced bottled water, allow me to share a little more insight into this 6-episode series.

In John's Gospel, Jesus used grapevines as a metaphor for our connectedness. In His explanation, Jesus emphasized the importance of connectedness and pruning. His analogy is multipurpose and powerful. And grapevines can help us to understand the difference between living water and cheap imitations.

God chose to live among humanity. It's foolish for me to think that I know for certain God's motivation for doing this, but my role as a pastor invites me to speculate. I'll start with the obvious, but in no way do I believe that I know the mind of God.

God is not a distant and symbolic deity far removed from the messiness of everyday life. Jesus was born in a feeding trough for livestock. He walked on country roads and city streets. He felt hunger pangs, cooked fish over a fire, drank from streams and wells, and cried real tears. Yes, Jesus prayed and led a spiritual life. But the concreteness of His faith was evident in what He did.

Jesus called the acts that offer evidence of what we believe our fruit. The fruit of our labor speaks volumes about what we believe to be true about ourselves, about others, and about the world around us. More importantly, what we do tells the story of what we genuinely believe about God.

Living water comes from another metaphor that describes the connection between God and us. We say that Jesus is "living water" based on the story of a conversation at a local well. A woman coming to the well to draw water during the heat of the day discovers that her thirst can only be partially and temporarily satisfied by the water she draws from the well.

Jesus offers us Living Water.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes live on both Facebook and YouTube. We go live at 10:30 am. You can find these links along with more information about us, or join our live broadcast on our [website](http://www.FlintAsbury.org) at [FlintAsbury.org](http://www.FlintAsbury.org).

Pastor Tommy

¹ Joel Salatin. *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs: Respecting and Caring for All God's Creation*. New York: FaithWords, a Division of Hachette Book Group, 2016.

Nurture and Nature (The contradictory role of mothers¹)... *cont. from pg 1*

A tragedy all too familiar interrupted the demonstrations. Their sons were shot during the rally—one in the head and the other in the heart. The brain is known for the source of reasoning and the heart, a metaphor for empathy. Reason calls for accountability, while empathy screams for nurture.

Mothers are often faced with what can feel like contradictory roles.

This story reminded me of how often our minds and heart are on different sides of an argument. We crave equilibrium. When this happens, we either fabricate a logical argument or ignore the warnings of our hearts, leaving us conflicted.

Images of landfills and pictures of hungry children can take me on a journey of contradictions. The images illustrate a paradox of discarded abundance and images of scarcity. In this week's reading from the book, *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs*, we learn that our landfills contain a large amount of biomass. The substance that turns into healthy soil produces food when handled responsibly.

The earth is the source of food which gives us the physical nourishment that we need to live.

We often refer to earth as mother earth because it offers us nurture. The earth provides oxygen, food, and water — all required to sustain life. The earth also provides nutrients for an abundant life. And the earth offers resources that fuel our creative minds and beauty that inspires us. It's no wonder that we sense God at work when we observe the power and awe of the planet we live on.

One of the moms in *The Good Doctor* episode took her son to the demonstration despite his objections. She wanted her son to learn the importance of voice. Democracy fails when public leaders are not held accountable.

After this mom's son was shot in the back of the head, she wanted to hold the other side accountable. And the only representative from the "other side" was the mom of the boy shot in the heart.

The earth also holds us accountable. We often witness the earth reclaiming lives with

violent storms, severe temperatures, and the process of decay. Individuals living in adverse conditions learn to respect the earth, realizing that while the earth offers nurture, it also holds each of us accountable. Global warming is rapidly changing weather patterns as the earth holds us accountable for our abuse.

Mother earth offers nurture but holds us accountable.



There was a risk in taking their sons to a demonstration. Passionate crowds quickly get out of hand. While most demonstrations are peaceful, competing sides close enough to taunt one another have a way of raising the temperature. There's a reason that fans are separated by the field of play at sporting events. But for these moms, the risk was worth exercising our freedom to be heard.



Asbury Farms offers fresh produce every week!

Go to our website, FlintAsbury.org to place your order for a Veggie Box, or sign up for a subscription. You can also call our office at 810-235-0016 to place your order. We accept EBT and Double-up Bucks for a limited time only!!!

Call By Noon on Wednesday for Thursday delivery.

Life groups question & notes

The man answered, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind." And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!" ... "And who is my neighbor?"

Luke 10:27-29 (NLT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Luke 10:25-37. Who are your neighbors? Do you think of neighbors as the persons on your block? Can neighbors live in different neighborhoods or cities? What makes a person a neighbor? What does this text tell us about God's plan for how we treat each other?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Faith, fear, and neighboring*. In
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.

The contradictory responses of nurture and accountability are packed with risk. A farmer that leaves hens unattended in a pasture risks the loss of one or more to predators. The alternative presumes that safety is found in bondage. This is an affront to nature.

As a child, I often played outside and walked barefoot in clover. Given my allergy to bees, this freedom was a risk for me. I'm grateful that my mom didn't keep me caged up for my own safety. The bees held me accountable to stay off their backs, and my mom came to my rescue when I stepped on top of one with unprotected feet.

And the bees risked their lives gathering pollen from the flowers in our yard. They were too busy being bees to search for safer landscapes void of children playing. I'm grateful that bees do what they do. We should all be thankful since bees are vital to our local food chain. Biologists warn us that bees are a bellwether for harm to our planet.

Joel Salatin, the author of *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs*, argues that allowing chickens the freedom to be chickens, pigs to be pigs, and cows to be cows, comes with risk. But this tradeoff of nurture and accountability is built into the divine order. There is no freedom without risk.

And there is no nurture without accountability.

Joel also encourages us to realize that it is often best to give up short-term gain for longer-term rewards. Moms know that rushing to

aid a child losing his balance as he is learning to walk hinders his progress. Infants need the freedom to explore, fall down, and try again. Nurture offers freedom to be who God created us to be.

The prophecies of the individuals we collectively name Isaiah focus on a time of accountability and nurture for the people of the nation of Judah. Descendants of people God freed from slavery, they turned their back on the agreement God made with humankind. They chose short-term profit over the well-being of God's creation. And God held them accountable.

But God's glory, that which makes God unique, is both nurture and accountability. The people longed to know that God had not abandoned them. Using Isaiah as a mouthpiece, God assured the people that they are loved. God asks, "Can a woman forget her own baby and not love the child she bore?" (Isaiah 49:15).

We were created from the same soil that nourishes carrots and squash. And the earth that God made to sustain us also holds us accountable. God is like a mother who tends to our wounds when we scrape our knees while reminding us of the perils of skateboards. Likewise, the earth both nourishes and holds us accountable.

This week's lesson connects our respect for motherhood with the care that we owe to all creation in honor of all mothers. Nurture and nature have much in common, as do mothers and the earth that sustains us.

HAPPY MOTHERS DAY!

We began our new. *Living water*, series two weeks ago. If you missed our earlier episodes, you can find the articles under the Worship tab of our website — *Messages and Audio Teachings*. Our primary subject matter is food. How we grow it, where we get our food, and how we treat creation in the process.

In this series we explore God's abundance and our role in its equitable use and distribution. Be sure to request your copy of Joel Salatin's book. And join us each Wednesday at Noon for Book Club and each Sunday at 10:30 am for New Beginnings.

We have a new button on the homepage of our *website* - *Click here to watch*. This button takes you to a viewer to allow you to join live or watch later in the week. We're also live on *Facebook* and our newly launched *YouTube channel*. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at *FlintAsbury.org*.

A reminder that we publish this newsletter that we call the *Circuit Rider* each week. You can request this publication by email. Send a request to *info@FlintAsbury.org* or let us know when you send a message through our *website*. We post an archive of past editions on our website under the tab, Connect - choose *Newsletters*.

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South Flint Soup Kitchen

ANGEL CLOSET & FOOD GIVEAWAY MAY DATES

Food Giveaways: May 12th and 19th,
11am-noon

Angel Closet (Appointment ONLY):
May 5th and 26th, 11am-noon

**MASK AND TEMPERATURE CHECK
REQUIRED FOR ENTRY. IF YOU DON'T
HAVE A MASK, ONE WILL BE
PROVIDED FOR YOU!**

To make an appointment for the
Angel Closet: 810-239-3427 or
southflintsoupkitchen@gmail.com

3410 Fenton Road
(3 blocks North of Atherton)
Flint, MI 48507

Like a journalist at a press conference, there is a follow-up question aimed at uncovering a headline. "Who is my neighbor?"

Jesus is a storyteller. Many great teachers use stories to hold the interest of their audience while getting their point across. With stories, we can learn something we didn't have the patience or willpower to simply believe and do on our own. So Jesus tells a story intended to hold the interest of the crowd and expose the hypocrisy of those with the same shoe size.

A man is robbed and left unable to get up. It's a well-traveled road, so someone will surely help. The listeners are familiar with the road. It's like Jesus saying to one of us that the crime took place along Dort Highway, where the nightclubs are.

A couple folks pass by like the man lying there might have COVID — they pass by with safe distancing. But finally, a man stops to help. Jesus is careful to give labels to each character that is familiar with His listeners. Those who passed by are respected titles and roles. The one who stopped to help is held in contempt.

At the end of His story, Jesus asks, "Which one was a neighbor to the man in need?"

Industrial farms are not good neighbors to anyone — whether next door or in another state. Yet this is where most of our food comes from. Isn't it time to care where our food comes from?

Fast food places stay in business because selling fast food is profitable. The cars line up as families turn over their money in exchange for unhealthy food coming from industrial farms. Smaller, local farms can profit if, instead, enough of us line up to purchase healthy food from good neighbors.

Go and do as we know God expects us to — know where your food comes from.

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² Mary Dunckel. "Small, medium, large - Does farm size really matter?" @ Michigan State University Extension, November 14, 2013.

³ "Chronic Diseases in America." *The Center for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved from www.CDC.gov.

The Center for Disease Control issued new guidelines for wearing face masks on May 13 that offer great hope for more of us coming out into the open. After a year and a couple of months of isolation from seeing smiles and frowns, many of us are excited to rejoin the show in progress. A production that was interrupted when a deadly virus spiraled out of control.



The guidance mandates the wearing of face masks for the unvaccinated. This affects a much smaller group than one might think since persons refusing to get vaccinated are often the same group refusing to wear a face mask. "It's about freedom" is one retort I've grown weary of hearing. Fortunately, businesses still have the option of requiring a face mask to be worn along with healthcare facilities and public transportation. The pandemic isn't over — it's just less of a threat.

Coming out is easy for a lot of us and not so easy for most of us. "Is it really safe?" we ask. "Is it really safe to reveal our vulnerabilities to one another?"

Part one of our new series coincides with the celebration of Pride Month. An annual tribute to the victims of a police raid in 1969 of the Stonewall Inn — a place where persons could gather whose gender identity or sexual orientation differed from their gender at birth. Coming out for persons coming to terms with their actual identity is substantially more terrifying than choosing to leave my face mask at home.

Fortunately, activist Brenda Howard, often referred to as the Mother of Pride, organized a way to keep the subject on the minds of a growing number of people. Including people with friends and family struggling with fears of coming out before being found out. And Pride Month took root and grew into a national time of recognition.

That these two life-giving opportunities share the calendar looked like a problem at first glance. Standing in solidarity with people made to feel abnormal for being who God created them to be, is crucial to the Asbury community. After all, we claim to be an inclusive community that puts the teachings of Jesus Christ into action. And as our spiritual leader, I don't want to take away from celebrating the coming out of any who risk relationships and hurt to be who they are wherever they go.

Yet, I realize that the losses created by our response to the pandemic are painful. Everyone was affected because so many of us were infected. And some of the same brokenness that is the human condition led to the needless loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. It's time to come out again and face a new normal. And we need to talk about it now.

Stay tuned. Meanwhile, share your thoughts, prayers, and creative gifts with our community. Testimonies are powerful. What you feel and believe matters a great deal. Let's plan to celebrate together.

I would be remiss if I did not emphasize that vaccinations are essential for everyone. Understandably a few have medical conditions where vaccination could be unadvisable. But the rest of us can protect our more vulnerable community members by ensuring that we aren't able to spread the virus. It's time to come out of whatever fears or biases keep you from being a part of the solution. Get vaccinated.

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