

# ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

## Spirited (Spirit-led Food<sup>1</sup>)



As a pastor, I get to hear a lot of stories. My least favorite stories are told about persons not in the room and involve something this person did or didn't do that created anxiety in the storyteller.

These stories are particularly annoying when I'm the one telling the story.

The pandemic has thrown gasoline on smothering ambers. These ambers represent the tension

between persons and between persons and their relationship with God. These outbreaks are exacerbated by the battles going on between our ears. We all have inner voices, and sometimes these voices compete with each other for attention. Worse, there is, more often than not, disagreement between them.

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Volume 2 Issue 23

May 23, 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!**



## Faith, Fear and Neighboring (Whosoever local food<sup>1</sup>)



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.<sup>2</sup> 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

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## Faith, Fear and Neighboring (Whosoever local food<sup>1</sup>) ..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.<sup>3</sup>

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** ★



Please keep Virginia Bigger, Terry Ward and the rest of the Bigger family in your prayers. Steve Bigger passed away March 16th. Memorial Service was held Saturday, March 22nd. Virginia has been a long time member of Asbury and Steve was also a member as well.

- May 24      Mon
- May 25      Tues    10am-12:30pm  
                  Water / Food Distribution
- May 26      Wed    12Noon    Pastor Book Club  
                  11am-12Noon  
                  Angel Closet (Appointments only)  
                  at South Flint Soup Kitchen
- May 27      Thu
- May 28      Fri
- May 29      Sat
- May 30      Sun    10:30am    New Beginnings  
                  Contemporary Worship

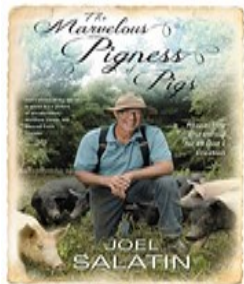
(We are live on [Facebook](#) and our newly launched [YouTube channel](#). You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at [FlintAsbury.org](http://FlintAsbury.org).)

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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](http://FlintAsbury.org).

<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Spirited (Spirit-led Food<sup>1</sup>)... *cont. from pg 1*

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology website warns that COVID-19 and the unprecedented lockdowns that followed have had a massive impact on relationships and family life. And the need for family psychologist rose dramatically as a result. <sup>2</sup>

Isolation and fear of catching the virus or transmitting the virus made getting along an art form. And most of us were not prepared to deal with such dramatic change. Relationships suffered, and we all suffer as a result.

The Bible is chocked full of relationship stories. From drama to humor and from love to war, the biblical narrative weaves a storyline of persistent and unwavering love despite the ups and downs of life with one another sharing the same planet. There is one thing about this endless love that is consistent. Love is more than a feeling of affection — love is a verb that acts in ways where love is manifested in visible, tangible ways.

The relationship between God and people is often strained in stories from the Bible. During the time of the Prophet Isaiah, the neighborhoods and farms were tangible signs of people suffering. The land was overgrown, and buildings were deserted and in ruins.

God promised through the Prophet Isaiah that this wouldn't always be the case. There would come a time, Isaiah told the people, when God's Spirit would fall upon the people, and their community would return to prosperity. God's love would be felt and seen in tangible ways.

Jesus referred to this tangible presence of love as fruit. Just as plants produce fruit that makes the continuation of life possible, love also produces fruit. This is because love makes the continuation of life both possible and often pleasurable.

**At last the Spirit is poured out on us from heaven. Then the wilderness will become a fertile field and the fertile field will yield bountiful crops.**

**Isaiah 32:14-15**

God created relationships as the foundation for all of creation. From the atomic level, where particles invisible to the naked eye bear fruit through a relationship with each other, to the cooperation between internal organs — each life is a symphony of relationships. This complexity of relationships within us is best recognized thanks to the human mind that conducts the symphony.

The greatest mystery of all, however, is the invisible interaction we call spirit. A force that binds us together, eliminating the possibility that anyone can exist without impacting the rest of us. Spirit ties each of us together into a more excellent score and connects us to something much grander than we can imagine.

We often talk about feeling God's presence in places where it seems like the separation between God and us is extraordinarily thin. God's presence lifts our spirits giving us a spiritual high. But spirit isn't just about "mountain top" experiences.

Joel Salatin writes in *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs*, "We can't live a spiritually vibrant life from a onetime mountaintop experience. I don't care how wonderfully touched and moved by the Spirit I may have been at a certain service or in a certain place. It won't sustain me over the long haul."

Fortunately, God's Spirit is persistently present. Creation began with the Spirit of God and continued as plants, creatures, and eventually, humankind emerged out of the carbon from which life begins and ends. And this Spirit interacts with our own, claiming us as God's own. Relationships are born of Spirit, which manifests itself as love.



## MULTICULTURAL FAMILY NIGHT

We are having a fiesta in our parking lot to kick off our new program!

English and music classes for kids start at 3pm

Dinner served at 6pm

Games at 7pm



Questions?

Call 810-235-0016 or

email Katelin at

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

There will also be a live DJ!

**JUNE 4TH, 3PM**

**LOCATED AT ASBURY CHURCH**

**1653 DAVISON ROAD FLINT, MI 48506**



### Life groups question & notes

*The palace and the city will be deserted, and busy towns will be empty...until at last the Spirit is poured out on us from heaven. Then the wilderness will become a fertile field, and the fertile field will yield bountiful crops.*

Isaiah 32:14-15 (NLT)

### NOTES FROM WORSHIP

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### QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Isaiah 32:14-15. Look around the neighborhood surrounding Asbury. What do you see? In what ways is our community deserted? Where do you see God's Spirit producing fruit?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Spirited*. How are your relationships holding up during the pandemic? What is the source of the anxieties that you are feeling? Do you ever sense God's Spirit filling you? Describe how it feels. What's different about you during these times? How might you share the love you feel when God's Spirit is present within you?
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.



Joel Salatin writes about his farm as a place of relationships. A handful of soil contains as many microscopic creatures as there are people on the planet. His family's farm needs people to do the chores that result in a bountiful harvest. Tools and machinery are used to help humans carry out the work expected by God rather than take the place of people.

Contrast this approach to large, industrial farms relying on massive equipment and thousands of gallons of herbicides, pesticides, insecticides, and antibiotics to produce a harvest. The only love found in abusing the land and animals is love for money. This idol replaces and negates relationships with God.



This week we celebrate the beginning of the church as we know it. The church emerged out of Synagogues and altars and any place where humanity's spirit intersected with God's Spirit. The church is nothing more than a group of people and nothing less. Spirits coming together in a relationship based on returning the love offered freely by God and expressing love to each other.

But once the Spirit of God stirs our souls, we discover that there is too much love to contain. We are like rain barrels overflowing during a storm, unable to hold all of the love flowing out of the Spirit's presence. We take this overflow to the city streets, country roads, our nation's trails, and the world. And we never run empty as long as we allow the Spirit access to our true selves.

We began our series, *Living water*, 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.

On June 6 we begin a new series titled *Coming out*. You can find more information elsewhere in the Circuit Rider under the heading *Coming up in worship*.

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*.

Pastor Tommy

<sup>1</sup> [Most of the content for our series comes from:](#) 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..

<sup>2</sup> "The psychology of family dynamics amid the COVID-19 pandemic," *{Insight}*. © The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, December 2, 2020.



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](mailto: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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<sup>2</sup> Mary Dunckel. "Small, medium, large - Does farm size really matter?" @ Michigan State University Extension, November 14, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> "Chronic Diseases in America." *The Center for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved from [www.CDC.gov](http://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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