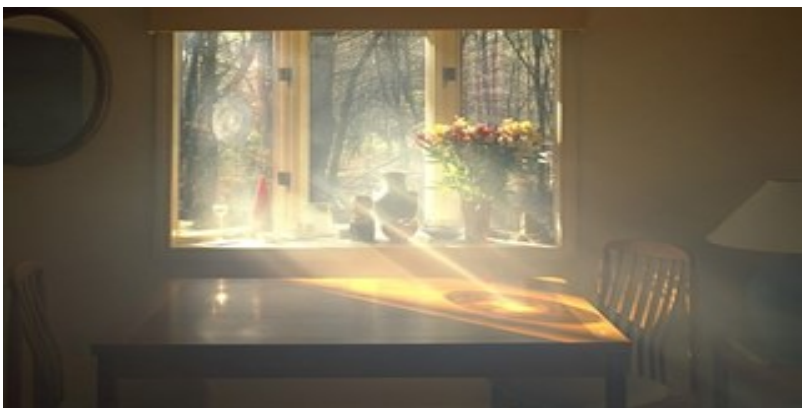


ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER

Sunbeams (Life is a symphony¹)



Sunbeams are amazing. For some reason, I can remember countless times, from my early childhood, noticing sunbeams seeming to dance in the air as they reflected off particles

in the air. But have you ever tried to catch a sunbeam? Cats can tell you that sunbeams are elusive.

The sunbeam that we see is an illusion, yet rays of light coming from the sun

are as real as you and me. We are just not set up to catch them And neither are cats,

Page 6

Collateral Damage (Taking care of genes¹)



Students at the Colorado School of Mines performing soil tests, Golden, Colorado. FSA.

I understand that there are still people in the world that question whether COVID-19 is real. I don't have the energy to keep up with the latest bizarre conspiracy theories that support ignoring reality. But stories about some individuals still in denial as this

deadly virus steals their last breath sadden me. Working together, we had the power to keep this virus from killing so many of us, but sadly we did not have the collective will. But COVID-19 isn't the only threat to our well-being.

A week ago, I stood in front of family members to officiate a celebration of life for my brother. My brother's cause of death was cancer. The likely cause of his cancer was exposure to dioxin, a deadly chemical commonly used as a herbicide.

Dioxin was the active ingredient in a substance used by U.S. military forces during the Vietnam War. It was used to eliminate forest cover and crops that fed North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops. The U.S program, codenamed Operation Ranch Hand,

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Volume 2 Issue 2

May 2, 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!



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Collateral Damage (Taking care of genes¹) ..cont from page 1

sprayed more than 20 million gallons of various herbicides over Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The primary chemical, known as Agent Orange, was later proven to cause serious health issues—including cancer, birth defects, rashes, and severe psychological and neurological problems.²

This is not the first time our country has used chemicals to gain an advantage on the battlefield while causing collateral damage to our earth and our soldiers.

It is said that World War II was the first war in history where more soldiers died in actual battle than from collateral damage. Disease traditionally took almost as many lives as the enemy, and sometimes more. According to an article written by Bill Ganzel, DDT was responsible for saving lives during WWII. This is because DDT was applied generously to kill insects, including disease-carrying mosquitos, lice, and houseflies.³

DDT was first patented in 1940 as an insecticide. Its inventor discovered that a small amount was lethal to a wide range of insects. And who doesn't want to rid of the world of pesky insects?

In another story, DDT was used to stop an outbreak of typhoid in Naples, Italy. The city was overrun with refugees as the war in Europe displaced persons seeking safety. The outbreak was subdued in a matter of weeks using DDT, saving thousands of lives.

After the war, farmers soon benefited from the miraculous cure that killed insects effectively. DDT had an immediate effect on-farm production and profits. DDT became the most publicized synthetic compound in history. It seemed like everyone was writing about and praising the

miraculous properties of DDT. Who wouldn't want DDT sprayed everywhere insects might reside?

Meanwhile, stories about the collateral damage sometimes noticed after DDT was applied caught the attention of a biologist and writer by the name of Rachel Carson. One story in particular involved 200 acres of Oak trees located in Pennsylvania. DDT was used to eradicate a problem with gypsy-moths. Within hours after applying DDT, every gypsy-moth caterpillar in the forest died.

But so did every bird—at least 4,000 of them within eight days - along with ladybug beetles which control leaf-devouring aphids — which weren't affected by DDT. The forest was on the way to being completely defoliated when rains finally halted the outbreak.

Is it possible that at least some human-made miracle cures can bring unintended consequences? Is it possible that we shouldn't always do so just because we can do something or build something? Joel Salatin writes in his book, *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs*, that "Inappropriate human actions created problems that should have never occurred in the first place."

DDT was highly effective in insect warfare because it didn't wash off. Once applied to fruit, it had staying power. Did I mention that it didn't wash off?

There is another problem with chemical warfare against the natural world called evolution. Resistance to threats increases through genetic evolution, potentially resulting in a more hostile environment than before.

And this is where the story comes home to Michigan. A process known as biological magnification was put in process when DDT entered the food chain of birds. Michigan State University utilized DDT to spray elm trees to control the beetle that spreads Dutch elm disease.

After a couple of years, it was observed that there were no robins on campus. Further research discovered that robins fed on earthworms that consumed elm leaves with tiny amounts of DDT. The chemical accumulated in their body fat until a toxic level was reached. The collateral damage continued for a couple years after the use of DDT was halted.

The potential hazards of DDT use appeared in articles as early as 1945 — before the chemical was made available for agricultural use. After Congress stripped the USDA of its power to control the use of chemicals in agriculture, DDT became the go-to compound for farms and household use. Even regulations aimed at food safety allowed for the presence of small amounts of DDT.

Congress later reversed course after the market was flooded with a plethora of potentially deadly compounds to control any nuisance from weeds to rodents. And while the use of DDT was banned in 1972 in the United States, the story isn't over. DDT remains a popular insecticide in many other countries.⁴

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 3 Mon
- May 4 Tues 10am-12:30pm
 Water / Food Distribution
- May 5 Wed 12Noon Pastor Book Club
 11am-12Noon
 Angel Closet Walk ins at South Flint Soup Kitchen
- May 6 Thu
- May 7 Fri
- May 8 Sat
- May 9 Sun **HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY TO ALL!**
 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
Connie Portillo	Office Secretary
Sylvia Pittman	Empowerment Arts
Jim Craig	Leadership Chair
Kevin Croom	Dir. Operations

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 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.

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	Farm Manager
Kevin Croom	Farm Operations
Israel Unger	Function to Funding
Kim Sims	Connections
Karl Collyer	Production
Katelin Maylum	
South Flint Soup Kitchen/Production	

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.

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 at FlintAsbury.org](http://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.

Sunbeams (Life is a symphone¹)... *cont. from pg 1*

Sunbeams contain energy. When they strike our body, we feel heat as the energy contained in the sunbeam converts into heat. The technical details of what happens to sunbeams are beyond our scope here. But sunbeams matter a great deal to you and me.

Scientists have discovered that the physical world is amazingly complex. The interactions of a sunbeam, for example, involve a symphony of interactions between molecules that make up the physical world as we experience it. Life is often described as a symphony with countless sources of vibration, each with its own sound and contribution to the whole.

Do you know who can catch a sunbeam? Plants are uniquely designed to catch sunbeams.

In the creation story found in the first chapter of Genesis, we read that God declared that the land sprout with vegetation. This included every sort of seed-bearing plant and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. And that the seeds coming from these plants will, in turn, produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came (Genesis 1:11). And the plants God created are sunbeam catchers.

But God did not end there. God also made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind (Genesis 1:25).

And like a master craftsperson proud of their work, God declared that it was good with each part of the material world God created.

While animals don't catch sunbeams any better than humans, they play an essential supporting role to plants.

But God did not stop with plants and animals. God created humankind as caretakers for creation. Not just one human, however. God provided the first human with a workmate — a partner to help care for creation. And in the living world, babies are born, people die, and the cycle of life, death, and new life continue for as long as there is sustenance available to sustain life.

In explaining the significance of His impending death, Jesus used a grain of wheat as a metaphor. He said that a grain remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains (John 12:24). This is the cycle of life. This is the carbon cycle. And all living things participate in this cycle whether or not we acknowledge our role — even when we try to ignore our own impending death.

A grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains.

John 12:24

And because we lived, life continues whether we participated in birthing children. Whether or not we plant a garden. Life comes out of death which never has the last word. This is the promise made by Jesus Christ.

Humans have a special place in the carbon cycle. While our physical bodies eventually return to the stardust we're made from — our spirit never dies. Jesus promised that all who follow Him will be with God forever. This is the afterlife. And Jesus died to make this the truth and the reality.

Life takes work. These are the rules. Any head of household can tell you that sustenance takes work. Whether you're putting together a family meal or waiting in line at your favorite drive-through, a lot of our time is taken up in assuring that our bodies receive nourishment.

The *Theology of Work Bible Commentary* refers to work as a divine calling.² But what does it mean that work is a sacred calling? For one, it means that a farmer does not work simply to earn a living. Instead, a farmer carefully prepares the soil, places the seeds, and waters the plants because this is part of the farmer's identity. This is who she is in large part.



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 Lord set before them the following decree ...If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right ...then I will not make you suffer any of the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you.

Exodus 15:22-27 (NLT)

NOTES FROM WORSHIP

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS

1. Read Exodus 15:22-27. How do you read this story? How might this story affect how we make everyday decisions? How might this story affect how we make the really big decisions like using chemicals to control the natural environment?
2. Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, *Collateral damage*. What personal experience do you have with chemicals to control insects, weeds, and other nuances? If you know that habits and food choices affect your descendants does this affect your choices if you plan to have children? What if you aren't planning to have children? Why does it matter what we choose to eat or how we grow food?
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.

Likewise, animals have a divine calling. But there is the elephant in the room that lawyers suggest we don't name. Since I don't have a lawyer to advise me, I will just blurt it out — Animals have a purpose other than a role in cheap HAPPY MEALS!® There! — I said it. Notice the "R in a circle?" I included this for legal reasons. Someone owns this label. I will get back to meals that make us happy later.

All vocations are divine callings in one way or another. This is why many of the jobs we accept are not fulfilling. The job is just a paycheck and nothing more. Yet, because God created work for us to do and created us to do work, even the most mundane, thankless job is a form of worship that glorifies God.

Work, such as farming, brings us in direct contact with the physical world. We can feel, taste, and smell the soil. A prick from a thorn leaves a mark. God created the physical world and put us in charge of its well-being. The material world provides the air, food, and water that we need for survival. The material world also provides opportunities for expression and abundance that are much more than sustenance.

Joel Salatin, in his book, *The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs*, invites us to consider whether what we claim to believe matches our choices for food. What goes into our

selection of whether we offer a salad or a Happy Meal® to our children? Can scripture help us make decisions that are more in line with what we believe God expects from us?

One of my most difficult struggles is using food for comfort. I eat when I'm anxious. And I'm anxious a lot. As a result, I am in a constant state of being overweight, despite my extensive collection of diet books. My doctor told me to write down everything I eat along with the caloric content. And when I reach the number of calories my body requires, stop eating.

But what if my body already has energy stored in the pantry? Then I need to ingest fewer calories for a while so my body can use up the reserve. This is called a diet. A 4-letter word that makes me cringe but may also allow me to live years longer than otherwise.

But our series, *Living water*, is not about dieting. In many ways, our primary topics are the opposite of dieting. Over the next six weeks, we explore God's abundance and our role in its equitable use and distribution. Using God's rules for justice and not rules we make up as we go that benefit a few at the sacrifice of the rest of us.

We begin our new series this Sunday. Our primary subject matter is food. How we grow it, where we get our food and how we treat



creation in the process. Be sure to request your copy of Joel Salatin's book.² 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](#).

Pastor Tommy

¹ 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.

² *Theology of Work Bible Commentary*. © 2015, 2016 Theology of Work Project. Peabody, MA: Henderson Publishers, 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

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

Epigenetics is a branch of genetic research that considers the possibility that behaviors and environment can cause changes that affect the way our genes work. Fortunately, epigenetic modifications are reversible. They do not change our DNA sequence. But our behaviors and environment can change how our body reads a DNA sequence genetic coding. These changes that are passed on to our progeny are a result of what we do and even what we eat.⁵

The idea of divine covenant permeates the first few books of scripture. God makes a covenant with Abraham and keeps this divine promise for generations. The covenant requires that the descendants of Abraham and Sarah hold to the agreement. This included adherence to just over 600 regulations known as the Mosaic law, named after Moses. Some of the laws applied to agricultural practices.

Scripture is timeless. There is divine wisdom for each subsequent generation to discern how to interpret and apply lessons illustrated through less familiar circumstances. For example, the use of DDT to kill insects or the use of dioxin to kill vegetation is not directly addressed in Mosaic law.

But what makes scripture timeless is an ability that God gifted to humankind as earth caretakers to recognize that meaning is contextual and transcends time. So let's apply an ancient declaration attributed to the God who created us to the situations presented in this article.

In God's story, liberating Abraham's descendants from slavery, called the Exodus, God makes this declaration through Moses. *If you listen carefully and do what is right, you will not suffer any of the diseases that fell upon those who enslaved you* (Exodus 15:26). I paraphrased the actual text to leave out some of the original contexts for clarity in our context.

Joel Salatin argues that while this text is generally applicable, God's promise is specifically relevant to agricultural practices. His family endeavors to utilize the wisdom found in scripture at their farm in Virginia. The arguments in favor of farming practices that rely on heavy doses of chemical solutions seem compelling.

However, the history of DDT and dioxin and the unfolding history of glyphosate, an ingredient in Roundup, is telling. These stories suggest that our failure to heed the wisdom contained in scripture creates many, if not all, of the diseases that affect us.

Is it possible in these cases that we broke a holy covenant with the God who created us to subdue an enemy of our own making? That we reaped what we sowed? If so, may God have mercy on us despite our disobedience.

We began our new *Living water* series last Sunday. Our primary subject matter is food. How we grow it, where we get our food, and how we treat creation in the process. Over the next six weeks, 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.

If you listen carefully and do what is right, you will not suffer any of the diseases that fell upon those who enslaved you.

Exodus 15:26

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Pastor Tommy

¹ [Most of the content for our series comes from:](#)
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² history.com Editors. "Agent Orange," © A&E TV Networks, May 16, 2019 & August 2, 2011.

³ Bill Ganzel. "The Chemical Age Dawns in Agriculture," © Wessels Living History Farm,

⁴ Kenneth S. Davis. "The Deadly Dust: The Unhappy History Of DDT," © American Heritage Magazine, Volume 22, Issue 2, February 1971

⁵ "What is Epigenetics?," *Center for Disease Control and Prevention*.

