ASBURY CIRCUIT RIDER



Volume 2 Issue 12

December 12, 2021

Joy (The Joy of Home¹)



Oxford High School students gathered for a candlelight vigil... Credit: Nick Hagen for The New York Times

Tuesday, November 30, was supposed to be an ordinary day for the 1,600 students attending Oxford High School. The vast majority of them got up the same time they ordinarily got up — got dressed following the same routine they ordinarily followed — and went to school along the route they ordinarily used to get to school.

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Please continue to wear your masks when in the building. If you don't have one, let us know we will provide one for you.



Peace (The Fear of Home)



Are you a Flintstone? I love this play on words, even though I realize it doesn't apply to me. I have no claim to being a Flintstone unless I pass some time test after living here for over ten years. Some say that Flintstones are persons who were born in Flint.

I decided to do a little research, so I went to a popular source, Wikipedia. And I discovered, according to this source, that "Flintstones" referred initially to Mateen Cleaves, Morris Peterson, and Charlie Bell. These three basketball players from Flint helped lead the Michigan State Spartans to three consecutive Final Fours and a national championship.

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Peace (The Fear of Home)....cont from page 1

Wikipedia also noted that the use of Flintstones now refers to Flint natives. This implies birthrights rather than occupational rights, which leaves me an outsider. But is Flint still "home" for me?

When I first arrived in Flint, I noticed something unfamiliar for me. When I asked the persons living in our neighborhood where they call home, their response most often began with the phrase "I stay at" followed by a location. Is home the place where we stay?

In an article that introduced this month's series, I wrote that "Home is whatever place you feel hope, peace, joy, and love. It is a place where hope never fades entirely out." For most of us, we find home wherever we are at the time that we're searching for home. In this case, we don't need a plane ticket or a gas card to go home. But this also suggests that when we lose hope, or when our joy fades, love evades us, or peace seems impossible, we leave home in some way.

Admittedly, we each experience "home" in different ways. If our topic is "going" home, we must be talking mainly about a place somewhere other than where we are currently. And if this place we call home offers us peace, why would we experience anxiety while contemplating our upcoming journey?

It's complicated.

I still remember returning "home" several months after I left to attend college. As the summer after high school came to an end, I loaded up my parent's car with my belongings for the drive to Bowling Green. I was moving away from home for the first time. "Home" as the place where my parents lived would never be the same.

I didn't get haircuts when I lived on campus while attending college. I'm sure that my new city of residence had barbers, but I seldom had extra money that wasn't already spoken for. And I never had long hair before, so the first time I went home for Christmas, I was greeted with "You need a haircut." Admittedly, this is not a harsh judgment for a person who doesn't spend time in front of mirrors, but this would be sufficient reason to dread going home for some.

As a parent, I know how quickly our standards drop out of focus for our children. And how quickly seemingly reasonable requests can escalate into arguments. This is hardly a peaceful scenario.

For others, the home of parents was never a place of peace. Rather the memories of abuse and violence overshadow any sense of longing. In this case, home is clearly somewhere else.

Can we agree that home is a place that gives us a sense of belonging? A place, physical or otherwise, where we fit in? Simple enough on the surface, but belonging is a very personal notion. When I say that "I feel like I belong here," our understanding of the "I" is crucial. Let me explain.

Research Psychologist Dr. Brene Brown, in her book, *Braving the Wilderness*, offered a definition of belonging that really hits "home" for me (pun intended). But first, Dr. Brown quoted poet Maya Angelou in an interview with Bill Moyers, "You are only free when you realized you belong no place." Dr. Brown shared that this quote made her angry every time she thought about it.²

I noticed that my stomach did a few flips the first time I read Maya's words. This doesn't sound like a place I want to call home. Is this what Dorothy meant in the Wizard of Oz when she said, "There's no place like home?" That we don't belong any place in particular?

Frankly, I get it. As I read Dr. Brown's introduction to her book, I realized one thing we have in common is a sense of not belonging due to multiple moves while growing up. Once we've lived in different neighborhoods and schools, you feel like you don't belong anywhere. In which case, our desire to belong can feel like everything.

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In Our Prayers

Kevin Croom Sylvia Pittman Shirley Craig Richard Oram



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 NEWS:

Pastor Book Club is still meeting via Zoom. Please call the Church Office for more info 810-235-0016 as it changes.

Meanwhile, as a lot of you are already aware, sharp increases in new infections of COVID are pushing us back into isolation. While our regular attenders are vaccinated, we realize that a large number of persons are not vaccinated.

Therefore, we reinstated our policy to require masks in our building for all persons when not eating or drinking. If you don't have a mask, we can provide one for you, just ask the office.

Thank you and everyone stay safe!



Dec 13 Mon 6pm Worship Team

Dec 14 Tues 10;00am-12:30pm

Food/Water Distribution

Dec 15 Wed 12 Noon Book Club

11:00am-12N Food Giveaway at

South Flint Soup Kitchen

(No Appointments Needed)

Dec 16 Thu

Dec 17 Fri

Dec 18 Sat 12 Noon Food Not Bombs

Dec 19 Sun 10:30am

New Beginnings

Contemporary Worship

(We are live on <u>Facebook</u> and our newly launched <u>YouTube channel</u>. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at <u>FlintAsbury.org</u>.)

Asbury Worship Series Time to go home (A search for normal)



Licensed Image...Adobe

The pandemic has proven pervasive and invasive. Michigan is again at or near the top of new COVID cases. A lack of cooperation, absurd conspiracy theories and outright lies conspire to thwart the efforts of our health professionals to protect us. And we're faced with the potential for another dangerous Christmas season. It's frustrating and downright depressing to think about it.

Our new series, *Time to go home*, is in some ways a search for "normal" or at least a search for the intersection between tradition and our current reality. The idea of going home for the holidays is a favorite Hallmark movie theme. There is something about familiarity that comforts us. ¹

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Book Club News

We concluded our discussions of *Better together* by Danielle Bean. We're taking a break from choosing another book during the holidays. Instead, we're talking about what it means to go home for Christmas. Of course, our conversations are within the context of some of the prophecies found in scripture about the birth of Christ and what Jesus said about His return.

Recent increases in new infections of COVID among the unvaccinated are pushing us

Leadership in Worship & Service

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

Asbury Staff

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

back into isolation. While our regular attenders are vaccinated, we realize that a large number of persons are not vaccinated. Therefore, we reinstated our policy to require masks in our building for all persons when not eating or drinking.

We strongly urge all persons to get vaccinated as soon as practical unless advised by your doctor. Avoid news sources and rumors that promote baseless claims and pay closer attention to the experts we depend on to keep us safe.

We each make our own arrangements for lunch at this point. However, we look forward to returning to pot-luck lunches when infection rates fall. We anticipate this happening as the number of vaccinations reaches herd immunity levels, and the CDC relaxes precautionary measures.

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

If you prefer to avoid groups or live too far away I encourage you to join us online for our Wednesday gatherings. Alternatively, you can call in by phone, be heard, and hear what others say by calling (929) 436-2866 -- enter 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.







Time to go home (A search for normal) ... Asbury Worship Series

If our memories of home are tainted with trauma, our search looks elsewhere when we feel as though our joy is under siege.

Families, communities, cities, and religious groups have varying ideas for rituals of celebration. And our calendars routinely overlap. Since Asbury Church comes out of Christian orientation, our calendar calls for a time of reflection, celebration, and communal rituals beginning on the last Sunday of November. The insider term is "Advent," but we're okay with simply calling this time the holiday season.

Advent captures a sense of anticipation about the future. Traditionally, we choose a theme each week that illuminates that which we're anticipating. Words like hope, peace, joy, and love show up on banners and posters to remind us of what we're expecting to find as we celebrate Christmas and beyond.

This year, our plan is to capture the spirit of this particular Christmas in a dramatic role-play that combines our present-day reality with the wonderment of anticipation. Even though the birth of Christ took place over two thousand years ago, we want to share the emotion felt by first-hand witnesses. But we weren't there, and any attempt we make looking backward is only partial.

We believe that the birth of the Christ child was anticipated for generations and interpret ancient prophecies as predictions of His arrival. Therefore, Advent is also about the promises He made and our anticipation of their fulfillment.

The main character in our role-playing is Mary, and the connection with the biblical character is intentional. Christmas is a big deal for Mary. And each year, she looks forward to time off from work, getting together with family, exchanging gifts, and lots of Christmas gatherings. Last year was a massive disappointment for Mary. This Christmas was supposed to be different.

Mary's Christmas journey isn't her's alone. Along the way, she meets others who, like her, struggle with our present circumstances. Mary also meets a few fascinating characters who try to help her see the joy in every Christmas.

Home is whatever place you feel hope, peace, joy, and love. It is a place where hope never fades entirely out. Home is space, feelings, longing, desires, and wholeness. And so, going home is a journey worth making.

The latest colder weather is bringing more people together indoors. Closer contact with each other, supercharged by new variants of COVID, is driving a resurgence of new infections among the unvaccinated. It's time to come out of whatever fears or biases keep you from being a part of the solution. Get vaccinated! If you've already done your part, thank you, but don't forget to get your booster.

I pray that you will join us each Sunday morning at 10:30 am. We share our weekly episodes live on our **YouTube channel**. 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**.

¹ Katelin Maylum, Tommy McDoniel, and Terrance Williams. "Home for Christmas. Flint, Michigan. © Asbury Church, 2021.

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Joy (The Joy of Home¹). cont. from pg 1

I suspect that most of us prefer ordinary over the alternative for daily routines. I know I do. While sporadic episodes of unexpected events can be delightful, there are some things where the ordinary is more practical and comforting.

Going to school is one of those things where parents, in particular, prefer ordinary for our children.

But for Ethan Crumbley, that particular Tuesday was anything but ordinary.

A morning meeting with his parents and school administrators interrupted Ethan's and his parent's daily schedule. After which, the parents returned to their schedule and insisted that Ethan return to his. While the vast majority of students rarely, if ever, find themselves in such a meeting, this was not the case for Ethan. The meeting took place after a teacher observed a disturbing drawing featuring a gun and a victim, accented by a laughing emoji and the words, "Blood everywhere."

Now I realize that in our justice system, it is proper to use words like alleged and suspect rather than words that suggest we already know the outcome to be decided. This understanding is essential given our assumption that all are innocent until proven guilty. And given the complexity of our legal system, which looks at splitting hairs into thousands of strands of minutia until a person is found guilty or innocent with great specificity.

Of course, the rest of us reduce such complexity into the reality of the horror and grief that we experience as a result. Even if we don't know a single student — or parent — or teacher — even if we don't even know where in Michigan Oxford is found on a map — we're affected in very profound and uncomfortable ways.

And for the families and friends of Hana St. Juliana, age 14; Madisyn Baldwin, age 17; Tate Myre, age 16; and Justin Shilling, age 17 — their grief is only beginning, and healing may be elusive for a long time. ²

We simply don't get over such violent affronts. We are both affected and marred when violence is done — even when we don't know anything happened.

And yet — we feel helpless to do anything about it.

In what is described as a rare decision, the suspect's parents, James, and Jennifer Crumbley, are charged with involuntary manslaughter. The legal term is "involuntary" even though they voluntarily purchased a tool designed and manufactured to take life away, supposedly as a Christmas gift for Ethan.

Seldom heard from and protected by numerous layers of legal veils are the persons behind the profits made by selling the 9mm Sig Sauer SP 2022 pistol to the suspect's parents. The weapon was manufactured by SIG Sauer. The

company is currently headquartered in New Hampshire. This company was initially founded as SIG Arms, an importer of German manufactured weapons.

The company eventually began manufacturing its own models of guns and, by 2016, was selling an estimated 43 Thousand weapons a year. Ron Cohen, President of SIG Sauer, Inc., will not be prosecuted for his role in this murder or any other destructive use of the weapons designed, sold, and manufactured for profit. Nor will the owner of Acme Shooting Goods, who sold the weapon.

Nor will any of the designers, manufacturers, store owners, employees, officers, or Board Members of other companies that produce and sell weapons designed for killing. They won't be prosecuted because we don't roll that way when it comes to protecting our rights to purchase weapons for home use. By the way, did I mention that a semi-automatic handgun is designed and constructed as a killing machine?

A weapon's intended "use" whether at home, school, the work place, or elsewhere is for the sole purpose of killing. And that's what Ethan had in mind whether or not his parent's ever considered that their son might actually use the weapon for its intended purpose.

I've been slow to learn that fitting in is not the same thing as belonging. I've never been very good at fitting in either. It's hard to find peace trying to pretend that the person others see when they look at you is real. Because when that person doesn't exist, there is a sense of being invisible that overshadows any sense of belonging.

I will send my messenger to prepare the way for me. Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to his Temple.

Malachi 3:1

You have to be seen to belong, and people can't see you if you're invisible. But to visibly emerge is frightening. I discovered that I'm actually afraid to go home because I'm fearful that If I am myself, I don't belong there.

So Going home is what Christmas is really about, Charlie Brown, so Linus can keep his thoughts to himself. But is this really what Christmas is all about — going home?

The prophecies associated with God's decision to live among us in human form are significant for Christians. And as Christmas approaches, we hold onto these promises to get us through the anxieties of everyday life.

One relatively obscure prophet named Malachi offered this message from God that continues to resonate when we think about Christmas. Malachi said that a messenger will prepare the way for God to appear in the flesh. What does it mean to prepare the way for God to come? And when God arrives, will God feel a sense of going home like belonging?

How can we prepare the way for God's homecoming?

I read where people are decorating Christmas trees earlier than ever this year. After working all week, my sister's neighbor turned on their light display the Friday after Thanksgiving. This is one way to prepare.

Our series for this year's holiday season is *Going home*. During Thanksgiving, the news stories focused on people traveling, and with COVID cases rising to new levels, travel is likely to top the charts again during Christmas. Along with product shortages, higher gas prices, of course, COVID. So going home, if home is elsewhere, is risky business again this year.



Perhaps this Christmas, we can focus some of our energy that COVID insists we don't utilize to focus on our sense of belonging. Not because we try to fit in, but because we reveal more of who we are as the person God created us to be.

You can join us each Sunday online by going to the 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 our YouTube channel. You can find these links along with more information about us on our website at FlintAsbury.org.

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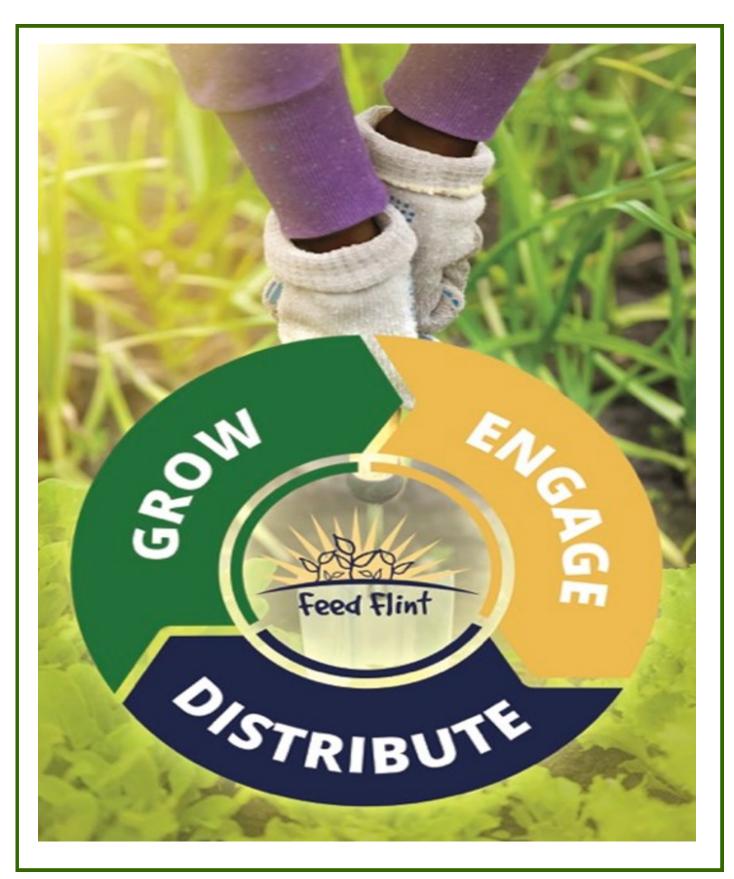
¹ Katelin Maylum, Tommy McDoniel, and Terrance Williams. "Home for Christmas." Flint, Michigan. © Asbury Church, 2021.

² Dr. Brené Brown. *Braving the Wilder*ness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone. NY: Random House, 2017.

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Li	ife groups questions & notes:
wi	A day is coming when people Il sing, "Give thanks to the Lord! Call for him to help you! Tell all the nations what he has
do	<i>ne!</i> Isaiah 12:4 (GNT)
	NOTES FROM WORSHIP
_	
_	
	QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUPS
	QUESTIONS FOR EIL CICOUS
1	Read the book of Isaiah 12:2-6, Zephaniah 3:14-18, and Philippians 4:4-7. What is a common theme found in all three of these verses? In what ways can you offer gratitude to God? In what ways can you find peace, joy, and hope during this holiday season despite the obstacles that get in your way?
2	Read the article in this week's Circuit Rider, <i>Joy.</i> In what ways is the Oxford school shooting affecting you personally? What does justice look like in this case? What is an action that you can take in response? Are you able to find joy during this holiday season even in the midst of pain and suffering? What brings you joy this season?
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.





A meal goes a long way for a senior living alone, a family struggling to make ends meet, or a child fearful of empty shelves at home. But for the residents of Flint who carry the effects of lead-tainted water, nutrition is critical. Feed Flint provides locally grown, chemical-free, fresh produce to residents living in and around Flint. And we're hoping that you can help us provide 10,000 meals this summer.

Feed Flint includes takeout meals, produce boxes with recipes, and home deliveries as part of our work to guide and support families in moving to sustainable abundance. The reality is that Michigan's food insecurity levels got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this summer's recovery is leaving behind those at the most risk of having to miss meals.

Flint families continue to struggle with the ongoing effects of the water crisis.

We're bringing together the resources of the Asbury Community Development Corporation. This includes Asbury Farms, the South Flint Soup Kitchen, the Asbury Community Help Center, multiple food pantries, and our Sizzling Culture Mobile Food Trailer. Our plan is to care for our neighbors when they need it most. We accept all people as they are, and our doors are always open to anyone.

Asbury Farms provides locally grown produce used to create fabulous and nutritious meals. Our seed-to-table approach is community-based. This not only helps families make it through emergencies and crises. We help move families towards sustainable abundance.

Our Sizzling Culture program provides jobs and new skills to our city's youth. This includes year-round employment. Our staff and most of our volunteers come from the neighborhoods we support. We call this sustainable abundance because families move from need-based on scarcity to enough based on community-generated abundance.

Our work is also about food and justice. Our vision is a revitalized community where every resident can use their talents and passions for the common good, where children grow into active citizens. And all residents can enjoy safety, good health, and a culture that fosters life-long learning and satisfying lives. This summer, help us address food insecurity and strengthen Flint's budding local food system by supporting the Feed Flint campaign. Thank you for taking the time to see what we're doing and considering how you can help.

Donate to our Feed Flint Campaign by visiting: flintasbury.org/feed-flint-donate





ASBURY FARM FRESH

- TRY OUR WEEKLY VEGGIE BOX FOR \$10.00 -

SIGN UP FOR A FREE ASBURY FARMS ACCOUNT TODAY

AND

Receive a \$15 credit on your account for your first purchase

CREATE YOUR OWN VEGGIE BOX

Select what goes in your box from each week's harvest. Get \$5 off your next order when you fill your box with \$15 of produce.

WANT US TO DECIDE FOR YOU?

Choose Veggie Box Subscription and we will fill your order with a variety of each week's harvest. Pay when you pick up your box. A \$15 VALUE FOR \$10.

* CONVENIENT PICKUP AT ASBURY OR AT THE SOUTH FLINT SOUP KITCHEN *

Meanwhile, the Sunday before the shooting, churches around the world celebrated the start of Advent. The name Christians chose to designate the four weeks leading up to Christmas. Advent is a holy time of preparation, reflection, and celebration.

On the first Sunday of Advent, we celebrated the hope represented by Christmas. Last Sunday, we celebrated the peace promised by God that came as a Messiah. This week we celebrate the joy of God's presence and actions in the world. Next week we celebrate God's love and recommit ourselves to loving others as we love ourselves.

Meanwhile, there is cause for grief, regret, despair, and anger.

Most of us recognize that joy is as intentional as it is a result of external events that evoke joy. We sometimes think of joy as an attitude more so than a response. Joy can appear calloused in the face of tragedy. Yet joy is nuanced, coming in a multitude of intensities and moods

The pervasive joy that rises above crisis, drama, and violence comes out of a sense of realizing that God is still in control. And for many, Advent is a time that reminds us of this reality. During Advent, we remember that God chose to live among us and promised to be with us always.

"A day is coming," said Isaiah, "When people will sing, 'Give thanks to the Lord!'" These words are among the numerous

predictions of God's intention for Jesus Christ to be born as both a sign and a solution. Isaiah challenges us all to "Tell all the nations" about God's plans (Isaiah 12:4).

Paul writes about joy in his letters. For example, in Paul's letter to the church in Philippi, Paul encourages the people to "always be joyful in your union with the Lord." He reminds us to ask God for what we need that is getting in the way of our joy.

A day is coming when people will sing, "Give thanks to the Lord!"

Isaiah 12:4

He goes on to point out that God's Spirit has a miraculous effect on us whenever we're able to shift enough of our focus from problems to gratitude. Paul notes that this feeling of peace is outside human understanding. I agree. It's hard to understand how we can find joy, even as Christmas approaches, given the problems surrounding us (Philippians 4:4-7).

Nevertheless, I promised myself that I will look for the joy of Christmas even as I grieve over the needless loss of life. I will celebrate each week, sing thanks to God. Even as my heart breaks over our divisions and inability to work together to end the use of violence, I anticipate that God's peace will prevail, and I will find joy. And I invite you to do the same.

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- ¹ Katelin Maylum, Tommy McDoniel, and Terrance Williams. "Home for Christmas." Flint, Michigan. © Asbury Church, 2021.
- ² Albeck-Ripka and Sophie Kasakove. "What We Know About the Michigan High School Shooting." © New York Time, December 3, 2021.





IMPORTANT NOTICE!

GENESEE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT WILL PROVIDE THE 'MODERNA' AND 'PFIZER' BOOSTER VACCINES

-ALSO-

PFIZER VACCINES WILL BE AVAILABLE TO CHILDREN 5+ YEARS OLD

When: Tuesday, December 14, 2021

Where: Our Lady of Guadalupe, San Juan Diego Hall

Time: 12N - 6:00pm

*Must have been at least 6 months after receiving your second Pfizer/Moderna Covid-19 vaccine or at least 2 months after receiving your J &J Covid-19 vaccine

*You must bring your Covid-19 vaccination card as proof of previous vaccinations

-No Appointment Required-

AVISO IMPORTANTE!

EL DEPARTAMENTO DE SALUD DEL CONDADO DE GENESEE PROPORCIONARÁ

LAS VACUNAS DE REFUERZO'

MODERNA 'Y' PFIZER

-TAMBIÉN-

LAS VACUNAS PFIZER ESTARÂN DISPONIBLES PARA NIÑOS DE 5+ AÑOS

Cuando: Martes, 14 de Diciembre, 2021

Lugar: Our Lady of Guadalupe, San Juan Diego Hall

Hora: 12N - 6:00pm

*Debe haber pasado al menos 6 meses después de recibir su segundo Pfizer/Moderna o al menos dos meses después de recibir su vacuna J&J del Covid-19

-No Se Requiere Cita-