GET VACCINATED
BLACK FAITH COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

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Over the past year, COVID-19 has torn through our communities, forcing us into isolation, escalating issues like depression, suicide, domestic violence, joblessness, evictions, business losses, educational setbacks—especially for poor and rural children—and disrupting one of the foundations of Black American culture: coming together to worship in the house of the Lord. However, there is hope on the horizon! With the advent of COVID-19 vaccines, a future where we can get back to gathering is within our sights. As shepherds, it is our role to lead our communities to take advantage of life-saving vaccines.

Understandably, the COVID-19 vaccine can be a hard sell. Many Black Americans are rightfully mistrustful of medical treatment in the U.S. due to a history of deceptive and callous experimentation, like the shameful Tuskegee experiments and the Henrietta Lacks projects.

Help is now here! It is a point of pride that the vaccine was developed with the help of a Black woman scientist, Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, an immunologist praised by Dr. Anthony Fauci, one of America’s most trusted voices on the vaccine. Meharry Medical College president, Dr. James Hildreth, leader one of the nation’s oldest medical schools for African Americans, serves on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) committee that authorized the use of the COVID-19 vaccines. Black people not only have a seat at the table; we helped build it!

Where you come in. Although Black people are three times more likely to die of the coronavirus than white people, white people are three times more likely to get the vaccine than Black people. CDC reports 5.4% Black people in first group vaccinated were Black vs. 60% among Whites. To bring equity to the black community, our job as faith leaders is twofold: to provide information and to provide access.

About this toolkit. This toolkit includes information about the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine, along with frequently asked questions and sample social media posts to help empower you as clergy to speak confidently to your congregations and communities about the vaccine. We encourage you to share these messages freely with your communities to lessen the most common fears about the vaccine and to encourage Black Americans to help stop the spread that is killing our beloved people. Let's get back to gathering!

Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Dr. T. DeWitt Smith, Jr., Co-Conveners, National African American Clergy Network
WHY SHOULD BLACK PEOPLE GET THE VACCINE?

LONG-TERM HEALTH DISPARITIES AND ISSUES THAT PLAGUE THE BLACK COMMUNITY PUT YOU AT HIGHER RISK OF DEATH FROM COVID-19. Black people are disproportionately affected by chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity—all of which increase the risk of dying from COVID-19. The vaccine lessens your chance of contracting the Coronavirus if you come in contact with an infected person as well as reduces the severity of the disease, if you do get it.

OUR CHILDREN NEED TO RETURN TO SCHOOL.
Distance learning has negatively impacted Black school children more than other races, with Black students in some areas regressing in education due to lost classroom time up to 12 months. Due to lack of access to technology such as computers and high-speed internet, Black children are more likely to miss online learning, falling behind their counterparts with long-term negative consequences. Even worse, many of our children depend on free or reduced lunch programs, making in-person school attendance even more vital.

THE VACCINE WAS CREATED BY US. The COVID-19 vaccine was developed, tested, and approved by a group that included Black medical experts and doctors. Clinical trials for all versions of the vaccine included adults of diverse backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and underlying conditions. Having a seat at the table ensured that the unique needs of the Black community were not overlooked.
WE NEED TO RETURN TO LIFE-ENHANCING ACTIVITIES. Coronavirus has taken away our ability to come together, preventing us from shaking hands with neighbors, worshipping together in the sanctuary, and even denying us the healing power of hugs. It is time to get back to gathering!

FOR YOUR COMMUNITY.

BECAUSE WE LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER. Community is the bedrock of Black America. From the plantation to the parish, we have always taken care of our own. Getting the vaccine is the most effective way to keep your family and neighbors safe. Protecting yourself also helps protect the people around you, including those at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 or those who cannot get vaccinated, like infants, children, or people with weakened immune systems due to chronic disease.

FOR YOUR CULTURE.

IT IS OUR DUTY TO HONOR GOD THROUGH OUR BODIES. While we think of our bodies as our own, we must remember that they are vessels of God’s love for us, and it is our duty to protect them.

“We should not allow fear to rule us as we make our decisions on taking the COVID-19 vaccine in the Black Community. Trust God, get sound advice from your primary care physician, and then move forward with your decision.” - Dr. T. DeWitt Smith, Jr., Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network

John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life abundantly.”

Philippians 2:4 “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.”
"If you get Moderna or Pfizer's vaccine..you have a 95% less chance of getting COVID-19. So imagine that for you and then imagine that for everyone around you in your community...The entire purpose of vaccines is to reduce the disease burden on a community."

Dr. Kizzy Corbett, NIH immunologist and COVID-19 vaccine co-creator

"My request to faith leaders is that they educate themselves to the point that they are comfortable recommending to the people that look to them for leadership that they accept the vaccine. That would be a major contribution."

Dr. James Hildreth, President of Meharry Medical College

"...we've got to approach this the way we approach smallpox, the way we approach polio, and the way we approach measles and other devastating global outbreaks... by vaccinating as many people as quickly and as efficiently as you possibly can."

Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease

"Just think—two shots in the arm will take about 30 minutes overall and prevent years of suffering and tens of thousands, yeah, hundreds of thousands of deaths."

Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr., Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network

"Getting vaccinated is the best gift you can give yourself and to those you care about. It opens the door to let others come safely into your presence and you into theirs. It is a key that unlocks the door of isolation and social distancing. Getting vaccinated is an invitation to hug again!"

Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, Presiding Prelate, 10th District, AME Church

"Like many African-Americans, I had a great deal of trepidation about the COVID-19 vaccine. But last week my wife and I completed our course of vaccinations. My experience as a pastor and leader in the black community led me to believe it was the right thing to do."

Bishop T.D. Jakes, Pastor, The Potter's House
(from Prayer and Science Led Me to the Vaccine, The Wall Street Journal)
Too many persons have died and too many others are living with lingering issues because of COVID-19. For me, the question is not, “Why get vaccinated?” but “Why not?!!” Senior Bishop Lawrence Reddick, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

There was a hesitancy and a fear that I had to fight because of the ugly history in this country as well as the contemporary medical apartheid that continues to exist. I have a responsibility not only to teach about the vaccine. But I have a responsibility to lead in taking the vaccine, so I’m going to take the vaccine. - Dr. Frederick D. Haynes, III, Senior Pastor, Friendship-West Baptist Church (from COVID-19 Vaccine: Faith Leaders Work to Address History of Distrust in Black Communities)

There is nothing more important at this point in history than getting vaccinated to confront and defeat this bully of a virus, COVID-19. It is literally a life and death struggle for the health of our people, the nation and the world. Choose life! - A. J. Richardson, Senior Bishop, AME Church

May God bless our work as we embrace the opportunity to reach humanity and assist in providing wholeness in a marvelous way. Working together as people of faith this pandemic will not defeat us. - Dr. Timothy Stewart, President, Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.

I took 2 shots in the arm because 500,000 Americans were put in the grave. Many people are concerned about whether the vaccine will keep them alive, all while we are sure that COVID-19 kills. Taking the shot may not be popular, but it sure is responsible and prudent. Let’s take a SHOT at it! - Dr. Jamal Bryant, Pastor, New Birth Missionary Baptist Church

**BENEFITS OF BEING VACCINATED**

The vaccine:

- decreases your chances of contracting the coronavirus;
- decreases chance of spreading the coronavirus;
- reduces the severity of COVID-19 infections;
- helps prevent future pandemics with herd immunity;
- gets us back to the moments we miss.

Herd immunity (or community immunity) occurs when a high percentage of the community is immune to a disease (through vaccination and/or prior illness), making the spread of this disease from person to person unlikely.  
(Source https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/terms/glossary.html)
STEPS TO BECOME A TRUSTED FAITH-BASED VACCINE SITE

SPECIAL NOTE: Churches may decide to be sites for actually storing and administering the vaccine. However, the best practice most churches are following is to become the trusted location and sacred space where the vaccine is administered by a health institution partner.

- Establish a partnership with the state or community health organization, or federally qualified vaccine source for a stable vaccine supply to administer vaccines in CDC-compliant sites.
- Create agreement that the health organization will administer vaccine at your church as a trusted space to reduce vaccine hesitancy.
- Determine your church’s capacity with volunteers and staff to accommodate 300-500 vaccinations in an 8-hour day, administered by the health partner.
- Ensure that the church has liability insurance to cover any costs not covered by the health partner.

MAKE SURE YOUR CHURCH HAS SUFFICIENT SPACE FOR THE FOLLOWING CRITICAL ELEMENTS:
- **Parking space** to allow cars to move in and out easily as people may prefer to wait safely in their car until they are ready for vaccination.
- **Rooms where vaccination is administered** with safe distancing between tables used. (for example in the church’s Life Center, Fellowship Hall, cafeteria)
- **Post-vaccination holding rooms** (15 minutes for each person vaccinated) until medical personnel on-site release those who show no unusual side effects and provide “I was vaccinated” card.
- **Space for medical practitioners** to operate and complete required paperwork.

VOLUNTEER OR PAID STAFF WILL BE CRITICAL TO PERFORM THE FOLLOWING TASKS:
- **Administrator** who conducts vaccinations and registration of people who meets states’ criteria.
- **Church volunteer** to help with vaccination process before and after shot in a friendly manner.
- **Office team** to help with appointment reminder calls, maintain standby list, and call people on the standby list, if people miss appointments.
- **Custodial staff** to keep all surfaces sanitized.
- **Parking attendants and security** to manage cars moving in an orderly manner in and out of the parking lot.

IMPORTANT RESOURCES CRITICAL TO A SUCCESSFUL CHURCH-BASED VACCINE PROGRAM
- **Prayer partners** to pray consistently to obtain community immunity and dispel falsehoods.
- **Community Ambassadors**: Operation "love thy neighbor" door-to-door education campaign informing residents of vaccine sites and times.
- **Involvement of the press** to write stories on trusted voices and venues.
- **Federal, state, and local government or charitable organization grants** to assist with the community education and vaccination process.
- **Post a telephone number** visibly on the street outside your church to attract people without internet.

Source: Dr. Kendrick Curry, Pastor, Pennsylvania Avenue Baptist Church, Washington, DC; Rev. R. B. Holmes, FL Statewide Coronavirus Task Force; Bishop A. J. Richardson, Presiding Prelate, 11th District AME Church, FL
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE VACCINE

- **WHY SHOULD I GET VACCINATED?** Getting immunized against COVID-19 will keep most people from getting sick. Even in a rare case where one does catch the virus, a vaccine will likely prevent you from becoming seriously ill. Protecting yourself also protects the people around you, like those at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 or those who can't get vaccinated—like infants, children, or people with weakened immune systems from things like chemotherapy for cancer.

- **ARE THE COVID-19 VACCINES SAFE?** Yes. Researchers began developing vaccines for COVID-19 in January 2020, based on decades of understanding immune response and how vaccines work. Based on the results, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized two vaccines for public use in December 2020. The vaccines met the agency's rigorous and science-based standards for quality, safety, and effectiveness.

- **HAVE ENOUGH PEOPLE TAKEN THE VACCINE SO WE KNOW THAT IT’S SAFE?** All COVID-19 vaccines were tested in clinical trials involving tens of thousands of people to make sure they meet safety standards and protect adults of different ages, races, and ethnicities—including Black people. Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines, and these vaccines have undergone the most intensive safety monitoring in U.S. history. This monitoring includes using both established and new safety monitoring systems to make sure that COVID-19 vaccines are safe.

- **ARE THERE SIDE EFFECTS FROM THE VACCINES?** It’s normal to experience some mild discomfort following a vaccine. This means it’s working and creating an immune response in your body. You may feel soreness or experience some swelling in your arm. You may also feel tired, have a headache, fever, or chills. These symptoms may impact your daily activities, but they shouldn’t last more than 2-3 days. If they continue or get worse, call your doctor, nurse, or clinic.

- **IF I HAVE SIDE EFFECTS LIKE SWELLING IN MY ARM, FEELING TIRED, HEADACHES OR A FEVER OR CHILLS, HOW LONG COULD THESE SYMPTOMS LAST?** These symptoms may impact your daily activities, but they shouldn’t last more than 2-3 days. If they continue or get worse, call your doctor, nurse, or clinic.

- **COULD I HAVE AN ALLERGIC REACTION?** Severe allergic reactions to vaccines are extremely rare. The FDA says the authorized COVID-19 vaccines appear to be safe for people with common food or environmental allergies. If you have had an immediate allergic reaction—even if it was not severe—to a vaccine or injectable for another disease, ask your doctor if you should get a COVID-19 vaccine. Your doctor will help you decide if it is safe for you to get vaccinated.

- **HOW DO THESE VACCINES PROTECT ME?** When we get a vaccine, it activates our immune response. This helps our bodies learn to fight off the virus without the danger of an actual infection. If we are exposed to the virus in the future, our immune system “remembers” how to fight it. Some COVID-19 vaccines use messenger RNA vaccines that do not contain a live virus. They give our bodies “instructions” for how to make and fight the harmless spike-shaped proteins that will protect against a COVID-19 infection. While these vaccines use new technology, researchers have been studying them for decades.
**CAN I CATCH COVID-19 FROM THE VACCINES?** No, it's not possible to get COVID-19 from the current FDA-authorized vaccines.

**DID THE COVID-19 VACCINE CLINICAL TRIAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS INCLUDE BLACK AMERICANS LIKE ME?** People may respond differently to vaccines based on factors like age, gender, and health conditions — so it is important to have a diverse group of participants in clinical trials. Researchers made sure that the trials included adults of diverse backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and geographic areas by working with faith leaders, community organizations, and health clinics to reach volunteers from many different walks of life across the United States. Historically, these populations haven't always been included in clinical research. However with COVID-19 vaccines, researchers made sure volunteers included people of color, as well as people over the age of 65 who are at higher risk of complications from the virus.

**SHOULD I GET VACCINATED IF I’VE ALREADY HAD COVID-19?** If you’ve had COVID-19 in the past 90 days, talk to your doctor about when you should get vaccinated. People who have already had COVID-19 should still eventually get vaccinated to ensure they are protected. However, anyone currently infected with COVID-19 should wait to get vaccinated until after their illness has resolved and after they have met the criteria to discontinue isolation.

**HOW LONG DOES THE COVID-19 VACCINE LAST?** Immunization against COVID-19 will help protect you for the near future, but it’s still not clear how long the protection will last. We will have a clearer picture of how long immunity lasts in years to come when we have collected more data. Both natural immunity and immunity from the vaccine are important ways to fight COVID-19 that experts are trying to learn more about, and places like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will keep the public informed as new evidence becomes available.

**ARE THE COVID-19 VACCINES FREE?** There shouldn't be a cost to get vaccinated. Insurance providers will cover the cost of the vaccine, and the U.S. government has set up a system to cover costs for those who do not have insurance. Vaccine doses bought by the U.S. government will be given to the public for free; however, vaccination providers will be able to charge an administration fee for giving the shot to someone. Vaccine providers can get this fee reimbursed by the patient’s public or private insurance company or, for uninsured patients, by the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Provider Relief Fund.

**HOW WILL THE COVID-19 VACCINES AFFECT ME IF I HAVE PRE-EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITIONS?** Adults of any age with certain underlying medical conditions are at increased risk for severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19. mRNA COVID-19 vaccines may be administered to people with underlying medical conditions provided they have not had a severe or immediate allergic reaction to any of the ingredients in the vaccine. Talk with your doctor, nurse, or other health provider to discuss whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

**I HAVE LUPUS. CAN I TAKE THE VACCINE?** People with autoimmune conditions may receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. However, they should consult with their doctor, nurse or other health provider to discuss whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

**WILL I STILL HAVE TO WEAR A MASK?** Yes. Until enough Americans are vaccinated, it's important to continue to wear a mask, stay 6 feet apart from people you don't live with, avoid crowds, and wash your hands frequently. Researchers are working to understand whether you can still carry the virus and spread it to others, if you've had the vaccine and are protected from getting sick.

FAQs and Answers are provided by The Ad Council, [https://getvaccineanswers.org/](https://getvaccineanswers.org/)
"So God created human beings in his own image." *Genesis 1:27*

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well." *Psalm 139:14*

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God: I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous hand." *Isaiah 41:10*

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." *Jeremiah 29:11*

"Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security." *Jeremiah 33:6*

"Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." *Philippians 2:4*

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." *Matthew 7:12*

"The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." *Mark 12:31*

"And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." *Romans 8:28*

"You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies." *2 Corinthians 6:19*

"For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." *Ephesians 2:10*

"Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." *3 John 1*

“We proclaim that black lives matter—to God and to all of us. If we really believe that, then we have to nurture and protect black lives by getting the COVID vaccine as soon as possible and urging our communities to sign up." - The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church

"COVID-19 vaccine education is critical and can greatly reduce the level of hesitancy among African Americans." - Bishop Talbert W. Swan, II, Senior Advisor to Presiding Bishop, Charles E. Blake, Sr, Church of God in Christ.
You may adapt these sample posts to include your church’s vaccine website information.

- Protecting yourself - protecting your community. Learn the facts about the COVID-19 vaccination and register to get yours today. #GetVaccinated #LetsGatherAgain
- Did you know Black people are three times more likely to die of a COVID-19 infection than other ethnic groups? Protect yourself and help stop the spread by getting the vaccine! #GetVaccinated #LetsGatherAgain
- Black people only account for 8% of the total U.S. population receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. Don’t be left behind—register to get the vaccine when it becomes available in your area. #GetVaccinated #LetsGatherAgain
- Got questions? We have answers! Read up on frequently asked questions about the COVID-19 vaccine here: www.SkinnerLeaders.org/getvaccinated
- Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is one of the most powerful ways to protect your at-risk family and neighbors from the coronavirus. Learn more about where you can get yours here:
- Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is the key to re-opening our country, returning people to work, and restoring our most important assets: church and community. #GetVaccinated #LetsGatherAgain
- Too many Black lives have been lost due to COVID-19. Do your part to stop the spread: get vaccinated! #GetVaccinated # LetsGatherAgain
- Yes, you are eligible to get the vaccine even if you have preexisting conditions! Yes, you should get the vaccine even if you’ve already had a COVID-19 infection! Have more questions about the vaccine? Click here to learn more: www.SkinnerLeaders.org/getvaccinated
- Quarantine has been hard—the vaccine is our best chance of getting to spend time with our loved ones again. Let’s get back to gathering again! Find more about where you can get the COVID-19 vaccine here:
- Did you know a black woman was instrumental in developing the COVID-19 vaccine? Thank you, Dr. Kizzy Corbett! #RepresentationMatters #GetVaccinated #LetsGatherAgain
- Hope is on the horizon. With the COVID-19 vaccine, a future where we can get back to gathering is within our sights. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them.” – Matthew 18:20 #LetsGatherAgain #GetVaccinated
- We once lifted our hands in the sanctuary. Remember that? Getting the vaccine is essential to returning to our church homes. Learn more about where you can get it here:
- Did you know a trusted vaccination site is right in your community? Learn how you can get the vaccine here:
- COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting Black Americans—it is critically important to do our part to reduce and hopefully eliminate the spread of the coronavirus. Find out more about the vaccine here: www.SkinnerLeaders.org/getvaccinated

“The current pandemic opportunity for vaccinations is one that will pass us by if all of us do not take seriously the resistance of African Americans to take the vaccine in the face of the historical mistreatment of blacks in regards to healthcare, economic and educational opportunities.” - Dr. Franklyn Richardson, Chairman, Conference of National Black Churches

www.SkinnerLeaders.org/getvaccinated | GET VACCINATED, Black Faith Community Toolkit
KEY ACTIONS FAITH LEADERS CAN TAKE

● Share this toolkit, including the Frequently Asked Questions, with your congregations and social media communities to spread awareness of the facts about vaccination.

● Provide information on how to get vaccinated to your congregation on your website and during services.

● Host virtual town halls with medical professionals to answer questions from your congregation.

● Work with local health officials to become a trusted site for vaccine distribution.

● Help those without internet access to register for the vaccine online.

● Share videos from trusted sources during your virtual services.

● Gather volunteers to provide transportation to vaccination centers.

● Center your sermons on health and wellness.

● Continue to work with local officials to reduce the health disparities that put Black people at risk for COVID-19 infection.

As the Senior Bishop and President of the Board of Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, we are practicing all precautions in assuring the safety of those persons and communities that we serve to end this pandemic.....We have COVID-19 testing sites throughout our denomination as well as vaccination sites. - Bishop George E. Battle, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church

Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is an act of love. It helps save lives - yours and others. Didn't Jesus say, “Love your neighbor as you love yourself!” - Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale, Sr. Pastor, Ray of Hope Christian Church, Decatur, GA
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

RESOURCES
- [https://vaccinefinder.org](https://vaccinefinder.org)
- [https://getvaccineanswers.org/](https://getvaccineanswers.org/)

For additional resources, visit [www.SkinnerLeaders.org/getvaccinated](http://www.SkinnerLeaders.org/getvaccinated)

NEWS ARTICLES: (PARTIAL LISTING)
National and Local Examples of Black Faith Leaders Taking the Lead in Black Community Vaccine Education, Registration, and Administration

- [Black pastors tapped to overcome racial divide on COVID-19 vaccine in Washington, D.C](https://example.com)
- [To Save Their Communities, Black Ministers Preach the Gospel About the COVID-19 Vaccine](https://example.com)
- [Black churches have become indispensable in COVID-19 vaccination effort](https://example.com)
- [A Baltimore pastor, preaching about vaccines to the Black community, emphasizes personal agency](https://example.com)
- [Task force aims to vaccinate Black Floridians](https://example.com)
- [Prayer and Science Led Me to the Vaccine](https://example.com)
- [COVID-19 with Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett, PhD (Interview with Dr. Frederick D. Haynes, III)](https://example.com)

National African American Clergy Network Partners:
- African Methodist Episcopal; African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; The Church of God In Christ; Conference of National Black Churches; Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International; National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc; National Baptist Convention of America International, Inc.; Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.; and Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference.

Watch a 90 second video by the Faith Community on COVID-19 Vaccines and the Path Forward.

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