

“Have Faith” Initiative

The Faith Community’s Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak

Notes from 4/16/20 Meeting (via Zoom)

Greg Burris reminded the group that the call was being recorded in order to share it with any other member who was unable to join today’s call.

Co-chair of the Have Faith Initiative, Rev. Bob Roberts, welcomed the group.

Mr. Samuel Knox provided the opening prayer.

Rev. Mark Struckhoff provided a brief update on the previous (April 9) meeting, highlighting the reports from the four committees.

Springfield Mayor Ken McClure updated the group on Springfield’s and Greene County’s “stay-at-home” orders, which both expire on April 24th. Mayor McClure noted that Kansas City has extended their “stay-at-home” order until mid-May and that he expected that St. Louis would do something similar.

Greene County Commissioner Harold Bengsch also thanked the faith community leaders participating in this initiative, and noted a copy of a letter he received this morning from Senator Blunt to Secretary Mnuchin suggesting that churches are eligible to apply for loans via the Economic Injury Disaster Advance Loan program.

Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement for the City of Springfield, provided an update and noted the various methods the City and County are using to disseminate information about the coronavirus outbreak status and response. She highlighted the recent Town Hall meetings hosted on television and noted a panel discussion that will air on Fox on Saturday night.

Clay Goddard, Director of the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, provided an update on the status of the COVID-19 outbreak and response strategies. He noted that our county experienced six (6) new cases today and quarantines will be necessary. Clay noted that we are not “out of the woods” and we need to stay the course in order to get back to normal. Clay fielded a variety of questions about testing, the process that will be used to step out of the “stay-at-home” order, and the definition of “essential” vs. “non-essential” businesses.

Mark Struckhoff asked for updates from the chairs of the four steering committees.

Tom Faulkner, chair of the Supply Drive Committee, indicated that Walmart locations will likely have food collection bins and Harter House has been approached about doing

the same. Tom noted that grocery stores are still experiencing restrictions by product amount. The committee is designing a kit for churches to use to conduct food drives. Tom noted he is working with staff at United Way of the Ozarks and Salvation Army to plan a food drive, although the dates for the drive will likely be moved back to late-May or early-June. Tom noted that Ozarks Food Harvest is not charging food pantries for products at this time.

Rev. Jenn Simmons, chair of the Community Spiritual & Mental Health Committee, said her committee is collecting “best practices” and will be sharing these resources with the group. She indicated this will include caring for spiritual leaders.

Linda Merklings, chair the Coming Together in Faith Committee, said the National Day of Prayer will be hosted on May 7th and will be live streamed with no limit on the number of participants. Linda indicated her committee is also considering the creation of a video that would be submitted to TV stations as a PSA and organizing kids’ yard signs to thank healthcare workers.

Vickie Hicks noted there are 51 participants on today’s call.

Rev. Bob Roberts thanked all involved in last weekend’s “spin up” of five new shelters for the homeless as temperatures dropped below freezing.

Janet Dankert, President & CEO of Community Partnership of the Ozarks, also thanked all involved and noted that these shelters were up in less than 24 hours. She appreciated the entire group involved and thanked the churches for providing space and volunteers.

Rev. Christie Love also thanked the entire faith community, the City of Springfield, and everyone else involved in creating the shelters. She said she was very grateful for the work and they had enough beds for tomorrow night. Rev. Love also said she hopes the group can keep this momentum in our community to care for the homeless. There was some discussion about the need for cooling shelters in mid-summer.

There was discussion about the need for porta-potties for the homeless and questions about whether the City plans to purchase/rent some and how much each costs. The Venues is providing four porta-potties now and indicated this is working out well, but there may be a need for porta-potties in other locations.

Rev. Mark Struckhoff asked the host trio of Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Community Partnership of the Ozarks and United Way of the Ozarks to determine whether there are resources available to fund porta-potties.

Vickie Hicks indicated that additional face masks are needed and that Community Partnership of the Ozarks is coordinating the allocation of masks to daycare centers and other locations. Vickie noted that United Way of the Ozarks is developing a web page for the Have Faith Initiative that should be available soon. Vickie also noted that she

will send an email later today to share everyone's name and email address so participants can contact each other. If anyone does not want their email address shared, please contact Vickie by 3:00 pm today.

Linda Merklung noted that Integrity Healthcare is offering to provide funding for kits so churches can make masks.

Deanna Carpenter noted that a local Facebook group has already made 60,000 masks. Their site provides "how to" videos and they are willing to facilitate.

The next meeting of the Have Faith Initiative will be a Zoom call on April 23, 11:30-12:30. An email invitation will be sent by Vickie Hicks, United Way of the Ozarks.

Deanna Carpenter offered the closing prayer. The meeting was adjourned.