

“Have Faith” Initiative

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

Notes from 4/30/20 Meeting (via Zoom)

Greg Burris opened the meeting and thanked all for participating on behalf of Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Community Partnership of the Ozarks and United Way of the Ozarks. There were 58 participants on the Zoom call. Greg welcomed all new-comers to the call, and thanked Rev. Robert and Rev. Struckhoff for participating in the City-County news conference immediately preceding this meeting.

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

Rev. Kevin Short provided the opening prayer.

Tom Ryan, new co-chair of the Food/Supply Drive Committee, reported that KOLR was hosting a food/hunger-related telethon today. Tom thanked the members of the Communications Committee for their work in helping to get the word out about the various projects. Tom noted that Crossway Baptist hosted a “pilot” food drive and experienced great success. Tom also noted that food collection barrels are already set out at various grocery stores; these donations will be taken to Ozark Empire Fairgrounds for cleaning, sorting and distribution. Tom thanked all of the partners for their great collaboration.

Rev. Jenn Simmons, chair of the Community Spiritual and Mental Health Committee, reported that her committee met yesterday to identify goals and determine the community’s needs. They will pursue consistent messaging within the community and hope to offer practical tools that will be posted on the Have Faith Initiative’s web site – www.uwozarks.org/have-faith

Linda Merkling, chair of the Coming Together in Faith Event Committee, reminded everyone about the National Day of Prayer breakfast on May 7th at 8:30 am. She said the food drive will be mentioned during this event. Linda also noted that her committee is still working to develop the “Champions Week” concept and will celebrate and thank healthcare workers first in early June, with other groups being celebrated afterwards. She also said this committee is working to develop a weekly prayer video and the “Be Still” campaign, which will likely involve the media.

Linda also provided an update on the Communications Committee, of which she is a member. She thanked Rev. Ken Chumbley, who has joined the committee and is doing some writing for it. Linda said the committee is collecting stories from healthcare workers and developing a PSA video. She noted a new logo has been created for the

Have Faith Initiative; it will be posted to the web site. Also, a Dropbox is being created so churches/organizations can easily access the logo, videos, etc.

Rev. Mark Struckhoff summarized last week's meeting, including Michelle Garand's presentation about the Ozarks Alliance to End Homelessness (and noting that masks are still needed for the kits). Mark also summarized the results of the survey that was conducted since last week's meeting that indicated approximately 80% of respondents are not comfortable reopening at this time.

Springfield-Greene County Health Department Director Clay Goddard provided a summary of the Springfield and Greene County orders announced today. He also noted that the Health Department is providing free tests for 200 front-line, asymptomatic workers in our community; test results should be available next week. Clay indicated that much of the new order was based on an analysis of "density and intensity" – the amount of people gathered in a single place and the length of time and activity occurring while they are together.

Cora Scott, City of Springfield's Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement, provided more details about the new order and noted the full order and a Frequently Asked Questions are now available on the City of Springfield's web site. Cora indicated that the City and County officials will reevaluate the situation in three weeks to consider next steps. The new order prohibits public gatherings of more than 15 people and allows drive-in services.

Greene County Commissioner Harold Bengsch noted that Greene County's new order will extend through May 25th. (The City of Springfield's new order extends through May 31st.) The Greene County Commission continues to work closely with the Health Department staff.

Springfield Mayor Ken McClure joined the call and provided a summary of Springfield's order. He noted the biggest difference between Springfield's order and the Governor's order is the local limitation on mass gatherings. Mayor McClure thanked Rev. Mark Struckhoff and Rev. Bob Roberts for participating in the April 30 news conference.

City and County officials answered a variety of questions from the call participants. Almost all the information is included on the City's web site, although a document providing additional guidance for the faith community will be forthcoming.

Vickie Hicks, United Way of the Ozarks, showed the participants the new logo for the Have Faith Initiative and noted that she will be emailing to all participants a packet for churches/organizations regarding the food drive and information about the National Day of Prayer.

The next meeting of the Have Faith Initiative will be a Zoom call on May 7, 11:30-12:30.

Rev. Emily Bowen-Marler offered the closing prayer. The meeting was adjourned.