

“Have Faith” Initiative

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

Notes from 5/21/20 Meeting (via Zoom)

Greg Burriss 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 51 participants on the Zoom call. Greg welcomed all newcomers to the call.

Co-chair of the Have Faith Initiative, Rev. Bob Roberts, welcomed the group. Then Co-Chair Rev. Mark Struckhoff shared some important thoughts regarding that this is a collaborative space and each attendee is welcome.

Elizabeth Weiner, Temple Israel, shared the Mourner’s Kaddish in Hebrew as our opening mediation.

Rev. Struckhoff reviewed a few items from last week’s agenda and encouraged the group to review the notes that are available on the Have Faith Initiative website- www.uwozarks.org/have-faith.

Rev. Struckhoff then welcome Steve Edwards from Cox Health to share an update on his facility. Steve thanked everyone in the faith community.

Steve shared a few personal reflections. We each look at the virus through our own lens of experiences. Steve’s lens is focused on the health care industry. Steve grew up in Springfield and the patients are very personal to him. One of the first patients they saw with COVID was his friend’s mother. Another was a different friend’s grandmother. His high school classmate was on a vent for 19 days and is now recovering.

Cox currently has a 22-year-old patient. She was admitted pregnant at 33 weeks and diagnosed with COVID. Besides the pregnancy, she was a healthy individual. The hospital decided to perform an emergency C-section and the baby is currently in the NICU. The mother was put on a ventilator and things did not look good. She was given Remdesivir and a plasma donation. She is now out of the ICU and in a normal room and recovering.

He believes that faith-related meetings are well positioned for widespread transmission since the highest risk is related to individuals that are shoulder-to-shoulder and elbow-to-elbow. He appreciates the faith community’s concern for their congregations. His team is very sensitive to how the faith-based community handles this.

He shared one more story. His lifelong friend called him about the friend's father, who is a prominent doctor. The father had shared his advanced directive to his son because he felt that he only had a short time left because of his double pneumonia. The doctor didn't want to bother his pulmonologist because they were already busy with COVID. The friend contacted Steve and Steve was able to arrange for an appointment with the pulmonologist and the individual is now fine. We need to go to the hospital when we are not well.

As far as the state of the hospital, 6,000 elective procedures were deferred, but now they are back to normal volumes. He did indicate they are currently stocked with PPE. Prior to this crisis, they were using 40 n95 masks a day and now they are using 1000. Cox currently has three COVID patients. In total, they have admitted 30 individuals, with seven deaths (six from the same nursing home), and 20 have been discharged and are now home. They do have one individual that is of concern right now. In response to a question, Steve indicated that they have a full department of Chaplains and they are meeting with patients, families and staff. He stressed the importance of masks, physical distancing and hygiene and that all three together will help and make a difference.

Next, Bill Hennessey from Mercy spoke to their current state. He thanked the faith leaders and is impressed with how the community is coming together. Thankful for those in healthcare and ministry – it is a calling. It's been a roller coaster from getting ready for the COVID and now to re-opening. He echoed Steve's comments. He then addressed the difficult financial realities and he indicated that the recent furloughs were painful. As a faith-based organization they care deeply about their employees. He indicated that the best thing they can do for their employees is to communicate regularly and care for each other. Mercy has a staff of 15 Chaplains that minister to the staff as well as the patients. They have begun elective procedures that had been delayed. They currently have two patients that are suspect, but they had several weeks without a COVID case.

Bill indicated that the three local Sisters of Mercy are under quarantine in their cottage. They have seen how their ministry unexpectedly evolved in the current crisis. They are committed to prayer and ministry to those infected and the employees involved.

The floor was then turned over for reports from the city and county.

Clay Goddard spoke first. There has been some case growth. He said that last week there were eleven cases, but this week there are 23 cases. He indicated that seven individuals of the 23 cases had attended an out-of-state funeral with no masks or physical distancing. He indicated that several were critically ill and that nine other individuals related to this funeral are now waiting on test results. He reminded the audience that density and intensity of contact is important. We need to avoid that situation here. Our next steps are critical.

Mayor McClure then spoke. His leadership team started working on the city's Road to Recovery Plan last week. City Council then reviewed the plan in a study session last Friday. The city wished they could have gotten the message out to faith leaders sooner, but it was just the way

everything fell. On Wednesday, they issued Phase 2 that is in effect from May 23 through June 14. The plan does have some guidelines for future phases, but those will be evaluated as we go along. They are and will be evaluating daily.

The Mayor asked individuals to take personal responsibility for their own health and to take appropriate actions, such as hygiene, physical distancing and to limit trips out of town. The disease is still out there and as a city we need to keep up our good practices.

Cora Scott then covered the [full order](#), which is located on the City's website, along with a [Road to Recovery Plan](#) document that maps out projected phases 3 and 4. As a reminder, this order applies to the city.

County Commissioner Bengsch then spoke and indicated that their plans are currently under review by the county attorney and will most likely be announced early next week. He thanked Steve Edwards and Bill Hennessey for their presentations and the hard work they are doing for our community. He did encourage anyone interested in travel to review the CDC travel compliance website. He ended with a warning to please consider what might happen if we are not careful.

Due to time limitations, there were quick reports from the sub committees.

Tom Ryan, chair of the Food/Supply Drive Committee, said that the June "Stuff the Bus" events were going to be delayed since there is currently an influx of food being supplied to the agencies and storage would be problematic.

Rev. Jenn Simmons, chair of the Community Spiritual and Mental Health Committee, reported that the resource library is coming together and would be available on the Have Faith Initiative website's shared drive. Please share any resources that you have found helpful. They are adding a social media piece -- it's okay not to be okay. They are in need of mental health kits and you can contact her to learn more, pastorjenn@nationalavenuecc.com.

Linda Merkling, chair of the Coming Together in Faith Committee, reported that kids throughout the region have been making thank you signs for the upcoming Healthcare Champions event. She does have 50 signs left if your congregation has children interested in decorating signs. She also needs volunteers interested in helping them put the signs out. Contact her at lmerkling@sbj.net. Her committee, in conjunction with the Communications committee, are focusing now on inspirational video messages, 60-second recordings of an inspirational message. If you are interested in doing one of these, please contact Linda or review the information and messages already shared on the [Have Faith Shared Drive](#) on the website.

Cora Scott, chair of the Communications Committee, is working closely with Linda and her committee. She will begin working on a news release/feature story that will report on all the

activities the Have Faith Initiative have completed and will be doing. People need hope now more than ever.

The next meeting of the Have Faith Initiative will be a Zoom call on May 28, 11:30-12:30.

Professor Wenping Qui with the Chinese Baptist Church offered the closing prayer in his native Chinese, with an accompanying transcript in English. The meeting was adjourned.