

## “Have Faith” Initiative”

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

#### Notes from 8/13/20 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, United Way of the Ozarks, the City of Springfield and Greene County. There were 43 participants on the Zoom call. Greg welcomed all newcomers to the call.

Co-chair of the Have Faith Initiative, Rev. Jenn Simmons, welcomed the group and invited Christie Love, Connecting Grounds, to open the meeting in prayer.

Donna Barton, Public Information Officer for Greene County, then presented the county report. Donna reported that as of Thursday at 7:00 am, 289 applications were completed for CARES funding. She said that in the healthcare category, four applications totaled \$16 million. She referred those interested to the CARES funding website for updates. (<https://greenecountymo.gov/cares/awards/>)

Rev. Simmons then introduced Mayor McClure. The Mayor invited people to watch the morning’s press briefing on the city’s website, in which they updated everyone on the current state of the pandemic in Springfield. (<https://cityview.springfieldmo.gov/>). The Mayor said that he extended the emergency proclamation for Springfield until September 13, 2020, because we continue to see a rise in the number of COVID-19 cases. He can only extend it one month at a time.

Clay Goddard, Director of the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, then spoke about the current caseload in Springfield. He said that we saw an increase in cases last week. Clay said out of those 95 cases on Tuesday, that 15 were from the jail, and of the 82 cases on Wednesday, 27 were from long-term care facilities. There is concern about institutional settings. Clay said his department is reviewing those cases for common sources. Anecdotally, he said that people are getting together more frequently with their guard down and that we need to be cautious and still practice physical distancing.

Clay then shared good news. When reviewing the current exposures, churches reopening were of concern, but that as of July, only 2.4% of those testing positive were connected to a church exposure. He complimented the faith leaders for opening up well and taking the virus seriously.

The Health Department is currently reporting that 16.3% of cases come from community spread. Clay went on to complement Springfield Public Schools (SPS) on their serious approach to opening up. He said that his team regularly consulted with the team at SPS. The school system was tasked with choosing the least worst option, and he

believes they chose the option with the best chance of success. Rev. Simmons thanked Clay for taking time each week to report to this group and for the hard work he is doing.

Cora Scott, Public Information Officer for the City of Springfield, then took the floor and said the city was focusing their messaging efforts around prevention, prevention, and prevention. She said that over 30% of the cases in the last three weeks were in the 20-29 age group. There is concern that as the college students return to Springfield, they may let their guard down while attending off-campus events. She announced that there would be a new campaign launching soon called "Stay Strong Springfield."

Cora then combined her report with Linda Merklings of the Coming Together in Faith Committee to announce the Healthcare Heroes Appreciation focus taking place next week. Cora showed one of the *Standing in the Gap* video spots. The video and audio files are available on the shared drive on the Have Faith Initiative website ([www.uwozarks.org/have-faith](http://www.uwozarks.org/have-faith)). Linda encouraged pastors to include appreciation messages on their websites and church marquees.

Linda also requested volunteers to help put out the 200 appreciation signs made by area children. Those will be posted outside of Cox, Mercy, and Jordan Valley Health Center. Lastly, Cora invited participants to like the new Have Faith Initiative Facebook page @Havefaithinitiative.

Pastor Simmons then introduced Greg Burris, who formally introduced our guest speaker Stephan Hall, Chief Communications Officer for Springfield Public Schools. Stephen shared an excellent presentation on the school's reopening plan. That presentation is available here: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1wAl0rH4GeufMdm8fQJ8sRXk514i2QuKgHLtOYQbi0UY/edit?usp=sharing>.

Stephen concluded his program by thanking churches for adopting area schools. He asked faith leaders to continue to be engaged with their neighborhood schools. There are many children in need right now.

Lastly, Tom Ryan, with the Food and Supply Drive Committee, announced that the citywide Stuff the Truck food drive will be September 18-19. He said they are continuing to feed the homeless that are sheltered in hotels. East Sunshine Church of Christ recently stepped up to provide all the food for the month of September.

Rev. Simmons closed the meeting in prayer, and we were adjourned.