

“Have Faith” Initiative”

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

Notes from 9/3/20 meeting (via Zoom)

Brian Fogle, Community Foundation of the Ozarks, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Brian shared that it was great to be in a meeting with people who are “for” something, the good of the community, instead of against something. There were 38 participants on the Zoom call.

Co-chair of the Have Faith Initiative, Rev. Bob Roberts, reminded the listeners that the September 10 meeting is canceled, but we will return on September 17 and that we have some relevant topics coming soon. Rev. Roberts introduced Rev. Roger Franklin, Heart Church USA, to open the meeting in prayer.

Rev. Roberts then turned the floor over to Harold Bengsch, Greene County Commissioner. Commissioner Bengsch shared that the County voted this morning on more of the CARES Act funding requests. Out of the \$34.4 million that the County received, they have approved \$22 million to date. Thirty volunteer committee members are reviewing the applications and making recommendations to the Commission. This is a big job, and they are working very hard. To view the funding to date, visit <https://greenecountymo.gov/cares/awards/>.

Mayor McClure was then given the floor. The Mayor explained that Monday, there was a hearing in Federal District Court regarding the lawsuit over the masking ordinance. The court denied the request to lift the ordinance. He also reported that Clay Goddard, Director of the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, Cora Scott, Public Information Officer for the City of Springfield and himself had recently presented at Missouri State University. He said they welcomed the students back. He asked the student leaders to help spread the masking message to students. The students are masked on campus, but there is great concern over their off-campus activities.

Rev. Roberts then introduced Clay Goddard to give a Health Department update. Clay reported that last week’s COVID-19 caseload was robust and dominated by the 18-24 age cohort. He had hoped for lower numbers, but then said this spike is not novel to Springfield. Clay said he is an optimistic person and that he hopes the COVID growth at MSU has peaked. He is also hoping there are no dramatic jumps in cases like after previous holiday weekends such as Memorial Day and July 4. He advised people that even if they are with family, please maintain physical distance, wash your hands, and wear a mask.

Cora Scott then discussed some of the new messaging her department is producing. She spoke of a video made by a brave Evangel student who shared her experience with COVID. (<https://vimeo.com/453353393/46b0fc3a40>). She then shared a video that is

geared toward children (<https://vimeo.com/454026581/6417cfc186>). Both videos would fit into a church service. She also said the Health Department had created a toolkit for businesses, but it could be adapted for churches as well. (health.Springfieldmo.gov/business).

Brian Fogle then introduced our guest speaker, Francine Pratt. Francine is the Executive Director of the Missouri College Access Network, and she is transitioning out of her lead role with Prosper Springfield.

Francine gave a brief history behind the Tough Talks project. A few years ago, she was a member of the Race and Faith Collaborative in Springfield that brought the faith community and the greater community into discussions regarding inclusiveness. This citywide movement ended when the grant funding went away. Missouri State University did pick up the discussions on campus, and those continue today. Last Fall, during the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce community visit to Lexington, Kentucky, she and others learned about their community's Courageous Conversations program. This brought all different groups together to make changes in their community. On the bus later that day, Francine, Cora, and others adapted the program for Springfield.

They were ready to launch in March, but were put on hold due to COVID gathering restrictions. They continued to postpone and have now decided to host these gatherings in late September or October via a virtual gathering and/or in person. To learn more about the program, please visit Francine's PowerPoint found here: https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/10h6vqn6_NMddNDTnpmRTICVUZW9Uj6iG Francine said that she would certainly update this group when the discussions begin and how members of the Faith Community can participate.

Have Faith Initiative Co-chair, Rev. Jenn Simmons, thanked Francine for her presentation. She then requested an update from Tom Ryan on the Food and Supply Drive Committee. Tom shared that the Stuff the Truck food drive has been postponed until next Spring. The reason being that the pantries are well stocked with food at this time, and they don't want to take away from the toy drives that will be held in the next few months.

Tom then shared some numbers relating to the feeding program for the homeless being sheltered in hotels.

August Served

315 Clients

29% of Housed Clients

315 3-day meal boxes

158-day meal bags

110 volunteer hours (planning, production, and delivery)

Clients Served in the Program

Older clients

Grandmothers taking care of grandkids

Disabled clients

Medical reasons – recovering from surgery, cancer, COPD, etc

Pregnant clients

Others – family started new job, The Kitchen (temporary housing), etc.

Rev. Simmons thanked Tom and his committee for their hard work, and then she invited Rev. Orrin Cummings, Messiah Lutheran Church, to close the meeting in prayer. We were adjourned.