

“Have Faith” Initiative”

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

Notes from 10/15/20 meeting (via Zoom)

Co-Chair Rev. Jenn Simmons opened the meeting by thankfully greeting the participants and expressing appreciation for the culture of compassion that has been created on our weekly calls. There were 32 participants on the Zoom call.

Rev. Simmons shared that our co-chair Bob Roberts is present on the call, but he is recovering from COVID-19. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers.

Marla Marantz, Faith Voices of the Ozarks, provided the opening prayer

Clay Goddard, Springfield Greene County Health Department, took the floor. Clay shared that he received a letter from the parents of a 13-year-old girl this morning. She had designed a t-Shirt and sent it to Clay; it said, “Together we stand (front) but 6 ft apart (back). She also sent Clay’s staff a \$40 gift card to Tropical Smoothie Café. This act of kindness warmed his heart and was what he needed.

Clay reported that things are improving. Greene County is no longer on the White House Task Force website as a “red” county. We have moved to “orange.” In the last 22 days, we have had a case drop of 22%. Sadly, that drop does not correspond with hospitalizations, which are a trailing indicator. Clay requested that we continue to pray for healthcare providers, as we have a record number of hospitalizations.

Clay highlighted some interesting research out of Australia. In a lower humidity environment, the disease is more transmittable. Those results are worrisome as the colder weather approaches, and we move inside to a closed-air environment. The holidays are ahead, and families will be coming together in closed environments. His department will be developing suggested guidelines for safe holiday gatherings.

Question: Clay, what are your thoughts on herd immunity? Clay explained that the medical community doesn’t know the long-lasting effects of COVID-19. He doesn’t believe herd immunity is the path forward. We need more time for a safe vaccine to be developed and more effective therapeutics. Our patience and faith are needed.

Question: Can you comment regarding what is happening in Europe, and if that is a precursor to what we might see here? We see spikes in the upper Midwest. The disease is wreaking havoc in the Dakotas and Wisconsin. We know what works -- it’s not glamorous, but it’s distance, time, face coverings, and staying home when you are sick.

Churches have been incredible for keeping their congregations safe. The most recent analysis indicated that 1.6% of cases came from the faith community (since September

25.) Household contact is still the most significant vulnerability. Next are Community events, backyard BBQs, work, and youth sports; after that, schools, universities, and childcare centers.

Question: Where is the best place for Missouri numbers? The state site was down, but is now fixed: <https://showmestrong.mo.gov/public-health-county/>.

As a sign of Clay's optimism, he has had a cot in his office since late February, thinking that he might need to spend the night in his office. He hasn't yet. He put the cot away today.

Greg Burris introduced our guest speakers: Dr. Gloria Galanes retired MSU Dean and Heather Hardinger Chair of the Mayor's Commission on Human Rights & Community Relations. They joined us to share the results and recommendations regarding the Community Inclusion Survey.

To review the presentation, please go to: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1LhXVJkN7hckQHwMR8kMGgB2qf6sapGPOaDPq1T9ZudY/edit?usp=sharing>

Our group will take some time to digest the survey results and invite them back to ask questions. Please note, the Mayor's Commission wants to be a clearinghouse for resources relating to inclusion.

Dr. Galanes concluded that the time to act is now, and that we can't keep doing yet another survey.

Greg then introduced Aaron Schekorra, with the Springfield-Greene County Health Department. Aaron said that they recently released Halloween guidelines. The Health Department is not encouraging traditional Halloween activities since they involve person-to-person contact and crowded events leading to disease spread. They are not canceling Halloween, just suggesting a way to celebrate safely. Events are do-able, but they need to be outside. For guidance, please visit: <https://health.springfieldmo.gov/5302/Halloween-Tips/holidaytips>

Aaron also asked churches and other groups to please contact him with questions regarding any upcoming events. They want to be a resource for this group.

Question: Where is the information regarding how and when to inform the Health Department of an exposure in a church? When someone tests positive, they will be connected to the Health Department. If you hear before they do, please contact the Health Department, and they can advise you on the next steps.

Question: Is the Health Department involved with contact tracing in the schools? Is there mandatory contact of those exposed in the schools? SPS is doing their own

contact tracing, but the Health Department trained them. If your child is in close contact with someone who tests positive, they should be quarantined.

You can reach Aaron Schekorra at aaron.schekorra@springfieldmo.gov or (417) 512-6011.

Deanna Carpenter, Interfaith Alliance of Southwest Missouri, closed in prayer.