

“Have Faith” Initiative”

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

Notes from 10/22/20 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 38 participants on the Zoom call. Greg welcomed all newcomers to the call.

Co-Chair Rev. Simmons welcomed everyone and then invited Barbara Block, Temple Israel, to open in a meditation. She shared a Jewish tradition, “we partner with God to bring about a better world.”

Rev. Roberts then took the floor and thanked everyone for their prayers as he and his wife, Bonnye, are recovering from COVID-19. He then introduced our speakers.

Greene County Commissioner Harold Bengsch explained that the County Commission is busy with CARES funding applications for small businesses. They approved 43 applications this morning that totaled \$380,000. This is money going back into the community. He recently called some of the funding recipients, and it was gratifying to hear how they are using the money and how appreciative they are.

Mayor McClure recognized that the Mayors of Nixa and Ozark issued executive orders for masking earlier this week. He said it took courage for them to do that, and they acted within their executive authority. He asked that we pray for them as they are most likely receiving a lot of negative feedback.

Clay Goddard, Director of the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, stated that there were currently 9131 cases on the dashboard, 83 will be added later this morning, 54 deaths in October, for a total of 130 deaths in our community so far. He reminded everyone that we saw a high case count two weeks ago, which leads to those hospitalized now. There are currently 181 in hospital, 30 in ICU, 72 of the 181 are Greene County residents. He asked the group to pray for health care providers as they are tired. The COVID units are full. He was excited to see Nixa and Ozark issue the executive orders, and he believes Bolivar will issue one soon. There are still hot spots in our region, and we are not living in a bubble. He is looking forward to coming before us and saying it’s over.

Question: If someone has symptoms but not sure, can they get tested? Someone who might not have good health insurance? Testing is available regardless of insurance. If you have a provider, start there; if not, call 874-1211. There will be another Statewide testing event, even if you have no insurance, and it is completely free on Oct 30-31. The MO National Guard will be at the Fairgrounds on the 30th from 9 am – 7 pm, on the 31st, until 4 pm. This testing is available for anyone who is a MO resident. Registration is

preferred; details are available here:

<https://dcpndo02redcap.azurewebsites.net/redcap/surveys/?s=XTLH7FCLD7>.

Question: What symptoms should people consider test worthy? Some folks seem to think they have a cold, but no one knows it, so they think they are ok. Symptoms include fever chills, cough, fever, shortness of breath, fatigue, weakness, headache, recent loss of taste or smell, nausea, among others. If there is any concern, call your provider and get tested. Rev. Roberts added you will know your body is not normal. His first test was negative, but the symptoms continued, and then his second test was positive. Rev. Roberts didn't know he was exposed until he received a call from the Health Department.

Question: What are the rules now for who should be contacted after a positive? Clay said a cumulative of 15 minutes within 6 ft distance will be contacted. They will ask who you came into contact within 48 hours before your symptoms started, which is your infectious period. You could be infectious for ten days.

Question: Is that different than the state's rules? The Springfield-Greene County rules are fairly universal.

All of the content we describe is shareable from the Health Department's website and Facebook: health.springfieldmo.gov

Cora Scott, Springfield's Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement, announced that they launched a memorial page for those who passed, and Lost and Found provided resources as well. If you wish to wear a ribbon in remembrance of someone lost to COVID, please wear blue/green. To learn more about the living memorial webpage, visit: <https://www.springfieldmo.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=7427>

Cora reminded everyone that there would be another Tough Talks session tonight, October 22, from 6 to 7:30 pm. They will focus on hearing the lived experiences in our community. To register for the next session on October 29, please call 417-888-2020 or email collaboratives@cpozarks.org.

City Council will begin listening sessions starting Monday night, October 26, at 6 pm on Race and Crime. You can watch online at Springfieldmo.gov. For more details on how to sign up to speak and/or submit written testimony, visit: <https://www.springfieldmo.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=7433>

Greg Burris spoke briefly about the recent survey results, in which several people requested an update from Springfield Public Schools. Greg introduced Stephen Hall, Chief Communications Officer for SPS, who also serves on the United Way's Board of Directors.

Stephen's presentation is available here:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1tlQP9rSrXBDzvz0Y9WKI8F1PSnmW4PxJRXS F2qEtJ0Q/edit?usp=sharing>

Question: How long is the average quarantine based on when testing, identifying of those with contact, and alerting by county? Clay Goddard responded the average quarantine is 14 days post-exposure.

Question: Do you have any comparison data on your case count vs. surrounding schools or same-sized districts? They don't have that specific data right now because different schools report data differently. To date, they have quarantined 1200 students and staff. Of note, other nearby districts are five days a week. They are in contact with other districts to share best practices.

Question: How are teachers doing? This sounds like it could overload them to be teaching in two modes. Teachers are very tired; this is taxing for them. They are trying to simplify the process - going back to 4 days a week, which will help the staff with lesson planning.

Question: Is there a central location where school supplies can be dropped off? Contact Lisa Sarles with the district, 523-0000, to find out what supplies are needed and where to drop them off.

Cora Scott indicated that The Health Department has a nice educational toolkit online for parents and students. <https://www.springfieldmo.gov/5296/Kids-and-COVID-19>

Question: What are the absentee times of students based on quarantine reasons? Is SPS keeping numbers on this? SPS is tracking, but since online learning is available, many students switch to that mode.

Question: Is it possible that grades 9-12 will go back to a 5-day class structure in January, like what's been communicated for K-8? And if so, will that be communicated prior to parents/students needing to make a decision for any changes for the 2nd semester? They are currently evaluating second-semester options, and parents will be asked to decide in November for adjustments for the second semester.

Question: How are school nurses fairing? Especially with the added rapid testing. Nurses are heroes. They lead contact tracing at their sites and work closely with SPS Health Services and the Health Department.

Question: How's the bus transportation system working through the pandemic? Bus drivers are doing well at safely transporting students. The students load back to front, have assigned seats. The SPS Transportation System has embraced the Health Department's protocols.

Rev. Simmons thanked the presenters and then requested any committee updates.

Tom Ryan, with the Food and Supply Drive Committee, said that Ozark Food Harvest is helping with the homeless food boxes. They may need volunteers to assemble the boxes, so stay tuned. There are currently 50 people served each visit. Of note, the partner agencies are prepping for the holidays, and they need volunteers. Please contact any of the following to volunteer: Crosslines, Victory Mission, Grand Oaks, Salvation Army.

Cora Scott said the Springfield Annual Holiday Tree lighting would be on November 21; if your church has bells, please consider ringing around 8 pm in a moment of unity.

Co-Chair, Rev. Bob Roberts reminded us that friends and prayers are valued during this time. He then closed in prayer.