

“Have Faith” Initiative”

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

Notes from 10/8/20 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 42 participants on the Zoom call. Greg welcomed all newcomers to the call.

Co-Chair Rev. Jenn Simmons opened the meeting good by thankfully greeting the participants and the culture of compassion that has been created on our weekly calls.

Rev Chris Miller, Trinity Presbyterian Church, opened in prayer.

Mayor McClure then took the floor. He stated that the City Council voted to extend the masking ordinance on Monday, October 5. He realized that many on this call provided positive input into that decision. He was pleased that the Healthcare and Education community were also represented the night of the vote. City Council was united in the decision to continue the ordinance. His office and City Council members continue to receive opposition and threats of picketing.

To view the testimony of the Have Faith Co-Leaders, here are the links:

Pastor Bob Roberts Video Testimony: <https://vimeo.com/463844364/e061497831>;

Pastor Jenn Simmons Video Testimony: <https://vimeo.com/465029978/f22c03d7aa>

Clay Goddard, Director of the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, then took the floor. He limited his comments since Jordan Coiner from his staff would be presenting later in the program.

October has been a rough month, with 35 deaths already. The deaths and hospitalizations are trailing indicators since those individuals most likely got infected in September. Clay is hoping the new testing protocols will catch up. His department is really emphasizing the Importance of prevention messages. We need to continue to be focused on prevention and not to let apathy take over.

Clay added that he doesn’t want us to wish 2020 gone. We need to live for today and be positive and supportive of one another. He expressed gratefulness to Mayor McClure for his leadership considering all the verbal opposition he receives.

Clay continued by stating that it is not all negative news. Springfield is down 24% on our rolling average. There are currently fewer cases. Additionally, positivity rates, an important measure, indicate we are 81st in MO. Bear in mind the positivity rate can be confusing. For it to be an accurate indicator, you must do enough testing in your

community. The positivity rate is a tile in a bigger mosaic, and we need to look at the whole picture.

Lastly, Clay offered a big thank you to Second Baptist and Rev. Roberts for hosting the National Guard testing last week. From that event, 36 tested positive at that event, and those individuals learned what to do next. That sort of testing is an excellent fit for a church.

Greene County Commissioner Harold Bengsch then spoke. He came off a 14-day quarantine on Wednesday, October 7. Greene County continues to work on the CARES funding allocations. There are 200 small business applications in the pipeline. The State has selected BKD to audit the State CARES funding.

Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement for the City of Springfield, thanked everyone for their support around the extended Masking Ordinance. The city received 82% support via its messaging portal and 75% support in phone messages.

Cora is continuing to work on a video that will celebrate what faith-based groups have done to support what the city is doing during the COVID-19 crisis.

Cora shared some good news. The city has developed a different way to do the traditional Tree Lighting Ceremony, which is always the Saturday before Thanksgiving. This year they will show the tree lighting live from Vantage Rooftop. KY3 will air a one-hour special that will include the lighting. Cora requested that if your church has bells, please considering ringing them at 7:45 pm on November 21 as a sign of unity.

Greg Burris then announced the United Way's Give Five Volunteer Engagement program for those 60 years old or better will resume. If you or you know anyone who is age 60+ and lives in Greene County who might be interested in learning about our community and various volunteer opportunities. In that case, we will be hosting our inaugural Give 5: Virtual Edition class starting October 20. Please direct people to www.sgfGive5.org to apply!

Greg then introduced Jordan Coiner with the Springfield Greene County Health Department to walk through the new COVID-19 dashboard found at <https://www.springfieldmo.gov/5068/Coronavirus>. A video is also available on that site that explains the new dashboard.

Question: I noticed it does not show the mortality rate anywhere. Would this be helpful for people to potentially take COVID more seriously? If I take the completed cases compared to deaths, we are almost at a 2.4% mortality rate locally. In the beginning, this rate was much higher. Then with social distancing and masking, it dropped significantly. Now it is slowly rising again.

Jordan appreciated that feedback, and they will revisit that idea in the future.

Question: How often is the dashboard refreshed? Jordan said during the workweek, every day. They stopped updating it on the weekends, and that is so noted on the site.

Amanda Stadler, with CPO and the Ozarks Alliance to End Homeless, then took the floor to announce a critical need for volunteers to staff emergency cold weather shelters this winter. These shelters will be open from November through March when overnight shelters drop below 32 degrees. Each night two shelters are open, and four volunteers are needed. They would like churches and faith organizations to adopt one week and staff the shelters as needed. The volunteers must be 18 years or older and pass a background check. The volunteers staff the shelters from 8 pm to 8 am and take turns sleeping. Amanda said that training is being developed.

For more information on volunteering: visit <http://www.cpozarks.org/coldweather/> and for more information- astadler@cpozarks.org or 417-888-2020.

Rev. Roberts thanked Amanda and Jordan for their presentations. And then he asked if there were any committee reports.

Deanna Carpenter, the new chair of the Coming together in Faith Committee, said that she is looking for committee members; please contact her if you are interested kdcarpenter@sbcglobal.net. She also announced that South Street Christian Church will host a prayer service on election night. This will be an interfaith opportunity, and she will share more details in the weeks to come.

Rev. Roberts welcomed Lee Huddleston, former pastor at Seacoast Church in Redondo Beach, CA, who recently moved here. Before closing in prayer, Lee commented on how great to see the community come together for these meetings.