

“Have Faith” Initiative

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

Notes from 11/19/20 meeting (via Zoom)

Greg Burris opened the meeting and thanked all for participating on behalf of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Community Partnership of the Ozarks, United Way of the Ozarks, the City of Springfield, and Greene County. There were 40 participants on the Zoom call.

Have Faith Initiative Co-Chair Rev. Bob Roberts reminded everyone that we now have our meetings every two weeks, so our next meeting will be on December 3. He then introduced Rev. Ken Chumbley, Christ Episcopal Church, who opened the meeting in prayer.

Greene County Commissioner, Harold Bengsch, complimented the City and Health Department’s Press Conference on Wednesday. Commissioner Bengsch gave an update on the distribution of the \$34.4M in CARES money. The county has a 30-member team that reviews applications and makes recommendations to the County Commission. Today, 43 new applications were awarded a total of \$264,000. All the funding has been distributed except in the Small Business category; today, \$3.4M of that fund has been awarded, which is only 50% of the funding available for small businesses.

Springfield Mayor Ken McClure then spoke about the press briefing on Wednesday. He said his three talking points were: 1) We have so much to be thankful for, 2) He and others are strongly urging for a statewide masking ordinance. (Rumors are out that we are shutting down again, but that is a rumor). The Mayor said the last thing we want to do is step back to a shut-down. Statewide masking is more practical since there is currently no safety net for small businesses. We need to stay open. 3) Enjoy Thanksgiving but be careful. Stay safe. One meal is not worth a life.

The Mayor said he was looking forward to celebrating the Annual Tree Lighting on Saturday, November 21. Instead of an in-person event, this year, the whole celebration will be on KY3. He asked participants that if their organization had bells/chimes to please ring them at 7:55 on Saturday evening as a sign of unity.

Our featured Speaker, Francine Pratt, had limited time, so we moved to her presentation next. Francine Pratt and Lyle Foster recently oversaw the most recent Tough Talk discussions. Francine said these talks are intended to bring the community together to talk about difficult issues. Those talks centered around the following topics:

- 1) Racism
- 2) Lived experience in our community
- 3) Business and student experiences

All talks were facilitated by professionals. These first-round discussions were funded by Community Partnership of the Ozarks and the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce.

More conversations will be coming. In the meantime, Francine encouraged organizations to consider hosting the same conversations with their members. If, through those discussions, you have action items to suggest, please send those to Francine at fpratt@cpozarks.org. They are especially interested in ideas that can generate measurable outcomes.

Lyle Foster was introduced as the co-facilitator for the talks, and his comments mirrored what Francine shared.

Francine then asked if leaders knew of someone who should participate in future Tough Talk discussions. She asked that you contact Francine for more details, fpratt@cpozarks.org.

Jon Mooney, Assistant Director of the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, was then invited to share comments. He stated that the Governor's message on Thursday morning was disappointing for those seeking a statewide masking mandate.

He then asked participants to be okay with how Thanksgiving looks this year. It will be different. We need to keep those we love safe. He commented that his son would be learning how to make a pecan pie by his Grandmother on Zoom.

Jon indicated that disease rates are at an all-time high. The seven-day rolling average is over 190 cases per day, which far exceeds the Health Department's capacity to do contact tracing. Hospitalizations continue to rise and are at an all-time high. He said that they don't see respite looking ahead. They are setting up systems to keep up with volume, but the tracing will not be the same quality as before. To reach someone diagnosed with COVID-19, they first try phone calls, then send texts, all in an effort to instruct them on quarantine. He asked that if you know you have been exposed, please be proactive and isolate even if his department hasn't contacted you.

We all need to limit our exposure and risk. Please look at your environment. Reassess your current activities. His department now has all meetings via Zoom, even if they are next door to his office. Ask yourself, what are common sense things we can do to reduce exposure. His department will be producing additional workplace guidance in light of the challenging winter months ahead.

He then spoke about the possible vaccines. There are currently two promising vaccines. Pfizer and Moderna are claiming their vaccines are 94% effective. At 94%, that could turn the tide of this disease. The Health Department is hopeful of getting the vaccine in significant quantities in March. Of course, there are a lot of factors at play that could change the delivery timeline.

Jon then answered the following questions:

Q: How many cities have masking ordinances? In our region: Branson, Forsyth, Springfield, Nixa, and Ozark.

Q: Is there any new guidance for places of worship? Not at this time.

Q: How can we make sure our essential workers don't face risks from those who don't wear masks, even those who have exceptions, but may be contagious. I know families are the big spread, but many workers spend their shifts in fear.

Jon responded that if everyone wears a mask, that is the most effective. There is currently a lot of spread in households, even when family members isolate at home. Do not overly rely on the mask; we need to distance as well.

Q: What is Cox and Mercy's capacity for new patients, COVID, and non-COVID? At this time, he cannot answer that. It is up to the hospital, and it's a complicated answer because it's not just beds; it's staff and supplies as well. CoxHealth and Mercy have been very upfront with the community.

CoxHealth held a Facebook live on Wednesday, November 18, and it's available here: <https://fb.watch/1SrKhMegOt/>

Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement for the City of Springfield, started by announcing the public engagement opportunity on the Grant Ave Parkway; the city is excited about the revitalization of the neighborhoods along that corridor.

As a reminder, the Mayor's Tree Lighting Celebration will be Saturday night, November 21, from 7-8 pm on KY3. It will include performances by local artists, possibly live at the end to turn on lights. She is hoping to hear some church bells. There will be a drive-thru visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus, who will be behind plexiglass.

City Council will hold another public listening session on Monday, November 23 on race relations in the community. You can view that session on Cityview.springfieldmo.gov/livestream

Co-Chair Rev Jenn Simmons asked for committee updates.

Tom Ryan, chair of the Supply/Food Drive Committee, said the CARES Act funding for the food supplies has been spent. They currently have approximately 4000 3-day food boxes to provide to the sheltered homeless this winter and into spring.

Deanna Carpenter, chair of the Coming Together in Faith Committee, then announced a lofty goal of 20,000 Healthcare Hero note cards to be collected in December. These would go to employees at Cox and Mercy. This includes not just doctors and nurses, but all staff, including the cleaning crew and food service workers.

The note cards can be handwritten cards or even children's drawings. To learn more or to sign up your organization to prepare cards, please visit <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409054ea8aa2ba6f49-cards>

If you have a group working on them, please take pictures and email those to Deanna at kdcarpenter@sbcglobal.net

Cora also included the following in the chat:

From Mercy, continue to hold our caregivers and teams in prayer. We have been asked by community members how they can pray for our teams, and we have developed a site called "Prayers for Mercy." Leaders share community prayers at our team huddles and meetings. We would value your prayers at <https://prayersformercy.com>, if you want to send a prayer online asap.

Reminder, no meeting on Thanksgiving; we will meet again on December 3.

Barby Pohl, The Venues, closed in prayer.