

Pima County Faith-based Task Force

Notes

TEAMS meeting /Chair Linda Leatherman

May 6, 1:00 p.m.

Attendees:

Chuck Huckelberry, County Administrator

Jan Leshar, Deputy County Administrator

Arnold Palacios, Director, Community Services, Employment and Training

Marguerite "Peg" Harmon, MS, CEO Catholic Community Services

Damon Holt, Pastor, PhD. Trauma Trainer & Counselor, President of Interdenominational Ministers Alliance (IMA), Pilgrims' Rest Missionary Baptist Church

Randy Reynolds, Pastor, Counselor, Founder & CEO of Community Renewal, Inc.

Dr. Andrew G. Ross, Senior Pastor, Northminister Presbyterian Church

Reverend D. Grady Scott, Senior Pastor, Secretary & Community Liaison for Interdenominational Ministers Alliance (IMA)

Daniel Summers, Tucson Region Leader, Soka Gakkai International-USA, Tucson Buddhist Center

Dr. Jim Toole, Pastor /head of Staff, St Andrews Presbyterian Church

Linda Leatherman, Pima County Faith-based & Community Initiatives Coordinator

WELCOME, Purpose, Sharing of Resources

The meeting came to order at 1:05 pm with the Welcome from Chuck Huckelberry. He expressed gratitude for the attendees participation and outlined briefly the County's role during the COVID-19 crisis. The County has a huge responsibility for public health and consequently works diligently to follow the Executive Orders of both Arizona Governor and the President as outlined by the CDC. He outlined the CDC Phases that are currently guiding activities:

Phase 1: 10 people or fewer with 6' social distancing between (we are at the beginning of Phase 1)

Phase 2: 50 people or fewer with 6' social distancing (will move into Phase 2 after some level of recovery—date unspecified)

CDC has lots of other guidance like using masks, wellness checks, staying at home, etc

Mr. Huckelberry specifically asked the group to give input and submit thoughts about how to minimize the spread of Covid-19, the ultimate goal of working together. He asked several questions for the group to consider: 1) How can the County help the faith community? Do you want information about the

physical impact of the disease? Are you interested in meeting with the physicians? What would you like the County to do for your group or for the faith community in general? How can you contribute? What materials do you need for your members to increase their sense of safety? He volunteered County resources for posters, education materials and the large County parking lots for Saturday & Sunday services. He encouraged other “thinking out of the box” to find ways for County and Faith Community to collaborate.

Jan Leshar expanded on his offers of resources and asked for suggestions on how to help members feel safe enough to come back. How do we convey that? Again, Jan asked the group to share what they felt was needed from the County and thanked them for participating in the Faith Leader meeting.

Arnold Palacios shared some of the resources available to the faith community through Community Services Employment & Training.:

- Access to unemployment benefits
- PIMA WORKS.com website
- HOTLINE number (520-724-5735 staffed by real people)for job information, training, career counseling, CAA assistance with rent and utilities if caller impacted by COVID -19 shutdowns

Arnold also expressed gratitude for the collaboration of the faith community with the Community Services Department and complemented the group on the collaboration and community support the faith groups have provided over many years to Community Services.

PARTICIPANT Introductions:

Each of the members introduced themselves and their faith group. Each also shared some of the activities their group is doing to help during this pandemic. Several are directly assisting the Pima County Emergency Management Center with programs for food, shopping, and other needs for those who are vulnerable and unable to leave their homes. Community Renewal is helping the extreme poor to access their stimulus checks from IRS. Catholic Community Services is continuing its program Save Our Home. Some participants are actively partnering with other churches in the HELPING OUR City project which includes assisting elders and hospitals with resources. All continue to meet the spiritual needs of their members and to provide resources as needed by their members.

Several items about health care were mentioned. The health care needs of minority groups have been starkly highlighted by the pandemic: there needs to be more clarity around next steps to remedy some of these inequities, which are causing greater physical impact and death by the pandemic in the minority communities. It was urged that the work be “solution driven,” focused on solutions to the problems exposed by the pandemic so that minority communities are more resistant to pandemic impact in the future. It was also stated that this meeting was an important opportunity for education for participants. Pastor Holt expressed concern for the traumatic impact the pandemic is creating for teachers and for children, especially for those children who come to school for safety, acceptance, and interaction with a caring adult. Some state agencies are finding that child abuse is increasing under the Stay at Home mandate.

DISCUSSION, Concerns, Questions:

The discussion was encouraged by asking the Faith Leaders their primary concerns. An immediate response was, "To stay healthy" for self and for everyone else. There was a general agreement to that.

Dan Summers said his group was NOT driven to open by the May 16 date. His group is more concerned about his members being safe when they come back. He expressed concern about another spike in the pandemic. Jan explained that the County is also concerned about the safety of the environment for returning members and that a second spike in the pandemic is possible. She explained the County's Chart (Attached)

CHART: **9 Element Chart** with red, yellow and green graphs indicating the progressive safety of the environment.

When all the elements are green, the environment is totally safe to open without fear of contagion. Jan said that involves 14 days of a continuing downward trend and with 2500 to 5000 tests being administered daily. Currently, the County has access to about 1000 tests per week. Money is available to purchase all the tests needed but there is no place to buy that number of tests. Availability of purchasable tests and supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) continues to be limited. Hospitals are looking for volunteers to make gowns.

Jan again stated that the County is willing to supply anything the faith groups need to get information out to your group or to the community. TV, Radio, other messages that are reassuring to the public can be crafted by the faith groups for the individual faith groups or for general distribution. The County can help polish and/or distribute them.

Andy Ross stated that his most pressing need is CLEAR and CONSISTENT guidelines from the County and from the Governor on what is to be done. Faith groups receive too many messages and many are inconsistent. Pastor Andy requested an AIMING REPORT: what date are we aiming for at the County? May 31, Pentecost for Christian Churches? July? Jan said she would take that suggestion to the Medical Team but it is hard to do predictions.

Pastor Jim asked to have clarification of Phase 1, Phase 2, Phase 3. What are their markers? How many people can gather in each? Will social spacing always be 6 feet? He is especially concerned because St Andrews hosts multiple addiction groups with many having more than 50 people. Do they have to wait until Phase 3? Many in the groups are asking to come back because they are in need of the support provided by the group interaction to maintain their sobriety.

Pastor Andy would like to have something that relates to the size of the sanctuary. Maybe larger groups could be accommodated in phase 1 or 2 for the groups with larger sanctuaries. A ratio of sq ft to people could be worked out. Jan said that a similar dynamic is being set up to accommodate businesses so she

would take that back for consideration. The County is modifying codes at Developmental Services to meet these new situations necessitated by the pandemic.

Randy Reynolds of Community Renewal said the SOBER PROJECT has sobriety groups of 700 attendees that are managing to continue with ZOOM and several small venues but being able to congregate in a larger space would be very stabilizing.

Peg Harmon added that not all groups need the same things even within the faith membership. She said the protective action that CCS takes depends on the guidelines of the individual's personal characteristics. They have modified the interaction with the older or health challenged individuals. The focus is on the recipient's need so they set different standards for each so that they do what is necessary to have a healthy community.

Pastor Holt asked that the financial health of faith groups be considered. If some of the smaller groups are left too long without being able to bring back members, they may never re-open. There will be an on-going loss of spiritual guidance in the community. Many of the churches in Pima County have 100 or fewer members and being closed limits income from members. Additionally, many members of these smaller churches are impacted because their membership is comprised of minority groups hard hit by the pandemic in 3 ways 1) They have lost their jobs because they are the service workers 2) As service workers they have been deemed essential so they are in most vulnerable position for contracting COVID-19. 3) They have poorer health facilities and diets so many are physically impacted, have lost wage-earning family members, or have died.

Pastor Andy reiterated his interests by commenting in 2 areas:

- 1) Pima County is an anchor point for the faith-based community. Therefore, he asks that Pima County provide clear guidance on numbers of people allowed to gather in each phase, alternate seating spaces allowed per sanctuary sq ft, how to practice safe hygiene.
- 2) Other ways that the faith communities can cooperate with the County? Outreach, community care, community Support

Addendum: Pastor Scott asked that hand sanitizer and masks be made available for the staff of the faith-groups collaborating with the County during the initially phases of opening the houses of worship.

Linda Leatherman, Chair, before adjourning, asked the attendees if they wanted to continue to participate in the Faith-based Task Force and to have their names listed on the Faith-based Task force list. All agreed. Linda reminded them that the meeting had been recorded and its video and the presentation documents used during the meeting would be sent to each participant. Notes on the meeting would also be sent.

Meeting Adjourned.

Respectfully submitted with Special Thanks to Dalila Perez for her TEAMS support,

Linda Leatherman, Chair