HOLY WEEKEND TALKING POINTS FOR CHURCH LEADERS

BACKGROUND

• On Monday, April 6, the Louisiana Department of Health reported that 70 percent of deaths from COVID-19 were black.

• We know from data released in other cities around the country that blacks are being disproportionately affected by positive cases of COVID-19.

• The Department of Health is also reporting that underlying conditions – especially hypertension and diabetes – is a significant factor in COVID-19 deaths.

What can be done?

• We can have faith in God that we will get through this together. We can have hope that there are brighter days ahead.

• In addition to having faith, we must display wisdom.

• It is wise to listen to the governor and our public health professionals’ advice.

• Those professionals tell us:

  • It is wise to wash your hands frequently.

  • It is wise to stay home and practice social distancing.

Consider our front-line workers.

• We should remember that working from home during this challenging time is really considered a luxury.
• Many in our community do not have the luxury of staying home.
• These workers help keep the supply lines running driving trucks and making deliveries.
• These workers keep our grocery stores and our gas stations open.
• These workers tend to our elderly and infirm and our sick.
• These workers often take great personal risk.
Consider what these workers are exposed to.

- Consider a man or woman working on the front lines who can’t afford a vehicle.
- This worker, if they take public transportation, are exposed to more risk on our buses.
- This worker is exposed to other people they work with who may be sick.
- These workers may come home to a house where it’s difficult to practice social distancing.
- Let us reach out to these people in our community: Do they have what they need?
- Do they have face masks they can wear to work?
- Do they have rubber gloves they can wear when they ride the bus?
- Do they have enough disinfectant spray to wipe down frequently touched surfaces?
- Do they have sanitizer to carry with them when soap and water isn’t readily available?
- Let’s make sure we are asking this of our front-line workers and finding ways to help provide it.

We acknowledge that this is a dark time for our communities, but there are also bright lights.

- Public health crises tend to shine a bright light on the weaknesses in the society, the gaps in services, the need for compassion, the vulnerabilities.
- We know that underlying conditions like hypertension and diabetes affect vulnerable communities more because of lack of opportunity, because of roadblocks that need to be removed.
- We know these vulnerabilities are created by what we call social determinants of health.

Social determinants of health are not new, but awareness of their importance is.

- COVID-19 can help us demonstrate the importance of our health leaders focusing more on social determinants of health.
- These underlying conditions may be a major weakness during this pandemic, but it doesn’t need to be in the future.
- Our health leaders have committed to doing more to address social determinants of health through community health workers, expanding Medicaid and making our health care system work for everyone.
- But there is more work to be done.

We have the research. Now it is time for our health leaders, our political leaders and our communities to band together and act.