

## **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.**