



Faith Connections

United in Faith Helping
People In Need

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Our Mission: Serve this community † Revitalize the Church † Celebrate Christian Unity

Speaking Through Sickness (Acts 9:1-19)

We never enjoy illness or afflictions, such as we are experiencing. After all, what good could possibly result from our ailments? God would never allow us to get sick for any reason – would He?

The answer, surprisingly, is yes. Suffering is one of the consequences of living in a fallen world, so we should not be surprised when it comes our way. However, God can use it to get our attention. If illness is what it takes for us to refocus on Him, that's exactly what He will allow to happen.

Think about the apostle Paul. When we hear his name, we recall the missionary who spread the gospel during the first century but this was not always the case. When we are first introduced to him, he is known as Saul, Christians' enemy (Acts 9:1-2). So how did God get Saul's attention?

The Acts account explains that the Lord appeared in a brilliant flash of light that only Saul could see. After revealing Himself, Jesus left Saul completely blind. This enemy of the church was now brought low, having to be led into town by hand and completely at the mercy of others.

What went through Saul's mind during these three days of blindness? No doubt he was focused on one thing -- Christ. By removing his sight, God took away all distractions during this vital time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caught our attention. Our world...our country...our community is in the midst of troubling times. COVID-19 has plunged our country and community into chaos. The COVID-19 virus is:

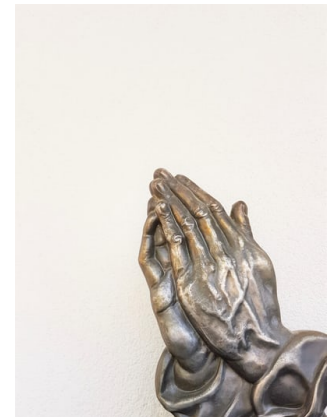
- Political
- Economical and Financial
- Governmental
- Athletic
- Sociological
- Medical

God's primary goal is our ultimate good, not our comfort or short-term happiness – He wants what is best for us in light of eternity. At times, this means He will lay us flat on our backs for a season. As we journey through this season of the COVID-19 pandemic, let us pray for healing as well as the ability to discern His message to us.

Blessings,
Mel

Inside this issue:

<i>Appeal Letter</i>	2
<i>COVID-19 Update</i>	3
<i>Thank You</i>	3
<i>Bettendorf Ecumenical Food Pantry</i>	4



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We've been working in collaboration with groups throughout the community in responding to the needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic. We recently interviewed the Salvation Army's Quad Cities Coordinator, Major Scott Shelbourn.

How has your role in the community changed in response to COVID-19?

“Our roles hasn’t really changed; it’s been amplified. The Salvation Army already has emergency disaster services in place and so we just kick all of those services into gear when something like this happens. And then on top of that because of the way the pandemic has affected the greater community about the need for housing and shelter services and also extensive food distribution, just as donations for those specific services have come in from the greater community and also the government funds that we administer to help people out in those situations, those have all increased a little bit which has enabled us to increase our services a little bit to help those in need.”

What groups have been hit the hardest by the pandemic?

“I would say there’s multiple groups that have been hit hard by the pandemic. Anybody that’s in a service industry that’s had to shut down because of social distancing restrictions and such, those folks whether they’re the small business owner or the people who work for them have been hit very drastically by this pandemic. So you have a lot of people that are kind of the lower middle class folks, a lot of folks who have been traditional donors to the Salvation Army are actually coming to us for assistance now because they’ve lost their job or been laid off over the past few weeks. Even though there’s a moratorium on evictions and rent and mortgage payments, we know those are all going to come due at some point. So a lot of those folks are coming to us requesting help at this time. There’s been this kind of lower middle class...the working poor that have been hit hardest by this but then also, those in the upper middle class that are property owners and maybe, rent some of these houses. The landlords and the management companies have also been affected by this because obviously they don’t have funds coming in from the renters and the city still wants their property taxes paid and things like that. That’s been a big dynamic so if you are in a service industry any how...any such service industry...from a store to a small business you’ve been affected. If you own the store or you’re an employee there or if you’re in the greater economic structure as companies have laid off portions of their workforce and stuff and those people have been affected. So this is really when you look at the overarching effects of the pandemic, it’s really hit people throughout the economic strata and social strata of our community.”

What are the greatest needs in the community?

The greatest need coming up is going to be housing because if somebody was just barely making it let’s say in February and March, and then sometime in March they got laid off. They weren’t able to make their April payment and there’s the chance of them going back to work in April is slim so they’re going to miss their May rent or mortgage payment and then if they are able to go back to work in May, they’re not going to get enough hours in to make their June payment on their mortgage or their rent payment. So you can see the effects of this cascading well into the summer months where people are gonna be by the time they get back to their normal work schedules that they’re going to be two or three months behind on their rent as all of these restrictions on evictions and moratoriums on rent and mortgage payments happen. And so you can easily see this summer, people are going to be affected drastically in the housing area because they might not be able to make up all these rent payments or mortgage payments and be evicted from their current dwelling or they might have to do other financial means to maintain their housing.”

Describe the working relationship between the Salvation Army and Churches United.

“It’s a great working relationship. Our building that we recently remodeled on Kirkwood was designed just for this situation and actually the design is working out just the way we planned. The plan always was that we’d make a kitchen here that we’d serve the community as we need throughout the year but then in a disaster situation, that kitchen would be able to crank out a lot of meals and we would be able to back vehicles up to the kitchen. We have a ramp back out there to get the meals out to vehicles and get the meals out to the community. So this working relationship with Churches United and SmokinPyro, they’re coming in almost daily and cooking meals in our kitchen. We’re running out to area vendors to buy food for them to cook and supplying a lot of the food service things, like the clam shells and silver wear and such, along with other donations that are coming in through Churches United. It’s all coalescing with them cooking the meals, getting them right out of our back door into vehicles and getting them out to places where they’re feeding. It’s a great working partnership. We’re able to use donations that are directly for food to buy food to help make sure that all of this happens. We’ve got great volunteers through SmokinPyro and Churches United to get it all done and get it out to the people. It’s a wonderful collaboration.”

Page 2 Interview Continued...

Anything else?

“First off, I want to say the community collaborations to make sure that peoples’ needs are being met...it’s just phenomenal. I appreciate Churches United, Smokin Pyro and our relationship we’ve developed here to make sure people are being fed and the way we are doing it. We look forward to working with everybody as we continue to battle the affects of this pandemic in our community.”





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