****

Social Justice Ministry Newsletter

February 2021

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."*Luke 4:18, NLT

The 5th Annual Financial Empowerment Workshop is quickly approaching. To register, please go to:

http://2021FinancialPower.evenbrite.com



**Missouri’s COVID Response**

**WHAT IS COVID-19?** COVID-19 disease is caused by a coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. This type of coronavirus has not been seen before. You can get COVID-19 through contact with another person who has the virus. It is predominantly a respiratory illness that can affect other organs. People with COVID-19 have had a wide range of symptoms reported, ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2 to 14 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms may include fever or chills; cough; shortness of breath; fatigue; muscle or body aches; headache; new loss of taste or smell; sore throat; congestion or runny nose; nausea or vomiting; diarrhea. (Manufactured by Pfizer Inc., New York, NY 10017, revised January 2021)

**How do vaccines work?**

Vaccines stimulate the human body’s own protective immune responses so that, if a person is infected with a virus or bacteria, the immune system can quickly prevent the infection from spreading disease. In this way, vaccines mimic natural infection but without causing the person to become sick. For SARS-CoV-2, antibodies bind to and block the protein on the virus’s surface, preventing the virus from entering our cells and initiating COVID-19, the disease caused by SARS CoV-2. **(****COVID-19 Vaccine Information (stlouis-mo.gov)****)**

**December 11, 2020** - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an Emergency Use Authorization for use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in people aged 16 years and older for the prevention of COVID-19.

**December 18, 2020** - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an emergency use authorization (EUA) for the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine, allowing it to be distributed in the U.S. for use in individuals 18 years of age and older.

**By January 2021**, Missouri ranked Dead last in COVID-19 vaccination rollout. That's the ranking Missouri's been given when it comes to vaccine rollout compared to other states. Illinois isn't far behind, ranking 44th according to CDC data compiled by the New York Times.

In response a spokeswoman for the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services released a statement in response to the state's ranking: (in part), The limited allotments that our state receives continues to limit the rate at which people are vaccinated, but we have also become aware that some of Missouri’s vaccinators have not been administering vaccinations as efficiently as we have been asking, but we are working with these providers to increase the speed at which they get vaccines into arms. With that said, state-enrolled vaccinators in Missouri have administered over 60% of the doses shipped into the state for their use. The State of Missouri interagency vaccination planning team is responsible for determining where vaccines go throughout the state based on the limited amount of vaccine allotted each week to Missouri.

**WHAT ABOUT US?E**

While Black Americans make up just 13 percent of the U.S. population, theyaccount for more than 50 percent of COVID-19 related deaths. Black workers are more likely to have lost their jobs due to COVID-19, and the Black unemployment rate has doubled to over 16 percent according to the most recent data. (https://www.childrensdefense.org/blog/the-two-deadly-diseases-plaguing-our-nation-and-our-children/)

Black, Hispanic and Native Americans are dying from COVID at nearly three times the rate of white Americans, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analysis. And non-Hispanic Black and Asian health care workers are more likely to contract COVID-19 and to die from it than white workers. (Hispanics can represent any race or combination of races.) “If we don’t vaccinate the population that’s highest-risk, we’re going to see even more disproportional deaths in Black and brown communities,” said Dr. Fola May, a UCLA physician and health equity researcher.

Yet, Black Americans are receiving COVID vaccinations at **dramatically lower rates** than white Americans in the first weeks of the chaotic rollout, according to a new KHN analysis.**t** About 3% of Americans have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine so far. But in 16 states that have released data by race, white residents are being vaccinated at significantly higher rates than Black residents, according to the analysis — in many cases two to three times higher. (Black Americans Are Getting Vaccinated at Lower Rates Than White Americans | Kaiser Health News (khn.org))

If the rollout were reaching people of all races equally, the shares of people vaccinated whose race is known should loosely align with the demographics of health care workers. **But in every state**, **Black Americans** were significantly underrepresented among people vaccinated. (Black Americans Are Getting Vaccinated at Lower Rates Than White Americans | Kaiser Health News (khn.org))

Access issues and mistrust rooted in structural racism appear to be the major factors leaving Black behind in the quest to vaccinate.

Concerns over the vaccine have left some Black people entirely unwilling to take a vaccine, while others have said that they want to wait and see how the first wave of vaccine distribution is handled. (https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/experts-warn-low-covid-vaccine-trust-among-black-americans-n125)

 **WE CAN’T ALLOW OURSELVES OR OTHERS TO BECOME NUMB TO INJUSTICES**

SPEAK UP

In keeping with the service from Sunday, Jan 10th, I’d like to reiterate the subject “Speak Up”. We, as believers of God have to go the extra mile to make our voices heard. Our beliefs as Christians are the very foundation that the United States of America are said to be built on. That being said, we have an obligation to speak up concerning politics and the way we are represented or the lack of thereof, as is the case more often than not.

Those who hold political offices or leadership positions are called to “oversee” what is right and just for all people, not just a certain class or race of people, but **ALL** people. We know from Biblical teaching that some of the qualifications an overseer should have, but are not limited to, are: to be above reproach, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, not violent and have a good reputation (1 Timothy 3). Our leaders should live with wisdom and righteousness. This is not what we witnessed in Senator Josh Hawley’s actions on January 6th, 2021 which were instrumental in the insurrection that took place.

Leaders don’t just rely on themselves. They are faithful and they realize the power of a higher being that keeps their feet grounded **“If any of you lack wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”** **James 1:5**.

People who live with integrity are faultless. Leaders who lead with integrity act based on what they know is right. And because they do, they are respected and incorruptible. **In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.”** **Titus 2:7-8 –**

On the next page you will find an open letter to Senator Josh Hawley that addresses the appalling behavior he displayed on January 6, 2021. Please take a moment to read the letter and contact Senator Hawley’s office and make your voices heard. In addition, we will be sending the following letter to Senator’s Hawley’s office upon leadership approval. Thanking you in advance. You can find Senator Hawley’s information at:

https://contactsenators.com/missouri/josh-hawleyor send your own letter to:

*212 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510*

 **SENATE BILLS (SB)**

**CURRENT BILL SUMMARY**

**SB 17** - Under current law, a person may vote absentee for candidates and ballot issues in any election in which he or she is eligible to vote if such voter expects to be prevented from going to the polls for specified reasons. This act permits a person to vote absentee for any reason or no reason at all.

This act is identical to SB 69 (2021) and SB 113 (2021) and substantially similar to HB 412 (2021), SB 657 (2020), a provision in SB 681 (2020), HB 1393 (2020), HB 1530 (2020), HB 1665 (2020), SB 59 (2019), SB 171 (2019), HB 209 (2019), HB 527 (2019), HB 992 (2019), HB 1283 (2018), a provision in HB 1550 (2018), HB 1814 (2018), HB 173 (2017), a provision in HB 501 (2017), and HB 644 (2017).

SCOTT SVAGERA

https://www.senate.mo.gov/21info/BTS\_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=54105451

**SB 14** - Under current law, any person seeking to vote in a public election must provide a certain form of identification, provided that any person lacking such identification can vote without such a form of identification through the execution of a statement under the penalty of perjury averring, among other things, that the person is who they say they are. This act repeals the provision allowing persons to vote through execution of the statement under penalty of perjury. The act additionally creates new provisions governing the use of provisional ballots in the case of persons who do not possess the proper form of identification in order to vote.

The act repeals a provision requiring the Secretary of State to provide advance notice of the identification requirements for voting in elections as well as a provision requiring all costs associated with the implementation of the voter identification law to be reimbursed from the general revenue by an appropriation for that purpose.

This act is identical to provisions in SB 282 (2021) and SB 818 (2020) and substantially similar to provisions in HB 334 (2021) and HB 1600 (2020).

SCOTT SVAGERA

https://www.senate.mo.gov/21info/BTS\_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=54240365

SCS/SB 66 - This act modifies provisions relating to public safety.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT BUDGETS (Section 67.030)

Under current law, the governing body of each political subdivision may revise, alter, increase, or decrease items in a proposed budget. This act provides that the chief law enforcement officer of a political subdivision may initiate an action for injunctive relief, which the court shall grant, if the governing body of such political subdivision decreases the budget for its law enforcement agency by an amount exceeding more than 12% relative to the proposed budgets of other departments of the political subdivision over a five year aggregate amount.

For complete bill go to: https://www.senate.mo.gov/21info/BTS\_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=54250840