

July 6, 2020

A Message of Solidarity from Interfaith Wellness Ministry

Since its formation as a non-profit in 1997, Interfaith Wellness Ministry has been dedicated to helping Estill County become a healthier community. We work with our local food bank, the public school system, public housing, the health department and hospital, several local churches and many members of our community to help those in need. Without discriminating in any way, including race, we have provided a wide range of services including free:

- school supplies, dictionaries and reading materials,
- food for the hungry,
- blood pressure checks,
- personal health counseling,
- health talks and educational materials,
- diabetes management guidance,
- gardening and nutrition assistance, and
- guided exercise classes.

We are not affiliated with any particular religion. As our very name indicates, we work with and through all religions and faiths to promote wellness. We know that we serve our community best by combining words with actions.

Recent events have given us time for reflection. What can we learn here from what has been happening all across the nation? What does it mean to be non-discriminatory with regards to race while living and working in a community like Estill County, which is over 98% white?

It means we must work harder to be inclusive and welcoming to the 2% of our neighbors and fellow community members who are non-white. It means we must work harder to model anti-racist behaviors. It is not enough to be non-racist. We must encourage anti-racist discussions so that all of us, especially our young people, will be better equipped to be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

The problems highlighted today by the Black Lives Matter movement are not new to our society. What is new is the increased level of awareness that there are systemic injustices in the world. We are being given an opportunity to understand on a deeper level how we each play a role in perpetuating such a system, even by our silence while others suffer. “We would do well to remember that evil can *only* be substantially overcome by collective good. When one part is hurt, we all share in that pain, and if one part is liberated, we all share in the joy.” (Richard Rohr, OFM)

No one should say “All Lives Matter” without pushing for real changes that show “black lives matter” too. When a house is on fire, we don’t sit back telling ourselves that “All houses matter”. We call the Fire Department. Systemic injustice is like a house on fire in our community. We can’t ignore it any longer.

We condemn violence of every kind. We stand with the peaceful protestors working diligently for justice and equality for the black community. We call on all members of our community to work together so that our nation can be whole again in body, mind and spirit.

Donna M. Crow, Executive Director

Sr. Loretta Spotila, Founder/President

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Background:

Interfaith Wellness Ministry was founded in 1997 by Sister Loretta Spotila, RN, CSA to help the people of Estill County build a healthier community. Its mission is ***to assist local churches and the community to integrate faith and health by promoting wholeness in body, mind, and spirit.***

Interfaith Wellness Ministry does not discriminate with regards to race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identification, financial status, disability, age or even political affiliation. We welcome any discussion as to how we may serve our community better and more equitably.

Interfaith Wellness Ministry has long been supported and encouraged by the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine. We agree with their recent message that:

...We must work in solidarity to end the racism and violence that continues to devastate the health and well-being of too many individuals and communities.

...We will continue our pursuit of both unlearning and learning anew the complex systems within philanthropy that impede progress toward our vision of an equitable community. We will ask ourselves difficult questions and reckon with the truth.

...We must hold one another accountable to examine our policies and practices to determine who is excluded or disadvantaged, and we must make room for their influence, voice and power in redesigning the systems that result in a noticeable change within our community. This requires collaboration among new voices with different experiences that think, look and listen differently, and we must provide them equal platforms as we seek solutions together.