

The following is the text from an April 9 email from Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu to city officials and religious leaders.

Subject: City and Faith-Based Collaboration

Good Afternoon,

As our community prepares for Easter, Ramadan and Passover holidays, we are continuing to deal with the impact of Coronavirus. As the number of cases continue to climb, I wanted to take a moment to thank those of you who have stepped forward to help share information, provide social connections, support vulnerable populations, and help to mitigate the impact of the virus.

We are all under considerable pressure to navigate uncharted waters during the coronavirus pandemic. Faith-based communities can provide an important outlet to disseminate information, provide reassurance, serve vulnerable populations, and promote social cohesion during a time of considerable difficulty. It is important to keep clear lines of communication open to help ensure that we at City Hall and Bristol's faith leaders are working together to help slow the spread and keep our residents and members of our congregations safe during this time of increased uncertainty.

As Elected officials and faith-based clergy, I think it is very important that we offer words of encouragement to one another and strive to be models for our citizens, creating environments where Hope exists. We need to show love and compassion for one another. And, we should continue to look out for those who are the less fortunate or the least among us. At City Hall, we have created the All-Heart Hotline (860-584-6253). It is really important that we all work together to identify those Bristol residents who may have needs and may be afraid or too proud to ask for help. Our city has a large number of older citizens still living independently, and often times alone. Some are fortunate to have friends, neighbors and others who look out for them. But unfortunately, some are without those supports. I would like to ask that the various churches think about how they can reach out to their older members and ensure that they are ok, and ask if they need anything. Specifically, I am worried about those that are staying in and can't access online ordering for basic needs such as food, etc. We are here to help them and know that all of you are as well. If you have the ability to have church members or volunteers to call through your congregation membership list, I hope you will do so. At the same time, we want to help your members with what they need, so please know that we encourage you to communicate via the Hotline to help meet their needs.

While there are many who would reference the separation of church and state, it is at times like this that we must all stand together for the good of our community. I wish you a blessed week and please do not hesitate to reach out to my office or any member of the City Council if you need assistance during this time.

Sincerely,

Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu