

Transcript of Oral History Interview with “Steve”

Interviewee: “Steve”

Interviewer: Speaker 1

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Abstract: “Steve” answers questions about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted his faith and beliefs as well as his interaction with his religious community. He also answers questions about changes the church has made to fir shelter in place order and what community service activities they have engaged in to help those affected by the pandemic.

Speaker 1 0:00

How has COVID-19 affected your faiths or beliefs?

"Steve" 0:06

Oh, that's a good question. COVID-19 really hasn't shaped my faith or my beliefs, you know, I continue to believe in God, and I have faith in God that continues. I personally don't believe God has anything to do with COVID-19. God didn't create it. God didn't spread it, God isn't going to determine who gets it, who dies, or who recovers. I believe that faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen. For instance, I hope that there is an afterlife beyond this world and that my soul will live on. I can't see God, or see beyond this world, but believing that God in an afterlife exists requires faith. If you could prove that there is a God, faith wouldn't be necessary. It requires faith to believe in God, a God that cannot be seen now. But I see evidence of creation all around me and COVID-19 hasn't shaken that at all. COVID-19 has no impact on my faith in God, because it's a physical disease that affects primarily the body and not the soul. COVID-19 has affected my faith in people, however, and I see images of people, you know, hoarding toilet paper or food. But, but I also see images of nurses and doctors and first responders and people working so hard to help other people who are affected by COVID-19. And so, in that regard, you know, it does impact my faith in people, you know, I know that many of them are afraid and worried about getting sick themselves, but they push through and keep going and that takes a tremendous amount of personal courage to overcome fear and do what needs to be done to help treat the sick and comfort the dying. Overall, you know, I think, in regards this question COVID-19 is helped confirm my belief that most people are good and want to do what's right. And, you know, they do what they can to help but there are always going to be a few knuckleheads out there who are looking out for themselves. But, I think in the vast majority of humanity, most people just want to do what's right. So, in that regard, my faith in God hasn't been shaken but I think I think, overall, you know, my faith in people has kind of been affirmed.

Speaker 1 2:26

Well, that's a very, actually, it's a very refreshing answer considering all the hysteria going on currently. That's a, that's a great answer. Okay. Um, my second question for you is: is your

religious community still currently gathering? And how has COVID-19 affected your participation in your religious community?

"Steve" 2:52

That's a good question, you know, and surprisingly, you know, no, my religious community is not currently gathering, which, which is interesting, because they believe strongly in not only attending worship services on Sunday morning, but also evening services, you know, Sunday night, and scripture classes throughout the week. They also tend to shake hands with everyone when they greet them in the church building but that's not happening now because they're not even, they're not even gathering at the building. And I know, it's hard for them to resist that impulse to do that, but not gathering to worship and study scripture together is a big deal. And I think it runs, you know, against, you know, our nature. But, but we also believe in obeying laws of land unless they run contrary to, to the Word of God. And, you know, there currently is a shelter in place order and, you know, we're abiding by it. You know, this means all the classes and worship services are being done virtually, via livestream, and nobody's gathering at the church building. And I know, there are some religious communities that, you know, see the, the church as a structure, you know, with bells and steeples, and stained glass windows, but my religious community believes that the church is comprised of people, and really has nothing to do with the building, you know, the building is just an expediency, you know, just a physical place to gather, since there's a shelter in place order that, you know, they figured out a way to gather virtually and spiritually without meeting in a physical structure. So, you know, COVID-19, you know, is impacted, you know, what, what, my faith community is used to: gathering, you know, in a building, greeting each other, handshakes and hugs. But, you know, the bigger threat, you know, the law of the land to, to shelter in place, is being obeyed. And so that's, that's kind of refreshing.

Speaker 1 4:45

Yeah. Okay. My final question for you, is: is your religious community supplying or engaged in any kind of community service in an attempt to help alleviate issues caused by the pandemic? And if so, what are those efforts that you know of?

"Steve" 5:02

Yeah, you know, they are. First of all, they have made it clear to everyone in the congregation that all they need to do is ask if they need anything. And, you know, they've got a group of people who are ready to assist, which is essentially, you know, everybody in the, in the church, you know, it includes delivering food and meals to some of the members who can't get out to shop for themselves or, you know, make repairs their home if need be, or, or even, you know, what, provide money for them, you know, if they've lost their jobs. So there is a lot of support, you know, within the community itself. You know, they're, they're just regularly calling in, checking on some of the more elderly members, you know, while maintaining social distancing. So, you know, that's, that's going on. So, you know, the effort first to the, the congregation, the members of the of the church, you know, is a priority, but they're also working, you know, within the community to assist people who are not members of their group, religious community. They're involved in working in food pantries, soup kitchens, making deliveries of food or medical prescriptions for neighbors and friends who are not members of the faith community. And so that's going on, you know, since they can't physically gather, they have essentially, you know, adjusted their ministry to offer to drop off groceries or supplies for people who can't get out

while, there's deliver meals or food. So, you know, members of my religious community believe very much in being good neighbors, good Samaritans if you will, who will go out of their way to help others, no matter, you know, whether they're members of their faith group or not. So that's, so that's going on. I think that's, I think that's good. You know, the priorities are definitely taking care of the members of the congregation, but, you know, being good neighbors and being good examples in the community help those who are in need.

Speaker 1 6:52

Yeah, well, I appreciate your time very much, Steve and I thank you for giving me giving me the opportunity to interview here with these questions.

"Steve" 7:05

Yeah, Jack. Glad to help out. Good luck with the class.