

Transcript of Oral History Interview with Morgan

Interviewee: Morgan

Interviewer: Speaker 1

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Abstract: Morgan talks about how the COVID-19 has impacted his faith and beliefs. He also talks about how those faith and beliefs have affected his views on the pandemic. Additionally, he answers questions about how his church as adapted to the pandemic to continue holding services. He also talks about how his church has been helping out the local hospital and small businesses.

Interviewer 00:00

How has COVID-19 affected your faith or beliefs?

Morgan 00:08

Yeah, so it's, people have described it as, you know, these, these times are unprecedented. Nobody has had to, to endure or deal with or live through something like this of this magnitude in the past. I know that there's always been, you know, previous flus or outbreaks or, you know, epidemics here and there. There's, you know, Black Plague, obviously was a big one, Spanish Flu, the Flu of 1918 was pretty bad. And a lot of those were pretty treacherous, you know, for how many lives that they took and how much it affected communities that way. So thankfully, we haven't had to deal with that a whole lot with this one, as of right now, and we're, we're pretty grateful for that. And I think, obviously, the, the world is trying to catch this thing before it gets too widespread. So as far as it affecting my faith and beliefs, I think a lot of people are tempted to ask the question like: why would, why would a loving God, you know, allow something like this to happen? Why would He allow people that He loves to endure such pain and heartache? And those are all very fair and very important questions to ask and stuff that we ask ourselves to. Yeah, you know, we just, we live in a broken and fallen world. And, unfortunately, not everybody responds in the same way and people are going to look at this and use that as an excuse to, you know, engage in a lot of substance abuse, you know, start, start participating in things that they wouldn't have chosen to do if they weren't given this reason or justification. I think there's, there's a lot of pain that's going to come from it. People who, whose family members have caught it and are unable to, to visit or, you know, just support those who are dealing with it because they still have to be quarantined. One of our good friends works at the hospital, she's, I think she was the, she was there when the first person in Colorado passed away and her family couldn't even go and see her because they all had to be quarantined. So, they weren't able to have a funeral, they weren't able to be in community and help support one another through this, they just had to be quarantined and deal with the fact that their mom had passed away from this thing. So, there's a lot of difficult, difficult questions and thoughts and feelings that are caused by this. But there's also a lot of good that's happened, and I think it's almost critical for us to, to look at those and to recognize those and to really hold on to the good

that's happening in the world because of this. You see how people are intentionally developing community in ways that they've never imagined before, like, even this conversation right now, FaceTime, it's like, people are taking advantage of technology in such phenomenal and remarkable ways. I mean, work is still getting done, like we're able to work from home almost seamlessly, overnight, after being sent home and having to be quarantined. And the fact that, like, people who were thought of as you know, that the top tier, you know, unreachable. You have your, your actors and your political leaders and people who are just on a on a different echelon of society, are now like, having to endure the exact same thing that everybody else is and we're all trying to figure out what on earth is going on and how do we how do we deal with this, define rather, this new normal, at least for now. As far as my faith and beliefs, yeah, it's tough having to deal with questions like that but it really gives us an opportunity to love on people in in creative ways, in unique ways, in very practical ways. Like our next-door neighbor, she's 91, I think, yeah, 91. She lives in her house with her daughter, who is a cancer survivor, so they're both, you know, part of the people that are probably more susceptible to this thing. So, we've been very intentional about reaching out, texting them and letting them know, "Hey, you know, whenever we're going grocery shopping," let us know if we can pick anything up for you. You know, we can run errands for you, if you need to, just to prevent you from exposing yourself unnecessarily." You know, and even or just some of our neighbors like behind us, it's just nice to have people around that you can talk to on the other side of the fence and still respect that social distancing but to let each other know that you're there, and that we're here to help and that people have been saying this all over, but we're, we're in this together. And it's a I think it's, it's important for people to remember that, recognize that and to look for intentional ways of building community outside of what the norm used to be.

Interviewer 06:25

Which leads me to my next question, having to do with your religious community: is your religious community still gathering currently? And how has COVID-19 affected your participation in your religious community?

Morgan 06:40

So, this is a question that a lot of church leaders were struggling with early on, like, what is what is church going to look like when we can't meet together, like, you know. I, I'm trying to think of other moments in history when the church was not able to physically meet, and just doing some, some research, even during like the Black Plague, and when it hit Europe too, I don't think there was ever a time when, like, the church wasn't able to gather but now it's, it's mandated from a from a government and health, from a health point of view, just, you know, the CDC and WHO are just trying to prevent this. So, what that means for religious gatherings is that we also have to respect and honor and try and do our part to mitigate this thing. Yeah, our church is still gathering. We meet online just like everybody else does. And I think they do a prerecorded songs or just moments of worship. And then we have some online pastors who are constantly encouraging and talking to and praying with people online during the service. And then we have our lead pastor who is just frustrated because he's such a people person and when he doesn't get to be with people, it's just, it's, it's hard. It's very heartbreaking. But the participation actually in this, I think, is across the board. Church participation online, at least in the US, has actually gone up 30%, since this thing has happened. So, I don't know if that's a, if it's giving people a reason to go to church in a way where they're more comfortable or where they feel more

welcomed. Or if it's just like, "Man, this is such a dark time, and there is not, there's not many other places to look to then then to a loving, caring, hopeful God," and the church has been, I think, a very healing place for people, a place for them to process through some of these thoughts and emotions and the pains that come with this thing. And, yeah, so church participation has actually gone up surprisingly, it's really cool. And the church is taking advantage, just like the rest of the world, of amazing technology that allows us to meet and allows this to happen.

Interviewer 09:30

And if, I'm not mistaken, you were involved in some church participation on Easter services.

Morgan 09:37

Yeah, yeah. Our worship pastor did a, an online choir.

Interviewer 9:42

That is-

Morgan 9:43

So we had every. Yeah, he had everybody pre-record themselves and he put it all together and it was, man, it was moving. It was awesome just to see everybody on one screen. Just, yeah, thanking the Lord for the good things.

Interviewer 09:58

That's awesome.

Morgan 09:59

Yeah.

Interviewer 10:01

Third question for you and final question: is your religious community supplying or engaged in any kind of community service in an attempt to help alleviate issues caused by the pandemic? If so, what are those efforts?

Morgan 10:17

Yep. So, like I said, we have one of our best friends at church, she is an internist at the hospital here in town. She works exclusively with COVID patients right now and one of the, I think one of the big things, especially with health care workers is lack of proper protection. I don't know if it's, you know, I know Trump had talked about some of the issues with 3M and making masks for our health care professionals. I don't know if it's a government issue, that we're not getting what we need, I don't know if it's, you know, supply and demand. I don't know if it's political, but our health care professionals need protection and they're not getting it, or at least as much as they need. And definitely not in the way that they'd prefer. So, our friend, she says that she has to wear the exact same mask, protective visor, gloves, everything in between each patient of hers instead of switching them out like they're supposed to do every time and it's terrifying because we're not able to practice medicine in a way that's best for everybody, we're kind of working in a desperate state. So, I know that our church has been making

masks that go over these N95 masks for our healthcare professionals at the hospital. They've also been creating a group of small business owners in the in the city and creating like a database of these small business owners and helping those businesses to, I guess, helping people helping community to, sorry, sons here, (inaudible talking to his son) helping create this directory, directory for people of the city to go to these small businesses to continue to help support and love and build community that way so that they don't go under. Everybody is affected by this thing, it's not just health stuff but it's the economy, and our churches done a phenomenal job creating this group of local business owners who desperately need people to support them even still. And so, it's nice for them to be able to pursue that instead of going to like Amazon or, you know, going to some of the chain restaurants, they are going to some of the local places who are still very much in need.

Interviewer 13:09

And just knowing what's available too.

Morgan 13:12

Absolutely, and that's the thing, we wouldn't have known otherwise. So, our lead pastor was integral in that because we have a lot of small business owners at our church too. Yeah, but they've also been providing supplies for some of the local schools in the area and continued to help, like, bring, I know, like, stuff, food stuff to the food pantries in town. They've been helping, they've been asking a lot of our congregants. Yeah, they've been asking a lot of our congregants to help with that effort and supply and some of the food shortages still in town. So yeah, it's been incredible to be in a church who is so community driven and community minded. It's, it's honoring to humanity to know that we're a part of a group that just needs to love people and, and cares to meet people where they are. And like I said, we just have a very practical way of meeting people in a very, real, tangible and heartbreaking way but just a lot of opportunity to love well.

Interviewer 14:33

Thank you so much for your time, Morgan, and for all of your thoughts and thank you for sharing. We appreciate you.

Morgan 14:44

Yeah, absolutely. Thank you for calling.

Morgan 14:46

Yep. And this will be uploaded on the ASU COVID-19 archive project.