



“Government is not the answer to some of our greatest problems. The government’s purpose is to protect life, liberty, and freedom. We the people are the ones to address our greatest problems.”

Governor Bill Lee - Inaugural Address, January 2019

The Tennessee Legislature created The Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives by Public Chapter No.218, which was signed into law by Governor Bill Lee on April 25, 2019. The stated purpose was:



“To maximize the effectiveness of state government through collaboration with faith-based and community initiatives to serve Tennesseans with respect to public purposes.”

The Office is an independent, nonprofit organization funded by The Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Foundation to bring together faith communities, nonprofits, business and civic organizations, academia, and state and local government agencies to recognize and implement best practices in our shared goal to make life better for every Tennessean.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



To the Governor and Members of the 111th Legislative Session:

Thank you for the opportunity to serve Tennessee's citizens in The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. We appreciate your recognition that government is not the answer to our problems and that faith communities are called to feed the hungry, visit the sick and imprisoned, care for our neighbors and provide healing to those who are suffering. It is our desire to work with you to bring these faithful, compassionate people together with state and local governments, find new ways to solve some of our toughest issues, and leverage opportunities that contribute to the flourishing of Tennessee communities.

I was honored to be appointed to the position of Executive Director of this office by Governor Bill Lee on July 8, 2019. The Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Foundation was established as a nonprofit organization funded by charitable contributions from private citizens, to carry out the work of the Office. In accordance with the law, The Governor appoints the Board and leadership of the Foundation as well:

- Ginger Eley, Chairperson of the Board of Directors
- Fred Decosimo, Secretary/Treasurer of the Board of Directors
- Lang Wiseman, Deputy to the Governor, member of the Board of Directors
- Dave Worland, Executive Director

From Shelby and Lake Counties in the West, across to Davidson and Giles in Middle Tennessee and over to Sullivan and Bradley in the East, I have met with faith leaders, state and local representatives, business and community advocates who are excited to see what we can accomplish for the people of Tennessee as we work together.

At one of my first meetings in Memphis, Julie Sanon, Chief Operating Officer of Agape Child and Family Services, expressed the desire to bring lasting change to the citizens of Tennessee.

"It's a good thing to give a family a turkey for Thanksgiving. It's a better thing when they can buy one for themselves. It's a good thing to fill a backpack with school supplies for a child. It's a better thing when a Mom or Dad can take the kids to the store to purchase them."

Good things are happening in communities across Tennessee, but better things help our citizens flourish when we engage, encourage, and empower Tennesseans. We are enthusiastic about what we have accomplished in one year, and to share our plans, hopes and dreams for the next 3 years. God is at work across the state of Tennessee, even through the recent hardships brought on by a global pandemic, tornadoes, and economic disruption.

On behalf of the 50,000+ nonprofit agencies and the 12,000+ faith communities across the state, I am encouraged about the prospect of developing strategies that focus our efforts in a common direction, thereby providing transformative solutions to improve the lives of fellow Tennesseans.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Worland".

Dave Worland
Executive Director, The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

The Experts are in the Field

2019-2020 Executive Director Listening Tour

- 40,000 miles traveled
- 250+ meetings with faith and community leaders, state agencies
- 39 counties visited
- Spoke at conferences, events, community meetings and celebrations.



VISION, MISSION, PLAN

Vision

For people of faith and goodwill to inspire and implement transformative solutions improving lives for fellow Tennesseans.

Mission

To leverage the capacity of the faith communities and nonprofits engaged in solving some of the greatest challenges in our society.

Four-Year Strategic Plan

The Four-Year Strategic Plan for the Office establishes specific goals that will guide the work of the Office into the future. Focusing on the Governor's priorities of prison and criminal justice, education and health reform/opioid addiction, the Office will also leverage the work being done in the areas of homelessness and foster care and adoption. Collaboration between faith communities, nonprofit organizations, state agencies, business and academics leads to comprehensive solutions and best practices that are replicable across the state.

The plan has 4 major components:

- Invite the citizens of the State to pray for the Executive, Legislative and Judicial leaders.
- Identify the faith communities, faith-based and community nonprofits and state agencies that provide transformative solutions by geography, causes, initiatives and relationships in order to connect, promote and accelerate efforts.
- Leverage ground-engaged leaders to develop state-wide strategies that identify, build and align the work of faith communities, nonprofit organizations and the state agencies.
- Collect and tell stories about Tennesseans improving the lives of their neighbors.

Support Staff



Bevelle Puffer
Communications Director



Matthew Grove
Project and Policy Director

IMPROVING LIFE FOR EVERY TENNESSEAN

Statewide Strategies

Faith-based communities, nonprofit organizations and state agencies are already working together to implement lasting change for those struggling with homelessness and addiction in Tennessee. Our goal is to accelerate their efforts.

Tennessee Home Together Task Force

In early March 2020, the Office launched the Tennessee Home Together Task Force with a vision to permanently house families with children and adults over the age of 50 who are currently homeless. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck our state a few weeks after the Task Force began its work, members of the group quickly took the lead in advocating for this vulnerable population, and Dave Worland was appointed as a liaison reporting to the Unified Command Group, leading to a successful, compassionate approach for caring for the homeless.

The Task Force will continue its work with nonprofits, state agencies and faith communities to make homelessness “rare, brief, and non-recurring” by permanently housing large sectors of this population and increasing their resiliency for continued success with support services. Learn more about the Tennessee Home Together Task Force here: <https://www.tnfbc.org/stories/help-for-the-homeless>.



“All it took was for someone to believe in me. To extend the hope of the Gospel. . . The moment someone saw me as “Josh” and not just an addict or a homeless man, I took hold of hope and have been clean for over a year. Remember, no one is ever too far gone.”

Josh, Knoxville Area Rescue Ministries, Berea Program

Mental Health/Addiction/Recovery

The Governor’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives works with other state and local agencies, churches and nonprofit organizations to sponsor and participate in events promoting collaborative efforts that offer help and healing to those walking through mental health, addiction and recovery issues. In the past year, we have been a part of 8 such events across the state.

One of our goals is to improve health outcomes across the state, particularly in addressing the problem of opioid addiction. This powerful video shares stories of hope: <https://youtu.be/TdyU99BazrM>.



“The faith community has always been here, and long after all of us are gone, they will still be here. They are that sustainable resource that is tried and true and can be the deliverer of that good message of hope, of hope, of hope.”

Monty Burks, PhD, TN Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Faith-Based Initiatives

Freedom of Religion

The Office supported legislation which ensures that all parents who request released time for religious and moral instruction will be accommodated and that students released for this period will be counted present. The Bill passed unanimously in the House and Senate and was signed into law by Governor Bill Lee in June 2020.

CONNECT. PROMOTE. ACCELERATE.

TN Connects

Collaboration is key to successful solutions. TN Connects is a Community Service Portal designed to build pathways that will enhance cross-sector partnerships, establishing relationships between faith communities, nonprofits, civic organizations, academia and government. Our Office is leading a statewide effort by several state agencies, nonprofit and faith organizations to stand up a state portal that will benefit all. We are also working with other data-driven, missional organizations who are developing a database for mission and ministry by Houses of Worship and nonprofits.

Foster Care and Adoption



In the state of Tennessee, hundreds of children need foster and adoptive parents who are committed to giving them the opportunity to gain stability and the resources needed to flourish. If 1,000 churches committed to help one family provide for one child, that need could be met easily. The Office is engaged with faith communities and nonprofits that have developed easily replicable programs making foster care and adoption a priority.

“For every child to have a place to belong, for foster families to have the support they need.”

Tennessee Kids Belong, foster care and adoption organization

Volunteer Support

The Office has answered the call to help with volunteer support for programs ranging from food and supply delivery to school children, to connecting eldercare check-in systems with church volunteers, to developing programs for faith organization assistance with Veteran’s issues.



*“When you see the families – when you see kids’ eyes light up. . .
People know they are loved.”*

Robin Popplewell, Englewood Baptist Church, Jackson

Purposity

Purposity is a nonprofit organization that presents tangible needs identified and vetted by social service organizations and school counselors with citizen donors who meet those needs, one at a time. We are working with the First Lady Maria Lee’s Office to make Purposity part of her Tennessee Serves strategy. She will collaborate with nonprofits, business leaders and musical artists from across the state to engage citizens to fulfill specific needs for their neighbors. <https://about.purposity.com/>

Convening

Bringing together like-minded individuals, faith and community leaders to provide solutions to our most pressing challenges has been a hallmark of our work. We have been able to connect those working within the criminal justice system with those interested in prevention, re-entry and reform; bringing workforce development planners together with the Department of Labor and Workforce Development; providing faith communities with opportunities to serve their neighbors; and introducing faith leaders to state agency leaders for mutual benefit. Working together to connect, promote, and accelerate best practices, we are transforming lives and communities across Tennessee.

THE TENNESSEE PRAYER INITIATIVE



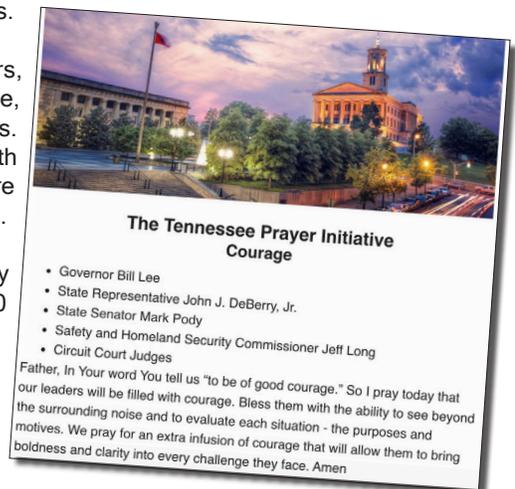
“Through all the circumstances of my life, the Lord has been true to His word that prayer accomplishes much, and that things happen because people pray. What you’re doing is so important, and I am deeply grateful for it.”

Gov. Bill Lee, Tennessee Prayer Initiative Launch, December, 2019

In December 2019, a group of faith leaders from across the state gathered with Governor Lee at the Capitol to kick off The Tennessee Prayer Initiative. These leaders and others volunteered to develop more than 100 one-to-three sentence prayers designed to encourage and uplift our government leaders.

Those who join receive a daily email with the names of five leaders, including some from each branch of government (executive, legislative, judicial), and a short prayer focused on a specific value for the leaders. We pray for wisdom, unity, sound judgment, peace, mercy, etc. with the goal that every leader will be prayed for every day. Prayers are non-partisan and interfaith, and people of all faiths are invited to join.

To date, more than 600 individuals pray for our state leaders every day. Our goal is to increase that to 1,000 by year-end and to 2,500 by 2023.



WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

On March 3, 2020, tornadoes swept across Tennessee in the middle of the night, touching down in 7 counties and taking 24 lives. At daybreak, the full extent of destruction in major cities like Nashville and smaller towns like Cookeville was evident.

Even as those communities mourned, a few weeks later, COVID-19 began making its presence known in our state, quickly causing a shutdown of virtually all business, recreational and faith activity as we braced for the worst.

In the midst of the pandemic, tornadoes returned to Tennessee on Easter Sunday, ravaging the southeastern part of the state and taking 4 more lives.

The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives participated as friends and neighbors stepped in to care for their communities after the tornadoes. Working with churches, faith leaders, nonprofit organizations, TEMA and FEMA, we hosted calls and events to help victims understand and complete the processes required to receive assistance and support as they struggled through grief and loss.

As people retreated to the safety of their homes during the COVID-19 crisis, the Office provided pastors valuable resources and support to help navigate the technical and financial difficulties they encountered. We hosted 3 calls with Governor Lee and 300-400 faith leaders across the state, providing the opportunity for mutual encouragement and prayer.

The Office developed Guidelines for Gathering Together in Houses of Worship as the state entered Phase 1 of "Reopening Tennessee Responsibly." We continue to assist with other guidelines for camps and childcare as the state slowly reopens. Our growing connection to faith and nonprofit organizations enabled us to answer the calls for volunteers and support from the Departments of Health, Human Services, Children's Services, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, and Area Agencies on Aging.

"Every single act of kindness, every single message, every single call we've received, have all ended with the same 5 words: We are praying for you! All. Of. Them! What this crazy experience has taught us is this: to find 'the church' in our local community, we just have to be the church to our neighbor."

Tennessee's COVID-19 "Patient Zero," Franklin



"We are a tight knit community. We all knew people that died. We all knew people in these communities. The winds that tore us apart will bind us together even tighter as a community."

Cookeville Resident after the tornadoes

LOOKING AHEAD

The Storytelling Initiative

When people receive help, understanding, love, their lives are changed. Our mission is to tell their stories well - on social media, in print, with photos, with words and video.

Faith communities and nonprofit organizations are the experts in the field - doing good things that are having a positive impact in neighborhoods across Tennessee. But people of faith are humble. Our goal is to tell their stories in a way that resonates throughout society and generates positive feelings about people of faith.

The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives is looking for storytellers, college students or recent graduates who are gifted with the ability to listen well and craft language that brings stories to life.

We aim to recruit 3-5 individuals from different regions of the state to visit with the people and organizations in big cities and rural areas who are making a difference in the lives of those they serve. Through inspired storytelling, citizens across the state will be encouraged to fully participate in improving life for every citizen.

The Governor's Award of Excellence

Each year, The Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives will recognize those faith and community organizations who have served their neighbors faithfully and strategically; partnering with others to solve problems in innovative ways that achieve measurable results and are easily replicable. This year, a committee of 14 nonprofit and faith-based leaders from across the state have worked to recognize 20 outstanding organizations across the state. We are thankful for the creativity and volunteer spirit of Tennesseans.

Winners of The Governor's Award of Excellence to be announced soon.



The Governor's Office of
**Faith-Based and
Community Initiatives**

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