



“HEALING HANDS COMMUNITY CLINIC RESPONSE TO COVID-19” (May 29, 2020)

As with other medical facilities, rural free clinics were also affected by the Covid-19 shutdown. New Beginnings Church, located in the old township area of Naples in Blanchard, Oklahoma, began a joint fellowship with the Tabler Gospel Tabernacle church in October 2017. New Beginnings Church was growing, and the Tabler church building had a much larger fellowship hall than the Naples Church. Due to legal issues, the Tabler Gospel Tabernacle retained its name after the fellowship agreement with New Beginnings Church. “Tabler” and “Naples” are old township areas located in a rural area of Grady County, Oklahoma. Neither of these areas are incorporated towns or cities in this day.

New Beginnings held Wednesday night services and special event dinners at the Tabler sight. Since the building was not used as often as it could be, New Beginnings Church wanted to start an “outreach” program for the rural people who lived in the nearby communities. The Church Leaders worked with knowledgeable and experienced doctors and other people to create a free clinic for those in need who had no health insurance. The logistics of opening a health clinic were detailed and it took several months to complete all the legal work as well as the physical changes needed. Some of the children’s church classrooms double as patient’s rooms and offices. The smaller kitchen area was converted to a pharmacy and the bathrooms were updated and modified to allow for patient use and for handicapped access.

In September 2018, the “Healing Hands Community Clinic” was created and opened for business. Initially, there were problems related to locating doctors, nurses, physician assistants, and pharmacists to operate the clinic on a voluntary basis, but eventually it all worked out for the good. The church membership also includes several nurses who help in the clinic. The clinic volunteers are served dinner on the evenings they work.



Healing Hands Community Clinic – Under Construction August 2018

The free clinic is typically open for only three hours in the evening of the 3rd Thursday of each month. Only one doctor or PA is available at to see patients at that time. This limits the number of visits to 4 to 7 patients per month. The office visits and the prescription medicines are free to those who come to the clinic. The clinic is typically used by people who have minor health problems or ongoing health problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or other chronic conditions.



Healing Hands Community Clinic Mission Statement – August 2018

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the health clinic considered virtual visits, as most medical clinics were doing. Although this practice was allowed by law, the community clinic was not really prepared for such an event. There was no portal set up or other system to create a virtual visit and the doctors preferred not to give out their home telephone numbers. Only one patient used a virtual system to speak to the doctor. Generally, the Clinic called those who had appointments and asked them if they needed prescriptions filled. For those who needed refills or prescription changes, a list was created and then issued to the doctors. They reviewed the requests and then authorized the refills or changes as appropriate. The prescriptions were filled by the Pharmacist and the patients were notified as to the time to pick up their medicine.

Another obstacle to virtual visits is related to internet access and the ability of the patient to utilize what is available. Many rural people and especially older people are not very internet savvy. Although they have smart phones, they do not understand how to use email or various other applications on their phones. This is a drawback for this sort of operation. It would be important to set up the system with the patient in advance and, also to make it very "user-friendly" for the non-technical people.

This system of operation (mostly just re-filling prescriptions) began on the 3rd Thursday in March and it has continued through April and now May. However, it is planned to open the clinic to patients again in June 2020.

Photos courtesy of “New Beginnings Church – Blanchard” Facebook Site:

<https://www.facebook.com/Newbeginningsblanchard/>

Photos Posted August 28,2018

Clinic Links:

<https://www.facebook.com/HealingHandsCommunityClinic/>

<http://healinghandsclinic.org/>

Much of the information about the clinic and the system used during the Covid-19 shutdown was provided by:

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