

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 10, 2020, 8:00 PM

CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT NEW HOPE
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP'S COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT SESSION**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Excellent. Well, Bishop, thank you. Bishop, I really want to thank you for what you're doing, gathering people together and helping them to know how to make sense of these incredibly challenging times, and I think for all of us who feel called to leadership in so many different ways, whether it's in faith communities or in government or public service or civic life, one of the most important things we do is give people information, give them a sense of hope and a sense that things can move forward and can get better, and I know Bishop you're doing that all the time. I really, really want to thank you for that and your leadership not only in New Hope Christian Fellowship, but obviously in the God Squad as well. An incredible group of leaders that I've had the real honor of working with over many years.

Look, here's what I want to say very quickly, very simply. We've all been through the unimaginable and one could look at this experience and be depressed, be overwhelmed. We've all had those moments for sure. But you could say, well, you know, COVID, the great – unimaginable, arguably the greatest crisis we've ever been through in the city. So many challenges laid on one on the other, how can we possibly find our way forward? And I look at this crisis and I've been through every minute of it as a leader of this city. Lord knows. I could tell you, you know, that I've felt the pain of the people of the city in so many ways, very personally, for people in my life who've been affected but also talking to me, my fellow New Yorkers – I might be a prime candidate to say I'm, you know, lacking the hope to move forward. But I'm exactly in the opposite place, Bishop, I feel an immense amount of hope. I feel immense amount of energy because we went through so much and survived and the challenges, and it was because of the nature of the people of this city, it was because of the compassion of New Yorkers. It was because of the incredible resiliency and toughness, because New Yorkers actually look out for each other, you know, and in a lot of parts of the country, when folks were warned by health care leaders to wear masks and socially distance, those warnings were ignored. That advice was ignored, and there was a sense of just with me, me, me what do I owe to my fellow resident? And here people have actually had a sense of responsibility and a sense of concern and compassion for each other. Leaders like you, Bishop, and so many other people on this Zoom have really been crucial to sending that message and encouraging people to the right path and it's made a huge difference. I can't tell you how many thousands upon thousands of infections and sicknesses and deaths have been avoided because people did the right thing. So, that gave me heart right there to see that, to see the fact that this city at one point was the epicenter of the crisis and then became one of the safest places in the country. Went from worst to first, or in scriptural terms, when we note the extraordinary early powerful message, the first

shall be last and the last shall be first. That's exactly what we went through. We lived it, we expressed it by our very actions.

So, where does that leave us now? It leaves us with a track record that people in the city improved in their ability to overcome and what we have to, what we had to overcome in March and April was so challenging, so vast, even compared to the challenge now, and I'm not going to sugar coat – look, we have a substantial rise in cases. I'm very concerned, and everyone needs to take this very seriously. You need to cancel your travel plans if you were going to travel. You need to limit your holiday gatherings and practice those safety measures. But let me be the first to say there is no comparison to what we're going through now and what we went through in March and April. People are doing so much better. Patients are doing better. Hospitals are doing better. People are more educated in how to deal with the disease. These are all huge improvements, and there's such a brighter situation over the horizon.

So, I remind you it's going to be a tough December. It's maybe a tough January, but after that a much, much better situation. Why? Because we have a vaccine, the vaccine is arriving in the city in a matter of days and for everyone's knowledge, it takes two doses, but even the first dose provides substantial protection against the coronavirus. So, the vaccine is about to be real and here amongst us. We have and I won't say anything partisan, Bishop, I'm going to be very appropriate here, but we have a new president coming and that is going to make a world of difference in terms of helping us to overcome COVID, in terms of respect for immigrant communities, something near and dear to your heart. We know a lot is about to change in a matter of weeks in this country, and then I believe there will be a substantial stimulus. We have to fight for it, but I believe it will be here and it will make a big difference in our lives and provide us the support we need.

So, I just want to offer all of that and share that Bishop, but also to conclude with a point, which I think is crucial, which is [inaudible]. There are some Doubting Thomas's out there. There are some people who spend all day suggesting that New York City will not recover. Interestingly, there were people who said that in the 60s and 70s about New York City, there were people who said that after 9/11 about New York City, after Hurricane Sandy. We have seen the Doubting Thomas's more than once in the history of the city. What somehow they always fail to note is that the city has consistently overcome its challenges, time after time, and New Yorkers are very special people. New Yorkers have it gift a strength. That's not everywhere in the world, but it sure is here. I don't have a doubt in my mind, we're going to come back. But when we come back, we will not resort to the previous status quo, and I think this is very important to note, we've seen shocking disparities on display in this crisis. We know that even before the pandemic, as much as we love New York City, it was not perfect. We know that there are many profound matters that must be addressed. We must be a better city. We must be a fairer city. We must be a more inclusive city. We cannot just repeat what was. So Bishop, I guarantee you we're coming back, but my call to everyone in this gathering is to be as committed as I certainly feel to coming back better, being a city of greater justice, using this painful moment and turning it into a transformative moment and showing the world what a place New York City could be if it really represents all of us, that's what I'm going to fight for. I ask everyone to join together. We will overcome COVID and we will create something better in New York City. Thank you for the opportunity to be with you all. I really appreciate it.

###