

Report to Commissions  
March 17 2020

Human Concerns

- 1 There are a great number of areas covered by Human Concerns
2. Committee due to size has focused on a few areas this past year
3. The Giving Tree; This past season's giving tree was successful way beyond our hopes. In the past 350 tags were placed on the tree. This year 500 tags were placed and were taken. It led to a new collaboration with the human concerns ministry in the school. First the school kids created the ornaments and decorated the tree. Their pajama drive placed 100 of the 500 tags and the remaining 400 were slated for uses that are in great need by patrons of Congregation of the Great Spirit food pantry. The pajama drive collected more than in past years and Great Spirit was overwhelmed by the generosity of St Gabriel parishioners. If you recall the gathering space became a collection area overflowing with our generosity.
4. This collaboration with the school kids has led to a new opportunity for the parish human concerns and school human concerns to work and assist one another in any opportunity to reach out to others. A member of Human Concerns now attends the school's meetings when possible. Examples of this new collaboration, every food drive was met with a school food drive; the pajama drive success and assistance with the giving tree.
5. Thanksgiving Food drive: We collected 3000 lbs of food for the pantry at Great Spirit. For every pound of food that is collected by Great Spirit, Hunger Task Force matches with another pound. So our collection resulted in a total of 6000 lbs of food to line their shelves. Great Spirit is required to obtain at least 55,000 lbs of donated food to obtain Task Force assistance. Our 3000 lbs amounted to 5.45% of their needs. Needless to say Great Spirit was once again more than grateful for our support.
6. The recent emergency food drive for Great Spirit. The pantry shelves there were stripped due to the large increase in families, especially large families with children that have lost more of the safety net, loss of school programs, food stamps etc that has stressed the pantry. To understand, in December of 2019 they helped 245 families and 723 individuals. One month later, Jan of 2020 they helped 303 families, a 24% increase, and 837 individuals, a 16% increase. Dee Loomis down at Great Spirit contacted me with a plea for help, noting that we have been so generous in the past but wondering if there was anything that we could do. We did, collected another 1500 lbs of food, including the school kids drive, which was once again matched by Hunger Task Force. In addition, human concerns made a \$500 donation to Great Spirit to be used to fill out the shelves. Someone, a Great Spirit donor, was so moved by our donation that they matched our \$500. Once again our generosity multiplied.
7. St Ben's. We are now sending parishioners down to St Ben's once every 3 weeks or 18 times a year. Couple years back we were going 6 times a year. The list of those who volunteer has grown to almost 40 but still looking for more as I have found that those who love the experience and we may be able to expand the number of trips. We also used to send around 5 people, we now have 7-9 each time. The

school also sends a group down 5 or 6 times a year and now Mike Gorichanaz has the Eagle Scouts signed up for 2 times in the coming months. So as a parish we will have sent a group to serve 26 times over 12 months. As St Ben's serves over 90,000 meals a year, 6 days a week, our 26 trips cover 8.3% of the total days and 7,500 meals. St Gabriel volunteers serve as floor workers.

7a. As of now, since March 17<sup>th</sup>, the volunteer program at St Ben's has been suspended. Food is being prepared by the Capuchin staff and is handed out at the door so those who are in need can get a meal. Please keep the staff and its patrons in your prayers.

8. St Vincent de Paul Society held 2 important and successful presentations. In the fall a presentation on homelessness was held and just last week immigration was discussed.

9. The St Boniface/St Gabriel food pantry donations continue to be generous and a number of parishioners help out twice a month passing out food and helping stock shelves

10. Health Ministries; still having trouble having a consistent bp screening program. Trying to decide if we have the ability to maintain that program. 2 annual blood drives are going to occur and that is being handled well through the efforts of the St Vincent de Paul society..

11. Reminisce Program; There is a group of 4 individuals headed by Jean Prodehl that visit the Gables memory facility and spend time with the residents, telling stories, bringing treats, songs etc. Bonnie Gerhardt when in town also goes. She is trying to recruit more people to the program. The time and talent survey has shown some interest in home and hospital visits but at this time we do not have a vehicle to organize that around.

12. We have enough baptismal blankets at the moment. Bonnie Gerhardt is working to establish a standard for the blankets. I have heard that the teens are being asked to handle the program, handing them out etc

13 Funeral Meals: We have huge response from the time & talent survey of individuals wanting to help out, bake, prepare for these meals. Leona Ksioszk, chair of Christian Women's, organizes this. However she does not have email access so her reach is limited and as a result many who want to help are generally left out. It has been suggested that a list of all bakers, volunteers etc be created. When a funeral arises a note can go out from the office to the list looking for help. Volunteers can contact either Leona by phone or the office which can pass along the names to Leona so she can coordinate. Opens opportunities for more, takes a burden off of Leona and also I suspect a certain few that she may fall back on. It was also discovered that there are so many willing to bake etc for parish events there may be a possibility for a group to prepare a meal for St Ben's to be served. That requires a crew to prepare, take down and then man the food line..12 or 15. Just a few times a year but another opportunity to serve.

14. Sister parish: Sister parish Great Spirit. We have a unique opportunity, having a sister parish located so near to us. Most sister parishes are located in a foreign country, ours in on the south side of Milwaukee. We do wonderful things for them, the giving tree and food drives. But there is an opportunity to be closer to the staff and parishioners there. Help at the food pantry, combined parish events, invites to

parish activities, the ability to meet others. Attendance at their Mass or we once brought them here to celebrate. They recently held their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an active parish and as a token of our friendship we gave them a cedar tree to be planted on their grounds. Cedar trees have great symbolic meaning in Native American culture. Looking to form a group to look into ways that we can be true sister parishes.

15. There are many others in our St Gabriel family who are doing “human concern” activities every day, like the scouts, those who care for the environment, the stretch and exercise groups, Christian mothers, the Men’s group, farmer’s market, religious ed programs, Fr Tim and his visits to the sick and homebound, auction volunteers and so many others who care for their neighbors and their church. We need to encourage them, let them be seen and heard, so we can continue to be a vibrant and caring parish. Let them know that their actions are making a difference and their work is not unnoticed.