

Social Justice and Caring Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday, October 1, 2020 (via Zoom)

Present: Martha Arko, Kendall Doom, Bill Dorgan, Mary Huettl, Christine Malec (minute writer), Margaret Malec, Fr. John Mitchell, Nate Pacer, Kim Roering and Mary Weyandt

New Member

The committee members welcomed a new member to the committee, Mary Huettl.

Prayer Service for These Times

Chris reminded the committee members that the “Prayer Service for These Times” planned by Keri Mader, the parish’s Pastoral Associate for Ministry, and Sharon Balcom, the parish’s Pastoral Associate for Music, will take place at the parish (and via livestream) on Tuesday, October 13, 2020, at 6:30 p.m. and that it is hoped that the service will give parishioners the opportunity to prayerfully discern about the upcoming election through the lens of their Catholic faith.

Parish Lending Library

Chris announced that the books that have been added to the parish lending library have been labeled, that card pockets have been added to them and that the library list has been updated - including a new column stating whether each item is intended for a child, young adult or an adult. She pointed out that Fr. John Mitchell has begun advertising the library in the parish’s electronic newsletter, the *Pulse* - highlighting several books in each issue.

The issue of access to the library arose. Fr. John mentioned that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, parishioners will not be allowed to browse through the collection at this point in time. He said he would check-out items for parishioners and arrange a time to have them picked up at the parish.

We Care Campaign

Chris reported that Fr. John had spoken to parish Business Administrator, Theresa Ruttger, regarding dispersing the We Care Campaign funds the way they had been in the past - with each option in the campaign receiving the donations that were specifically designated for it by parishioners as well as one third of the undesignated funds donated to the campaign and one third of the bills and change from the collection for the three masses of the We Care Campaign weekend and that she agreed to do this - as opposed to each option in the campaign receiving one third of the combined total of the designated funds, the undesignated funds and the bills and change from the collection for the three masses of the We Care Campaign weekend (with the idea being that as long as each option received no less than its designated amount, it would be easier to divide the grand total three ways).

Chris stated that Theresa adjusted the funds from the June 27 - 28, 2020, campaign and that the revised totals are as follows:

- **Progressive Baptist Church Fishes and Loaves Food Shelf** - located within Progressive Baptist Church at 1501 Burns Avenue in St. Paul that provides emergency food items to anybody in need - \$356.67,
- **Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce Charitable Fund** - a charity that is collecting donations to provide the community with direct financial support to small businesses and non-profits to help them rebuild their storefronts, reopen their businesses and serve neighborhoods after the recent civil unrest that has taken place - \$431.67 and
- **We Love Lake Street** - a fund started by the Lake Street Council charity to help rebuild Lake Street, starting with direct support to small businesses and non-profits to help them rebuild their storefronts, reopen their businesses and serve the neighborhoods after the recent civil unrest that has taken place - \$356.67.

Chris reminded the committee members that the next We Care Campaign will take place the weekend of October 24 - 25, 2020. She said that she has submitted bulletin announcements for this campaign.

“We Were Made for These Times: Where Do We Go from Here?” Event

The committee members reviewed the “We Were Made for These Times: Where Do We Go from Here?” virtual event facilitated by parishioner Anne Weyandt (Associate Professor of Education at St. Catherine’s University) and Sr. Sharon Howell, CSJ (the Director of the Center for Spirituality and Social Justice at St. Catherine’s University) that took place via Zoom on Tuesday, September 15, 2020.

It was noted that approximately 30 - 40 people participated in the event, there were no glitches with the technology, participants were very involved in the discussion, that more time could have been allotted for the discussion part of the event etc.

The committee members discussed their hope that those who participated in the event would remain engaged in this topic and want to continue working on it.

Kim reported that, continuing with this theme, this Advent, the parish will host a prayer service entitled “Being Light in These Times.”

A suggestion was made that an e-mail be sent to all those who participated in the “We Were Made for These Times: Where Do We Go from Here?” event inviting them to attend the Advent prayer service and/or to become involved in the committee - and that this e-mail could come from Kim or the sub-committee that planned the event. It was also suggested that these invitations could be sent in two separate e-mails and that the document that Ann Karner wrote summarizing the event could be included in the message.

JustFaith Catholic Program

Chris announced that the next JustFaith Catholic program is entitled “Faith and Racial Healing: Embracing Truth, Justice and Restoration” and will begin October 20, 2020. She stated that

absent committee member, Ann Karner, informed her that Mary Huettl has agreed to help Ann facilitate this session.

Faith & Blue

Fr. John declared that Officer Kurt Hallstrom of the St. Paul Police Department sent a letter to all the pastors on the eastside asking if their parish would like to participate in a “Faith & Blue” event - whose goal is to facilitate law enforcement officers connecting with members of the public in the communities in which they serve in order to build a mutual understanding.

Fr. John said that a national “Faith & Blue” weekend will take place on October 10 - 11, 2020, but that the parish could choose to participate in such an event at any time. The committee members decided that, due to other activities occurring at the parish, it would be better to host such an event in January or February of 2021 - perhaps in the evening.

The committee members discussed the type of event they would like to have. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they determined that a “meet and greet” style gathering in Brioschi hall could not take place and, therefore, should be held via Zoom. Some of the possibilities suggested include:

- providing the officer(s) involved with questions developed by the parish prior to the event,
- inviting parishioner Office Mike Ernster to participate in the event,
- having an open floor-type discussion,
- asking the officers what the parish could do to help affect positive change,
- having the officer(s) inform parishioners about a topic affecting the eastside (such as the Motel 6 issue),
- including a healing circle as part of the event,
- combining the event with a prayer service,
- making the event a listening session - giving parishioners the opportunity to ask questions, share their thoughts/feelings/perspectives regarding what troubles them, what gives them hope, what they see as strengths and weaknesses etc.

The committee members agreed that they would not want the event to be politicized or become a propaganda opportunity for the police - such as having them highlight only the good things they have done.

The committee members decided they would like to host such an event but that they would table further discussion regarding the format of it until a future meeting. They also discussed the possibility of having a sub-team of committee members plan the event.

Fr. John agreed to contact Officer Hallstrom to let him know that St. Pascal’s is interested in having him come to the parish at some time in the future.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ *Open Wide Our Hearts* Letter Study Opportunity

Kim reported on a proposal that was made regarding having the parish offer sessions on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ *Open Wide Our Hearts* letter regarding the topic

of racism. Kim stated that Ann Karner is envisioning having three one-hour sessions followed by a session lasting one and a half hours. Kim said that Ann suggested having each of the sessions concentrate on the different sections of the letter:

- Session 1: Introduction/What is racism?
- Session 2: Do Justice
- Session 3: Love Goodness
- Session 4: Walk Humbly with God - with additional time to discuss “Where do we go from here?” - individually and as a parish

Kim stated that Ann proposed that each session begin with prayer followed by small group discussion then large group discussion and a final prayer. Kim noted that, if such a format were used, leaders would be needed to lead the small group discussions - which could possibly be found from the Adult Faith Formation Team or the Social Justice and Caring Committee.

Kim said that it was suggested that these sessions could be held in November or after the first of the coming year and that the night it would be offered would be decided at a later date.

Fr. John and Kim stated they would discuss this issue further with Ann.

Christmas Gifts

Bill asked if the parish were to provide gifts to those in need this Christmas. Fr. John and Mary Weyandt said that, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be difficult for the parish to participate in the Angel Tree ministry as it did last year (a program that provides the children of incarcerated parents with Christmas gifts).

The committee members discussed the possibility of supporting families in need from the parish or school. Fr. John stated that he believes the school may already have a process in place during the Christmas season to assist families in need but he volunteered to ask some of the teachers if there might be additional need for which the parish could be of assistance.

Fr. John and Mary agreed to discuss this at the next parish council meeting.

The committee members suggested other projects that could be done - such as having a giving tree, responding to the needs of the neighborhood around the parish, supporting the organizations for whom the parish collects items in the donation closet (Brittany’s Place, Joseph’s Coat, the Listening House, Merrick Community Services) etc.

Bill and Mary Huettl volunteered to help with this project.

Next Meeting

Thursday, November 5, 2020, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Fr. John or Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting and Mary Huettl agreed to lead the prayer.