

Social Justice and Caring Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday, November 5, 2020 (via Zoom)

Present: Martha Arko, Anna DeCrans, Bill Dorgan, Mary Huettl, Ann Karner, Christine Malec (minute writer), Margaret Malec, Fr. John Mitchell, Kim Roering and Mary Weyandt

Meeting with Progressive Baptist

Ann described a meeting that took place between various committee members and Reverend Paul Johnson and others from Progressive Baptist to discuss the needs of the under-sheltered/unsheltered on the eastside and to discern actions that could be taken to address the issue of homelessness. She said that this initial gathering was a “meet and greet” - with the members introducing themselves to each other and that, at future meetings, the topic of how to assist the under-sheltered/unsheltered would be discussed more in depth.

Ann stated this meeting took place as a result of one of the action items suggested by participants of the last JustFaith Catholic program to have the parish collect items for Progressive Baptist’s food shelf. Ann stated that, when she contacted Progressive Baptist to discuss this, she was informed that its food shelf received ample supplies from other sources but that the congregation would be interested in working together on other issues - such as homelessness.

Ann informed the committee that some members of Progressive Baptist would be bringing donations to the unsheltered in the camps on Shepherd Road this coming Saturday and that any one who is interested in joining them would be welcome to participate. She said that if anybody wanted to bring donations for them to distribute, these could be brought to Progressive Baptist on Friday morning.

Ann stated that if any committee members who were not present at the first meeting would like to participate in future ones, to let her know and she would have their names added to the group distribution list.

Christmas Gifts/Catholic Charities Giving Tree Program

The committee members continued their discussion on ways to provide gifts to those in need this Christmas since, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the parish is not participating in the Angel Tree ministry as it did last year (a program that provides the children of incarcerated parents with Christmas gifts).

At the last meeting, they had discussed the possibility of supporting families in need from the parish or school. Fr. John reported that he spoke to Pam Campbell from the school and asked her to let him know of any families who may need assistance with Christmas gifts. He said Pam informed him that the students often collect items for those in need.

Fr. John said he also researched the Catholic Charities Giving Tree program which collects unwrapped gifts for those in need - at the following drop-off locations, dates and times:

- the **Catholic Charities Administration Center** - located at 1200 Second Avenue South in Minneapolis (Monday - Friday, from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.)
- the **Catholic Charities Distribution Center** - located at 341 Chester Street in St. Paul (Monday - Friday, from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.) and
- the **Mall of America**, located at 60 E. Broadway in Bloomington, (from Friday, December 18th - Sunday, December 20th from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.).

Fr. John stated that the Giving Tree program has a wish list posted on its website that contains suggested gift ideas of clothing for adults, housewares, miscellaneous items and personal items. He noted that toys are not on the list due to the fact that the program has enough of these.

The committee members discussed the possibility of printing and folding copies of the wish list, tying ribbons on these and hanging them as ornaments on a Christmas tree at the parish for parishioners to take for reference when purchasing items to donate to the program.

Fr. John suggested putting a copy of the wish list on the parish website so that parishioners who are currently attending mass virtually instead of in-person would also have the opportunity to view the list and make a donation if they so choose.

The committee members also discussed the possibility of allowing parishioners to drop-off their donations at the parish and having volunteers bring them to one of the above-listed drop-off centers. They felt more donations might be received if parishioners did not have to bring them to the drop-off locations.

Fr. John agreed to discuss this with the parish staff and he and Mary will talk about it at the next council meeting.

The committee members decided to begin collecting donations after Thanksgiving.

Faith & Blue

Fr. John mentioned that he has not had an opportunity to contact Officer Kurt Hallstrom of the St. Paul Police Department to let him know that the parish would be interested in participating 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 he would contact Officer Hallstrom to let him know that the parish would like the event to be a listening session that would give 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.

Prayer Service for These Times

The committee members reviewed the “Prayer Service for These Times” that took place at the parish (and via livestream) on Tuesday, October 13, 2020. They agreed that it was very well done, that the prayers and songs really fit the theme, that the sermon was excellent etc. They expressed that they wished that more people had attended and remarked that the majority of

those who were present in the church were committee members. (It was noted that approximately twenty parishioners were present in church and forty-one people viewed it on-line.)

The committee members noted that, instead of focusing on the number of those in attendance, it was important to recognize the good things being offered by the parish.

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

Kim reported that that parish will be offering a virtual study on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Open Wide Our Hearts* letter regarding the topic of racism. She stated that the study will take place on Tuesdays, starting February 23, 2021, and will last for four weeks. She said that the first three sessions will take place from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. and the fourth one from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Ann stated that these sessions will include small group discussions and that people will be needed to help facilitate these. She asked the committee members to consider assisting with this.

Fr. John remarked that the parish may also post the study materials on its website so that any parishioners interested in learning about the letter but prefer not to attend the virtual sessions would have access to these.

American Red Cross Blood Drive

Margaret announced that the next American Red Cross blood drive will take place at the parish on Monday, November 23, 2020, and that, as of now, thirty-eight out of the fifty-eight available slots have been filled. She remarked that, since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, donors have been signing up to give on-line so she has not had to make telephone calls asking for donations.

"We Were Made for These Times: Where Do We Go from Here?" Event Follow-up

The committee members discussed continuing the momentum that began as a result of 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.

They remarked on some of the things that have resulted from the above-listed event:

- the "Prayer Service for These Times" that took place at the parish (and via livestream) on Tuesday, October 13, 2020,
- the "JustFaith Ministries: Racial Justice" insert that was included in the November 1, 2020, bulletin,
- the above-referenced collaboration with Progressive Baptist and

- the upcoming “Be Light for These Times” Advent Evening of Reflection that will be held on Wednesday, December 9, 2020.

The committee members agreed to resume the discussion of this topic at the next meeting - perhaps taking some time to brainstorm additional ideas. They noted that, for any idea to be successful, it was important to have somebody who was willing to help get it started.

Anna agreed to contact all those who participated in the “We Were Made for These Times: Where Do We Go from Here?” event to invite them to join the committee. She said she would contact Kim to obtain the names of those present at this event.

Next Meeting

Thursday, December 3, 2020, at 6:30 p.m.

Fr. John or Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting.

Mary Huettl agreed to lead the prayer.