

**Social Justice and Caring Committee**  
**Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday, February 4, 2021 (via Zoom)**

Present: Martha Arko, Kendall Doom, Bill Dorgan, Mary Huettl, Ann Karner, Julie Ludden, Christine Malec (minute writer), Margaret Malec, Fr. John Mitchell, Eileen Muetzel, Ray Muetzel, Kim Roering and Mary Weyandt

**Beacon Interfaith Housing**

Several committee members reported having attended Beacon Interfaith Housing's "Bring it Home, MN" virtual meeting on January 21, 2021, which launched its legislative advocacy season. (Beacon Interfaith Housing is an organization working to end homelessness and advance equitable housing in the Twin Cities.) They said one of the pieces of legislation discussed was a bill that would provide a housing subsidy to those earning fewer than thirty thousand dollars per year.

These committee members stated that this organization makes it easy to do follow-up work with legislators by providing scripts for making telephone calls on various issues.

It was noted that becoming involved with Beacon Interfaith Housing might require some coordination by the parish. Fr. John reminded the committee members that Elizabeth Tannen from Beacon Interfaith Housing hopes to have parishes create a core group of parishioners who will work with its organization and have this group communicate with the entire parish, inviting parishioners to participate in housing-related issues either individually (such as by choosing to be added to Beacon Interfaith Housing's e-mail distribution list to receive information on various action items that can be taken) or with the core group.

**Meeting with Progressive Baptist**

Chris announced that the next virtual meeting with Progressive Baptist will be held on Thursday, February 11, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. via Google Meet. (These two churches meet monthly to discuss the needs of the under-sheltered/unsheltered on the eastside and to discern actions that could be taken to address their immediate needs as well as to create long-term solutions to address the issue of homelessness.)

Ann said that, at the last meeting, it was decided that this group would be called the Eastside Community Alliance. (Previously, it was called the Christian Community Alliance but it was decided that the name would be changed to be more inclusive to people of all faiths.)

Ann stated that Reverend Paul Johnson from Progressive Baptist had mentioned seeing an article in the newspaper stating that the City of St. Paul was striving for more coordination regarding the issue of serving the unsheltered. She said that the article contained a telephone number to call to obtain additional information and that Reverend Paul called this number and, after many attempts, was eventually referred to Freedom House. (See below description.) Ann stated that Reverend Paul discovered that Freedom House is currently accepting donations of clothing and

bedding, and, because of this, she has put announcements in the parish's electronic newsletter, the *Pulse* asking for donations.

Ann explained that one of the Progressive Baptist members, Joanne Hill, shared her brother's struggle with living on the streets and the need to provide long-term housing solutions for the unsheltered.

### **The Listening House**

Ann informed the committee members that Cheryl Peterson has left The Listening House and that Molly Jalma is serving as the Interim Executive Director.

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

Kim reminded the committee members that the parish will offer a four-week session on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Open Wide Our Hearts* letter regarding the topic of racism that will begin on Tuesday, February 23, 2021. She said that the parish's Communications & Office Manager, Thea Munoz, posted all of the session materials on the Adult Faith Formation webpage on the parish's website.

Kim stated that the sessions have been advertised via the parish's Facebook account, the bulletin and in the *Pulse* and that Fr. John invited parishioners to participate in these sessions at last weekend's 8:45 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. masses. Fr. John said that he would make an announcement about this at this weekend's 4:30 p.m. mass.

### **We Care Campaign**

The committee members discussed the following options for the We Care Campaign that will be held the weekend of March 6 - 7, 2021:

- **Beacon Interfaith Housing** - an organization working to end homelessness and advance equitable housing in the Twin Cities,
- **Freedom House** - a day shelter located at the former fire station on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street,
- **Joseph's Coat** - an inner-city free store providing clothes and household items to the poor,
- **Mosaic Christian Community** - a multi-ethnic church located on the eastside of St. Paul that is partnering with Settled to establish a tiny home community that will build a deep support system, create a space for social belonging, offer truly affordable and sustainable homes, provide purposeful work and create a neighborhood asset by transforming under-used spaces into a thriving, safe, clean, hospitable area, using its church building as a shared space, including a kitchen, shower rooms and common areas. (Mary Weyandt agreed to send the committee members a link to information regarding this option.),
- **Progressive Baptist Ministry Assisting the Unsheltered** - to support the work of Jeanette Jones, a member of Progressive Baptist who uses her own money to buy items for the unsheltered to whom she ministers (such as hot food, sanitizing wipes, tarps and tents) and

- **The Listening House** - a St. Paul inner-city drop-in center that provides hospitality and practical assistance to disadvantaged, unsheltered and lonely people.

The committee members chose Freedom House, the Mosaic Christian Community and the Progressive Baptist ministry assisting the unsheltered. (Those who will attend the next virtual meeting with Progressive Baptist will ask input on the best way to provide funds for this ministry.)

The committee members were not certain if Freedom House accepted monetary donations. Ann agreed to contact Freedom House to ask this. It was decided that if Freedom House does not accept monetary donations, this option would be replaced with Joseph's Coat.

### **American Red Cross Blood Drive**

Margaret noted that the American Red Cross blood drive was held at the parish on Monday, February 1, 2021, from 1:00 - 6:00 p.m. in Brioschi Hall. She stated that forty-six pints were donated - which was one more than the established goal.

Margaret remarked that the American Red Cross will give each of the doners a \$5.00 Amazon gift card.

Margaret announced that the next blood drive will be held at the parish on Monday, May 3, 2021, from 1:00 - 6:00 p.m. at the parish and that half of the donation slots have already been filled.

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

The committee members resumed their discussion on 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.

Mary Weyandt and Fr. John reported that, at the last parish council meeting, the members were presented with the committee's idea of starting an outreach campaign to parishioners who may be experiencing a sense of being disconnected to the parish as a result of the pandemic. They said that telephone calls would be made to parishioners over seventy years of age who do not receive the parish bulletin via the mail or have not signed up to receive the *Pulse* - which totals approximately one hundred and fifty people.

Fr. John stated that since he did not receive many responses to the Christmas letter that he sent to all parishioners asking anyone who needed assistance to contact the parish, those who volunteered to assist with this project could help make the telephone calls. He said that twenty-five parishioners volunteered to help, which would result in each of them having to make six telephone calls.

Mary stated that Fr. John drafted a script that the volunteers could use when making their telephone calls. She said the script keeps things general - stating that the parish is reaching out during this time of the pandemic, reminding the parishioners that, due to the COVID-19 protocols that have been put in place, attending mass is safe. The script will also contain questions such as asking if they would like to receive the *Pulse*.

It was determined that if any of those called express concerns that cannot be handled by the volunteer, they would be referred to Fr. John for a follow-up call.

The committee members discussed the possibility of expanding the age range of those who receive a call if the first round proves successful - such as parishioners of fifty to seventy years of age.

The committee members also discussed developing a plan to reach out to the youth of the parish.

### **April 2021 Meeting**

Christine told the committee members that Kim realized that the April 2021 meeting, which would normally fall on the 1<sup>st</sup> is Holy Thursday. Because of this, she suggested that the meeting date be changed. The committee members decided to meet on Wednesday, April 7, 2021, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom. Eileen and Ray volunteered to lead the prayer.

### **Next Meeting**

Thursday, March 4, 2021, at 6:30 p.m.

Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting.

Ann agreed to lead the prayer.