

Social Justice and Caring Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday, March 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

Prayer

The prayer was led by Ann.

Beacon Interfaith Housing

Ann announced that a leadership team has been formed to work on Beacon Interfaith Housing-related issues that consists of herself and fellow committee members Martha, Bill, Mary Huettl, Julie, Fr. John and parishioner/possible new committee member Julie Moore. (Beacon Interfaith Housing is an organization working to end homelessness and advance equitable housing in the Twin Cities.) She said the team is looking for additional members who may be interested in becoming active in this work. Ann stated that, although recruitment notices may be put in the parish's bulletin and electronic newsletter, the *Pulse*, she felt it would be more effective to use personal invitation as a means of finding more volunteers.

Ann said that she and Julie Moore attended training and that there is a relationship-building workshop next week.

Ann reminded the committee members that the next "Rent is Due Day of Action" will take place on Thursday, April 1, 2021, from 8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. It was stated that these meetings usually consist of two speakers followed by actions steps that can be taken by participants - such as asking their legislators to support a bill that would provide a housing subsidy to those earning fewer than thirty thousand dollars per year. Ann told the committee members that if they were interested in attending the next meeting, to let her know and she would send them a link to access it.

Ann mentioned that, although recent meetings with Elizabeth Tannen from Beacon Interfaith Housing, have taken place in the day, future ones may be held in the evening in order to give those who work during the day the opportunity to attend.

Meeting with Progressive Baptist

Chris announced that the next virtual meeting with Progressive Baptist will be held on Thursday, March 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 reported that she and committee member Bill along with Reverend Paul Johnson and Cynthia Morrison from Progressive Baptist delivered donated items to Freedom House. (See below description of Freedom House.) She noted that announcements have appeared in the bulletin and the *Pulse* asking for such donations.

Ann reminded the committee members that one can participate in food sorting every Friday between 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. as well as between 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. on Saturday mornings at Progressive Baptist - where all pandemic-related precautions are in place. She said that if any committee members were interested in participating in the food sort, to let her know and she would ask Reverend Paul from Progressive Baptist if the church needed additional help.

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

Christine mentioned that the four-week session on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Open Wide Our Hearts* letter regarding the topic of racism is currently in progress. She stated that the conversations have been very good.

JustFaith Catholic

Kim reported that the parish has decided to offer the JustFaith Catholic program on "Faith & Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege" again after Easter. She said that, this time, the program will be offered to all parishioners instead of only to those who have participated in past JustFaith Catholic programs. Kim noted that she has already sent an e-mail to all the Open Wide Our Hearts study participants inviting them to sign-up for the Faith & Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege program.

We Care Campaign

Christine reminded the committee members that the next We Care Campaign will be held the weekend of March 6 - 7, 2021, and that the options chosen were:

- **Freedom House** - a day shelter located at the former fire station on West 7th Street,
- **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 space into a thriving, safe, clean, hospitable area, using its church building as a shared space, including a kitchen, shower rooms and common areas and
- **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).

The committee members discussed the fact that the current "We Care Campaign" envelopes included in the packet that get distributed to parishioners do not include a section where donors can indicate to which options they would like to give. They pointed out that previous versions of the "We Care Campaign" envelopes have contained such a section. They surmised whether it

would be possible for the parish's current envelope company to modify the "We Care Campaign" envelope to include such a section. Fr. John agreed to ask the parish's Business Administrator, Theresa Ruttger, about this.

Outreach Project

Fr. John updated the committee members on the Parish Council initiative to reach out to parishioners who may be experiencing a sense of being disconnected to the parish as a result of the pandemic. He stated that volunteers are currently in the process of making telephone calls but that not all of the 148 parishioners who will be called have been assigned to a volunteer. (Those who are being called are 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*.)

Fr. John noted that those who are being called are asked:

- how they are doing,
- whether they have any needs,
- whether they feel safe coming to mass,
- whether they are watching mass on YouTube,
- whether they would like to receive the parish bulletin and
- whether they would like to receive the Pulse.

The volunteers are making note of the responses received in a Google Form.

The committee members who are assisting with the telephone calls remarked that some of the phone numbers they were given were no longer in service but that those parishioners they did reach were very thankful for having been contacted.

Mary Weyandt stated that the Parish Council spoke about next steps - including the possibility of expanding the outreach campaign to other parishioners if enough volunteers could be found to assist with this effort.

Past/Future Actions

Ann reviewed some of the committee's recent activities including:

- the One Body meeting held at the parish on the topic of immigration,
- the JustFaith Catholic programs: "Phase 1: Journey to Compassion," "Phase 2: Journey to Justice," "Faith & Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege" and "Faith & Racial Healings: Embracing Truth, Justice and Restoration,"
- the partnership with Progressive Baptist and
- the collaboration with Beacon Interfaith Housing.

The committee members also discussed future actions that could be taken using the parish's campus and facilities.

Next Meeting

Christine reminded the committee members that the next meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 7, 2021, from 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom. She stated that the committee was not meeting on the usual night of the first Thursday of the month due to the fact that this date falls on Holy Thursday.

Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting.

Eileen and Ray agreed to lead the prayer.