

Social Justice and Caring Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Wednesday, April 7, 2021 (via Zoom)

Present: Mary Huettl, Ann Karner, Julie Ludden, Christine Malec (minute writer), Margaret Malec, Fr. John Mitchell, Julie Moore, Eileen Muetzel, Ray Muetzel and Mary Root

Prayer

The prayer was led by Eileen and Ray.

New Members

The members welcomed Julie Moore and Mary Root to the committee.

Beacon Interfaith Housing

Ann reported that she attended the Beacon Interfaith Housing monthly leadership meeting. (Beacon Interfaith Housing is an organization working to end homelessness and advance equitable housing in the Twin Cities.) She said she learned that the “Bring It Home, Minnesota” legislation that would provide rent subsidies to low-income households is not going to pass this session. She stated that Beacon Interfaith Housing will try to pass this again at next year’s legislative session. Ann said Beacon Interfaith Housing will focus on other housing-related issues during the rest of the legislative session.

Ann remarked that Beacon Interfaith Housing offers a free “1 on 1” training that teaches people how to build relationships and connect with others to foster working together effectively. She stated that even though Beacon Interfaith Housing offers the training as a tool for recruiting people to work on housing issues, it could be adapted to any type of work. Ann encouraged the committee members to view the training on Beacon Interfaith Housing’s website.

Ann mentioned that Ben Werner from the East Side Freedom Library spoke about the disparities between whites and people of color with regards to home ownership on the eastside of St. Paul. She said that the East Side Freedom Library, which advocates for justice and works toward equity for all, might be a good partner with whom to collaborate.

JustFaith Catholic Program

Ann stated that the JustFaith Catholic program on “Faith & Racial Equity: Exploring Power and Privilege” started this past Tuesday. She said that Mary Huettl is serving as her co-facilitator and that six other parishioners are participating in the program.

Ann suggested that, perhaps at some time in the future, all those who have participated in the various JustFaith Catholic programs could gather together to reflect on their experiences, share what they have learned, express how they were affected etc.

Ann noted that these participants who are not already serving as committee members could be possible recruits.

Meeting with Progressive Baptist

Chris announced that the next virtual meeting with Progressive Baptist will be held on Thursday, April 8, 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 stated that she will be putting announcements in next week's bulletin regarding a project that both congregations have worked on in the past.

Ann reminded the committee members that one can participate in the food sorting that takes places every Friday at Progressive Baptist and that if any committee members were interested in participating to let her know.

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 COVID-19 pandemic. He said that the volunteers making the calls have received positive feedback from those being called and that most of the parishioners have not requested any assistance.

Fr. John stated that a card may be sent to the parishioners that the volunteers were unable to reach after several phone call attempts and that these cards may be made by the parish or school children. He said that the parish will have to update the contact information for these parishioners.

Fr. John noted that, due to the success of contacting the parishioners over seventy years of age who do not receive the parish bulletin via the mail or have not signed up to receive the parish's electronic newsletter, the *Pulse*, calls may be extended to include parishioners over seventy years of age who do receive the bulletin and/or the *Pulse*.

Recruitment/Reorganization

The members noted that, with the various activities in which they are involved - such as the American Red Cross blood drive, collaborating with Beacon Interfaith Housing, collecting clothes for Freedom House, the JustFaith Catholic program, the partnership with Progressive Baptist, etc., additional people should be recruited to serve on the committee and/or to work on projects sponsored by the committee.

The members recognized that getting to know parishioners on a personal level could help identify any social justice issues in which these parishioners might be interested and on which they might be willing to work.

The members agreed that parishioners could volunteer to work on various social justice issues without having to be a member of the committee and/or attend committee meetings.

The members acknowledged that one way to attract people back to the parish after the COVID-19 pandemic is to have a vibrant Social Justice and Caring Committee.

The members spoke about the need to inform the parish about the committee. Some ideas discussed include:

- adding to the committee's webpage on the parish's website;
- being available after mass to respond to questions parishioners may have about the committee,
- creating a committee brochure describing the various projects in which the members are involved - listing the contact information for the leads of each of these projects,
- personally inviting parishioners to get involved,
- putting an insert in the bulletin describing the committee,
- utilizing the committee's bulletin board located in the gathering space and
- writing items for the bulletin and/or the *Pulse*.

Ann agreed to start putting a notice in the bulletin every week on a variety of topics - including activities in which the committee is involved, social justice-related book recommendations etc.

Mary Huettl volunteered to look at the bulletin board to see how it could be used more effectively.

The committee members decided to resume discussing this topic at their next meeting.

We Care Campaign

Chris mentioned that Fr. John told her that he had asked parish Business Administrator, Theresa Ruttger, whether the parish's current envelope company would be able to modify the "We Care Campaign" envelope to include a section where donors could indicate the options to they would like to contribute and that he was informed that this would not be possible. She stated that, in light of this, in future announcements regarding the "We Care Campaign," she would instruct parishioners to write a note on the envelope indicating how they would like their donation distributed. Chris said that she would also continue to inform parishioners that they have the option of using an old envelope that does contain a section on which they could indicate how they would like their donation distributed.

Next Meeting

Thursday, May 6, 2021, from 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting.

Mary Huettl agreed to lead the prayer.