

Social Justice and Caring Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday, May 6, 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, Julie Moore, Kim Roering and Mary Weyandt

Prayer

The prayer was led by Mary Huettl.

Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative

Julie Moore reported that Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, an organization working to end homelessness and advance equitable housing in the Twin Cities, is currently working to obtain support for Ramsey County's property tax levy for its Housing and Redevelopment Authority. She said that the funds raised through the levy will be used to create new affordable housing for Ramsey County residents and will provide a long-term resource to address the existing housing crisis.

Julie Moore noted that Fr. John will discuss this levy during his homily this weekend and that information about it will also be posted on the parish's website as well as in the bulletin and electronic newsletter, the *Pulse*, and that this information includes a sample letter endorsing the levy that could be sent to one's St. Paul City Council member. She stated that the sample letter will also be made available after the masses this weekend.

The committee members remarked that they realize that affordable housing is very complex but they felt that providing information about the levy would be a good first step in making parishioners aware of this issue.

Ann reminded the committee members that the "Bring It Home, Minnesota" legislation that would provide rent subsidies to low-income households is not going to pass this session. She said that Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative will meet at the end of May to plan on how to continue working on this effort during next year's legislative session. Ann stated that Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative feels more hopeful about getting this legislation passed during next year's legislative session due to the fact that it has now formed good relationships with various legislators.

Ann mentioned that, at the May "Rent is Due" meeting, she learned that Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative has worked with Catholic Charities on various projects.

Partnership with Progressive Baptist

Ann told the committee members that last month's meeting with Progressive Baptist was canceled.

Ann informed the committee members that twelve parishioners now participate in the food sorting that takes place every Friday between 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at Progressive Baptist. She said that one can also assist with the distribution set-up between 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. on Saturday. Ann stated that if any of the committee members were interested in assisting with these efforts to let her know.

Ann asked the committee members to spread the news about the food shelf - about the generous amount of food that is included in the boxes that get distributed every Saturday morning between 10:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. Fr. John suggested describing what gets distributed on the parish's website and in the bulletin.

The committee members discussed other local food shelves - such as the Christian Cupboard in Oakdale, Minnesota. Ann volunteered to make a list of these.

Donation Closet

Kim renewed discussion on the parish's donation closet in light of the fact that more parishioners may be returning to mass as result of the loosening of COVID-19 restrictions and the increased number of those who have been vaccinated. She asked for which organization the parish accepts donations and which parishioners deliver these donations. Christine said that, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the parish was accepting donations for Brittany's Place, Joseph's Coat, The Listening House and Merrick Community Services.

Kim stated that she had spoken to parishioner Kathy Meyer who informed her that Andre Simon delivers donations to The Listening House and John Roche delivers donations to Merrick Community Services. The committee members determined that, as of now, there may be no volunteers to make deliveries to Brittany's House or Joseph's Coat.

Christine reminded the members that the committee had drafted a sheet for the donation closet describing the above-listed organizations and listing the items they accepted as donations but that it was never finalized. The committee members agreed that it should be updated to ensure that it reflects the organizations current needs. Mary Weyandt said that she still has the document. Ann and Kim volunteered to work with her on this. They agreed to present the revised draft at the next committee meeting.

The committee members debated whether the parish should continue collecting for each of the above-listed organizations year-round or if donations should be accepted for each organization on a rotating basis - switching the donation focus each month - so that each organization would come up in the rotation several times a year. The committee members decided to collect for the organizations on a rotating basis.

The committee members discussed whether the parish should choose Catholic Charities' Giving Tree program (which collects unwrapped gifts for those in need) for the month of December since the parish collected donations for this program last year and it was a successful drive.

American Red Cross Blood Drive

Margaret announced that thirty-one units were donated at the American Red Cross blood drive that was held at the parish on Monday, May 3, 2021. She stated that the next blood drive will take place at the parish on Monday, June 28, 2021, from 1:00 - 7:00 p.m. and that half of the donation slots for this drive are already full.

Margaret said that she hopes that Grace Lutheran will renew taking its turn hosting the blood drive that will take place this fall. (Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Grace Lutheran has not been taking its turn hosting the blood drive.)

Future Meeting Location

Christine stated that she had received an e-mail from parish Communications & Office Manager, Thea Munoz, asking her to schedule the Social Justice and Caring committee meetings for the next fiscal year of July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022.

Christine said that Thea informed her that committee meetings can continue to be held via Zoom or members could meet on-site - choosing to use either Brioschi Hall or the Staff Lounge.

Christine stated that if the committee members decide to meet on-site, they would first need to submit a *COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for Building Usage in Parish Spaces* to parish Business Administrator, Theresa Ruttger.

Christine noted that she has to let Thea know the committee's decision by May 28, 2021.

The committee members decided to continue meeting via Zoom for the time being and agreed they would consider switching to meeting on-site if COVID-19 restrictions are lifted later this year.

Community Event

The committee members discussed ways to develop relationships with those in the neighborhood surrounding the parish. They suggested some possible options for accomplishing this:

- partnering with the East Side Interfaith Alliance to address this concern,
- inviting Pastor Miller from Progressive Baptist to be a guest speaker at the parish,
- holding 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),
- working with the congregations that participate in the annual Thanksgiving ecumenical service on this issue and
- hosting a National Night Out-type event.

The committee members decided to pursue the idea of hosting a National Night Out-type event - with food and games - either on John Ryan field or in the upper parking lot. They discussed

having the event on August 3, 2021, the official date for the National Night Out or on another day if those who live near the church would be involved in their own neighborhood National Night Out event.

The committee members suggested creating a flyer for the event and then going door-to-door to the houses in the neighborhood surrounding the parish distributing the flyer, inviting the residents to the event.

The committee members agreed to resume their discussion of this event at their next meeting.

We Care Campaign

Christine said that Theresa Ruttger provided her with the results for the “We Care Campaign” held the weekend of March 6 - 7, 2021. She stated that a total of \$1,469.00 was donated to the Campaign and that, individually, the following amounts were raised for each of the options:

- **Freedom House** - a day shelter located at the former fire station on West 7th Street operated by the Listening House - \$508.00
- **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 for the unsheltered - \$453.00 and
- **You Matter Outreach Ministry** - run by Jeanette Jones, a member of Progressive Baptist, to minister to the unsheltered in the Twin Cities by providing them with needed items such as hot food, sanitizing wipes, tarps and tents - \$508.00.

Christine reminded the committee members that the next “We Care Campaign” will be held the weekend of June 5 - 6, 2021, and that they should choose the options for this. They discussed choosing Every Meal (formerly called The Sheridan Story) - an organization in the Twin Cities area that fights child hunger by providing a weekend supply of food to hungry children. However, based on the above-noted discussion regarding the possibility of hosting a community event, the committee members decided to choose one option for the June We Care Campaign to raise funds to support parish outreach efforts in the neighborhood surrounding the parish. Ann and Christine agreed to work on the text for the bulletin announcement.

Committee Bulletin Board

Mary Huettl announced that she updated the committee’s bulletin board located in the gathering space outside the church.

Next Meeting

Thursday, June 3, 2021, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting.

Bill agreed to lead the prayer.