

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

Present: Martha Arko, Bill Dorgan, Mickie Hageman, Mary Huettl, Ann Karner, Julie Ludden, Christine Malec (minute writer), Fr. John Mitchell, Julie Moore, Kim Roering, Mary Root and Mary Weyandt

Prayer

The prayer was led by Ann.

Possible New Member

The committee welcomed a possible new member, Mickie Hageman.

Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative

Julie Moore updated the committee on Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, an organization working to end homelessness and advance equitable housing in the Twin Cities. She stated that the in-reach project to familiarize parishioners about this organization (via one-on-one conversations) is approximately half completed and that it is going well.

Ann informed the committee that some parishioners declined having a conversation and others were interested in the work of the Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative but felt they could not devote themselves to it at this point in time. She added that, as a result of the in-reach effort, ten additional parishioners have expressed interest in becoming involved with this organization's work.

Ann also reported that many of those who were interviewed gave positive responses regarding the parish's social justice efforts and that the Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative is pleased with the parish's efforts.

Julie Moore informed the committee members that Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative is currently educating people about the proposed rent stabilization ordinances that will appear on this November's ballot in the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. She said the ordinances would limit residential rent increases to no more than three percent per year.

Continued Community Outreach

Mary Root announced that she had gotten additional information regarding Merrick Community Service's request that the parish partner with this organization. She stated that, instead of asking the parish to serve a meal on a monthly basis, Merrick Community Services would like St. Pascal's to become a mobile food distribution site to assist those living on the eastside who are experiencing food insecurity. Mary said that Merrick Community Services would supply the food that would be distributed (such as eggs, produce, protein, staples etc.). She stated that the parish could choose to distribute the food curbside or in-person. Mary said the parish would be

expected to store any leftover food but that, if needed, Merrick Community Services could provide a refrigerator and/or a freezer for this purpose. She stated that Merrick Community Services estimated that it would take ten volunteers approximately four to five hours to do the food distribution.

The committee members liked the idea of becoming involved with this project but expressed concerns that it could jeopardize the parish's recently-established collaboration with assisting Progressive Baptist with its food shelf. They acknowledged that Progressive Baptist is still in need of volunteers due to the fact that many of its congregation members have not yet returned as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic so they would like to continue supporting this effort.

The committee members also debated whether it might be redundant to have two food shelves relatively close to each other. They felt it was possible that there is enough need on the eastside to warrant having two food shelves in close proximity and acknowledged that some people may not be able to travel as far as Progressive Baptist in order to make use of its food shelf.

It was decided that St. Pascal's would host a meeting and ask a representative from Merrick Community Services to attend along with members of Progressive Baptist who are associated with that congregation's food shelf and any interested committee members to discuss the possibility of both congregations working together with Merrick Community Services. Ann volunteered to speak to members from Progressive Baptist and ask if they would be interested in attending such a meeting. Christine agreed to organize this meeting.

The committee members also discussed whether it would be possible to assist Merrick Community Services with a different project if the parish decides not to become a food distribution site.

Donation Closet

It was noted that Freedom House will be the recipient of the November 2021 donation closet collection. Christine will contact Freedom House to determine this organization's current donation needs. Absent committee members Eileen and Ray Muetzel had previously agreed to delivering the donations collected for this organization.

The committee members decided to take down all the signs in the donation closet except for the one indicating the recipient of the current month's donation.

Ann asked Fr. John if the parish had received any information regarding the December 2021 donation closet recipient - the Catholic Charities Giving Tree program (which collects unwrapped gifts for those in need). He said he did not think so but he would look into this. Fr. John also stated that he would check in with the Angel Tree ministry (a program that provides the children of incarcerated parents with Christmas gifts) since the committee decided to support this organization in December as well.

Meeting with Progressive Baptist/East Side Community Alliance

Christine said that the next meeting with Progressive Baptist will take place on Thursday, October 14, 2021, at 5:30 p.m. via Google Meet. She stated that any committee members not on the distribution list for these meetings who would like to attend should let Ann know and Ann would ensure that they received a meeting invitation.

Kim asked if the parish's partnership with Progressive Baptist (called the East Side Community Alliance) would expand to include other congregations. Ann said that this was the intent but that the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down such plans. It was suggested that when plans to increase involvement in the East Side Community Alliance are underway, a possible starting point could be to invite the other congregations that are involved in the annual ecumenical service in which the parish and Progressive Baptist participate.

Cerenity Senior Care Marian

Kim reported that she had been contacted by Cerenity Senior Marian asking that the parish advertise and/or participate in its winter clothing food drive for the American Indian Magnet school. The committee members decided not to collect items for this drive due to the fact that the parish has a set schedule for collecting items for other charitable organizations. However, they agreed to put announcements regarding the drive in its bulletin and electronic newsletter, the *Pulse*. Kim volunteered to do this.

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Mickie asked if the parish had ever been involved with the National Alliance on Mental Illness. The committee members stated that they did not think that the parish had. Fr. John mentioned that May is Mental Health Awareness month so that might be a good time to educate the parish about this issue - such as by bringing in a speaker.

Next Meeting

Thursday, November 4, 2021, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting.

Martha agreed to lead the prayer.