

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

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

Prayer

The prayer was led by Martha.

Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative

Julie Moore updated the committee on the 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 with this organization has been completed and that it was successful. Julie Moore said the first meeting with this team of interested parishioners (approximately twenty in number) will be held on Monday, November 15, 2021, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Julie Moore noted that the rent stabilization ordinances that appeared on the Minneapolis and St. Paul ballots this past Tuesday's election passed.

Julie Moore said that Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative seems to be pleased with the efforts being undertaken by the parish.

Merrick Community Services - Possible Food Distribution Ministry

The committee members continued their discussion on having the parish work with Merrick Community Services to serve as a possible food distribution site to assist those living on the eastside who are experiencing food insecurity.

Kim informed the committee members that she, Fr. John, Mike Kelleher (the parish's Director of Facilities and Maintenance) and Theresa Ruttger, (the parish's Business Administrator) met with Joshua Bao, (the Food Services Manager) and Josh Daniel Rodriguez (the Executive Director) from Merrick Community Services to tour the parish to determine if it would be a good location for a food distribution ministry. She stated that Joshua and Daniel felt that Brioschi Hall could be used.

Kim reviewed the information learned from the above-described site visit and the meeting held on Tuesday, October 19, 2021, with various committee members, representatives from Progressive Baptist and Joshua Bao from Merrick Community Services. She said that:

- Merrick Community Services is looking for an additional food distribution center since it might be closing its Woodland Hills location.

- If the parish decides to become involved in this ministry, it could choose when to begin distributing the food and how often it would do this.
- The parish could start distributing food to a small number of families and choose to increase this number in the future.
- The parish could decide to distribute the food curbside or in the building - but that it would probably start doing curbside distribution.
- Merrick Community Services would deliver the food to the parish and pick-up any leftovers - either on the distribution day or the day after this.
- Merrick Community Services is prepared to provide other assistance to those coming to pick-up food if they desire additional help - such as employment/family/senior/youth services.
- The parish could decide which day(s) of the week to distribute the food and the time frame for the distribution.
- This ministry takes approximately four to five hours - with one and a half hours for set-up and two hours for the food distribution and cleanup.
- A total of six to eight volunteers are usually needed for this ministry - including somebody to serve as the lead.
- Volunteers will be required to have a background check. This background check would be performed by the parish. Merrick Community Services would not need to see the background checks; it would only need to be informed that the volunteers passed the background checks.
- Merrick Community Services would require that the parish do some data collection - such as the number of household/individuals served and the ages of those served.
- Merrick Community Services does not expect the parish to make any financial contribution to it.
- Diamond Hunter, the Senior Manager of Integrated and Family Services from Merrick Community Services, would be willing to give presentations on trauma informed care to those picking up food who may be interested.

Kim stated that Merrick Community Services provides dry goods at its mobile market at John Glenn Middle School to approximately sixty families in a four-hour time span, ministers to approximately thirty to one hundred families over a two-day period at its Woodland Hills location and serves approximately fifty families per day, four days a week, at its Arcade location.

Kim reported that she and Fr. John had met with the rest of the parish staff and asked for their input on whether St. Pascal's should participate in this ministry. She said that they were supportive of this effort.

The committee members decided that if the parish were to decide to participate in this ministry:

- it would not choose to distribute food on Fridays or Saturdays so as not to overlap with Progressive Baptist's food shelf sorting/distribution times,
- the food distribution would be done through Door #4 in the upper parking lot,
- the time for the food distribution would start no earlier than 3:00 p.m. in order to ensure that the school children would have left for the day,

- more than the recommended six to eight volunteers should be sought so that people would always be available to serve,
- it could possibly send out announcements to try and gauge whether parishioners would be interested in the parish becoming involved in this ministry and
- it would start small - distributing food once a month, ministering to a small number of families (twenty to twenty-five) and then expand this if things seem to be going well.

The committee members reiterated that they do not want to jeopardize the parish's recently-established collaboration with assisting Progressive Baptist with its food shelf. They acknowledged that Progressive Baptist has been very supportive of St. Pascal's becoming involved in this ministry and has offered to provide the parish with supplies that it might need as well as volunteer assistance.

Mary Weyandt expressed an interest in possibly serving as the lead for this project and indicated that her sister Anne may also be willing to work on this.

Kim agreed to contact Daniel and/or Joshua to get some answers to some of the committee members questions (for example, a description of the site leader's role, whether the same volunteers do the set-up, distribution and clean-up etc.). It was noted that Mary Weyandt may participate in this conversation as well since she is contemplating becoming the site leader.

It was noted that Merrick Community Services also expressed partnering with the parish with other community events - such as National Night Out.

American Red Cross Blood Drive

Margaret announced that the next American Red Cross blood drive will be held at the parish on Monday, November 22, 2021, from 1:00 - 7:00 p.m. in Brioschi Hall.

Catholic Charities Giving Tree

The committee members decided to participate again in Catholic Charities Giving Tree program - which collects unwrapped gifts for those in need.

Fr. John mentioned that he had contacted the program for information regarding this year's collection. He showed the committee members a copy of this organization's 2021 wish list which contains suggested gift ideas for clothing, housewares, self-care and other miscellaneous items.

He reminded the committee members that when the parish participated in this program last year, copies of the wish list were printed and folded, ribbons were tied to them and they were placed as ornaments on a Christmas tree was set up in the gathering space - for parishioners to take for reference when purchasing items to donate to the program.

Fr. John stated that parishioners can bring their donated items to the Catholic Charities Distribution Center in St. Paul, the Catholic Charities' two-day Warming House collection site at the Mall of America or to the parish.

It was determined that the Christmas tree will be placed in the gathering space on Thanksgiving weekend and will stay up until Christmas.

Fr. John agreed to begin getting things set up for this year's collection.

Ann volunteered to deliver the items that are dropped off at the parish to Catholic Charities.

Angel Tree Ministry

The committee members agreed to participate in the Angel Tree ministry again, a program that provides the children of incarcerated parents with Christmas gifts.

Mary Weyandt, who is heading up this project, explained that five children have been assigned to the parish (three from one family) and that she would like some assistance with tasks such as labeling the tags that will be placed on the Christmas tree with the gifts desired by the children, putting the tags on the tree, wrapping the donated items, delivering the donated items etc.

Mary Huettl volunteered to label the tags.

The committee members decided to hang the Angel Tree ministry tags on the same Christmas tree as the above-described Catholic Charities Giving Tree program wish list ornaments - especially since parishioners will be able to tell them apart since the Angel Tree ministry tags are shaped like angels. They determined that there should be separate drop-off boxes for each collection to ensure that the donations for each stay separated.

The committee members decided to accept donations for the Angel Tree ministry until December 15, 2021, in order to allow for enough time to wrap and deliver the gifts to the children assigned to the parish.

The committee members discussed the possibility of hosting a party for the recipients of the gifts.

It was decided that this ministry (as well as the above-described Catholic Charities Giving Tree) would be advertised in the bulletin and the parish's electronic newsletter, the *Pulse* and that Fr. John may make pulpit announcements regarding these collections.

Next Meeting

Thursday, December 2, 2021, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting.

Mary Huettl agreed to lead the prayer.