

Social Justice and Caring Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday, June 2, 2022 (via Zoom)

Present: Bill Dorgan, Mickie Hageman, Mary Huettl, Chris Igielski, Ann Karner, Julie Ludden, Christine Malec (minute writer), Margaret Malec, Kim Roering, and Mary Weyandt

Prayer

The prayer was led by Margaret.

Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative

Christine stated that committee member Ann Karner provided her with an update regarding Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, an organization working to end homelessness and to advance equitable housing in the Twin Cities. She said that Ann reported that, on Thursday, June 23, 2022, Cross Lutheran church in Maplewood will host a meeting (in-person and via Zoom) from 7:30 - 8:30 p.m. to preview the new supportive housing development being built for young adults (up to age twenty-four) and their children. Christine stated that Ann mentioned that the parish's Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative team will advertise this meeting and invite parishioners to attend and that Ann is encouraging the committee members to come as well as a sign of support of this effort.

Mary Huettl mentioned that the development will have approximately forty units and that it will provide services to the tenants - such as job training, nursing, parenting classes, social work etc.

Julie said that those interested in attending may meet at the parish and car pool to the event.

Donation Closet

Julie noted that the recent collection for Brittany's Place contained fewer donations than the first one. She and absent committee member, Martha Arko, suggested that the parish collect donations for this organization only two times a year to enable parishioners more time to accumulate items to donate. The committee members were fine with this idea and discussed replacing Brittany's Place with another charity for the additional times it is on the donation closet calendar.

JustFaith Program Suggestions

Christine and Kim reported that committee member Ann Karner had attended the last Adult Faith Formation team (of which they are both members) to discuss some of the ideas that came from the participants of the most recent JustFaith program (Faith and Poverty: A Justice Response) and to request possible sponsorship by the Adult Faith Formation Team and/or the Social Justice and Caring Committee for these ideas. The ideas mentioned include:

- creating a weekly “Faith in Action” section in the parish bulletin and/or the electronic newsletter, the *Pulse*, listing things such as opportunities for involvement in faith-related activities, faith-related book/movie suggestions etc. (Ann agreed to work on this.),
- giving parishioners the opportunity to read a book and then come together to share what they learned in small groups - with facilitated discussion (Some of the suggested books include: Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption by Bryan Stevenson, Racial Justice and the Catholic Church by Bryan N. Massingale, Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle by Shannen Dee Williams and White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo,
- having a forum on racism with various speakers,
- hosting a movie night with social justice-related films - such as *Just Mercy* and
- planning a “Candidates Night” in the fall (perhaps with other eastside churches such as Grace Lutheran, Presentation, Progressive Baptist) - inviting local legislators to have a discussion on various social justice-related topics such as the environment, health care access, housing insecurity (perhaps including the work of the Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative), racism etc.

The members felt that the “Faith in Action” section, the discussion on racism and the “Candidates Night” would fit in well with the work of the committee.

Kim volunteered to check the parish calendar for possible dates to host a “Candidates Night.”

Mary Huettl noted that another suggestion that came from the most recent JustFaith program was improving the signage in Brioschi Hall to make it more clear regarding what items could be composted, recycled, put in the garbage etc. She stated that she had agreed to do this project but when she went to the parish to work on it, she spoke with parish Business Administrator, Theresa Ruttger, who took her on a tour of the recycling program in the school - which Theresa felt could be adopted by the parish. Mary Huettl said that Theresa informed her that the school obtained a grant to help pay for the costs associated with converting to the new recycling program (such as new bins, counter tops, rollers, signs etc.). Mary Huettl observed that such a project is bigger than originally thought so that additional volunteers may need to be involved in moving it forward and it may require funding. Kim remarked that the Catholic Community Foundation distributes grants and could be a possible source of funding.

The committee members discussed other suggestions such as:

- continue making connections with neighbors around the parish - perhaps asking for their input on how the parish could be of assistance (perhaps during the National Night out event),
- focusing on the topic of racism - which is connected to issues such as housing insecurity, gun violence, mental health etc.,
- having a talk on mental illness (Mickie volunteered to contact the National Alliance on Mental Illness to see if this organization has any suggestions for how churches could work on this issue.) and

- scheduling a “Faith & Blue” event (after the National Night Out 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. (It was noted that the committee had been planning on hosting such an event but that such plans were put on hold as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Kim agreed to ask Fr. John if he still has the contact for this event.)

Merrick Community Services Food Distribution Ministry

Mary Weyandt reported that twenty-six families were served at the second Merrick Community Services food distribution event that took place at the parish on Monday, May 23, 2022. She stated that all the food was distributed in approximately fifteen minutes and, because of this, it was decided that the parish would increase the number of families that it serves to fifty starting with the next distribution event - which will take place on Tuesday, June 28, 2022. (Mary Weyandt noted this event is taking place one day later than the normally-scheduled “fourth Monday of the month” due to the fact that the American Red Cross blood drive is taking place at the parish on Monday, June 27, 2022.)

It was suggested that, in lieu of holding up signs on the corners near the church advertising the food distribution, it might be easier to have some sandwich board-type signs made for this purpose. Mary Weyandt said that she would contact parishioner Brianna Flanagan who might be able to help with this.

The committee members discussed the possibility of having the parish collect items that could be distributed to the families being served in addition to the food provided by Merrick Community Services - such as toilet paper. It was suggested that collecting such items could be added to the parish’s donation closet schedule - perhaps taking the place of some of the already scheduled Brittany’s Place collections. (See the above “Donation Closet” section.) The committee members liked this idea. It was suggested that such a collection could take place starting in August 2022.

National Night Out

Mary Weyandt provided the committee members with the following updates regarding the National Night Out event that will take place at the parish on Tuesday, August 2, 2022. She stated that the parish has been registered for this event and that:

- Fr. John Mitchell had given her copies of the letters that were used to solicit donations for the door prizes that were given out at last year’s event, that she will update these letters for this year’s event, keep track of them on a spreadsheet and give committee members the opportunity to deliver them to any of the chosen locations,
- Julie has volunteered to work on the gift bags that will be distributed to the children in attendance,
- there has not been much success finding food trucks to participate in this year’s event and
- the Kim will create the flyer for the event and that it is possible that the names of the businesses that donate prizes to the event will be added to the back of the flyer.

We Care Campaign

Christine mentioned that she had submitted bulletin announcements for the June 4 - 5, 2022, We Care Campaign. She said that she had asked for the announcements to appear in the bulletin two weekends prior to the Campaign but they ended up appearing the weekend before and this coming weekend. Christine reminded the committee members that the options chosen for this Campaign are:

- **Merrick Community Services** - a non-profit agency in Ramsey County that assists individuals and families in transition from poverty to become self-sufficient,
- **Minnesota Adult and Teen Challenge** - an organization that provides in/out-patient treatment services for adults and teens seeking recovery from chemical addictions and other life-controlling problems by addressing their physical, emotional and spiritual needs and
- **Save Ukraine Mutual Aid Center** - an organization which focuses on evacuating people from this country's war zone and providing them with clothing, food, fuel, housing, hygiene products etc.

American Red Cross Blood Drive

Margaret reminded the committee members that the next American Red Cross blood drive will take place at the parish on Monday, June 27, 2022. She stated that, as of now, twenty-three of the fifty-three donation slots have been filled.

Margaret stated that she is still waiting for the American Red Cross to provide her with the dates of the future blood drives.

Strategic Planning

Bill asked for an update on the "Social Justice and Caring Committee" section of the parish's *A Road Map for 2024: Strategic Plan for The Church of St. Pascal Baylon, St. Paul, MN* document. Mary Weyandt, the current chair of the parish Council, said that the Council will discuss "next steps" regarding this document at its next meeting and that parish leadership will be contacted to provide input on how the strategic plan will be put into action. Ann, another Council member, stated that the committee will be asked how to implement the "Social Justice and Caring" part of the plan.

Next Meeting

Thursday, July 7, 2022, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting.

Ann agreed to lead the prayer.