

Social Justice and Caring Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday, August 4, 2022 (via Zoom)

Present: Martha Arko, Bill Dorgan, 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 Kim.

Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative

Julie Moore told the committee members that volunteers for Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative (an organization working to end homelessness and to advance equitable housing in the Twin Cities) will receive additional training before meeting with members of the Maplewood City Council and Ramsey County Commissioners to discuss land use permits.

JustFaith Program Suggestion: Possible Candidates' Night

Ann reported that she had spoken to Hayden KilKenny from the St. Paul chapter of the League of Women Voters regarding the possibility of the parish partnering with this organization to host a candidates' night in the fall. She said that Hayden looked at Brioschi Hall and thought it would work as a venue as long as the room was arranged with the chairs set up "classroom style" instead of being positioned around tables. Ann stated that she has to provide Hayden with the total room capacity for Brioschi Hall.

Ann said that Hayden informed her that the League of Women Voters would:

- invite the candidates (It was noted that, in order to ensure that the event will be non-partisan, all candidates running for office in the chosen districts will be invited to participate. It was recommended that the candidates from legislative districts located in St. Paul, such as 4, 65 and 65A, be invited. The committee members acknowledged that, since many parishioners live in legislative districts not located in St. Paul, the parish could advertise other candidates' nights being held in other districts.),
- set-up for the event,
- provide the moderator and
- create the questions that the candidates will be asked. (The parish and attendees will also be given the opportunity to submit questions and the League will sort through them and choose the most relevant ones to ask the candidates.)

Ann remarked that the parish would be expected to advertise the event and that providing refreshments would be optional.

Ann mentioned that she was informed that the candidates would not be allowed to have their campaign literature inside Brioschi Hall but that they could have it in the gathering space. She

pointed out that the parish would have no control over the content of what the campaign literature might say. The committee members discussed the possibility of adding a disclaimer to the event advertising stating that the parish does not endorse any of the candidates or their views.

The committee members decided they would prefer to host this event at the end of September or in early October. Kim volunteered to check the parish calendar for dates during this timeframe when Brioschi Hall would be available. Ann asked her to let her know these dates and she would inform the League of Women Voters when Brioschi Hall would be available.

Merrick Community Services Food Distribution Ministry

The committee members discussed possible signage options for advertising the parish's Merrick Community Services food distribution ministry including:

- a banner that could be placed on the fence facing Third Street,
- an electronic sign and
- sandwich board-style signs for use if volunteers continue to stand on the corners around the parish advertising this ministry. (The committee members discussed having several volunteers take turns holding the signs instead of one or two doing this task for the duration of the food distribution.)

Kim mentioned that she has started to create possible designs for the signage.

The committee members also talked about:

- adding information regarding Progressive Baptist's food distribution event to the flyers advertising the parish's event that are distributed to the guests,
- having some pet food on hand to distribute to the guests who have cats or dogs,
- creating some guidelines for when guests should be given extra amounts of food
- using a tent canopy while distributing the food during the winter months in order to have some protection from the elements and
- having to be careful not to allow food that should not get frozen stay outside for long periods of time in the cold weather (e.g., eggs).

National Night Out

The committee members reviewed the second annual National Night Out event that was held at the parish on Tuesday, August 2, 2022. It was commented that:

- since most of the set up took place during the morning on the day of the event, the volunteers could have arrived later in the day,
- the welcome table and food distribution area were important places to connect to the guests,
- it seemed like many of the guests were from the neighborhood surrounding the church (more than last year),
- several guests mentioned having received the flyer advertising the event,

- it was a good idea to open up dining in Brioschi Hall as an option for people due to the hot and humid weather and that it may be a good idea to offer this option at future National Night Out events and to make it clear in the advertising that both indoor and outdoor dining would be available,
- the freeze pops were popular with the guests,
- the pizza was popular with the guests but it was somewhat difficult to cut and to tell the difference between the cheese and pepperoni options,
- having the water set up in jugs located by the eating area outside seemed to work well and resulted in not having to recycle a lot of water bottles,
- no local legislators attended this year's event,
- the parish had the largest number of children that utilized the opportunity to get a free book in The Free Book Buggy van,
- perhaps next year:
 - additional tents could be set up in order to protect the volunteers and guest from possible foul weather,
 - there could be more activities for the adults - such as some of the games used at other parish event (e.g., Plinko),
 - the parish could prepare some ice breaker activities to facilitate people getting to know each other (e.g., find somebody who has been married for ten years etc.) and/or the volunteers could make efforts to reach out to people they do not know,
 - the parish could distribute backpacks and school supplies to the children in attendance - as long as doing so would not jeopardize similar activities being undertaken for the school students and
 - the parish could have a voter registration table.

It was noted that the cupcakes were well-received but there were a lot leftover. It was decided that the leftovers would be handed out after mass this weekend. It was determined that if cupcakes were served again next year, fewer should be made.

Julie Ludden remarked that thirty-one goody bags were distributed to children and that the leftovers were given to Progressive Baptist to give away at its next food distribution event. The committee members decided to remove the age restriction currently listed on the goody bag tickets since the parish did not run out of the bags at either last year or this year's events.

It was noted that Kim took pictures during the event and that she would post them on the parish's Facebook page.

Mary Weyandt said that she would send thank you letters to the sponsors who provided donations for the event and that Kim would post a list of these sponsors on the parish's Facebook page.

Possible Produce Giveaway

The committee members resumed their discussion of having a table in the gathering space at which parishioners could give away their excess produce from their gardens to those who may not have the opportunity to grow their own. It was noted that, although the committee members

had previously agreed to do a trial run of this idea by having a produce table at the National Night Out event on Tuesday, August 2, 2022, this did not take place. (It was noted that Julie Ludden had brought some produce from her garden that was given away on this night.)

The committee members suggested giving produce away during the Merrick food distribution and/or at Young at Heart events. It was decided that the produce giveaway would first be offered to parishioners but if any was leftover, it would be given away during the next Merrick food distribution event. Since the next Merrick food distribution event takes place on Monday, August 22, 2022, the committee members determined they would schedule the produce giveaway after each of the masses on the weekend of August 20 - 21, 2022.

Ann agreed to write announcements regarding the produce giveaway for the August 14, 2022, bulletin and the August 18, 2022, edition of the parish's electronic newsletter, the *Pulse*.

Julie Ludden volunteered to set up the produce table before the 4:30 p.m. mass on Saturday, August 20 2022, and to clean up after the 10:30 a.m. mass on August 21, 2022, - putting any leftover produce in the kitchen to be given away at the Merrick food distribution event on August 22, 2022.

We Care Campaign

Christine informed the committee members that Theresa Ruttger, the parish's Business Administrator, had provided her with the totals for the "We Care Campaign" held the weekend of June 4 - 5, 2022. She stated that a total of \$2,138.74 was raised, that \$618.75 of this amount came from the plate, that \$1,693.75 of it was undesignated by the donors and \$445.00 was designated. Individually, the following amounts were raised for each option:

- **Merrick Community Services** - a non-profit agency in Ramsey County that assists individuals and families in transition from poverty to become self-sufficient - \$709.58
- **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 - \$684.58 and
- **Save Ukraine Mutual Aid Center** - which focuses on evacuating people from this country's war zone and providing them with clothing, food, fuel, housing, hygiene products etc. - \$744.58.

Christine reported that twenty-eight envelopes were used - nineteen of which did not contain designated contributions and nine that did.

Christine said that Theresa notified her that when she tried to submit the donation to Save Ukraine Mutual Medical Aid, she was unable to do so because the parish's bank does not offer international wires (which was the payment option suggested by the charity) and that the parish's credit card could not be processed. She stated that, as a result of this, Theresa suggested giving the donation to Catholic Relief Services' outreach to Ukraine. Christine asked the committee members if they would be okay with making this change and they were fine with this.

The committee members decided that, in the future, they would only choose We Care Campaign charities that have a mailing address to which donations could be sent.

Christine mentioned that a parishioner sent her an e-mail containing a recommendation for a possible future We Care Campaign option: Bethany House in Toledo, Ohio - which is a long-term shelter (sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis) for victims of domestic abuse and their families. She said that families are allowed to live in the shelter for up to two years and that they receive clothing, counseling, food, job skills, social work assistance etc. Christine stated that a unique thing about Bethany House is that it admits fathers with children who have experienced abuse.

Bill remarked that he had spoken to St. Paul Interim Police Chief Ellison at the parish's National Night Out event and the Chief told him about the Community Ambassadors program that aims to reach out to youth by building relationships with them and helping them connect with services, find jobs, stay safe etc. Bill suggested that the committee chose this program as a future We Care Campaign option. He agreed to provide additional information regarding this program.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Mary Root noted that the National Domestic Violence Hotline information cards posted in the restrooms off the gathering space are running low. She volunteered to assist with replenishing the cards if the parish has a supply of them or a template from which copies could be made. Kim said she would look to see if there is anything in the office files for this.

Next Meeting

Thursday, September 1, 2022, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting.

Julie Ludden agreed to lead the prayer.