

Social Justice and Caring Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday, November 3, 2022 (via Zoom)

Present: Mickie Hageman, Mary Huettl, Chris Igielski, 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 Margaret.

Strategic Plan Formation: Protecting the Life and Dignity of the Human Person

In response to the decision made by the committee members last month to take some time at the beginning of each meeting to remind themselves about the Church's seven themes of Catholic social teaching, Mary Huettl spoke about "Protecting the Life and Dignity of the Human Person." She reminded the committee members of the following major points from this document.

- Life is sacred and the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society.
- Human life is under attack through things like abortion, the death penalty, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia, terrorist attacks etc.
- Catholics are called upon to avoid war and protect the right to life by resolving conflicts by peaceful means.
- People are more important than things and the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.
- These ideas are based on scripture (Genesis, Deuteronomy, the Gospels, Proverbs, Psalms, Romans etc.).
- When one fails to acknowledge the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities etc., it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature - all is connected.
- "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life but "thou shalt not" must also be said to an economy of exclusion and inequality.
- Today, everything comes under the law of competition and the survival of the fittest when the powerful feed upon the powerless and masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized.
- Human beings are considered consumer goods to be used and discarded.
- The basis for all the Church believes about the economic life is its vision of the sacredness of human beings. The dignity of the human person is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured.
- All human beings are ends to be served by the institutions that make up the economy. The economy must serve the common good. Humans must be respected with a religious reverence since they are created in the image of God.

After Mary Huettl informed the members about this document, they discussed how it is being lived out at the parish and how the committee supports these principles. Some commented that:

- The committee does a good job reaching out to the community.
- The parish offers a lot of charity and is beginning to move into the realm of justice - for example, through its involvement with Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative.
- If justice works towards rectifying broken systems, there would be no need for charity.
- All humans deserve respect - including those suffering from mental illness. Perhaps the parish could bring in a speaker from the National Alliance on Mental Illness. Mickie agreed to work on this.
- The parish has a lot of wonderful speakers and it is helpful when they give the participants action steps regarding what to do with the information they learned.
- The parish does a lot of good work which can be enhanced through collaboration.

Mary Weyandt volunteered to discuss the “Call to Family, Community and Participation” theme at the beginning of the next committee meeting. It will be decided if the opening prayer will be aligned with the theme of this topic.

Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative

Julie Moore updated the committee members on the activities of Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, an organization working to end homelessness and to advance equitable housing in the Twin Cities. She stated that there will be an in-person meeting at the parish on Tuesday, November 15, 2022, from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. (room still to be determined) to discuss plans for increasing parish involvement in Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative activities.

Julie Moore announced that there will be a Congregational Convening meeting on Thursday, December 1, 2022, from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at Gloria Dei Lutheran at 700 Snelling Avenue in St. Paul for all the churches that belong to Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative during which upcoming plans will be discussed.

Ann suggested that this meeting could serve as the current JustFaith program’s immersion experience.

Julie Moore said that the Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative will attend a Maplewood City Council meeting in the spring to discuss land use permits for the Gladstone Crossing housing project that will be built at 1375 Frost Avenue.

Merrick Food Distribution Ministry

Mary Weyandt reported that Fr. John, Kim and she met and decided that they will work with parish Business Administrator, Theresa Ruttger, to obtain a permanent sign advertising the Merrick food distribution ministry and it is hoped that it will be available to use at the next distribution event on November 28, 2022. She stated they hope to obtain permission from the school to place the sign on the fence near the playground located on the corner of Third Street and White Bear Avenue - only on food distribution days.

Mary Weyandt noted that the parish has received unsolicited donations from parishioners wanting to contribute to this ministry. She said that, in the future, an option for donating to this ministry may be placed on the parish's website.

Mary Weyandt suggested that the parish collect toilet paper (or purchase some using the funds that have donated to this ministry) to give to those who are served at the food distribution event on Monday, November 28, 2022. She stated, moving forward, those who volunteer for this ministry could discuss what to collect for the next month's distribution event during the free time between the food packing and food distribution portions of this event.

Mary Weyandt informed the committee members that the December food distribution event will take place on the 19th instead of the 26th (the usual fourth Monday of the month date) since Merrick Community Services will be closed on that day due to the Christmas holiday.

Strategic Plan Workgroup

Mary Weyandt reminded the committee members that the Strategic Planning Workgroup (consisting of Ann, Christine Mary Huettl and herself) had met to discuss how the committee could implement the Social Justice and Caring-related elements from the parish's strategic plan (*A Road Map for 2024: Strategic Plan for The Church of St. Pascal Baylon St. Paul, MN*) and that it decided to start with the following actions:

- taking the contact information used by various work groups that currently exist (such as volunteers for the American Red Cross blood drive, the Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, the Merrick Community Services food distribution ministry, the Progressive Baptist Fishes and Loaves food shelf etc.) to create a social justice-related distribution list that could be used to inform these volunteers about social justice-related opportunities and
- having each member personally invite somebody to be part of the committee and/or to become involved in any of its work.

Mary Weyandt suggested that the Strategic Planning Workgroup meet in December.

Angel Tree Ministry

Mary Weyandt reminded the committee members that the parish will participate in the Angel Tree ministry, a program that provides the children of incarcerated parents with Christmas gifts. She reported that eleven children have been assigned to the parish - from five families.

Mary Weyandt said that tags listing the gifts desired by the children will be placed on a Christmas tree located in the gathering space at church. She asked for assistance with labeling the tags.

Mary Weyandt stated that, this year, the tags will be divided up into three groups and one group will be placed on the tree before each of the masses on the weekend of November 26 - 27, 2022. She said that this was being done to avoid what happened last year when all of the tags had been

placed on the tree before the 4:30 p.m. mass on Saturday and all of them were taken by parishioners in attendance - leaving no opportunity for parishioners who attend other masses to participate in this ministry.

Mary Weyandt informed the committee members that parishioners will be asked to wrap their donated gifts and bring them to the parish by December 17, 2022. She stated that the gifts will be picked-up by the families at the parish from December 19 - 21, 2022.

Catholic Charities Giving Tree

Ann mentioned that the parish would participate in the Catholic Charities Giving Tree program again - which collects unwrapped gifts for those in need. She said that, like last year, the list of requested items will be folded and tied (by ribbon) to the Christmas tree in the gathering space.

Kim remarked that she has created a mock-up of what the list will look like and that staff member Karri Kraemer (from the Welcome Desk) will make them. She stated that the lists will be available the weekend of November 26 - 27, 2022.

It was decided that parishioners can bring their unwrapped gifts to the parish through December 25, 2022.

Kim recommended that Fr. John mention this collection in his "From the Pastor's Desk" column in the bulletin on the weekend before the beginning of Advent as he did last year.

Bulletin Board

Fr. John asked the members if they would be willing to share some of the space on the committee's bulletin board located in the gathering space so that photographs of the Parish Council members, the Parish Finance Council members and the trustees could be placed there. The committee members agreed to this. It was noted that the tentative time for posting the pictures is January 2023.

The committee discussed the possibility of creating a schedule for changing the information that is posted on the bulletin board - with the members taking turns doing this task. It was suggested that information could be posted highlighting the work of the committee.

Listening House Gala

The members discussed the Listening House Gala that absent committee member, Bill Dorgan, informed them would take place at the St. Paul Hotel on Thursday, November 10, 2022. It was suggested that if one is planning on attending, it would be preferable to make a reservation and to request a seat at St. Pascal's table.

Ann mentioned that she has attended this event in the past. She said there is a social hour and dinner followed by a request for donations. Ann stated that she plans to go and is willing to carpool with others who may want to attend.

Next Meeting

Thursday, January 5, 2023, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom (A meeting will not be held in December.)

Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting.