

Social Justice and Caring Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday, January 5, 2023 (via Zoom)

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

Prayer

The prayer was led by Christine.

Strategic Plan Formation: Call to Family, Community and Participation

In response to the decision made by the committee members to take some time at the beginning of each meeting to remind themselves about the Church's seven themes of Catholic social teaching, Mary Weyandt spoke about the "Call to Family, Community and Participation." She mentioned that her resources included Sr. Joan Mitchell of the Good Ground Press and the book See, Judge, Act: Catholic Social Teaching and Service Learning by Erin Brigham and she showed the committee members a handout with information from these sources.

Mary Weyandt said that this theme states that each person is social and called to participate in family and community. She stated that, if Catholic social teaching reminds people what they are called to do, she asked how to respond as a group to this collective call to action, and, more specifically, how the committee members are cultivating and supporting a spirit of Christian discipleship that supports this as well as seeks the common good.

The members noted that the committee: collects clothing, contributes to the Catholic Charities Giving Tree program, hosts the National Night Out event, is involved in the Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative, participates in the Merrick food distribution, publishes the "Faith in Action" column in the parish bulletin, sponsors the donation closet (which collects items for various charities such as Brittany's Place, the Listening House etc.), supports the We Care Campaign, takes part in the Angel Tree ministry, welcomes people at church etc.

Mary Weyandt reminded the committee members to remain aware of this theme and she agreed to send them the handout that she used after the meeting.

Ann volunteered to discuss the "Rights and Responsibilities" theme at the beginning of the next committee meeting.

Angel Tree Ministry

Mary Weyandt updated the committee on the Angel Tree ministry, a program that provides the children of incarcerated parents with Christmas gifts. She said that the parish was assigned eleven children from five different families (most of whom were from the eastside of St. Paul) and that gifts were distributed to all of them prior to Christmas except for one. (Mary Weyandt noted that she had difficulty connecting with the parent of this child.)

Mary Weyandt stated that two of the caretakers came to pick-up gifts during the December Merrick food distribution and that they were very grateful and thankful. She said she provided them with bulletins and invited them to mass and to contact the parish if they needed additional assistance. It was suggested that these families be invited to this year's National Night Out event.

Mary Weyandt thanked the committee members who worked on this and stated that she placed an announcement in the parish's electronic newsletter, the *Pulse*, thanking the parishioners who contributed to this effort.

Catholic Charities Giving Tree

Ann reported on the results of the Catholic Charities Giving Tree program, which collects unwrapped gifts for those in need. She said that she delivered three carloads of donations to Catholic Charities.

Ann remarked that, last year, many of the donated items consisted of household items (such as appliances) but that this year's gifts included a lot of winter jackets. Kim suggested that it was possible that parishioners chose to donate items from the "Top Five Needs" section contained on the "Wish List" ornaments that were hanging from the Christmas tree in the gathering space - which included winter jackets.

Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative

Ann 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 informed them that a Rally for Housing would take place at the State Capitol on Wednesday, January 11, 2023, and that a group of parishioners would be attending. Ann stated that the purpose of the rally is to remind legislators to keep housing issues in mind as they disperse the surplus budget.

Ann announced that the event that was going to take place at the parish on February 28, 2023, will be delayed - perhaps until the spring. She said the event is being delayed so that it can be tied in with the upcoming permitting process for the Gladstone Crossing complex being built in Maplewood as well as the "Unlock the Metro" campaign that will emphasize that project-based vouchers are the keys that unlock housing equity due to the fact that they help secure financing to build affordable housing. Ann stated that parishioners will soon be asked to donate old keys as part of the "Unlock the Metro" campaign and that additional information regarding this will be provided at a later time.

Bulletin Board

Christine reminded the members that, at the last meeting, they agreed 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 and that they 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 part of the bulletin board could be used to advertise the current parish donation closet recipient - perhaps including a list of items desired by the charity.

Another idea was listing upcoming volunteer opportunities - such as future Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative events, Progressive Baptist Fishes and Loaves Food Shelf/the parish's Merrick food distribution dates etc.

Ann mentioned that absent committee member, Mary Huettl, was the most recent person who worked on the bulletin board. She volunteered to ask her if she would be willing to work on this again. Ann said that she would be willing to assist Mary Huettl with this.

The committee members discussed that parishioners may not realize that the bulletin board is there since it is tucked behind the table that is located in front of it. They suggested removing the table and replacing it only on the days in which it would need to be used. Suggestions were made that the board could be mentioned in a future "Faith in Action" blurb in the bulletin, in the *Pulse*, a pulpit announcement, that the committee could host Fellowship Sunday and remind parishioners about it etc.

The committee members spoke about posting items that contain pictures and little text so that parishioners would be able to look at the things posted there quickly.

Merrick - Possible Donation Closet Collection

Mary Weyandt asked the committee members their thoughts on having a collection for non-food-related items to give to the recipients at the next Merrick food distribution event - such as paper towels or toilet paper. Fr. John reminded the committee members that various parishioners have donated money to support the Merrick food distribution effort and that these donations could be used to purchase such items. He advised checking the balance in the Merrick food distribution account each month to determine if funds were available to purchase additional items to distribute. Kim agreed to ask Theresa Ruttger the current dollar amount in the Merrick food distribution account and to tell the members the total at the next committee meeting.

It was suggested that, if it is decided that funds will be used to purchase non-food-related items for distribution, it would be helpful to have a volunteer act as the shopper for these.

Mary Weyandt recommended that, since Merrick Community Services provides all the food that gets handed out at the distribution events and funds are currently available for purchasing non-food-related items, that Merrick Community Services could be removed as a parish donation closet recipient during the months of March and October.

It was suggested that a new charity could be found to replace Merrick Community Services in the rotation (e.g., Catholic Charities) or that two of the recipients could be given an additional month.

The committee members were in agreement with this recommendation and decided to continue discussing this issue at their next meeting.

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:

- educating the committee members on the Church's seven themes of Catholic social teaching,
- 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 acknowledged that the committee members have begun reviewing the seven themes of social teaching. She stated that she may soon contact those who work with the above-listed groups to obtain the contact information for their volunteers that will be needed for creating the desired distribution list. She also said that, at the next meeting, she would speak about having members invite others to join the committee and/or participate in its work.

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 October 29 - 30, 2022. She stated that a total of \$1,769.99 was raised, that \$407.99 of this amount came from the plate, that \$1,509.99 of it was undesignated by the donors and \$260.00 was designated. Individually, the following amounts were raised for each option:

- **Community Ambassadors Initiative** - a program through the St. Paul Police Department that aims to reach out to youth by building relationships with them and helping them connect with services, find jobs, stay safe etc. - \$583.33,
- **Harriet Tubman Center East** - an organization located in Maplewood that assists women, children and families struggling with relationship violence, mental health issues and substance abuse. It provides community education, counseling, elder care resources, legal services, safe shelter and youth programming while guiding and sustaining individuals and families on the journey to healing and restoration - \$613.33 and

- **Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Consociates** - a group that works to advocate, educate and take action to promote social justice in such areas as anti-racism, care for creation, the death penalty, human trafficking, immigration, respect for life etc. - \$573.33.

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

Christine reminded the committee members that, for the March 4 - 5, 2023, We Care Campaign, they had agreed to choose the San Lucas Tolimán Mission in Guatemala as the sole option and that, in addition to a bulletin announcement, they had discussed putting an insert in the bulletin about the San Lucas Tolimán Mission that would appeal to parishioners who are already aware of this ministry as well as also to those who may not be familiar with it. She mentioned that Bill has drafted both a bulletin announcement and an insert. It was agreed that Christine would submit the announcement to Thea Munoz, the parish's Communications & Office Manager, for placement in the February 19, 2023, and February 26, 2023, bulletins, and that the insert would appear in the March 5, 2023, bulletin. During the meeting, Kim sent an e-mail to Thea informing her that the committee would like to place an insert in the bulletin on March 5, 2023.

Fr. John mentioned that he continues to receive thank-you notes from We Care Campaign recipients. Christine informed him that she has collected these over the years so he could give them to her.

Next Meeting

Thursday, February 2, 2023, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting.

Julie Ludden will lead the prayer.

Chris Igielski volunteered to lead the prayer at the March meeting,