

Social Justice and Caring Committee
Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday, March 2, 2023 (via Zoom)

Present: Martha Arko, Mickie Hageman, 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 Chris Igielski.

Strategic Plan Formation: Care for Creation

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, Christine Malec spoke about the "Care for Creation" theme that she read about on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' website. She mentioned that this theme discusses the below-listed ideas.

- Respect for the Creator is shown by stewardship of creation and care for the earth is a requirement of faith.
- All are called to protect people and the planet, living their faith in relationship with all of God's creation and this challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.
- When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain, this has serious consequences for society. This vision of "might is right" has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful. The ideals of fraternity, harmony, justice and peace as proposed by Jesus are completely at odds with this.
- A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach. It must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. Everything is connected. Concern for the environment needs to be joined to a sincere love for fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.
- The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. Sustainable development cannot be apart from intergenerational solidarity. The world is a gift freely received which must be shared with others. Since the world has been given to all, reality cannot be viewed in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to each person's individual benefit. Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world also belongs to those who follow.
- Human beings are not only the beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures.
- The environment is God's gift to everyone and everyone has a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole. Duties towards the environment are linked to duties towards the human person.

- Changes in lifestyle based on traditional moral virtues can ease the way to a sustainable and equitable world economy in which sacrifice will no longer be an unpopular concept. A life less focused on material gain is a reminder that humans are more than what they have. Rejecting the false promises of excessive or conspicuous consumption can allow more time for civic responsibilities, family and friends.
- In their desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, humans consume the resources of the earth and their own lives in an excessive and disordered way. Humans, who discover their capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through their own work, forget that this is always based on God's prior and original gift of the things that are. Humans think that they can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to their will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which humans can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out their role as co-operators with God in the work of creation, humans set themselves up in place of God and thus end up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by them.
- The dominion granted to humans by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to "use and misuse" or to dispose of things as one pleases. The limitation imposed from the beginning by the Creator Himself and expressed symbolically by the prohibition not to "eat of the fruit of the tree" shows clearly enough that, when it comes to the natural world, all are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity. A true concept of development cannot ignore the consequences of haphazard industrialization, the renewability of resources and the use of the elements of nature.

The committee members responded to this theme by discussing: what could be done about following this in their own lives and within the parish community, how to engage the next generation in this work of the Church, how to translate the duty to promote a sustainable world economy into the Catholic life, that people are more than what they have, that social justice issues connect all people together etc.

Mary volunteered to speak about the "Option for the Poor and Vulnerable" theme at the next meeting.

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 reported that she had sent an e-mail to a group of parishioners who participated in the postcard campaign last spring in support of the "Bring It Home, Minnesota" legislation that would provide rent subsidies for the working poor. Julie Moore stated that she invited these parishioners to contact local legislators, Melissa Hortman (the Speaker of the House of Representatives) and Kari Dziedzic (the Senate Majority Leader) to ask them to support: a

two-billion dollar housing budget, one billion dollars in housing bonds and the Bring it Home, Minnesota rental assistance program. She said that her message provided the e-mail addresses and telephone numbers of these legislators as well as a sample message the parishioners could use when contacting them.

April Meeting

Christine Malec reminded the members that, as Kim had noted at the last meeting, that the committee will not be able to meet on its usual meeting date (the first Thursday of the month) in April due to the fact that this is Holy Thursday. The committee members decided to meet on March 30, 2023, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom.

We Care Campaign

Christine reminded the committee members that the next We Care Campaign will take place this weekend, March 4 - 5, 2023, and that the San Lucas Tolimán Mission in Guatemala was chosen as the sole option for the Campaign. She stated that an announcement regarding this Campaign appeared in the bulletin on February 19, 2023, and in the *Pulse*, the parish's electronic newsletter, on February 16, 2023, and February 23, 2023, and that an insert appeared in the February 26, 2023, bulletin.

Donation Closet

Kim remarked that the March donation closet recipient was Merrick Community Services. She said that this week's bulletin will have an insert containing a letter from Merrick Community Services listing the items being sought by this organization - such as cooking oil, cooking sauces, grains, proteins, spices and vinegar. She stated that this information is also posted on the parish's Facebook page and its website.

Ann reported that she and a friend had delivered two car loads of items to The Listening House, last month's donation closet recipient but that there are still some that need to be delivered. Kim said that she took these items from the donation closet and moved them to the storage area downstairs.

Kim mentioned that the parishioner who usually delivers donations to The Listening House, Andre Simone, was out-of-town so was unable to deliver the donations herself.

Ann wondered if a notice had been placed in the bulletin and the *Pulse*, thanking those who donated to The Listening House. Kim volunteered to do this.

National Night Out

Kim asked if she should register the parish for this year's National Night Out event, which will take place on Tuesday, August 1, 2023. The committee members decided they would like to participate in this event again this year so they asked Kim to register the parish for this event.

Kim mentioned that she might not be able to attend the event due to the fact that she may be out-of-town.

Merrick Community Services Food Donation

It was noted that the parish ran out of bags at the last Merrick Community Services food distribution event on February 27, 2023. It was suggested that, moving forward, the parish could save the items that parishioners donate to this ministry to give away if the food runs out instead of using these donations to supplement the food that Merrick Community Services gives to the parish to distribute.

Possible Speaker

Fr. John announced that the Adult Faith Formation Team, together with the Social Justice and Caring Committee, may use some of the grant money received from St. Catherine University through the Lilly Endowment to host a speaker, Michael Rios-Keating, the Social Justice Education Manager at Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, to talk to the parish about social justice. He stated that this event could consist of a free dinner, followed by a talk and then some suggestions for ways to become involved in social justice-related work.

Some other ideas that were suggested that could be part of this event include:

- appreciating/recognizing parish volunteers,
- discussing the seven themes of Catholic social justice,
- providing information on Catholic Charities-related volunteer opportunities,
- providing parishioners with a flyer listing contacts for various parish volunteer opportunities,
- providing parishioners with statistics regarding ministries in which the parish is involved - such as the number of bags distributed at the Merrick Community Services food distribution events,
- suggesting actions items in which the participants could become involved and
- talking about the outreach opportunities in which the parish is currently involved (such as the Beacon Interfaith Housing Cooperative, Merrick Community Services food distribution, Progressive Baptist Church Fishes and Loaves food shelf etc.).

Fr. John suggested holding this event before Memorial Day - perhaps on Tuesday, May 22, 2023, or Wednesday, May 24, 2023. He said that he and Kim would choose a date and then send it to the committee members for their approval.

Next Meeting

March 30, 2023, from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Kim will schedule the Zoom meeting.

Julie Moore will lead the prayer.