

Minutes of STA Social Justice Committee
Tuesday, December 7, 2021, 6:00 p.m. in person at STA.

Present: Francis Today, Marianne Today, Chris Rehmann, Dave Dirks, Felicity Douglas, Chuck Glatz.
Action Items Highlighted

Opening Prayer - Chris

Minutes

Minutes of the November meeting were approved with one correction.
Chuck will post these to the website.

Solar Project

Committee felt **Chuck should get a short announcement** in this week's Mass announcements to make up for the mistiming of the first announcement.
Net will be providing monthly updates of funds raised to Chris.

Question raised as to if we could get any way of directly contacting parishioners. Frances noted that only the Knights have ever gotten permission to contact parishioners directly. Maybe posters could be put up. Just go with bulletin announcements and after the New Year pursue posters or table after Mass. We might request from Sue Winer that it be included in an Alumni Newsletter, perhaps in next fiscal year if the Council OK's a second year's commitment. **January Action required.**

STA Visioning Group Recommendations

Marianne reported that Phil Stone said he is not our go-to staff person. She was asking him for ongoing pieces on Catholic Social Teaching. She described content for the topic that could be in a carry-away handout. She **will continue to pursue this with Phil and Michael Steimel.** There is an expectation that Ann Gansemer-Topf will carry to the Parish Council the need for a Staff/Council contact person for the SJC.
For a study group on an encyclical, we need to identify leaders. As regards either that or some book for all to read, it would be helpful if it were accompanied by a series of sermons where Fr. Kyle would address the same topic. **Chuck will send some info on Laudato Si study guides to Francis and Felicity AND they will report back in January on a specific way to get it offered.**

As to connecting parishioners to ISU talks followed by discussion groups, it was proposed we seek being able to oversee inviting a Supple Lecturer on a Social Justice Topic. **Chuck will check with the Parish and Committee on Lectures** to find out what would need to be done.

Mary Ellen is looking into a series of bulletin pieces on perhaps six parishioners doing good work starting perhaps with some of Shannon Evans activities and going on with suggestions from each Parish Commission. **She will continue to develop this.**

Bridge Home

Dave asked to have time at a future meeting to report on the development work for The Bridge Home which is looking at a major campaign. **Chris will schedule it for Dave to present.**

AMOS

Mary Ellen reported on the need to get someone else involved as she can't maintain her effort there and hasn't interested anyone else yet. She feels that unless we get others involved, it will be hard to justify Parish support. Marianne noted that education in Social Justice Teaching might spur effort. **Chris is part of group planning a leadership retreat and will raise a question then on whether that topic could be covered.**

Immigrant Fund

Chuck reported that the Fund will terminate by mid-December and any residual funds (not likely to be any) will go to GNEA. The group is being reconstituted as an Immigrant Advocacy group.

Next meeting: January 11, 2022, 6 p.m. in person unless conditions dictate moving back to Zoom.

Minutes of STA Social Justice Committee

Tuesday, November, 16, 2021, 6:00 p.m. in person at STA.

Present: Francis Todey, Marianne Todey, Chris Rehmann, Kathy Trahanovsky, Felicity Douglas, Chuck Glatz. Guests: Ann Gansemer-Topf, Mary Jo Pfeiffer Wulf

Minutes

Minutes of the October meeting were approved.

Chuck will post these to the website.

Strategic Plan content relative to SJC

Ann and Mary Jo reviewed how objectives relating to SJC came about. There was a feeling that the richness of Catholic Social Justice was not being conveyed to students or resident parishioners. Recent encyclicals were viewed as good possibilities to convey these teachings. The Planning Group pictured them as material for study groups perhaps more so than a single lecture. In raising this goal there was a question raised as to whether there would be sufficient staff support. A second suggestion from the group was to get parishioners watching/attending and then hosting a discussion on ISU speakers on Social Justice themes.

Additional ideas offered at the meeting: All Parish Reads; Study of Laudato Si' meshes with things we already have underway; Education on Catholic Social Teaching via bulletin series and pamphlets in the racks on such topics; suggestion to start with some review of Catholic Social Teaching and then moving to Laudato Si' activities.

Ann will report to Parish Council on the discussion.

Operation Rice Bowl

Phil Stone has asked for how to raise awareness of the Rice Bowl procedure. It was suggested that he check with Tom Budnik on how it used to happen such that bowls appeared and announcements were made and it most likely it would prove to be simple enough for him to execute.

Next step on support for solar farm

Procedure will be to write checks to STA with "Solar Panel" in the memo line. There is also a need to advertise and inform about this. Francis will start to work with Chuck, Dave and Bob on what to put out there. There was some support for preparing a video for this purpose with footage of the solar farm and endorsers from parish council, pastor, Archbishop and Catholic Social Teaching. Perhaps Allan who does the Masses could do this.

Next meeting in person December 7. Francis to reserve a room.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:22.

Respectfully submitted,

Chuck Glatz

Minutes of STA Social Justice Committee
Monday, Oct. 18, 2021, 6:00 p.m. ZOOM

Present: Dave Dirks, Chuck Glatz, Francis Todey, Marianne Todey, Chris Rehmann, Kathy Trahanovsky, Mary Ellen Wishart

Minutes

Chuck moved and Kathy seconded approval of the September minutes.

Chuck will post these to the website.

We have been sending highlights of our meetings to the bulletin. It was suggested that we also include a link to our minutes. Chuck will check to see that the link is viable.

Season of Creation prayer service

Weather was splendid. About 65 people attended. Great displays by City of Ames, Mustard Seed Farm, Story County Conservation, recycling business. Many faiths represented.

Thanks to Michael Steiml

Several positive comments were made about the cooperation Michael Steiml has given to our projects...serving as MC at the prayer service, getting approval for our church display, including social justice thoughts and actions in the Sunday petitions. Please continue to collaborate with him.

Central Iowa Community ID program

was conducted at St. Cecilia's on Oct. 16. Sixteen persons received IDs and 10 people were vaccinated against COVID.

Next step on support for solar farm

After discussion, it was concluded that Francis will check with Pastoral Council to see if any action was taken at their Oct. 12 meeting. If the project has approval, Francis will meet with our director of development, Sue Winer, to see what comes next. Following that, we will form a subcommittee to use the information gathered by Bob Bourne and Dave Dirks to craft an appeal to the parish. Marianne suggested that we remember to get students involved in this effort, especially those in relevant majors. Jackie Comito will be invited to be part of the planning, if she is available. She continues to express interest in the project and has promised financial support.

Pastoral Council charge

Mary Jo Pfeiffer Wulf and Ann Gansemer-Topf were asked by Pastoral Council to be liaisons to the SJ committee. In response to questions drafted by Francis to Mary Jo and Ann, Mary Jo has agreed to meet with our committee in November to discuss the ideas. She is available Tuesday, November 16. We will set our next meeting (either by ZOOM or in person) November 16 to accommodate this exchange.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 for members to be able to attend the 7:00 AMOS meeting on affordable housing.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Ellen Wishart

Approved 11/16/2021

Saint Thomas Aquinas Social Justice Committee
Notes, September 21, 2021 5:30 p.m. (via Zoom)

Present: Chris Rehmann, Fr. John Herzog, Chuck Glatz, Francis Todey, Marianne Todey, Felicity Douglas, Kathy Trahanovsky, Dave Dirks, Bob Bourne

Prayer: Chris

Let us pray for an end to the
Waste and desecration of God's creation
For access to the fruits of creation
To be shared equally among all people
And for communities and nations to find sustenance
In the fruits of the earth and the water God has given us.

Almighty God, you created the world and gave it
Into our care so that, in obedience to you,
We might serve all people:
Inspire us to use the riches of creation with wisdom,
and to ensure that their blessings are shared by all;
That, trusting in your bounty, all people may be
Empowered to seek freedom from poverty, famine, and oppression.
-From xavier.edu

Minutes of August 11: Approved with minor correction Chuck will make.

Business

Solar Energy Proposal to Pastoral Council:

Dave provided an update on his presentation to the Pastoral Council on September 14, regarding a potential fund-raising effort to purchase Solar Power Packs from the City of Ames. The proposal consists of two parts:

1. A request for the Pastoral Council to approve a fund-raising effort to purchase Power Packs.
2. Direction from the Pastoral Council to have the Finance Council review options for St. Thomas to provide up to \$28,000 in matching funds to support this effort.

The goal is to begin taking action outlined by Pope Francis in Laudato Si. While a larger comprehensive plan for reducing the STA carbon footprint is needed, this would be the first step in that effort. A sense of urgency in addressing climate change is needed. We can also review what other faith communities are planning to do in this area. The Pastoral Council will discuss this proposal at their October meeting. Further review of potential actions will be considered after reviewing the Council's actions.

Season of Creation Celebration:

Plans have been finalized for this event at St. Cecilia Church on October 3 at 1:00. The theme is "A Home for All." Publicity will include announcements in the bulletin and at mass, as well as a display in the Gathering Space at St. Thomas. Several other faith communities will take part in the celebration. Holding this event and proposing the use of solar energy at STA aligns with direction from the Archdiocese of Dubuque which states that parish leadership/committees should take the following steps in the care of creation:

1. Review practices at the parish and consider implementing ways that activities can reduce the impact on environment.

2. Hold a prayer service to [Care for Creation](#)

Love Your Neighbor Leadership:

Dave has expressed a desire to step down as Chair of the Love Your Neighbor Committee. Jean Dirks has agreed to take over this position, and Dave will still be involved in the committee.

Parish Strategic Plan Goals:

Chris received a note from Mary Jo Pfeifer-Wulf related to output from strategic planning sessions that are taking place. The specific issue that Mary Jo's and Ann Gansemer-Topf were assigned is marginalization. Two goals they developed are:

1. A monthly educational dialogue be held focusing on documents from Pope Francis. This would start in January.
2. Announcements for all social justice related speakers that come to ISU be placed in the bulletin and parishioners be encouraged to attend. This will be followed up with small group discussions within two weeks after the event.

There was a significant amount of discussion about the goals as well as uncertainty related to the mechanics of accomplishing the goals. Should other initiatives be delayed to complete this work, or would the proposed small group discussion of Laudato Si be an appropriate focus for goal 1? Help will be needed to develop small groups that combine residents and students, so Phil and Emily will need to be involved in this effort. Communication will be critical to this effort, so it must also be a part of this discussion.

Chuck suggested that possibly the best solution is to write to Mary Jo and Ann to express some of the concerns we discussed. This would include discussing current initiatives of the Social Justice Committee, as well as requesting more information and answers to some of the questions we raised. The letter to Mary Jo and Ann will request that they attend one of our meetings so there can be further discussion of how the goals should be met. Francis and Marianne will draft a letter to Mary Jo and Ann for the group to review.

Options for Publishing Meeting Minutes:

The question was raised of whether a link to the meeting minutes should be placed in the bulletin, since they are available on the parish website. Links to Pastoral Council and Finance Council information is included in the bulletin, so this may be a better way to communicate with parish members. The possibility of including a few bullet points from meeting was also discussed. This may help attract people's interest in the activities Social Justice is undertaking. Chris will prepare a few bullet points for the committee to review and submit for the bulletin. This discussion did lead back to the question of which staff members will provide assistance with coordinating communication to the parish. We anticipate the delegation of duties among the staff members is an ongoing discussion.

Next Meeting: October 18, 2021 @ 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Francis Today

Minutes Approved: October 18, 2021

Saint Thomas Aquinas Social Justice Committee

Minutes: August 11, 2021 (via ZOOM)

Present: Chris Rehmann, Chuck Glatz, Mary Ellen Wishart, Kathy Trahanovsky, Francis Today, Marianne Today, Paula Friederich

Guest: Bob Bourne

Prayer: Chris

Excerpt from Pope Francis' Laudato Si' Action Plan Intro video: <https://www.laudatosi.org/laudato-si/action-platform/>

Minutes of July 13: Approved with a few minor corrections. Chuck will correct the errors before posting on the website.

COVID-19 Fund: Chuck, Kathy

To date, \$353,414 has been donated with \$328,872 having been distributed. Current balance is \$24,542. The steering committee for this fund is anticipating reducing the maximum benefit from \$500 to \$400 because of declining donations. It is also considering when to phase-out this fund.

Centralized Community Intake: Kathy

Story County Human Services has now established a central intake system to handle applications for their funds as well as those of participating nonprofits providing rent and utility payments. Discussions are proceeding as to how best the intake forms for assistance funds from various community/county resources may be centralized. Kathy will try to meet with Good Neighbor to gather their input on this and evaluate how Good Neighbor might interact.

Season of Creation Celebration, October 3: Chuck, Mary Ellen

There has been good interest and support in participating in this service. So far 4 congregations are involved. As hoped, it will be an ecumenical service this year. The Archbishop has expressed his support for this effort.

Chuck is gathering information about what other parishes are doing to conform with Laudato Si'.

Marianne and Mary Ellen suggested that this encyclical may be a good topic for STA small groups and/or Sunday Seminars.

Solar Farm: Bob

Bob will talk to Dave about presenting to the finance council. The proposal is that since the church is reporting a surplus, we seek permission to appeal to the parish for donations, and that the parish match those funds up to \$28,000. Dave has previously stated that he is aware of parishioners who have already expressed interest in this project with offers of donations totaling \$15,000, even though an appeal has not yet been made. Discussions are progressing.

Next Meeting: September 14 @ 6:00pm. (tentative)

Respectfully submitted by Paula Friederich

Approved at SJC Meeting 9/21/21

**Saint Thomas Aquinas Social Justice Committee
Minutes, July 13, 2021, 7:00 pm**

Present: Chris Rehmann (Chair) Chuck Glatz, Francis Todey, Mary Ann Todey, Kathy Trahanovsky, Dave Dirks, Paula Friederich

Prayer: Chris

Lord, give Your people Your peace that we may shine brightly in a dark world. Grant us the courage to live faithfully even in the midst of hard times. Let our fear of You be the beginning of wisdom rather than allowing the fear of the world to drive our actions. Help us to embrace our heavenly citizenship and live in the midst of a world that needs to know You.

Show Your mercy and heal those who are suffering in Your fallen creation. Most of all Lord, come. Restore the world You made and make all things new. We pray that Your will would be done. Amen.

Minutes of June meeting: Approved

COVID-19 / LYN Funds: Chuck, Kathy, Dave

To date, \$343,779 has been donated and \$313,892 has been distributed. The current balance is \$29,887. There have been 119 families helped by this fund thus far. There has been some discussion about possibly reducing the maximum benefit from \$550 to \$450 per month due to decreased donations.

Also, there is some effort among community agencies to centralize the application and distribution of available and various types of funds within the county. Tom had previously said that he didn't think STA would be likely to join a centralized fund if it meant that STA would lose its discretion to make decisions regarding the LYN and/or other funding programs. Kathy and Dave said that LYN has recently had fewer applications. It is unknown why. Kathy will talk to Nancy H. at STC before she meets with the county and gathers more information.

Social Justice Grants:

Funds have been all or mostly distributed.
Bobby has asked SJC to submit a description of the program.

AMOS

Community ID Drive will hold another Drive on Saturday, July 17, 2021 at 9am in the lower level of the parking deck of St. Thomas Aquinas. Covid-19 vaccinations will also be available at no charge.

Summary of Responsibilities of the Coordinator of Ministries (pertaining to SJC.)

Chris led a discussion and asked for input regarding how the staff liaison to SJC has assisted the SJC in the past. Chris will summarize these duties for Fr. Kyle.

Season of Creation Celebration:

Chuck reports that the Celebration will take place October 3, 2021 at St. Cecilia. There are multiple congregations involved in the planning this year.

Solar Farm:

Dave is working with the Finance Council to get approval for a fundraiser at STA. If approved \$50,000 will be requested for STA to invest in the Ames Solar Farm. It is anticipated that this will offset 15% -20% of STA's energy use.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, August 11@ 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Paula Friederich

**Saint Thomas Aquinas Social Justice Committee
Minutes, June 1, 2021, 6:00 pm (via Zoom)**

Present: Chris Rehmann, Chuck Glatz, Francis Todey, Felicity Douglas, Dave Dirks, Fr. John Herzog, Mary Ellen Wishart, Paula Friederich

Prayer: Chris

**As we breathe the very air which sustains us.
We remember your love, God,
Which gives us life.**

**Fill us with your compassion for Creation,
Empty us of apathy, selfishness and fear,
of all pessimism and hesitation.**

**Breathe into us solidarity
with all who suffer now and the future generations
who will suffer.
because of our environmental
irresponsibility.**

**Move us into action
to save our earth
And to build your sustainable Kingdom.**

Amen

Minutes of May 4: Approved

Business

Covid-19 Donations:

Donation levels are expected to meet the needs of the next month.

Support/sponsorship of Honduran mother and child who are seeking asylum:

Francis reported that the STA Pastoral Council was supportive of this effort and willing to offer an appeal to the STA community for aid to this family.

Mary Ellen will draft an announcement for publication.

Social Justice Grants:

These have been approved by the SJC sub-committee and the awards are to be distributed in July.

Sunday Seminars

The SJC discussed whether to resume in-person seminars in the fall. All were in favor pending continuing improvement of the pandemic.

Environmental Justice

Dave Dirks and Bob Bourne led the SJC in a presentation and discussion, specifically related to whether and how STA can and should advantage solar energy for the needs of the STA structure.

The SJC joins and strongly supports efforts to become more energy efficient. Further discussion is necessary among all to decide the best avenue for STA.

Next Meeting: July 6 @ 6pm

Respectfully submitted by Paula Friederich

Addendum: Next meeting was later rescheduled to July 13 at 7 pm.

Saint Thomas Aquinas Social Justice Committee Minutes, May 4, 2021 6:00 p.m. (via Zoom)

Present: Chris Rehmann, Fr. John Herzog, Chuck Glatz, Francis Todey, Felicity Douglas, Kathy Trahanovsky, Dave Dirks

Excused: Mary Ellen Wishart, Tom Budnik, Paula Friedrich

Prayer: Chris

Loving Creator,

We asked for strength, and you gave us difficulties to make us strong.

We asked for wisdom, and you gave us problems to solve.

We asked for prosperity, and you gave us purpose and brains to use.

We asked for courage, and you gave us fears to overcome.

We asked for patience, and you gave us situations where we were forced to wait.

We asked for love, and you gave us troubled people to help.

We asked for justice, and you called us to be just and lead with integrity.

Lord, we have received nothing that we asked for or wanted.

And yet, we receive everything that we needed.

For this we give thanks.

- By Colleen Hanycz, PhD incoming President at Xavier University

Minutes of April 6: Approved

Business

COVID-19 Fund:

Approximately \$43,000 are currently in balance after the largest fundraising month ever - \$41,000. This included \$10,000 from Sisters of St. Francis (Note added after meeting: Collegiate United Methodist is allocating \$10,000 and requesting matching funds from another Fund they can apply to) and \$2500 from Faith Baptist and a few stimulus checks. 691 payments have been made to 115 households since inception totaling \$272,175.14. There is an emerging problem that some of the cooperating agencies may not be able to help because of previous aid offered. Some landlords are now not willing to provide rental verifications.

“Linda” and Pastoral Council consideration—Francis

Francis gave the Council a brief report with promise to provide details at the May meeting. He didn't sense any resistance though just what help could be offered is not clear. Certainly the list of individual tasks listed as needed would be fine. Mary Ellen has asked to attend the May meeting to answer questions if she is available.

Honduras Committee

Tom's report: Perhaps one other thing is that I think we are coming closer to resolving the donation issue, in that Bobby has secured the assistance of an attorney to draw up an appropriate policy. You may also want to keep in mind that John Donaghy will be visiting the Ames area, on his own this time without STA assistance. He will be here beginning May 19th.

Love Your Neighbor (LYN) fund:

Dave reported that Tom, Bobby and Fr. Kyle conferred on who would handle LYN affairs with Don's retirement. It is expected that the new person wouldn't have the same time allotted and Dave will convene the LYN Subcommittee to plan how to cover the gap with volunteers. The new person will not have Don's historical memory and Net may also have less time with what she has done as she is now working with the new data system.

Social Justice Grants:

Chris, Felicity, Francis and 3 students plus Paula if she is available will meet 5:30 May 5 by Zoom. Dave reported that Matt Mitchell failed to apply on behalf of Romero House. Felicity suggested some funds could be left unallocated to consider Romero House needs later. They are generally housing 9-10 men and hosting Saturday dinners. Given the rules, Dave feels it is probably too late to consider them.

Care of Creation Celebration:

Via email Tom Budnik reports that John Wilson from St. Cecilia Church and he have met to talk about the 2021 Season of Creation Service, which is now set for Sunday October 3, 2021 at St. Cecilia Church. Chuck Glatz and Mary Ellen Wishart have agreed to work on the planning, and representatives from both churches will have an initial planning meeting on this Thursday May 6, 2021 via Zoom from 3:00 to 4:00 PM. SS Peter and Paul will also join in the collaboration and invitations to participate in the service will be sent to other denominations in the Ames area.

Chris and an email from Jackie Comito urging involving more ISU students than last year. Lynne Franco hopes for more children able to attend this year.

The Comito comments that Mary Ellen forwarded to us provoked discussion of proposing involving STA in supporting purchase of solar panels for the City array. Dave agreed to research STA energy use and availability of solar panels IF Parish Council and Fr. Kyle are open to the idea of STA purchasing panels directly or having parishioners make purchases on behalf of STA. At one point installing panels at STA was briefly looked at. Francis suggested bringing it to Finance Council (Chair is John Moss) first – Dave will do so. Fr. John suggested making the case for reducing future energy costs and the Church by-laws referencing investing for the long haul. Suggestions could be communicated as to other actions parishioners could take.

Adjournment at 6:54 p.m.

Next meeting: June 1, 2021 @ 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Chuck Glatz

**Saint Thomas Aquinas Social Justice Committee
Minutes, April 6, 2021 (via ZOOM)**

Present: Chris Rehman, (Chair,) Tom Budnik (Staff,) Fr. John Herzog, Kathy Trahanovsky, Francis Todey, Mary Ellen Wishart, Felicity Doulgas, Dave Dirks, Chuck Glatz, Paula Friederich

Guests: Diane Lyon (STA Honduras Committee,) David Hansen (Ames Sanctuary Interfaith Partners)

Prayer: Chris

God of love and compassion, may we always recognize your spirit:

**In the refugee family, seeking safety from violence;
In the migrant worker, bringing food to our tables;
In the asylum-seekers, seeking justice for their families;
In the unaccompanied child, travelling in a dangerous world.**

**Give us hearts that break open whenever our brothers and sisters turn to us.
Give us hearts that no longer turn deaf to their voices in times of need.;**

**Give us eyes to recognize a moment for grace instead of a threat.
Give us voices that fail to remain silent but which decide instead to advocate prophetically.
Give us hands that reach out in welcome but also work for a world of justice until all
homelands are safe and secure. Amen.**

- Fr. Dan Hartnett S.J.

Minutes of March: Approved with additional note from Chuck on potential Seasons of Creation celebration which may be held jointly with STA and STC: Someone will need to volunteer to coordinate and discuss this with John Wilson at STC.

COVID-19 Fund: Chuck and Kathy report that fund recently had its largest donation period. Approximately \$274,000 has been donated since the program began.

ASIP: Mary Ellen and David Hansen report that there is a Honduran woman, known to Sisters of St. Francis order in Honduras, who is seeking asylum to come to Ames and needs a congregation to support her sponsorship. She is approximately 34 years old and is asking to come to Ames with her 7-year-old son. She is fleeing a desperate and dangerous situation. While living with her parents and family in Honduras, she was the victim of a rapist who was subsequently convicted and sent to prison for this attack. He has since promised to murder her and her entire family.

Her father urged her to leave with her son, and to try to make the journey to the US. She is currently on the Guatemalan/Mexican border seeking and extended Visa to stay in Mexico until she can apply for asylum in the

US. She has the support of both her Honduras Diocese and that of the Archdiocese of Dubuque. While a congregation cannot be a primary sponsor, it can be a supporting sponsor. STA is being asked to consider whether our community can and will organize to assist this woman with her living needs if she arrives. She has visited the US twice before and she wants to come into a Catholic community. David also noted that she is experienced in and would like to do agricultural work.

SJC immediately agreed to propose the matter to the Pastoral Council.

Honduras Committee:

Diane reports that approximately \$6000 per year is donated to this fund from STA.

This fund has supported education programs for approximately 100-125 kids for the past 7 years. It has also helped with various building and repair projects throughout the diocese. In addition, \$4900 was sent for Hurricane Relief last year.

Diane will send information and updates to Chuck so that he may update the website.

LYN: Dave discussed the need to coordinate intake questions to train a new secretary who will replace Don Alexander, who is retiring.

Social Justice Grants: Subcommittee is Chris, Francis, Felicity, Paula. Chris will ask Shari to recommend students from the student SJ group to participate as well. Tom reports that he currently has 12 applications which seek \$30K total. Available funds at the present time are \$20K. The applications will be reviewed in May and the notices will go out at the beginning of June.

Next Meeting: May 4, 2021 @ 6pm

Respectfully submitted by Paula Friederich

Saint Thomas Aquinas Social Justice Committee Minutes, March 2, 2021 (via Zoom)

Present: Chris Rehmann, Tom Budnik, Fr. John Herzog, Mary Ellen Wishart, Chuck Glatz, Francis Todey, Felicity Douglas, Kathy Trahanovsky, Dave Dirks, Paula Friederich

Prayer: Chris

Oh how beautiful are your ways, O God; the works of your creation. Raise our consciousness to know and feel deeply in our hearts our connectedness to all that is.

Instill in us the gift of being co-creators and sustainers of life. Teach us new and unsuspected ways of living so that current and future generations can walk humbly in beauty, love all compassionately, and live justly in solidarity with all creation.

Loving and gracious God, give us the courage to seek this transformation of self and society and the strength to see it through.

Amen

Minutes of February 2: Approved

Business

COVID-19 Fund:

Approximately 12-13 thousand dollars are currently in balance. The fund has been distributing approximately \$20,000 per month. Tom reports that he has received several notes of gratitude from recipients of this fund.

Love Your Neighbor (LYN) fund:

This fund has approximately \$46,000 in balance. Kathy and Dave discussed that the pandemic has made allocation somewhat more difficult because clients are needing to mail-in documents supporting their applications.

The policies regarding the distribution remain fluid and dynamic during this time.

Bridge Home (formerly Emergency Residence Project):

The Bridge Home serves six counties, near and including Story County.

The need for monetary donations and physical help for tasks of moving and repairs is constant. Help is welcome.

AMOS:

Chris reports that Fr. Kyle is supportive of STA coordinating with AMOS on community and parish needs.

The local cluster of AMOS has begun a dialogue with the mayor, city manager and acting police chief in order to provide more community involvement and reciprocal input regarding the conduct of policing in Ames as it acts with and upon the community.

Care of Creation Celebration:

Chuck reports that St. Cecilia and St. Thomas may join again this year for a fall celebration. Inviting other congregations is under consideration. Someone will need to volunteer to coordinate and discuss this with John Wilson at STC.

Social Justice Grants:

Applications are due April 1.

Next meeting: April 6, 2021 @ 6:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Paula Friederich

**Saint Thomas Aquinas Social Justice Committee
Minutes, February 2, 2021 (via Zoom)**

Present: Chris Rehmann, Fr. John Herzog, Mary Ellen Wishart, Chuck Glatz, Francis Todey, Felicity Douglas, Dave and Jean Dirks (via phone), Paula Friederich

Prayer: Chris

Lord, I ask that you lead me today and give me guidance, direction, clarity and wisdom into your truth. God, order my steps by your Holy Spirit, let my choices be guided by your word, let me not go ahead of you. I humbly ask for your guidance and direction today as I go through life.

Minutes of January 5: Approved

Business

Welcoming of the LGBTQ community: Since the January meeting of the SJC, Chris has communicated with Fr. Kyle about his interest in ministering to this community and how SJC may assist in this effort. Fr. Kyle responded that he continues to welcome ideas about potential speakers, meetings, etc. that we may solicit in the future. He will discuss this further with Deacon Frank and advise SJC.

Fr. John incidentally noted that some Catholic Bishops are opposing the Biden administration's plans to offer further protections to transgender, lesbian and gay persons.

COVID-19 Fund:

Chuck reports that approximately \$218,000 has been donated of which \$207,000 has been allocated as of the end of January.

Love Your Neighbor Fund (LYN):

Felicity discussed the potential need to revisit the rules for distribution of this fund. She asserts that funds should be distributed when a bill/rent is due, and before it is delinquent, when possible. Chuck will discuss this with Kathy Trahanovsky to seek clarification of how this fund is currently applied, and whether the policies that govern it need to be adjusted, especially during the pandemic.

STA/SJC web site:

Chuck has updated some of the web pages but noted there are some that need more information in order to update, i.e. the sister parish in Honduras, Catholic Charities, et cetera.

The committee discussed the possibility of adding more information about community organizations/activities of which STA/SJC members are directly or indirectly involved which support social justice concerns Ames. These might include the Ames Romero House, The Bridge Home, AMOS efforts, etc. The SJC agreed that this information might be helpful not only to inform the parish congregation of what causes the SJC is active in, but also to show what opportunities are available for those in the parish who might be interested in service.

Bridge Home (formerly Emergency Residence Project):

Felicity will consult with her husband Dan, who is on the board of Bridge Home, to assess what further needs it has with which STA and or SJC may assist.

AMOS Ames cluster:

Chris and Mary Ellen reported that the local organization is discussing how best it should proceed to evaluate community needs and how to prioritize actionable responses. One proposal is to re-establish house meetings in order to discuss with individuals what needs are most concerning to them and how they think these could be addressed.

AMOS is also interested in engaging in a dialogue with the police department and its new chief of police, concerning the experiences the immigrant and minority population of Ames has as individuals encounter the police force.

General Discussion:

The committee also discussed how SJC might proceed to be more visible and helpful to our parish community. Francis discussed that prior to the pandemic, the Pastoral Council was engaged in long-range planning to establish what priorities STA will carry forward, and how best to ascertain the concerns of the parishioners. It was agreed that SJC has this same interest and may be able to combine and coordinate efforts with the PC so that we may be mutually informed and contributing to the future direction of STA.

Mary Ellen signaled a need to identify a resource(s) at STA to assist people who have pressing domestic issues which LYN cannot address. These may include domestic abuse, sudden loss, et cetera. We need to be able to address people who need help emergently. This is one example of a parishioner concern which could be presented to the PC and included in its planning.

SJC will continue this discussion in its future meetings.

Next Meeting: March 2, 2021 @ 6:00 pm. Note earlier time.

Respectfully submitted by Paula Friederich.

**Saint Thomas Aquinas Social Justice Committee
Minutes, January 5, 2021 (via Zoom)**

Present: Chris Rehmann (Chair,) Tom Budnik (Staff,) Fr. John Herzog, Mary Ellen Wishart, Chuck Glatz, Francis Todey, Felicity Douglas, Paula Friederich

Prayer: Chris

O God, make our year a happy one!
Not by shielding us from all sorrows and pain,
But by strengthening us to bear it, as it comes;
Not by making our path easy,
But by making us sturdy to travel any path;
Not by taking hardships from us,

But by taking fear from our heart;
Not by granting us unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping our face bright, even in the shadows;
Not by making our life always pleasant,
But by showing us when people and their causes need us most,
and by making us anxious to be there to help.
Grant us love, peace, hope and joy for the year ahead.

Minutes of December 1, 2020: Approved

Business:

Content and publication of the SJC minutes on the STA website:

Discussion: There was some discussion about the formatting of the minutes and how much detail of these meetings is useful and appropriate for inclusion on the website. It was generally agreed that, since one of SJC's goals is to be more visible to our parish community, salient details about our conduct and discussions should continue to be published and available on the website.

Welcoming of the LGBTQ community to STA;

Continuing discussion: Deacon Frank Montabon, on his own behalf and that of Fr. Kyle approached the SJC at its December meeting about the possibility of sponsoring a well known speaker, Mr. Hudson Byblow to present at STA and/or jointly with ISU.

Since December, some of the SJC committee have reviewed some of Mr. Byblow's presentations. There are questions and concerns remaining not of his credentials to speak about homosexuality as it relates to the church, but of the pastoral value in repeating the Roman Catholic teaching to this community. It was agreed that SJC would seek further advice from Deacon Frank and Fr. Kyle. Chris will invite them to join us at a future meeting so that we may gather more information and direction.

COVID-19 Emergency Fund:

Approximately \$204K has been donated and approximately \$184K has been distributed.

There is a concern that STA's support and contributions to this effort has not been well reported and is not well known.

MICA food collection:

Tom reports that the recent drive at STA yielded approximately 2300 pounds of donated goods. Tom has suggested that, due to increased community need, STA commit to a regular, monthly collection for MICA. He will discuss with staff to determine which weekend of the month is most feasible.

STA/SJC website

It was agreed that information about AMOS should be included since it is an interfaith, community based organization which addresses various social justice issues, which is supported by STA/SJC, and in which many members are active.

Chuck volunteered to investigate what enhancements to the website may be made.

Next meeting: February 2, 2021 @ 6:30 pm

Respectfully submitted by Paula Friederich