

**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.