

**Saint Thomas Aquinas Social Justice Committee
Meeting Notes, January 11, 2022 6:00 p.m. (via Zoom)**

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

Action Items Highlighted

Opening Prayer: Chris

Minutes of December 7: Approved with minor correction Chuck will make.

Business

Stewardship of the Environment Topics:

Discuss Goal of 83% Emission Reduction by 2030 – John Wilson from St. Cecilia Parish has asked if St. Thomas Aquinas would be interested in joining with St. Cecilia Church and Elementary School to set a goal of cutting emissions by 83% by 2030. This would match the goal set by the City of Ames. It was generally felt this would be a good goal to adopt, and working with St. Cecilia might be an effective approach. There is some uncertainty on how to move forward. The STA Finance Council has expressed interest in developing a long-range plan for improving energy efficiency of our buildings. It was decided the first step would be to discuss this concept with Brad Powers, Chair of the Finance Council. If the Finance Council is supportive of setting an emission reduction goal, developing a long-range energy efficiency plan and coordinating with the Pastoral Council to implement the plan will be necessary. **Dave will contact Brad Powers to discuss this further.**

Celebration of Creation Service – St. Cecilia Church would like to know if St. Thomas is interested in again working with them on the celebration this year. Currently, there has not been much interest expressed from other churches to be involved. Mary Ellen felt there needs to be personal contact to recruit other congregations. We are committed to again working with St. Cecilia on this service, and we hope to be able to include other congregations.

Solar Project – On Monday, Jan. 10th, we found that \$24,170 had been contributed for the purchase of Ames SunSmart solar packs. With the parish budget match of \$14,000, this will allow the purchase of 133 panels at this time. Donations will continue to be accepted and additional solar packs will be purchased as funds become available. **Francis will write a bulletin announcement updating the parish on the status.** The extent of parish support for this project, which supports the call to action from Laudato Si', is wonderful to see.

Story County Immigrant and Refugee Collaboration:

The COVID-19 Fund for Story County Immigrants has transitioned to the Story County Immigrant and Refugee Collaboration. The goals of this new group are to provide more advocacy for immigrants as well as financial support. Chuck provided the group's newsletter that explains the transition and the new focus. A total of \$374,235 was used to provide rent and utility assistance for immigrants over the past 21 months. Approximately \$500 remained in the

fund and it was transferred to Good Neighbor to be placed in a special immigrant assistance fund. St. Thomas will stay involved with the group. Love Your Neighbor will continue to coordinate with this group in the future.

Bridge Home Development Work Report:

Dave provided an update on the development efforts at the Bridge Home. They are entering the third year of a six-year capital campaign. The goal will be to raise \$10 – \$15 million to develop a new site near the existing facility. The new facility will provide more beds for homeless individuals and families, as well as other amenities such as showers, laundry facilities, and day rooms. Office space for staff will also be improved. It is anticipated fundraising will begin within the next year.

Actions from Recommendations of the STA Visioning Effort:

Social Justice Speakers – Chuck talked with Emily Klaus about how the Social Justice Committee and Campus Ministry could work together to bring speakers to the ISU Lectures Series. This would include selecting speakers as well as a follow-up small group meeting for students and resident parishioners to discuss their reactions to the speaker. Emily is willing to recruit a group of interested students that could meet with Social Justice representatives to discuss potential speakers. The earliest a speaker could be scheduled would be for the next ISU academic year. Begin thinking of potential speakers for this group to consider.

Catholic Social Teaching Information – No report.

Laudato Si' Study Group – Felicity and Francis reviewed the various study guides Chuck forwarded. There are many good resources to consider. The desire is for this study group to meet during Lent, but the current increase in COVID-19 infections calls that into question. Meeting “on-line” is most likely the best opportunity available. Other potential study options were suggested during the meeting. Felicity and Francis will consider the available resources and develop a plan for the study group to be presented at the February meeting. Depending on how well this study group is received, there may be interest in providing additional small study groups in the future.

Bulletin Profiles of Individuals Living Their Faith in Daily Life – Mary Ellen had to leave the meeting early, but she reported on the individual profiles she is writing for the STA Bulletin. They are going well and she has received positive comments about them. This is a good opportunity to show the positive efforts of individuals in our community.

Next Meeting:

February 1, 2022, 6 p.m. by Zoom

Respectfully submitted by Francis Today.

Minutes approved 2/1/22