

**Saint Thomas Aquinas Social Justice Committee
Meeting Notes, August 2, 2022 6:00 p.m. (via Zoom)**

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

Action Items Highlighted

Opening Prayer: Provided by Chris.

Minutes of July 5: Approved

Business

Stewardship of the Environment Update:

Joint Care for Creation Committee – Francis provided information on the Care for Creation Committee meeting held on July 26. Planning work is ongoing for the official kickoff event on the weekend of September 17 & 18. Information tables will be set up at each parish that weekend. The committee is reviewing information available from Catholic Climate Covenant that would provide more background on the types of activities that could be undertaken. This includes items such as posters, videos, and handouts. The committee plans to work on developing activities in four different areas: prayer, education, advocacy, and direct action. Follow-up activities are planned after the kickoff weekend. This would include the Seasons of Creation Prayer Service planned for October 2, bulletin announcements, and small discussion group opportunities. Chuck has been working to invite additional members to the committee, and his work has shown some success.

Coordination with Building and Grounds Committee – There was discussion about whether additional coordination is needed with the Finance Council and Building and Grounds Committee to raise funds for capital improvements that reduce energy usage. This could also include purchasing additional solar credits from the Ames Solar Farm. Chuck and Dave have encouraged Building and Grounds to prepare information on the energy efficiency improvements that were completed in the past, as well as develop a plan for future improvements. This would show the impact past improvements had on energy usage. It has been difficult to develop interest in starting this planning effort. **It was decided Chuck and Dave will approach Building and Grounds to see if the Social Justice Committee can provide assistance in these planning efforts.** Chuck suggested that conservation efforts likely have the largest payoff per dollar spent, when compared to purchasing shares of the Ames Solar Farm. Continued coordination with Ann Gansemer-Topf is important to make sure the Pastoral Council is kept informed of these efforts.

USCCB Document on Racism as a Parish Learning Opportunity:

The USCCB document on racism, “open wide or hearts”, and the accompanying study guide provide good source material that could be used in a class discussing racism. Francis suggested that a four-session discussion group focused on racism would be a reasonable option. However,

he also felt a larger general discussion that provides an overview of the topic might be a good lead in. This initial session could be something such as a Sunday Morning Seminar or a Wisdom and Wine event. The hope is that an initial general discussion might help generate interest in taking part in a discussion group. There was discussion about how to present this topic to college students in order to generate interest in joining a discussion group. Chuck has been attempting to engage with a small number of students to develop a potential list of speakers that could be scheduled for the next year or two. Having a speaker on racism might provide an opportunity to connect with students. Francis will continue to work on developing plans for a discussion group. He would appreciate input from anyone who may wish to be involved in this planning work.

AMOS Activity at STA:

Chris provided a brief update on how AMOS could be of assistance to STA. Fr. Kyle is looking for ways to help parish members become more connected, especially after the impact of COVID. This could be accomplished using the AMOS model of house meetings and discussion among small groups of individuals. Chris will follow up with Fr. Kyle to discuss how this approach could work.

Columbarium:

Paula provided an update on the Columbarium at STA. Ray Murray and Paula are the trustees for the Columbarium. All spaces in the Columbarium have been sold, but approval to place a second structure has not been granted. An additional 120 spaces could be added without raising any additional funds. There is concern that many in the parish may not know there are currently no spaces available. Ray has been sending out communication to help gauge the interest in adding more spaces. There was discussion about whether a larger communication effort to the entire parish may be helpful to determine how much support there is for the Columbarium.

Next Meeting:

September 6, 2022, 6 p.m. by Zoom

Respectfully submitted by Francis Today.

Minutes approved: September 6, 2022