

**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 Todey

Minutes Approved: October 18, 2021