

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting - February 17, 2015

Attendance:

Anne Fillin, George Chippendale, Ruth Chippendale, Mary Fong, Chris Lundin, Paul Chestnut, Susan Olsen, Terry Atkinson

1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week

We read a prayer by Ronald Roheiser that Mary had printed.

2. Approval of January minutes

The minutes were unavailable.

OLD BUSINESS

3. Community Plan to End Homelessness in Santa Clara County

At the January meeting, we discussed the request from Fr. Matt to review the "Community Plan to End Homelessness," an extensive plan to end homelessness in Santa Clara County. We formulated a response and since the last meeting, we wrote to him. Since then, there has been no action on this issue.

4. Social Justice Day - February 20

Social Justice Day takes place this coming Saturday. Susan is anticipating about 50 attendees.

5. Drones Quilt Project

The Drones Quilt Project was created to raise awareness about the illegal and immoral use of weaponized drones by the United States, which are responsible for the deaths of thousands of people, primarily in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Each block of the quilts bears the name of a drone victim and was created by a different individual. The Drones Quilt Project exhibit has been seen by thousands as it has traveled around the country for the past 18 months, visiting 20 cities.

The idea for a Drones Quilt came from some women in the UK who started the project as a way to memorialize the victims of U.S. combat drones. The idea traveled across the Atlantic. The idea is to collectively create a piece of artwork which connects the names of activists with those killed. The names humanize the victims and point out the connectivity between human beings.

Chris placed the two quilts with stands at the OLR Hall on Saturday, February 13. They will be at SAG Feb 20-21 (for the Social Justice Day).

6. Death Penalty News

We discussed the ongoing effort to place an initiative on the November ballot to replace California's death penalty system. This initiative, called the Justice That Works Act of 2016, will re-sentence the nearly 750 people currently on death row in our state to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Terry McCaffrey, the president of California People of Faith Against the Death Penalty, is strongly involved in this campaign. He is currently collecting signatures at strategic locations throughout the San Francisco Peninsula. He and his cohorts plan to set up tables to collect signatures outside our churches after Sunday Masses. Paul will write a letter to Fr. Matt, requesting permission for this. The signature gathering effort will go on through April. [Fr. Matt later approved the plan.]

A competing initiative is also striving for signatures. The objective of that one is to speed up the process of executions.

7. Have a Heart Collection

The HCC is sponsoring Have a Heart Sunday which will be held on Saturday February 20 and Sunday February

21. At each Mass this weekend, we will be collecting new, unopened underwear and warm socks for people who receive services at the Opportunity Center in Palo Alto. Donations are kept in a safe place and distributed to those clients in most need. Plans for how to collect both clothing and cash were discussed. A spreadsheet identifying the volunteers for each Mass was set up.

NEW BUSINESS

9. Democracy Spring - Discussion

Helen Baumann has proposed that the HCC get involved in an organization called Democracy Spring. The objective of the organization is to work to bring about a fundamental change in the way that we fund elections in this country. "We need to take back our government from the special interests that have purchased it and control it for their own purposes and to the ongoing detriment of the general electorate."

We agreed that the goal, to bring about a fundamental change in the way we fund elections in this country, is one that we all share. We agreed that this effort has a strong social justice theme, and is consistent with the goal of eliminating economic inequality in our system. We responded to Helen as follows:

"Our parish organization has many branches; the Human Concerns Committee acts as an umbrella for several small groups that have as a goal some aspect of social justice. In that spirit, we welcome your involvement, and look forward to helping you in any way that we are able."

10. SESS Books for Summer Reading

We discussed the plan for collecting books for second graders. We are aiming for the end of April. We need to look at the calendar of events to see if there are competing activities.

11. What's On Your Mind?

The Thomas Merton Center (TMC) has arranged for a family potluck luncheon on Saturday, April 23, with the local Muslim community. Bishop Patrick McGrath, Fr. Matt and the Muslim Imam will be joining members of our St. Thomas Aquinas Parish and the local Muslim community.

Those who are interested in attending should respond to Chris Lundin at clundin@stanford.edu no later than March 16. The Muslim community is small, with 300 adults and 100 children. We intend to have each community approximately equally represented. If capacity becomes an issue, attendance will be in order of receipt of RSVPs.

12. Volunteer for Faith-sharing/Question of the Week

Next meeting - March 16, 2016