

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting - June 15, 2016

Attendance:

Anne Fillin, George Chippendale, Ruth Chippendale, Mary Fong, Paul Chestnut, Terry Atkinson, Terry McCaffrey

1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week

2. Approval of May minutes

The minutes were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

3. Death Penalty News

The Justice That Works Act of 2016, which will re-sentence the nearly 750 people currently on death row in our state to life in prison without the possibility of parole, has not officially qualified for the November ballot, but a sufficient number of signatures were gathered. There is a competing initiative that will reduce the time to execution. That initiative also gathered a sufficient number of signatures to qualify for the ballot.

4. Torture Awareness Month

June is Torture Awareness Month. Our banners are up at the three churches. We are in the midst of a campaign to gather petitions for two petitions: Close Guantanamo and End Prolonged Solitary Confinement. Next Sunday, June 26, is the last day of the campaign. Susan pointed out that there is no Spanish announcement or insert for the 9 am Mass at OLR. George will strive to get a pulpit announcement in Spanish for this coming Sunday.

5. Spirituality Tuesday Plan

George is leading a plan to have a Spirituality Tuesday event on the subject of homelessness. Others involved are Anne Fillin, Mike Verve, and Veronica Duluk. Veronica is planning a presentation on "Ending Homelessness in Santa Clara County." The event will be an additional followup to the request from Fr. Matt to review the "Community Plan to End Homelessness."

6. Palo Alto Peace Walk

Chris continues to plan for the Palo Alto Peace Walk, together with Multifaith Voices for Peace and Justice. The date is September 11. Starting time is 1:30. The walk will pass several churches along the way, including OLR, where a short event is being planned. The walk will conclude at Mitchell Park where we will enjoy the annual 9/11 Peace Picnic hosted by American Muslim Voice.

NEW BUSINESS

7. Social Justice Day 2017

Susan suggested that we discuss next year's Social Justice Day. Two of our members suggested that we do not have a Social Justice Day next year. The events for the past three years have not been particularly successful in terms of attendance. Some thought that it is time for another parish to take a turn. None of the attendees disagreed or expressed a desire to work on the even again next year.

8. Revision of Mission Statement

Anne reported that the PSC wants to make the mission statements of the parish organizations more nearly uniform. The council is suggesting that the format should be: a one or two sentence mission statement followed by bullet points for goals. Our mission statement is on the first page of our web site. Paul made the statement conform to the suggestion as follows:

"The Human Concerns Committee of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish on behalf of the parish community responds to

Jesus' command to love neighbor and self by working for the common good of all. The committee works to inspire the parish community to discern and act in ways that make the works of peace, justice, and mercy integral to their daily lives. Our goals are:

- To alleviate the distresses of hunger, homelessness, disease, lack of housing and health care, and other human needs.
- To see the face of God in others and pray for God's oversight and guidance as we proceed.”

The group agreed with this change.

9. What's On Your Mind?

Paul brought in an article from the San Jose Mercury entitled, “Stop criminalizing victims of sex trafficking.” The article discussed California SB1322, a proposal to change the law regarding the arrest of children for sex trafficking. Federal law states that any minor who engages in a sexual act in exchange for anything of value is a victim of child sex trafficking. In California, a minor may be arrested and sent to juvenile hall. SB1322 will preclude victims of child abuse from being arrested. We discussed the idea of this law and why it is necessary, and whether we should take some kind of action.

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

Next meeting - July 20, 2016