

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting - January 16 , 2013

Attendance:

Paul Chestnut, Ruth Chippendale, George Chippendale, Terry Atkinson, Jean Ramaciotti, Mary Fong, Terry McCaffrey

1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week

Jean led us in a discussion of faith. Is it growing in us, or is it decreasing?

OLD BUSINESS

2. Approval of November minutes

The minutes were approved.

3. HCC budget

It is time to define our recommended budget for the next fiscal year. Paul showed the budget for the current fiscal year (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013), and also a spreadsheet for what has been spent, both this year and the previous year. The budget for the previous year (2011-2012) had been underspent by \$2773.67. Our current year (2012-2013) budget is \$5650, and as of November 2, \$555.64 had been spent. We discussed a proposed budget for the year beginning on July 1, 2013 at length. A major issue was our contribution to PIA (Peninsula Interfaith Action). Their mission is faith-based social justice issues, such as access to health care, immigration, affordable housing, home finances, jobs, and support for youth. In 2011-2012, we had budgeted a contribution of \$2000. The amount spent was actually \$1000. For the current year, we had budgeted \$2000. We agreed to recommend \$1500 for 2012-2013. We contemplated zeroing our contribution to three organizations: NETWORK, JERICHO, and Center of Concern.

NETWORK is a national Catholic social justice group of Sisters who lobby for federal policies and legislation that promote economic and social justice, such as peacemaking, comprehensive immigration reform, housing, poverty, federal budget priorities, trade and hunger [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org)

"JERICHO is the only statewide, interfaith, non-partisan, grassroots public policy organization in California founded specifically to educate and advocate on behalf of low-income individuals and families." [www.jericho.org](http://www.jericho.org)

"The Center of Concern is a faith-based organization working in collaboration with ecumenical and interfaith networks to bring a prophetic voice for social and economic justice to a global context. The Center is both a provider of information and analysis as well as a catalyst for launching projects to address issues or opportunities that advance an authentic human development agenda. Through analysis, education, advocacy and capacity building, the Center challenges structural injustice and promotes innovative economic alternatives." [www.coc.org](http://www.coc.org).

4. Refugees

Claire Collins had said that she plans to introduce us to a new refugee, but so far, she has not done it.

5. Homeless Issues

Terry Atkinson reports that Father Matt has given approval, on a case-by-case basis, for St. Thomas overnight visitors to come inside in the morning when church opens around 7 a.m. to quietly and respectfully take warm shelter or sleep until church closes after the noon Mass. Under those conditions, they will be extended cordial hospitality.

Mary Fong followed up with Fr. Matt about our participation in the Palo Alto City proposal of churches hosting three vehicles on church sites. Laura Chiu also brought it up in the PSC meeting. Fr. Matt and Chuck Tully are very concerned about insurance and liability issues. In light of the Diocese's concern about protecting our vulnerable youth, it appears that we cannot host any vehicles on our OLR and STA sites because of the schools on the grounds. The STA site is too small for this purpose.

The St. Thomas Site Committee hopes to invite the homeless expert, Heiri Shuppisser, to speak again sometime

in February.

## NEW BUSINESS

### 6. NRCAT's "Fact Not Fiction" Campaign

Paul read a statement from NRCAT (National Religious Campaign Against Torture) about "*Zero Dark Thirty*, the recent film that has been nominated for several Academy Awards. An excerpt:

"Millions of people will see the movie *Zero Dark Thirty* and many of them will walk out of the theater believing they saw an historically accurate account of the events leading to the capture of bin Laden. However, the film is not based on the facts about the U.S.'s use of torture. *Zero Dark Thirty* is fiction. It inaccurately suggests that the use of torture by U.S. authorities led to the capture of Osama bin Laden. Also, the film does not state that torture is immoral and illegal. Sadly, the film justifies the use of torture. Torture is immoral, illegal, and counterproductive, and we need to share this message. The National Religious Campaign Against Torture has created the Fact Not Fiction campaign to help you do this."

NRCAT recommends that congregations show the NRCAT film *Ending U.S.-Sponsored Torture Forever* in your congregation or on your campus between now and the end of Torture Awareness Month (June 2013). NRCAT will provide an updated study guide for the film.

Terry McCaffrey said that Charlie Rose had a panel discussion about this issue, and concluded that everything in the NRCAT letter is correct: Torture is against our constitution, is morally wrong, and it is ineffective. We started planning an event. Paul will order the DVD of the film from NRCAT. We need to create a flier. We should get several people outside the parish to support the event, such as Sue Gibson, pastor at First Presbyterian, and Paul George, president of Peninsula Peace and Justice.

Terry said that March 3 or March 10 would be a good date. Time would be 3 to 5 p.m. at OLR.

### 7. Day Worker's Handicraft sale

We postponed discussion of this topic because neither Laura nor Patricia Markee was present.

### 8. Social Justice Day of Reflection

From Sue Olsen: "Deanery 7 (with the help of Deanery 6) is offering a Day of Reflection on Social Justice on Saturday, March 2, 2013, at Holy Family Parish in San Jose. Bishop McGrath will be our keynote speaker. The day goes from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and includes lunch and the opportunity to participate in two workshops. We are offering workshops in both English and Spanish. Cost is \$15 if you register in advance (\$20 at the door). I will send a flier and registration form to you to pass on as soon as I have it. Hope we can get some good participation in this day from St. Thomas Aquinas Parish."

### 9. What's On Your Mind?

George: There was a PIA meeting last Monday about immigration reform. The political atmosphere finally appears ready to address immigration reform. The concern is that we need to get the right reforms. To do this, the politicians need to be continually confronted with the truth. The Hispanic community at St. Thomas is at the center of this discussion. They plan to keep careful track of what is being proposed, and to keep the politicians on the right track.

Terry McCaffrey: there will be a "Victims' Mass" at 2:30 Sunday at Our Lady of Refuge, 2165 Lucretia Ave., San Jose. Bishop McGraw will be there. The event is dedicated to anyone who has lost a loved one through violence.

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

Mary volunteered.

Next meeting - February 20, 2013