

Maintenance to Mission

Hello Friends/ Fellow St. Barnabas Parishioners,

I wanted to share with you all about the amazing encounter that was held at St. Barnabas Parish at the St. Augustine site on October 22nd.

In collaboration with the City of West Allis, we gathered to conduct a Community Conversation on the topic of homelessness in our community. The format of these conversation series is not a presentation, but a true dialogue with the various communities within a community.

This was the ninth conversation held on various topics in the past year and because a significant turnout was expected, the City requested our facility which would be a large enough venue to handle a larger than average turnout. More than 50 people attended, including Fire Dept., Police, Schools, the new City Administrator, Housing Authority, Aldermen, a State Assemblyman, Social Workers, Health Dept., multiple Neighborhood Associations, Aurora Health Care, W.A Senior Center, WA Women's Club AND about 15-20 members of St. Barnabas Parish. They represented our Leadership, Parish Council, Human Concerns, St. Vincent de Paul, Hospitality Commission, as well as some of our very active parishioners.

In addition, several individuals, including the two founders of Street Angels (a nonprofit serving the homeless in Milwaukee) offered incredible insight to the work they have been doing for the past decade in serving this population. They cast a picture of a growing crisis not only in West Allis, but throughout the entire County of Milwaukee, which currently has zero beds available to shelter the unsheltered. Winter is fast approaching, and resources are strained at best.

We also had the blessing of two homeless men, both in their sixties, who courageously and very articulately shared their stories and the cycle of despair they face on a perpetual basis as they have struggled to break the cycle and deal with the pure exhaustion of constant chaos and upheaval. Their stories were a true inspiration for our ministries. We concluded our 2+ hour meeting with consensus to continue to meet regularly and to pursue a course of action to address both things that are attainable in the short term and to align resources for the longer-term opportunities. For the sake of continuity, we have agreed to continue to host this initiative at our St. Augustine site.

Thank you to all who attended and who continue to support this ministry! Father's vision for the needy and disenfranchised and his encouragement for us to GO FORTH was so visible in the room. Christ is with us and I truly believe that this event was a Divine Encounter leading us from Maintenance to Mission. Many thanks to Maria, Russ, Rachel, Kitty, Deacon Terry, etc. etc. AND ALL OF YOU who silently but consistently serve Christ, St. Barnabas, and one another as one united community now connecting deliberately with our caring neighbors and friends in West Allis!

Please feel free to offer your continued guidance and support for our future work. There was \$0 cost to us for this. So much for what money can NOT buy!

In Gratitude,
Nancy Melcher