

St. Thomas More Social Justice Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 11, 2024 at 7:00 PM via Zoom

Mission Statement: The Social Justice Commission strives to put faith into action.

Members Present: Linda Myers, Sue Fett, Wayne Fett, Janeen Jorgensen, Cheryl Bombei, Emily Sinwell, Tom Noak, Kim Novak, Jan Blake, Jo Myers-Walker, Tracy Lees, Karla Smith, Jane Noble-Davis, Barb Swanson, Virginia Jeltima, Adam Summers, Maureen Vasile, Lee Mickey, Ann Elsbecker, Cece Roudabush, Ann Houlahan, Mary Merchant

1. Opening Prayer: Tom

2. Approval of February Minutes: Approved

3. Welcoming of New Members: Adam Summers

4. Iowa Catholic Worker House Immigration Issues

- a. Cheryl shared pictures and information about the recent trip to the US/Mexico border that was taken by local CWH volunteers. She told the group about the work done by various organizations that are supporting the immigrants as they enter the United States.
- b. Emily spoke about anti-immigrant legislation that will be voted on tomorrow in the Iowa Legislature. She shared concerns about the negative impact these bills would have on the work of the CWH and the people they serve. Emily invited us to join them in traveling to Des Moines to talk to legislators about these concerns. In addition, we were given contact information for us to use to call or write to our local representatives.

5. Fr. John Dear Book Talk

- a. The presentation was well-received, with approximately 65 attendees.

6. Offering of Letters for the Fam Bill - Weekend of April 13/14 after all Masses

- a. Linda, Tracy, Wayne and Cece are working on this project.
- b. There will be a brief presentation at the Masses that weekend to explain the project.
- c. We will have a table set up in the MPR as well as downstairs in the coffee/donut area.
- d. Information about how to send a letter by hard copy or email will be provided.
- e.. Parish members can write a letter that day, or take home the information to do at a later time. Paper letters should be returned to church. The basket of letters will be blessed at Mass before being mailed.
- f. Volunteers will be needed to staff the tables to assist with the project.

7. Next Expanded Fair Trade Sale - April 13/14 after all Masses

- a. We will no longer sell items before Mass.
- b. A Signup Genius will be sent.

8. Next Catholic Worker Meal - Sunday March 17th from 11:00AM - 2:00 PM

- a.. Conor Harris (a youth group member) and his family will be helping to serve this meal.

9. Stations of the Cross for Overcoming Racism - Friday, March 22nd at 7:00 PM

10. DEW Weekend - March 15th - 17th at Prairiewoods Retreat Center in Hiawatha

11. Franciscan Way of Life — Next meeting is on Wednesday, March 20th at 7:00 PM

- a. There will be Franciscan Sisters in attendance at the April meeting to discuss future options with the current group members.
- b. A retreat will be held in May.
- c. The next group will begin in September.

12. Green Team - Next meeting is on Monday, March 25th at 7:00 PM in the lower level of the church

- a. Jay will forward the agenda to the group.
- b. Cece has posted a Signup Genius for composting and recycling:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E4AA4AA2BA75-45897945-coffee>

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0E4AA4AA2BA75-45898099-weeklybiweekly>

13. Social Justice Retreat - What's Next/Priorities

- a. Welcoming and mentoring new members - strategies
Provide information about what we do and why.
- b. Lenten Works of Mercy - Create a brochure about the organizations. Done!
Cards for some organizations are already gone. Linda has replaced them.
- c. Marie Dennis - PAX Christi as a future speaker - World Day of Peace in September?
Lee reported that four members of the PAX Christi staff will be in the area in May.
We will organize an informal session before 5:15 Mass for them to share information about the work of their organization.

- d. Habitat for Humanity - Can we get a commission member to spearhead this? It would involve:
 - i. Contacting Habitat for Humanity and setting up some work dates.
 - ii. Advertising work dates in the bulletin, on Parish Facebook site and church website.
 - iii. Being an active participant in at least some of the work dates.
 - iv. Linda can help you get started and she has the contacts.
 - v. The group discussed the option of someone outside of the commission to coordinate this project. Tom is going to talk to someone from the Knights of Columbus to see if they would be interested in coordinating this. It also could be advertised in the bulletin.
 - vi. Working on a Habitat house could be a good activity for youth group members.
- e. Recycling Help - Currently done mostly done by Cece.
 - i. See the Signup Genius listings under the Green Team report.
- f. How do we let people know that they can be part of our commission by just focusing on one aspect if they want to? For example, Fair Trade, Habitat, Green Team, etc.
 - i. Linda and Tracy will work on compiling a list of all the volunteer options that are part of the Social Justice Commission.
- g. Parish Social Media - Angie Goodwin is working on our parish website including updating the commission information.
- h. Planning will begin in May for Season of Creation activities in September/October. The theme this year is "To Hope and Act with Creation."
 - i. Season of Creation Website:
- i. Recruiting young families and youth in our parish. Angie is working with the youth group and would like to get them involved in partnering with the social justice commission in our activities.
- j. Linda would like to see all commission members involved in at least one of our social justice activities/initiatives. Many hands make light work.

14. Our next commission meeting is supposed be on Sunday, April 14th. Due to the Fair Trade sale and the Offering of Letters we will not have a meeting so everyone is available to help with these two events.