

Social Justice Commission Meeting Minutes

April 12, 2026

The St. Thomas More Social Justice Commission strives to put Faith into Action, serving all Creation with a keen awareness of Catholic Social Teaching.

Opening Prayer -God of light and love, you created all people in your image and called us to live in a way that upholds the dignity of others. In a world wounded by conflict — including escalating tensions with Iran — turn hearts away from violence and toward encounter and understanding. Strengthen world leaders to act with wisdom, restraint, and moral courage. Guide them to uphold human dignity and seek peace through dialog rather than destruction. Wherever wars and rumors of war abound may your peace and understanding quiet all fears and animosities. May you give new and powerful gifts of courage and leadership to those who speak and work for peace. Help us to confess that war in this time is a mark of our failing one another and contrary to your will.

1. **March Meeting Minutes** - approved
2. **NEW/ONGOING BUSINESS:**
 - a. **Tithing Grants** – Funds disbursed, multiple thank you letters received.
 - b. A group will be convened before the next tithing grant cycle to discuss what guidelines we are using to decide what a “standard donation” is, how much these should be, and whether a renewal application should be periodically requested. 7:00 PM May 12th at Tom and Kim’s house (730 Walnut St, IC)
 - c. The recommendations of the group will be brought to the following SJ Commission meeting for discussion and approval.
3. **Lenten Works of Mercy Projects** Comments/suggestions for changes/ improvement?
 - a. General consensus that the Inside Out backpack drive and RMH fleece blankets are popular “hands on” activities with the chance to socialize.
 - b. Will consider additional service projects that allow members/parishioners to gather.
4. **Sat/Sunday Afternoon Lent Series:**
 - a. Dr Hitchon requested further discussion forums at STM regarding the Islamic faith and teachings, Christians in Palestine and Israel affected by war. Social Justice Commission will help coordinate. ?Dates - May 17th or June 7th?
 - b. **Handout from screening of “No Other Land” is available**, and summary of the event can be forwarded on request.
 - c. [Sr. Helen Prejean](#), is speaking at Mount Mercy in Cedar Rapids on April 13 at 6:00 p.m. No fee, but response preferred. **If you are able to provide a vehicle to carpool please let Lee Mickey and Jay Gilchrist know**
5. **Bread for the World Offering of Letters** -
 - a. The Bread for the World Offering of Letters will be on May 23/24 (Memorial Day Weekend). Our first planning meeting will be April 16th at 6:00 PM at Tin Roost. Let [Linda Myers](#) know if you plan to attend the planning meeting.

- b. Volunteers needed after Masses May 23/24th to help.

6. St Thomas More LGBTQ+ Ministry –

- a. STM LGBTQ Ministry leadership team has been meeting. We are planning to roll out active engagement with the LGBTQ+ community with a social event and potluck, then alternate off-site social events with Faith sharing activities at STM on a monthly basis.
- b. Waiting for confirmation of the venue for the first event. LGBTQ+ Ministry will be listed under the Social Justice Commission, with a mission statement and links to resources.
- c. Email contact will be thorough stm.lgbtq@gmail.com with shared access by the leadership team to respond to inquiries and gather responses for social events.

7. Succession Planning - Kim to step down as co-chair in August, Tom to remain co-chair for 1 more year. Overlapping co-chairs going forward, with a 2 year term for each chairperson. Who is interested? I promise it will be do-able and kinda fun!

8. Green Team Report Jay reviewed Green Team events. Weekly QR Code link in the bulletin is in place to link to the Green Team page and Laudato Si posts. Link to promoting the Habitat Solar fund is coming soon.

- a. Ecospirituality retreats planned: Sept 23rd at Our Lady of the Prairie - ["Rooted - The Invitation of Science, Nature and Spirit"](#) facilitated by Kim Novak.
Fall STM retreat with Connie Mutel (local author and speaker) at STM Oct. 10th.
- a. Coralville city wide "swap meet" May 9th at City Hall - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!
- b. Discussion about starting the process of adding solar panels to STM - we will need to talk with other churches in Iowa who have added solar, Solar Industry groups about the cost, process and potential grants, and with Parish Council about establishing a fund for directed donations for the first phase of solar installation once the groundwork has been done.

9. Racial Equity Report - Sofia Gonzalez wrote reflections based on USCCB Stations of the Cross for Overcoming Racism. Positive feedback was given from those able to attend. Thank you, Sofia!

10. NAMI Walks - May 2nd, Terry Trueblood Park -

- a. STM has multiple parishioners involved with NAMI. Join the STM-sponsored NamiWalks team, or donate at [STM Walkers For Justice](#)

11. Fairtrade Sales –

- a. Dates for future sales: [April 25/26th Volunteers Needed!](#)
- b. Additional products from Guatemala, Milwaukee Franciscans for Peace are now available.

12. **Knights of Columbus Dresser Build** Dresser and nightstand assembly for [Houses into Homes](#) STM lowerlevel May 16th from 9am to noon.
13. **Catholic Worker House Meals** -
- a. [May 3, 2026](#) (lasagna, salad, garlic bread, etc) food donations and servers needed!
 - b. June 7, 2026
 - c. July 5, 2026
14. **2026 PLANNING:**
- a. Emphasis on Catholic Social Teaching Education and Awareness
 - b. Monthly - pulpit announcement, bulletin submission, short discussion in meeting (EFJ Resources)
 - c. Note how each of our initiatives reflect intentions of CST
 - d. Catholic Social Teaching in a Year
15. **Collaboration/Organization of Initiatives** - additional help needed to contact other commissions and STM groups.
- a. How do we prevent duplication of efforts by multiple commissions and respond to requests of parishioners?
16. **Longer term discussion** - as we continue to have multiple sub-groups, what should the focus of Social Justice be?
17. **Future Initiatives** - [Shared Spreadsheet](#) Social Justice Commission

Next Meeting - May 11, 2026 **Monday 7PM** MPR (upstairs)

Future Meetings - (9:45 AM in church MPR unless otherwise noted)

June 14, 2026

July 12, 2026,

August 9, 2026

September 13, 2026