

Social Justice Commission Meeting Minutes **Sunday, November 9, 2025, 9:45 AM - MPR (Upstairs Conference Room)**

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

Members Present: Jan Cronin, Lu Westhoff, Sue Fett, Wayne Fett, Ann Houlahan, Mary Merchant, Tracy Lees, Ann Elsbecker, Terry Conner, Janeen Jorgensen, Lee Mickey, Peter Menard-Warwick, Adam Summers, Jan Blake, Linda Myers, Joann Miller, Patrick Sullivan, Sofia Gonzalez, Tom Novak, Kim Novak

Guest Speaker: Barry Buschelman

- 1. Opening Prayer**
- 2. New Members** - No new members
- 3. Approval of October Meeting Minutes** - No changes to meeting minutes noted.
- 4. GREEN Team Report** - Jay Gilchrist and/or Cece Roudabush
 - a. Not present, deferred until next weekend
- 5. Racial Equity Update** -
 - a. Stewardship Weekend Update - 6 new members joined, “Welcome” buttons were well received and more have been ordered.
 - b. Black Catholic History Month Update -
 - i. First week of book study was well attended. Next meeting 11/18/25.
 - ii. Info on Black Catholic Saints and those up for sainthood has been made available to all parishioners .
 - iii. A suggestion was made to possibly have a display and books available on a shelf in the new Library in the future for events such as this. MaryLu Callahan can be contacted if we wish to do so.
 - c. **Sunday Night: “Growing Up in the Shadow of Jim Crow and the Light of the Civil Rights Movement”** An evening of history, reflection, and a call to deepen our commitment to racial and social justice.
Speaker: Valerie Garr, Adjunct Assistant Professor, UI College of Nursing
When: Sunday night, November 9, 2025, 6:30pm

OLD BUSINESS:

- 6. CRC Winter Clothing Drive** - update
 - a. 1,925 winter coats were distributed.
 - b. 349 households & 7 community groups received coats & other winter wear.
 - c. Many recipients were recent immigrants experiencing their first winters.
 - d. 21 faith communities, the ICPD, a number of community organizations, & many individuals provided donations of warm winter wear.
 - e. Our volunteers were affiliated with 32 community organizations / groups.
 - f. As in past years, we ran short of snow pants & adult-sized winter coats.

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7. Fairtrade Sales –

- a. The *next sale is for the weekend of 11/22*. Help is still needed after the 830 and 11 am masses:
 - i. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E4BA8AD2EAAFA7-58903526-fair#/>
- b. December date may change due to volunteer availability.
- c. Display Options were discussed and are being evaluated.
- d. \$1400 deposited in past month; purchases made from EE and Guatemala

8. Stewardship Weekend -

- a. November 15 & 16 - two to three representatives needed after all masses: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E4BA8AD2EAAFA7-58904881-stm-social#/>
- b. A Social Justice Commission video made by Adam and Linda was shared with the group. (Thank you!) This will play by the table.
- c. A “Seven Themes of Catholic Social Justice” banner has been made and ordered, lists of initiatives will be available, as well as information on groups we have supported in past years. A sign-up sheet will be available for those interested in joining us.

9. Open Heartland/CWH Family Gift Sponsorship -

- a. Youth Group/SJC Collaboration
- b. *There are still many family members that need to be covered.*
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E4BA8AD2EAAFA7-60095562-stm-youth#/>
- c. Wrapping event November 16th (1 to 4 pm) with Youth Group. Please join us!

10. December Catholic Worker House Meal -

- a. Next meal: December 7
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E4BA8AD2EAAFA7-58904827-december#/>

NEW BUSINESS:

11. Prison Ministry - Parishioner Barry Buschelman shared the history and current state of Prison Ministry at the Oakdale Correctional Facility -

- a. Due to a number of contributing events, very few people are allowed into the facility at this time. It is unlikely that this will change in the near future.
- b. Barry, Father Chuck, Nancy Wagner, and Jorge Lopez currently visit on Tuesdays, providing a service, reflection, rosary and full mass (once per month).
- c. Reading materials have been provided by Maricarla and others, in both English and Spanish.
- d. Possible future initiatives: Johnson County Jail Outreach

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- e. *If interested in writing letters or mentoring those transitioning back into the community*, contact Inside Out Reentry Community <https://www.insideoutreentry.com> or Tracy Lees.

12. Other Upcoming Holiday Initiatives -

- a. Toys for Tots and DVIP Angel Trees -
 - i. Tree and tags will be up 11/30 through 12/15
 - ii. Collection boxes will be available in the MPR
- b. Christmas Tree Decorating for ICCWH (12/7/25) - more info to come.

13. Future Initiatives - Shared Spreadsheet [Social Justice Commission Initiatives](#)

- a. Development of LGBTQ+ & Allies Faith Sharing Group
 - i. Small group meeting has been planned to consider vision of group.
 - ii. Additional meeting set with local LGBTQ+ faith leaders
 - iii. If interested in helping with input or planning, please reach out to Kim, Tom or Adam.

14. Franciscan Way of Life -

- a. 11/20 6 pm Meet&Greet in LL, followed by a class on St. Clare at 7pm.
- b. Four new members have joined.

15. Additional items for consideration

- a. Fleece Blankets for Guatemala Mission -
 - i. ~30 Twin-size cut (not tied) fleece blanket kits needed for Jan trip.
 - ii. Please contact Tom or Kim if you would like to help
 - iii. Possible “cutting party” in early January.
- b. Used SAGES books for library -
 - i. A shelf display of SAGES books from the last 2 years will be created in the STM Library.
 - ii. If you would like to donate any of your used SAGES books, please contact Kim.
- c. National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (not discussed during meeting) - November 16 to 21, 2025.
 - i. Info and activities provided by Shelter House to be distributed.

16. Next Meeting – December 15, 2025, 7 PM MPR Zoom

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

- December 15, 2025
- **Monday 7PM, Zoom
- January 11, 2026
- February 8, 2026
- March 8, 2026
- April 12, 2026
- May 11, 2026 **Monday 7 PM
- June 14, 2026
- July 12, 2026
- August 9, 2026
- September 13, 2026