

Social Justice Commission Meeting Minutes

Sunday, October 12, 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.

Attendees: Wayne Fett, Sue Fett, Sam Engblom, Peter Menard-Warwick, Tracy Lees, Ann Elsbecker, Ann Houlahan, Linda Myers, Janeen Jorgensen, Jan Blake, Jay Gilchrist, Terry Conner, Lu Westhoff, Cece Roudabush, Sofia Gonzalez, Patrick Sullivan, Kim Novak, Tom Novak

1. Opening Prayer - Tom Novak

2. Welcoming of New Members -

- a. Welcome back to Terry Conner and Jan Blake!
- b. Welcome to Sofia Gonzalez and Patrick Sullivan, who recently moved to Iowa City from Cincinnati!

3. No changes to September Meeting Minutes were noted.

4. Member Recognition

- a. **Congratulations** to members Ann Elsbecker, Janeen Jorgensen and Linda Myers for their becoming Franciscan associates!
- b. **Congratulations** to Ann Houlahan who is being awarded the 2025 Iowa City Human Rights Award for the hundreds of hours, thousands of miles and millions of smiles she provides to our immigrant brothers and sisters in our community!

5. GREEN Team Report - Jay Gilchrist

- a. Many events, including Stations of the Cross, Peace Pole Blessing and half-day retreat, were completed for the *Season of Creation*. Thank you to the team!
- b. The Laudato Si Plan continues to be rolled out, although survey completion has been disappointing. Please complete and ask others to complete: [LINK](#)
- c. Water Quality Round Table - October 19
- d. Stewardship Weekend - October 18&19

6. Racial Equity Update -

- a. Black Catholic History Month - November
- b. Stewardship weekend November 1&2 -
 - i. handouts will be provided including info on Black Saints and upcoming book study.
 - ii. "Welcome" buttons will be available for commission members.
- c. Book study beginning November 4. Contact Kim or Tom.
- d. Janeen mentioned an art exhibition in Dubuque titled **"They Are Not Disposable"**. This art honors those whose lives were cut short by systemic racism. Please see a video [HERE](#).

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- e. Sacred Heart Cathedral in Davenport will hold a [Feast of St. Martin de Porres Liturgy](#) at 530 pm on Monday November 3.

OLD BUSINESS:

7. CRC Winter Clothing Drive -

- a. We received MANY donations, and will be delivering those this afternoon.
- b. Many volunteers are still needed, especially for Thurs/Fri of **this** week:
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0B49A9AE2FA20-58487415-2025>

8. Fairtrade Sales –

- a. Sale dates set for weekends of 10/18, 11/22, 12/13.
 - i. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E4BA8AD2EAAFA7-58903526-fair#/>
- b. Permanent display options other than the closet have been discussed and are being evaluated.
- c. Collaboration with Mosaic (previously Ten Thousand Villages) with Trunk Sale scheduled for our November sale date.

9. November/Future Catholic Worker House Meals -

- a. Next meal: November 2
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E4BA8AD2EAAFA7-58904802-november#/>
- b. We are looking for a lead for this initiative, which would include making sign-ups, ensuring all spots are filled, being “on shift” one Sunday per month. Please contact Kim if you are interested.

10. Youth Group Collaborations -

- a. Kim, Tom, Terry and Ann E met with Angie to discuss options for including youth in our activities.
- b. In November we will participate in the Open Heartland Family Christmas Gifts Sponsorship.
- c. A representative from the Youth Group will be invited to various commission meetings for input.

NEW BUSINESS:

11. Stewardship Weekend -

- a. November 15 & 16
 - Table representatives needed after all masses. Sign up below.
- b. <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E4BA8AD2EAAFA7-58904881-stm-social#/>

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- c. Stewardship Planning Meeting- Monday, November 3, 2 PM (at church)
- d. Focus on Seven Themes of Catholic Social Justice or other ideas?
- e. Linda Myers and Adam Summers will work on a slide show.

12. Open Heartland Family Gift Sponsorship -

- a. Youth Group and SJC will be sponsoring 20 families (90 individuals) for Christmas gift sponsorship.
- b. **Contact Kim if you would like to purchase for a family or for a certain number of individuals.**
- c. Wrapping event November 16th (1 to 4 pm) with Youth Group.
- d. Kim will reach out to Emily regarding family sponsorship for **CWH families**.

13. Other Upcoming Holiday Initiatives -

- a. Gift Tree will be put out with tags to sponsor:
 - i. DVIP (Linda Myers)
 - ii. Toys for Tots (Karla Smith)
- b. As Thanksgiving is late this year, we are recommending having tags available and announcements in the week before.
- c. Members are encouraged to forward other holiday initiatives

14. *The development of an **LGBTQ+ & Allies Welcoming/Faith Sharing Group** was discussed, with those in attendance interested in moving this forward.*

- i. <https://www.owningourfaith.com/>
- ii. **Initial Planning Meeting - TBD**
- iii. *A suggestion was made that SAGES consider adding a book study/discussion to reflect on Catholic LGBTQ+ experiences*

15. **Diocesan Social Action Group Update** - Ann Elsbecker reported that the Diocesan group continues to work on encouraging parishes to establish/implement their Laudato Si plan.

16. **Additional items for consideration** -

- a. **Fleece blanket kits (twin size)** - cut but not tied, are needed for distribution as the [Iowa MOST](#) team returns to Guatemala in January. Please contact Kim or Tom if you are able to provide.
- b. Sofia and Patrick suggested consideration of a Marriage Enrichment program that was offered through [Bellarmine Chapel](#). This parish website has a number of other ministries that we may wish to consider.

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

- November 9, 2025
- December 14, 2025
- January 11, 2026
- February 8, 2026
- March 8, 2026
- April 12, 2026

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- May 11, 2026 **Monday 7 PM
- June 14, 2026
- July 12, 2026
- August 9, 2026
- September 13, 2026