

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting - March 16, 2016

Attendance:

Anne Fillin, George Chippendale, Ruth Chippendale, Mary Fong, Paul Chestnut, Susan Olsen, Terry Atkinson, Hong-Ha Vuong

1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week

2. Approval of February minutes

The minutes were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

3. Social Justice Day Review

The Social Justice Day was named Faith, Justice, Action — A Day of Reflection on Social Justice. “Praise Be! Living Mercy in Our Common Home.” There were between 50 and 60 attendees. \$650 was collected, and this amount allowed expenses to be covered. The workshops were well-received, judging from the “Commitment Forms” that many people filled out.

4. Have A Heart Collection results

The HCC sponsored “Have a Heart Sunday” on Saturday, February 20 and Sunday, February 21. The plan was to collect new, unopened underwear and warm socks for people who receive services at the Opportunity Center in Palo Alto. We collected about 67 packages, and people donated more than \$1200.

5. Death Penalty News

We are engaged in an ongoing effort to place an initiative on the November ballot to replace California’s death penalty system. This initiative, called the Justice That Works Act of 2016, will re-sentence the nearly 750 people currently on death row in our state to life in prison without the possibility of parole. It is estimated that this approach will save the state \$60M. 350,000 signatures are necessary to get this initiative on the ballot. The deadline is April 22. Volunteers were at all of the Masses for the past two weeks to gather signatures.

A rally will be held on March 20 at Lytton Plaza to inspire people to gather signatures. Speakers will be Paul George, the Director of the Peninsula Peace and Justice Center, and Willima Butkus, Field Organizer for Amnesty International. Chris Lundin will provide music. The sponsors are California People of Faith, and Amnesty International.

6. SESS Books for Summer Reading

We will again collect books for the second graders at Elizabeth Seton to provide reading material for these new readers for the summer vacation. The dates will be April 30 and May 1. Posters are ready. A signup sheet has been created for volunteers, who will stand outside Churches at all the Masses that weekend.

NEW BUSINESS

7. Interfaith Potluck With Muslim Community

The Thomas Merton Center (TMC) has arranged for a family potluck luncheon on Saturday, April 23, with the local Muslim community. So far we have 30 positive responses.

8. Get On The Bus

“Get On the Bus” is an organization that strives to bring children and their caregivers to visit a parent who is in prison. The coordinator for San Jose is Sister Elaine Coutu. She raises funds for a trip to Soledad from San Jose once a year. We discussed what role the HCC might play in supporting this organization. George

Chippendale proposed a Spirituality Tuesday event that would discuss at length various aspects of how our community puts social justice ideas into practice; aspects such as Get On the Bus, St. Vincent de Paul, the death penalty, homelessness, etc. This topic was the reason for the presence of Hong-Ha Vuong, a parishioner who has a special interest in Get On the Bus.

9. What's On Your Mind?

10. Volunteer for Faith-sharing/Question of the Week

Next meeting - May 18, 2016