

Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting
April 26, 2011

Attendance:

Paul Chestnut, Laura Chiu, George Chippendale, Ruth Chippendale

1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week

No one was prepared.

2. Approval of March minutes

The March minutes were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

3. Refugee Resettlement plans

At the January HCC meeting, we invited Claire Collins, the Refugee Resettlement Supervisor at Catholic Charities, to discuss the refugee resettlement program run by Catholic Charities. We agreed to participate in this program, and the Parish Stewardship Council gave us approval on March 1. On May 26 and 27, we placed an insert in the bulletin about the program, and we appealed at all the Masses for volunteers. To the surprise of all, we collected over 70 names. The next step in this program is an informational/organizational meeting at which volunteers would learn more about the Refugee Resettlement program and how they can help. Claire Collins, our contact at Catholic Charities, will preside at the meeting. It will include a Power Point presentation with great stories about our refugees. We decided that Saturday, May 14 at 9 a.m., or Thursday, May 19 at 7:30 p.m. would be good choices. Paul will contact Claire to set the date.

4. Mary Kalgiri proposal

Mary Kalgiri is from Kenya, where she was an accountant, and has been living in asylum in the U.S. for the past three years after having undergone some horrific experiences in her native land. Her children remain in Kenya in the care of an aunt. Mary's six children (ages 13-22), one infant grandchild, and two nieces and a nephew, ages 17, 19 & 21, (orphaned due to tribal conflict in Kenya), are legally able to emigrate to the U.S., but the cost is beyond what Mary can afford. Also, Mary lives in a room in a house in Palo Alto and needs to obtain housing for herself and any children that emigrate. Mary Sullivan of our parish would like to coordinate a parish-wide effort to make it possible for at least some, if not all, of the children to relocate to this area and to move into adequate housing, enroll in school, seek employment, etc. The main obstacle to their emigrating is the cost of travel, plus the initial cost of setting them up with housing until they can earn their own way. Mary Sullivan would like to do more research before she recommends that the parish embark on a fund-raising effort. We agreed that this situation is completely independent from our refugee resettlement program.

5. Hotel De Zink

Ruth reported that April's program was very successful. All the people were very thankful for the food. The STAY group were the contributors for one night, and they performed very well.

6. Plans for Bread for the World Offering of Letters

We reviewed the plans that Bread for the World has for their annual Offering of Letters. The main message this year is to seek changes in U.S. foreign assistance in four ways:

- A stronger focus on reducing poverty
- Clearer accountability for how U.S. aid dollars are spent and their results
- A transformed U.S. development agency
- U.S. aid that meets the needs and wants of local people in developing countries

This program seems weak and not conducive to getting people motivated to write letters. We decided to skip the Offering of Letters this year.

7. What's On Your Mind?

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

Next meeting - May 17, 2011