

## Minutes of the St. Thomas Aquinas Human Concerns Committee Meeting - July 17 , 2013

### Attendance:

Paul Chestnut, Ruth Chippendale, George Chippendale, Mary Fong, Terry Atkinson, Terry McCaffrey, Chris Lundin, Susan Olsen, Claire Collins

### 1. Faith-Sharing/Question of the Week

Mary led us in a passage from a book regarding consumerism.

### 2. Approval of May minutes

The minutes were approved.

### 3. NRCAT grant to continue the fight against torture - Chris

Chris has been working with Multifaith Voices for Peace and Justice on an NRCAT (National Religious Campaign Against Torture) grant to continuing the fight against torture. They are striving to get a meeting with Dianne Feinstein on the subject.

### 4. Homeless meeting 7-13

Mary had a copy of the handout at the meeting on July 13. There were three main issues:

- Homeless Bill of Rights
- Local Homeless Issues
- Effort to stop the proposed ban on Vehicle dwelling.

We did not have time to discuss this topic.

### 5. Refugee Foster Care - Claire Collins

Claire was present, and she led a long discussion about the refugee programs at Catholic Charities. First, Refugee Resettlement program has been drastically cut back. In its place, Catholic Charities is funded for a Refugee Foster Care program. The plan is to place refugee and asylum youth into homes in the Bay Area. These youth, between the ages of 12 and 17, are refugees who have been abandoned, abused, or neglected. They come from many countries all over the world. Catholic Charities has already placed 75 youth in the Bay Area, and they are coming in at the rate of two or three per week. They are looking for adults who can become a foster parent. The foster parent can be of any religious faith, any race, or any age over 21. He or she can be married or single, have a big family or no children at all. Catholic Charities will provide training, monthly financial stipends, and lots of support.

We agreed to help find people in our parish for this program. We agreed to arrange a meeting on Sunday afternoon, September 8 at OLR Hall. Catholic Charities will introduce our parish to their Refugee Foster Care program. Flyers, pulpit announcements, and bulletin announcements will be prepared.

### 6. Book collection report - Terry Atkinson

Terry reported that the "Early Reader Book Drive" provided 200 new books for second graders and \$359 for purchasing books.

### 7. PSC meeting - Mary

Mary reported on the PSC meeting. Of note: The office hours of the SVDP workers at the Pastoral Center have changed. The hours are Mondays from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM, Wednesdays from 3:00 to 5:00 PM. There will no longer be hours on Friday.

## NEW BUSINESS

### 8. Letter from Fr. Matt

Fr. Matt responded to the letter that Paul had written, suggesting that the parish needs a Social Justice Coordinator on the administrative staff. His response:

"I asked Susan Lee Olsen, our Faith Formation Director, to work with the Committee as our Parish rep. She has lots of experience and enthusiasm, and I hope she will breathe some new life into this Committee. As I am sure you are aware, the parish is not in a financial position to add any more paid staff." We heartily welcomed Susan to our group.

### 9. What's On Your Mind?

Laura: The group "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" recently reported:

" I am the executive director for 'Neighbors Helping Neighbors'. Currently, we serve 97 Palo Alto households which 8 of those became homeless 5/01/13 and another 5 of those households became homeless as of 7/01/13. NHN is quite concerned over the ban like you." If only all the Palo Altans can recognize that the homeless population is really people just like you and me, with many of them being actual neighbors that were properly housed not that long ago. The other thing is that I am inspired by the fact that there is such a group like NHN out there helping these people in various aspects. Our own parish can learn from these non-faith based groups.

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

Next meeting - September 10.