

The Committee for Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation

The Church of St. Mary

Wednesday, February 14, 2018 - 1:30-3:15 p.m.

Members Present: Tammy Boushek, Rita von Holtum, Fr. Steve Binsfeld, Tom Lenertz, Julie Desautels (Sanctity of Life), Dawn Houska (Parish Council liaisons), Gloria Deick. Suzanne Sudmeier and LeeAnn Sticha joined us by telephone from Arizona. Absent: Gayle Walz, Tabatha Odens.

Rita led us in prayer and reflection including sharing a poem entitled "Commentary" by Sister Peronne Marie about the first woman to be involved in bombing over Baghdad which challenged us to think more about the victims of war.

Tammy informed everyone that Kathleen Lingor has decided to leave the committee – she was one of the three original members who began JPIC about 11 years ago.

Day on the Hill – Ken was unable to join us. Info will be in the bulletin. Anyone interested in attending Day on the Hill should contact Rita. Suzanne said she plans to attend. We still need to figure out transportation. The talking points this year will be housing, child care assistance, fees and fines, and penalties for property crimes. West Central Community Action will be going again this year also.

Discussion about whether we should put info in the bulletin about Town Hall meetings as they come up. Decided it was ok to put them in as a point of information, but not have JPIC promote them other than that.

(Side note: Fr. Steve said Ron Rolheiser has an excellent article about living with people we disagree with. I attached a copy of that article to the end of these minutes)

Point in Time –Rita reported on the activity to count homeless people nationwide that she and Kathleen were involved with locally. They personally did not find any homeless people – in cold January weather most people have probably found an alternative to sleeping in their cars. The *Echo Press* provided good coverage of the activity.

Death Penalty – Rita will draft an article that could go in the bulletin anytime there is a scheduled execution in the U. S. The goal would be to educate people about the Catholic church's position and that it is state-sponsored- murder and is a dignity of life issue. In addition to working toward the elimination of the death penalty, people will be asked to pray for that person as well as any of his/her victims.

Food Shelf – Tammy will talk to Gayle about the Food Shelf activity in March.

Sister Church – LeeAnn said everything is on track for Bill Peterson's visit on 3/13. Members of JPIC who are interested in joining her and Bill at 4:30 that day at Doolittles should let LeeAnn know of their interest. She said that Bill appreciated our offer of a donation to Friends of San Lucas and reimbursement for mileage. LeeAnn also reported that Kateri Mancini is leaving the Mission office of the diocese and will be working with Social Concerns of Catholic Charities. Kateri will let LeeAnn know who will take her position in the Mission office and be our contact there. We will have coffee and cookies on the evening of his presentation. Julie and Dawn will be in charge of those arrangements. LeeAnn has done a work order for set-up and having a projector and screen available. She will reconfirm it.

Parish Council – Dawn said she missed that meeting so did not have a report. Fr. Steve said one of the big issues is responding to the Bishop's request for recommendations about regional planning for parishes in our region in light of the shortage of priests. The bishop wants to begin implementing plans in July 2019. Comment was made that people will hopefully think creatively about ways to solve the problem.

Bulletin Articles - Suzanne did meet with Kathleen, Janell Eddy, and Kathy Ballou about bulletin articles for JPIC and Sanctity of Life. She forwarded this information to us Feb 5. We will hold off with this topic until our next meeting.

Budget -- Tom said that expenses that have been turned in to Todd through December was \$150. This is far short of our budget and what was spent last year. There will be additional expenses for Bill Peterson and our Arbor Day activity, as well as some for Sanctity of Life, but we still may not spend all our money this year. This reflects the fact that a lot of time this year has revolved about the interrelationship of JPIC and SOL and not as much towards other activities. We believe this is an anomaly and do not want to see our budget reduced. We need to budget for a couple of speakers in the future. Tom will submit our info along with SOL's to Todd.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 after our closing prayer.

At our next meeting, we need to set date and format of our Strategic Planning Session. Is there a volunteer to lead it or do we need to arrange for someone outside of the committee to facilitate it? We will also do recaps of Day on the Hill and our presentation by Bill Peterson as well as plan for a movie and the April tree project.

Next meeting: **Wednesday, March 14, 2018, at 1:30 PM**

Respectfully submitted,
Gloria Deick

OVERCOMING THE DIVISIONS THAT DIVIDE US

JANUARY 22, 2018

We live in a world of deep divisions. Everywhere we see polarization, people bitterly divided from each other by ideology, politics, economic theory, moral beliefs, and theology. We tend to use over-simplistic categories within which to understand these divisions: the left and the right opposing each other, liberals and conservatives at odds, pro-life vying with pro-choice.

Virtually every social and moral issue is a war-zone: the status of women, climate change, gender roles, sexuality, marriage and family as institutions, the role of government, how the LGBTQ community is to be understood, among other issues. And our churches aren't exempt; too often we cannot agree on anything. Civility has disappeared from public discourse even within our churches where there is now as much division and hostility within each denomination as there is between them. More and more, we cannot discuss openly any sensitive matter, even within our own families. Instead we discuss politics, religion, and values only within our own ideological circles; and there, rather than challenging each other, we mostly end up feeding each other in our biases and indignations thus becoming even more intolerant, bitter, and judgmental.

Scripture calls this enmity, hatred, and indeed that's its proper name. We are becoming hate-filled people who both fuel and justify our hatred on religious and moral grounds. We need only to watch the news on any night to see this. How's this to be overcome?

At the more macro level in politics and religion, it's hard to see how these bitter divides will ever be bridged, especially when so much of our public discourse is feeding and widening the division. What's needed is nothing short of religious conversion, a religious change of heart, and that's contingent on the individual. The collective heart will change only when individual hearts first do. We help save the sanity of the world by first safeguarding our own sanity, but that's no easy task.

It's not as simple as everyone simply agreeing to think nicer thoughts. Nor, it seems, will we find much common ground in our public dialogues. The dialogue that's needed isn't easily come by; certainly we haven't come by it yet. Many groups are trying for it, but without much success. Generally what happens is that the even most-well intended dialogue quickly degenerates into an attempt to by each side to score its own ideological points rather than in genuinely trying to understand each other. Where does that leave us?

The real answer, I believe, lies in an understanding of how the cross and death of Jesus brings about reconciliation. The author of the Letter to the Ephesians tells us that Jesus broke down the barrier of hostility that existed between communities by creating one person where formerly there had been two – and he did it this “by reconciling both [sides] in one body through his cross, which put that enmity to death.” (Ephesians 2, 16)

How does the cross of Christ put enmity to death? Not through some kind of magic. Jesus didn't break down the divisions between us by mystically paying off some debt for our sins through his suffering, as if God needed to be appeased by blood to forgive us and open the gates of heaven. That image is simply the metaphor behind our icons and language about being washed clean of sin and saved by the blood of Christ. What happened in the cross and death of Jesus is something that asks for our imitation not simply our admiration. What happened in the cross and death of Jesus is an example for us to imitate. What are we to imitate?

What Jesus did in his passion and death was to transform bitterness and division rather than to retransmit them and give them back in kind. In the love which he showed in his passion and death Jesus did this: He took in hatred, held it inside himself, transformed it, and gave back love. He took in bitterness, held it, transformed it, and gave back graciousness. He took in curses, held them, transformed them, and gave back blessing. He took in paranoia, held it, transformed it, and gave back big-heartedness. He took in murder, held it, transformed it, and gave back forgiveness. And he took in enmity, bitter division, held it, transformed it, and through that revealed to us the deep secret for forming community, namely, we need to take away the hatred that divides us by absorbing and holding it within ourselves and thereby transforming it. Like a water purifier which holds within itself the toxins and the poisons and gives back only pure water, we must hold within ourselves the toxins that poison community and give back only graciousness and openness to everyone. That's the only key to overcome division.

We live in bitterly divisive times, paralyzed in terms of meeting amicably on virtually every sensitive issue of politics, economics, morality, and religion. That stalemate will remain until one by one, we each transform rather than enflame and retransmit the hatred that divides us.