

ST. JEROME SOCIAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE MINUTES
March 23, 2009

Present: Barbara Bagnato, Laurie Corasaniti, Father David, John DiDomizio, Dan Loch, Annette Maiberger, Honey Secchi, Rebecca Sweeney, Tara Whalen

The meeting began at 7:05 p.m. with a prayer, Psalm 8:3-6, offered by Rebecca.

Introductory Remarks -- Rebecca relayed Jennifer Prescott's message to the Committee re: Briggs High School needs. Jennifer spoke with Briggs' nurse, who confirmed that eligible students receive free or reduced lunch, as they are served lunch by Norwalk Public Schools' lunch program, which eliminates the need to collect snack foods for students. However, Briggs' Day Care Program could use donations of diapers, baby wipes, and antibacterial lotion. Dan will add these requests to the Lenten Cross requests.

RECENT PROJECTS:

Plans for Special Lenten Food Drive -- Rebecca reported that the flyers with attached shopping lists were stuffed inside the 3/21-3/22 Bulletin, so the parish has been notified of the upcoming drive on 3/28-3/29. John asked the REACH staff to invite the REACH sixth grade classes to volunteer to help sort the hoped-for 3,000 items on Sunday, 3/29.

Cell Phone Update -- Barbara shared Kathy Jimenez's tally to-date: 193 cell phones with chargers (13 more than last month) and 10 cell phones without chargers.

Emergency Management Meeting -- On 3/18, Barbara attended a workshop sponsored by Norwalk's Fire Dept. Office of Emergency Management for churches. Briefly -- Norwalk Fire Dept. is trying to connect with community groups to work with them on being prepared for emergencies with their facilities, and elsewhere in the city. Topics focused on how a church could handle an emergency, like a fire, that would render the building unusable: How to have services, collect weekly money for its budget, keep payroll records. In addition, many interesting questions for a church to consider, include: How are church records backed up? Also, could a church have a reciprocal arrangement with another church to share facilities if needed? Would a church be willing to be used as a distribution center in case of a city-wide emergency? Does a church keep a list of homebound parishioners that would need special assistance? The Committee agreed with Barbara that these questions should be addressed, and she offered to contact the Parish Council to see if it would like this presentation brought to a meeting. Perhaps a subsequent parish committee could take on this "mission" for emergency management.

Once and Again, The Emergency Shelter Clothing Room -- Barbara reported that Frank Concepcion, Manager of Once and Again, explained that Wednesday morning is the only available timeslot for volunteers to help sort the clothing and hang clothing on racks. The room is only opened for clients on Thursdays and Fridays, and reportedly is very busy. Annette reported that according to Christi Pope, Director of Christian Community Action (CCA), the building would be sold soon and the Shelter and Once and Again are to be housed in one larger facility.

Tags for Lenten Cross -- Dan reported that he puts up new tags each week. He feels that there are a slightly fewer number of donations than last year. At the end of Lent, when Dan delivers all donations, Barbara offered to help make some of the deliveries.

Pennies for Peace Program -- John shared that Pennies for Peace is well-funded. Since our official parish ministry, Education and Hope, is not as well-funded, and shares the mission for educating children in third world countries, he suggests that we collect coins for Education and Hope. In addition, John has suggested to Father David that a portion of our car raffle profit should be donated to Education and Hope. Dan reported from the Finance Committee viewpoint, that while the committee supports the idea for charitable donations, the car raffle profit is targeted to offset our parish's negative cash flow problem, from the same time last year. Tara, who serves on the Education and Hope Board, shared that the Board is trying to take a bigger role in fund-raising.

Fodor Farm Announcement -- Kathy J., Honey, Francie Mansager, and Barbara have all committed to help maintain two garden plots, which will grow produce for local food pantries. Barbara will advertise this project to the parish next month, as well as invite parishioners to donate produce from their home gardens to local food pantries, too.

Earth Day -- Barbara will compose a flyer to insert into the 4/18 Bulletin, with suggestions for honoring Earth Day by recycling, including: Computer Fox accepting unwanted computer equipment; Soles4Souls program sponsored by Hawley Lane Shoes accepting gently-used shoes; CT Bike Project accepting used bicycles; Garbage Museum, Stratford, a great museum to teach children about recycling. John offered to research the start-up date for local recycling to begin accepting containers numbered "5". Rebecca offered to find out about the Lion's Club mission to collect used eyeglasses, and to contact Nancy Wagner for ideas that Earthplace may have re: recycling programs.

Memorial Day Plan --

Honey volunteered to coordinate a parish collection of food coupons, which will be sent to a program which sends them to U.S. military families living overseas to use with their grocery shopping. She will write up a description of the project, set up a collection box, and take care of sending the coupons.

John offered to contact Joanne Romano to find out if the Sons of Italy were collecting toiletries for soldiers.

Tara suggested the VA Hospital in N. Haven as a place we could support with a collection of toiletries.

Barbara offered to look into the USO website for information.

OTHER BUSINESS:

St. Vincent de Paul Society Food Pantry (SVP) Assistance -- John clarified for the group that our food donations to this well-supported food pantry is limited to twice yearly: the REACH Thanksgiving Food Drive and 500 items from the Special Lenten Food Drive. We do this to support the local Catholic agency. SVP does have a need for milk, and our donation specifically for milk is made quarterly.

Lenten Losers -- Dan explained that the money collected from pledges made to Lenten Losers will go to the Men's Group project for making dinners for Homes for the Brave and Malta House.

The meeting ended at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Sweeney