

**MINUTES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING
2017 01 10**

PRESENT:

L. McKenzie, S. Scollard, C. Scollard, Sr. Maria, C. Murphy, C. Gauthier, C. Orchard, S. Gasparotto

Guests: Doug Manners, Joan Fernandez

The meeting began with the prayer of Oscar Romero.

THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE:

Carole Murphy introduced Joan Fernandez, an active member of St. Michael's Parish, who immigrated to Canada with her family with no government or private sponsorship. In an informative and heart warming presentation, Joan spoke of the many challenges her family faced upon arriving in Canada and how important her faith was in meeting those challenges. She stressed how kind many Canadians were in helping her and her family to adapt to their new country. She always felt she had a responsibility to give back in some way to her adopted country, whether it be in treasure, time, or talent.

It is a common belief among immigrants that Canada is a land of milk and honey but there are still many challenges. Immigrants, she believes, must be resilient and willing to sacrifice. It is their children that will have a better life because of these sacrifices. She believes that it is important that immigrants mingle with those welcoming them to this country. Also important is emotional support that the community can provide. In addition, finding employment, even at minimum wage jobs, as soon as possible is most helpful in helping immigrants adapt.

The committee heartily thanked Joan for what was truly a very uplifting presentation.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE:

In James' absence due to illness, Stephanie passed on his thoughts as to how much he is looking forward to planning fundraising and the education campaigns of Development and Peace this year and in the future.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS AFFECTING DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE:

Doug Manners made a very informative presentation to the committee as to some of the considerations that have to be taken into account when planning a Development and Peace campaign. The fall campaign in 2016 was somewhat different than in previous years, at least partly because of some concerns re political action that the campaign suggested. While the campaign was promoted strongly through informative articles in the bulletin, announcements from the ambo, and displays in the narthex with members of the social justice committee available to answer questions, the action cards were not placed in the bulletin. One of the requirements that was taken into consideration in making this decision was the Revenue Canada regulation that no more than 10% of a tax free charitable organization's finances, personnel time, and facilities, can be devoted to political action. Since Development and Peace action cards have a political component care must be taken to ensure compliance.

After Doug's discussions with Richard Pommainville from the Development and Peace organization re these issues it was decided that there should be no problem in having the fall campaign in 2017 revert back to the format of 2015 and earlier, rather than that of 2016. The spring campaign will be the same as in previous years. In addition, future campaigns will be promoted through the parish website.

Cathie emphasized that in supporting Development and Peace we are supporting the organization specifically created in 1967 by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops to promote international development and social justice.

The committee thanked Doug for taking the time to make this very informative presentation.

REFUGEE COMMITTEE:

Sr. Maria said that the annual Euchre Tournament, in support of the refugee committee, will be held on February 18th. The format will be the same as in previous years.

There was a problem with the government financing of our Syrian family in January. Government funding should have covered the period from the middle of July to the middle of January but instead the money provided covered from the beginning of July to the end of December. This meant that rent money was not available for January, but the situation was resolved.

Carole Orchard has been working with a government sponsored refugee family. She is finding that this is much more difficult than working with those sponsored by private groups such as St. Michael's refugee committee.

Both Carole and Sr. Maria agreed that dental care is a prime requirement for many refugee families.

There is no further news on the Karen family we are hoping to sponsor.

INCOME DISPARITY PRESENTATION:

The income disparity presentation which our committee was hoping to sponsor in February has had to be cancelled because of a lack of suitable speakers. Larry McKenzie will research the topic and present his findings to the committee for discussion as to what the next step should be.

THAW PROGRAM (HOUSING STABILITY BANK):

Larry McKenzie will investigate how the program is presently operating and whether the committee will return to its previous support of the program.

NEW BUSINESS:

Sr. Maria passed on a request from the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange (USA) to pray during the first 100 days of the new Trump administration. Sr. Maria will forward the prayer to Charles who will distribute it to all members of the committee.

Carole Orchard expressed her concern over the lack of employment opportunities for recent graduates. She asked the members of the committee to think about the issue, and if it is a social justice issue, is it something about which we, as a committee, can do anything. This will be further discussed at a future meeting.

NEXT MEETING:

The next meeting will be on February 14th. Cathie will chair the meeting and Stephanie will prepare the prayer.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.