

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Members of the Social Justice and Outreach Committee include: Elizabeth Duckstein (St. Paul's, Mt. Lebanon), Patricia Eagon (St. Paul's), Charles Esposito (St. Stephen's Wilkinsburg, since October) Bill Farra (Community of Celebration, Aliquippa), Duwayne Ladd (St. Peter's, Blairsville), Nancy Lapp (Church of the Redeemer, Squirrel Hill, until August), Joe Macklin, St. Brendan's, Franklin Park, since June), Marianne Novy (Redeemer), Anne Robb (Calvary, East Liberty), Wesley Rohrer (St. Andrew's, Highland Park, until June), Linda Schneider (St. Brendan's, Franklin Park, until May), and Tom Slater (Calvary), Maeve Southard-Wray, and Maighread Southard-Wray (both St. Andrew's Highland Park, since October).

Our recommendation for the Diocese 2018 Lambeth Funds, accepted by Diocesan Council, concerned \$4224 to be distributed in four contributions of \$1106 each following our national church's setting of creation care as one of three main priorities as well as responding to the international migration, war, and hunger crises, to these organizations: International Rescue Committee, particularly for Yemen: New Sanctuary Movement of Pittsburgh; PennFuture, an organization that aims to lead the transition to a clean energy economy in Pennsylvania and beyond, thereby protecting our air, water and land, and empowering citizens to build sustainability for the future; and the Pittsburgh-centered Group Against Smog and Pollution.

The committee encourages service, education, and advocacy with regard to social justice issues. Our service now includes working with Andy Muhl in coordinating the Episcopal presence in the downtown five-church ministerium. We have a team of about 30 volunteers from five of our parishes and offer crisis walk-in help, mostly food but also toiletries, transportation and referrals, 10 am to 2 pm., Monday through Friday on our one week out of every five. We have served an average of 60 households each month, with especially high demand in winter months. We have received substantial funding for food from The Pittsburgh Foundation, the Allegheny County Bar Foundation, several Episcopal parishes and in-kind donations of items such as diapers from St. Paul's, St. Brendan's, and Calvary.

We also provide service by offering grants for vegetable gardens. This year we received applications and gave grants to the Community of Celebration, St. Andrew's, St. David's, the Shepherd Wellness Community, Holy Cross, and St. Thomas, North Cambria. Here too our funds were supplemented by some church donations.

We followed up the diocesan-passed resolution on helping incarcerated or re-entering people and their families by offering Healing Communities Training on October 5, at Holy Cross, Homewood, facilitated by Rev. Sandra Strauss of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches. Participants watched a moving film, *A Justice That Heals*, about how a priest and his congregation helped a former altar boy charged in a fatal shooting, his family, and the family of his victim, discussed it, and received much background information. They came from Redeemer, Calvary, St. Brendan's, Holy Cross, Community of Celebration, and All Saints Episcopal Congregations and Union Baptist Church of Swissvale. The film may be shown at one or two churches for the diocese.

Our education and advocacy program followed up the diocesan-passed resolution on protecting the environment by showing two films about the dangers to human and environmental health of excessive dependence on plastics, especially those used once and then discarded. These showings were part of an interfaith campaign in Pittsburgh. Like members of the Anglican Communion in the UK and Canada, as well as the Episcopal dioceses of Colorado and Washington, DC, we emphasized the connection between reducing reliance on single-use plastics and the tradition of giving up something for Lent. *Bag It* (2010), about what one man learned in his attempt to give up single-use plastic bags, was shown at Calvary in February, with responses by councilperson Erika Strassburger and activist and filmmaker Mark Dixon and further discussion; *Plastic Paradise: The Great Pacific Garbage Patch* (2014) was shown at Redeemer in March, with discussion led by climate activist Elise Yoder, and at St. Paul's, Mt. Lebanon in May, with State Representative Dan Miller, Kathy Hrabovsky from LeboGreen, Ashleigh Deemer from PennEnvironment, and Jenn Rick, anti-styrofoam activist. (St. Paul's gave reusable canvas bags to attendees at their film showing.) Eighty or ninety people (mostly not overlapping) attended each of these events. The diocese owns the films and they are available for congregations to borrow and show.

As in some places there is clearly a climate crisis and in others there will soon be, the environment continues to concern us. In April, Thaddeus Popovich of St. Brendan's, co-founder of Allegheny County Clean Air Now, spoke to our committee to update us about regional issues, especially continuing air pollution and the Shell petrochemical plant in Beaver County. We have encouraged congregations to follow St. Paul's lead in using more renewable energy. We hear from the Board of Trustees that discussion of a socially responsible investment policy, which theoretically might include divestment from fossil fuels and reinvestment in clean energy, has been deferred, but we hope that they will eventually take seriously the research and resolutions on these issues made by the General Convention of 2015.

The Rev's. Brandon Mazingo and Charles Schaller spoke to us at our May meeting about what the diocese is doing about the opioid crisis. We were impressed and hope to follow up this concern. Also, the committee has submitted a convention resolution on outreach to refugees and immigrants and would like to recognize many ways in which diocesan members are contributing. Special programs at St. Paul's, St. Brendan's, Redeemer, All Saints, Calvary, and St. Andrew's have come to our attention. No doubt there are more.

We are grateful, as always, to Council for their support.

Respectfully submitted,
Marianne Novy, chair