Scranton Area Ministerium Minutes 9 January 2019

St. Luke Episcopal Church 232 Wyoming Avenue, Scranton

Rebecca Barnes St. Luke Episcopal Shannon Brown GS Homeless Coalition

Bev deBarrros Exodus Ministries Mildred Harvey Salvation Apostolic Temple

Ruth Jones Salvation Apostolic Temple Melinda Krokus Islamic Center, Marywood U

Charlotte Ledbetter Community Activist Darlene Leonard Salvation Apostolic Temple

William Mentz Progressive Catholic Terry O’Rourke IHM Friends of the Poor

Mary Owens St. Matthew Lutheran Robin Qayyum Prison Ministry, Bethel AME

James Redington SJ U of Scranton Cynthia Stevenson Bethel AME

Daniel Swartz Temple Hesed Vera Walline BaHai Community

Katy Windels Diocese of Scranton Helen Wolf U of Scranton

Phil Yevics PA Prison Society

Mother Barnes called the meeting to order at 9:10, noting that President Jack Munley had to respond to a dying client and thus could not remain for the meeting. She welcomed the group to St. Luke’s and invited Rev. Mary Owens to offer the opening prayer before asking everyone present to introduce themselves.

Minutes from the December meeting were distributed by email the evening of January 8 and printed copies were available for the members to review. Charlotte Ledbetter made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, Mary Owens seconded, the motion passed with Phil Yevics Abstaining while everyone else voted in favor.

Fr. Redington distributed copies of the Financial Report, noting that our current balance is $1,430.57, which includes $50 already deposited by members planning to be at the MLK Banquet. He asked for a show of hands of who planned on attending and 12 members indicated they would. He then said he would reserve 2 tables, noting that there are still 4 seats available if folks are interested.

Mary Owens made motion to accept the Financial Report as submitted, Melinda Krokus seconded, all voted in favor.

1**] Martin Luther King Weekend** – All [except Sunday Dinner] on Monday January 21

Charlotte Ledbetter distributed copies of the flier for the Martin Luther King Weekend before presenting more information about specific events.

* 1. SAM is sponsor of the Interfaith Closing Service, which will be held at Bethel AME Church, 716 N. Washington, 7-9 PM Bishop Ray Johnson will be the main speaker.
     1. Phil Yevics made a motion that SAM offer a stipend of $200 to Bishop Johnson. Vera Walline seconded the motion, it passed unanimously.
     2. Charlotte asked that if any SAM members wanted to be part of the program they should contact her as soon as possible on her cell # 570.575-8242.
     3. She also invited members and their friends to be part of the Community Choir, which will be practicing tomorrow evening [Thursday January 10] at 7 PM at Bethel AME.
  2. Sr. Terry offered more information about two Youth activities –
     1. Peaceful Activism for Youth will be held at St. Mary’s Center on Monday at 11 AM – It is aimed at Elementary through Jr. High School students.
     2. Youth Dialogue on Race, Injustice and Community, will be held at the UofS DeNaples Center, Room 405, from 2-4 PM. It is aimed at High School aged teens.
  3. Penn State Scranton will be hosting a Luncheon and Discussion, View Café, 11-4. There is an internet form to RSVP given on the flier.
  4. The March from UNC Progressive Center to Courthouse will get organized at 4:45. Both Charlotte and Sr. Terry mentioned they would like to see more support for this March.
  5. Phil Yevics explained that he put the topic of *Diversity Circles for Spring* under the MLK weekend because it was the MLK Commission that first promoted the Diversity Circles in our area, and he would like to see it become one of the ways the work of the Commission is more visible throughout the year. While planning is in the works for several offerings of the Diversity Circles, there are not yet any concrete plans to announce.
  6. Mildred Harvey had an idea for the future. She would like to work with some teens this Summer putting together a presentation about the women involved in the Civil Rights movement. They would then have a performance and money raised would subsidize costs of the MLK weekend activities.
     1. Mother Barnes suggested the Anniversary of the “I have a Dream” speech [August 28] might be a good time.
     2. Several members expressed enthusiasm for the idea. It will be on the agenda for future meetings.

**2] Senior Isolation Workshop** Phil Yevics reminded the group that The Ministerium and the Scranton Diocese have been given a grant from the Moses Taylor Foundation to offer a workshop for leaders from faith communities on Senior Isolation.

1. Katy Windels explained that it will be held at Diocesan Pastoral Center, 330 Wyoming Avenue, Saturday March 30, from 10am to 1pm Prof. Jim Siberski from Misericordia University will offer a presentation on the problem of Senior Isolation nationally and in NEPA, offering observations on why faith communities are in a privileged position to respond to this problem before introducing a toolkit of ways faith communities might respond, Small group discussions will help participants plan for the future before the group enjoys fellowship over lunch. We are hoping to attract between 50-75 participants, ideally with 2-4 people from each faith community represented.
2. We still need to find someone to provide the Catered Lunch, and we would prefer to support a small family run business if possible.
3. Katy will be working on Publicity and registration will be available through the SAM website as well as by phone through the Parish Life office of the Diocese of Scranton.
4. At the last meeting it was suggested that perhaps we could invite local agencies serving seniors to have displays that could make participants aware of their services. There was strong support for this idea, so Katy and Phil will run with it.
5. Phil asked the group if we should introduce any fees or ask for donations. After discussion it was decided not to do so for this workshop, although it might be appropriate in the future.

**3] Prison Ministry**

* 1. Phil Yevics raised the question if the Ministerium wished to get involved in Advocacy for a Chaplain at the Lackawanna County Prison.
     1. Phil reviewed the history of the issue, noting that it was why he first got involved with the Ministerium, and it had been actively discussed by the group before he got involved.
     2. Some 10 years ago the County Administration decided to eliminate the position of paid Chaplain at the Prison, a position that at that time was held by Rev. Ricardo Jackson. The rationale was that there was a need to add another Correctional Officer and they did not want to spend any more money.
     3. After Rev. Jackson was let go Fr. Bill Pickard took on many of the tasks associated with the position on a voluntary basis. That came to an end after Fr. Pickard was banned from the prison after he pushed past a guard at the hospital in order to anoint a prisoner who had been badly injured by another inmate.
     4. It seems clear that there is little political will for the County to reinstate the paid position of a full time Chaplain.
     5. Yet it is also clear that there is a deep and abiding need of these services. Mother Barnes and Bev deBarros spoke eloquently of how they have seen that need in their own involvement at the Prison.
        1. Dr. Krokus pointed out there is a robust body of research that demonstrates the value of such a ministry for inmates and for staff.
     6. Discussion made it clear that the members of the Ministerium strongly supported advocacy that would explain the importance and need for a Chaplaincy at the Prison. The conversation then turned to exploring to the best ways to do so.
        1. Rabbi Daniel suggested we begin with informal inquiries to the current County Commissioners, and he agreed to initiate these contacts.
     7. Assuming we can make progress in demonstrating the need and value of a Chaplaincy, the next issue would be exploring the most effective and sustainable way of responding to that need.
        1. Phil noted that the Chaplain at the Luzerne County position is supported by a faith based organization from the southern part of the Commonwealth.
        2. Mother Barnes mentioned a Chaplaincy team as another way of responding to the need.
           1. Fr. Redington raised the concern that our Ministerium does not have the financial resources to provide ongoing support for such a ministry.
        3. All agreed it was worth researching if there are other models being used in County jails.
  2. Bookmobile – Bev deBarros
     1. Bev reported that in 2018 there were 7,365 uses or visits to the book carts, distributing 7,365 books and additional uncounted magazines. She thanked the Ministerium for their support of this effort, which is clearly having a positive effect.
     2. Phil promised to circulate information to help in recruiting more volunteers and book donations.
  3. Cypress House – Mother Barnes summarized developments that have led to the organization of this non-profit social outreach agency under the auspices of St. Luke’s. The Board met in December and will gather again in February, Grant applications have been submitted and we are starting to get replies, and the hope is that the Sandwich operation employing returning citizens can begin this Summer.
  4. Tell Me a Story – Phil Yevics explained that Robin Qayyum had agreed to join Shaina Brennan in working on this project to make audio recordings of inmates reading to their children.
  5. NEPA Prison Advocates – Mother Barnes noted that this enthusiastic and diverse group of advocates for better conditions in Prisons meets at 7 PM on the first Wednesday of each month at St. Luke’s. Everyone is welcome to these meetings.
  6. Phil reminded the group that the Lackawanna County Reentry Task Force meets on the 3rd Tuesday every two months, and the next meeting is Tuesday January 15, OUTREACH, 431 N. Seventh Avenue Scranton, 9-10:30AM. He sits on the Board as a representative of the local faith communities. Noting that Rev. Barnes has been an appreciated participant at these meetings he encouraged others to consider being present.

**4] Greater Scranton Homeless Coalition –** Atty. Brown reported that the group met the previous evening [January 8] at Marywood University, thanks to the efforts of Melinda Krokus. They plan to meet on the First Tuesday of February and March [Feb. 5 and March 5 2019] at locations still to be determined. Participation remains strong, both in the number of people attending meetings [20-30 each month] and in the active engagement of their interest in learning about and addressing the issues facing homeless people in NEPA. Anyone interested is welcome to attend a meeting or learn more about the evolving activities of the group by perusing their website - <https://sites.google.com/view/greaterscrantonhomeless/home?authuser=0>

**5] Suggestion for Membership Categories**

Phil Yevics explained that as he was moving our membership list to the new web site host, it occurred to him that among the 80 some people on our email list they cluster into different group. He asked the group to give some thought to the suggestion that it might be helpful to make these differing “levels of participation” explicit.

a) Participating Member – attends meetings and/or pays dues

b) Corresponding Member – receives emails, contributes to activities as is able

c) Network Member – receives emails, accepts responsibility for sharing information with their group as appropriate, shares information with us of their activities

**6] Communications**

a) Phil Yevics announced that the Ministerium Website is again live after our transition to a new hosting company. He asked all to please look at it and offer feedback. <http://scrantonareaministerium.org>

b) He mentioned that he hopes to link the Facebook page to the website blog, but reminded the group that pictures will be needed of our various activities.

c) Phil also raised two privacy issues concerning the group’s contact information.

* Is there still a need to blind copy members on our emails so that unauthorized people will find it more difficult to access your email addresses?
* Is there interest in a membership list that would share contact information among members of the group?

**7] Future Meetings 2019** – hosts needed

Mother Barnes noted that since the April meeting comes the week before the Western Christian Holy week, it might be helpful if one of the non-Christian groups could host it. Melinda Krokus will see if the Islamic Center could switch from February to April.

[*Conversations after the meeting resulted in the Islamic Center taking on the April 10 meeting.*

13 February St. Peter Lutheran Church, 1000 Taylor Ave., Scranton

13 March University of Scranton, DeNaples Student Center 405

10 April Islamic Center, 1509 West Pass Avenue, Scranton

8 May IHM Center

12 June?

11 September *Salvation Apostolic Temple?*

9 October *Temple Hesed?*

13 November St. Peter’s Cathedral

11 December

Mother Barnes thanked all those present for their participation in the meeting and asked Sr. Terry to offer a closing prayer. Mother Barnes closed the meeting at 10:36.

Respectfully Submitted,

Phil Yevics

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