

Notes from **Our Lady of Fatima Social Ministry Committee Meeting**  
which took place on April 14, 2010 at 6 PM in the Gathering Space at St. Catherine's

Those present were Father Tom Jennings, Sue Buffington, Virginia Gerken, Tillie Clark, Bernadine Merrill, Bill Deutsch, Sue Linebeck, Alex Miller and Mary Lou Mulligan.

The meeting was opened by Father Tom who led us in a novena prayer for Pope Benedict and the whole church.

Father introduced Alex Miller, a parishioner, who returned in March from a month of service in Madagascar. He gave a very interesting presentation about his month there. He is an attorney who works in a 9 county area of Minnesota as a guardian ad litem. In May he will head up the 15 county area doing the same work. He had a leave from work while he was serving in Africa. Madagascar is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest island in the world and is blessed with extravagant creation but suffers from extreme poverty as well. The rural communities suffer from the worst kind of poverty, that being isolation from the rest of the country and the world. He was working on getting these places connected by the use of cell phones. He works with the Human Network International. More information can be found at [www.hni.org](http://www.hni.org) He described the way cell phones can help farmers with crop information and also people with health issues can get information from hospitals. They are setting up computer centers which can do surveys of rural communities and their needs. UNICEF and USAID, for instance are doing a survey of nutrition and lack of it in many areas of the country. There are 700,000 children in child labor situations and these surveys can target where medical and food resources are most needed. Peace Corp volunteers at the computer centers teach native people to run them. Lack of transportation and the current political system present huge problems to the whole country but especially to the rural communities. Catholic Relief Services is a very big help to HNI. Madagascar was a French colony at one time so there are many Catholics there. Alex agreed to return to keep us informed of the work of HNI in Madagascar. He said they can use donations of cell phones and we may collect them in the fall. HNI can also use money and Father said that part of our charity donation as a parish may be directed to this group. He will discuss it with the Finance and Parish councils.

Connie told us that a group of women prepared more than 60 Easter bags which were delivered by the Care Ministry staff. Becky Ranchau had emailed us to say the St. Mary's delivered 15 bags in Ellsworth.

Sue Buffington said that our Belles of St. Catherine's team for the Relay for Life event has collected more than \$300 so far and has plans to sell rice krispie bars at the event itself. Neva Clausen will run the bake auction again this year. We still have bells to sell. Relay for Life will be June 18/19.

Fair Trade coffee weekends are the first and third each month. We scheduled for April and May.

Virginia Gerken reported on our Meals on Wheels ministry for April. She said she had all

of the slots filled for the whole month. Senior Dining is going to serve meals at the meal site this summer to the children in the backpack program. Our parking lot and gym will be used for activities as part of that program.

Mary Lou reported that we had the Bread for the World offering of Letters in May last year. After discussion we decided that we would move that date to September 11/12. The subject of the letters this year is to strengthen Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit and also get additional funding for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance.

The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary Earth Day is April 22 and as part of our celebration on the 21<sup>st</sup> the Faith Formation classes will have prayer services at 345 PM and again at 7 PM on the parish green. Following the services classes will clean yards for people. Mary Lou had handouts from the Catholic Covenant.

The Minnesota Catholic Conference supplied us with a pamphlet called TOOLS FOR FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP. Mary Lou reported on their work and explained that their website is very easy to use and has many useful links.

Father said that Bill Deutsch would be on the Honor Flight this month. Bill said he will leave at 5 AM on April 30 and return the next night. He is very excited about it. Father also said that we are composting again and that we will have a larger bin soon.

**Our next meeting will be May 5 at 6 PM.**

Mary Lou closed the meeting by leading all of us in the Creation Care prayer from the Earth Day handout.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Lou Mulligan, Coordinator