

SOCIAL ACTIONS NEWSLETTER



Coffee & Conversation



Just The Facts!

One of the arms of the parish Social Actions ministry is to host seasonal Coffee and Conversation meetings – winter, spring, summer and fall. Our purpose is to provide verifiable information on a particular social justice topic. At each meeting, speakers provide factual information as well as Catholic Social Justice teachings. At the start of the meeting, attendees are provided awareness questions to test their knowledge of the selected topic. Following presentations, attendees and speakers are broken into small groups to exchange their thoughts on the topic. The group is then gathered again for a discussion where the speakers can respond to small group questions. The evening concludes with a short recap and a closing prayer. Attendees are asked to select (or suggest) two topics from a list of Coffee and Conversation topics for next time.

Since inception, our topics have included the Role of Government, Human Trafficking, Food Assistance, Welfare to Work, Climate Change, Death Penalty, Health Care, Dying with Dignity and Gambling. Information about Coffee and Conversation topics is posted to the 'Social Actions - Coffee and Conversation' web page on the parish web site: www.mhccparish.com. Coffee and Conversation is the product of collaboration with Parish Director of Religious Education (DRE), Molly Hynes Collinsworth and a sub group of Social Actions: Tom Boland, Bob Jurick and Jeanne Duell.

If you are interested in suggesting a topic or participating in planning for a Coffee and Conversation, contact the DRE or one of these parishioners. We are always interested in talking with other parishioners who are looking for an avenue to get information on social justice issues.

Tom Boland



MHC Garden

Last year was our first full year of gardening after our renovation. We had many wonderful volunteers including 5 Greene County Master Gardeners, 8 adult MHC parishioners and 14 youth. Many of our plants were started in the classroom greenhouse by our 5th & 6th grade PSR students who helped with the spring planting outside as well.

Our best producers were green beans-230.8 pounds, cabbage-221.5 pounds, kale-67.9 pounds, hot peppers-61.3 pounds, sweet peppers-112.4 pound, tomatoes-124 pounds, summer squashes-178 pounds and other veggies in lesser amounts for a grand total of 1,536.2 pounds of fresh garden vegetables donated to FISH and St. Vincent DePaul food pantries.

In February 2016, our 5th & 6th grade PSR students started the cool season veggies, cabbage, kale, leeks and several herbs and marigolds in our classroom greenhouse. They will be planting some of these outside in early April along with onions and sugar snap peas. Spinach was planted late last fall for an earlier and longer harvest this year.

As weather permits, we work in the garden most Thursdays starting at 9:00 AM. If interested in veggie gardening and feeding the poor in our midst, won't you please join us?

Denise C. Wetzel
Garden Manager
(937-878-3450)



Climate Change, A Parishioner's Personal Experience.

Laudato Si', Our Common Home

Climate change is a controversial topic of discussion for many. My own feelings on the topic are influenced by my experience as a Peace Corps volunteer high school teacher in the South Pacific during the early 1990's.

According to [1], sea levels have risen by 8 inches since record keeping began in 1880. Furthermore, sea levels are expected to raise another 1 to 4 feet by 2100. The island nation of Kiribati has an average elevation of 6 foot above sea level, and would be one of the first affected by rising sea levels. Clearly, a 1 to 6 foot increase in sea level would have an extremely negative effect on a nation whose average height is 6 feet above sea level. The President of Kiribati, Anote Tong, is promoting awareness of climate change, while at the same time attempting to protect his nation from this disaster. His strategies include migrating his people to other countries, and building a sea wall [2].

My own observation is that within the United States, climate change is not affecting us as much as certain other populations such as island nations. At 700+ feet above sea level, Ohio is sheltered from a 4 foot increase in sea level. Furthermore, although we may be able to do the math and calculate the effects of climate change on others, we understand this only on an intellectual level not on a personal level. It is difficult for us to internalize what climate change means for others.

I spent time in a village in a bay leading out to the Pacific Ocean. Houses there were about 2-3 feet above sea level. The ocean was next to their front yards. People there differed from us in more dimensions than just race. They did not live at the high level of material standard of living as we are accustomed. Conversely, they also did not share the same work ethic promoted here. Life moved at a slower pace for these people. There was good and bad in these people. Some of my students worked extremely hard at their studies, were responsible and trustworthy, and even helped in the operation of the school. Others would fight, run off to drink or smoke cigarettes, and not make any effort at their studies. One girl lost several family members in a truck accident, and you could see the pain in her eyes from then on. One boy was always making jokes, and although he was funny, sometimes he had trouble being serious when the need arose. My point is that these people affected by climate change are human beings with basic levels of similar needs, aspirations, and problems as other human beings.

This is my contribution to a discussion on climate change. Most of what we know may only be the statistics we see on the news, but my argument is that this is a real problem for many, and the people affected by this are real people. My belief is that the very foundation of our country is self-determination: we have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I think in the United States that we have recognized these rights as universal, and we have even fought wars to protect other nation's rights to self-determination.

If our industrial methods and our lifestyle are potentially washing away someone's country, I hope that we would recognize our responsibility to respect other's rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness and I hope we can take positive steps to solve, or at least not worsen, this problem. Finally, in conclusion, we may at times feel powerless to address this problem, but that is simply not correct. We can all take even simple steps to reduce energy usage, reduce consumption, and simply be more conscious of the environment, these steps will help.

[1] <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report/our-changing-climate/sea-level-rise>

[2] *President Tong and His Disappearing Islands - The New Yorker*
<http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/president-tong-and-his-disappearing-islands>

Tom Pyatt

If you are wondering about the church's position on climate change, read *Laudato Si'* on the Vatican website

<https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals.index.html>

Helping Our Community



Children across the country are abused at an alarming rate. According to the Children's Defense Fund, a child is abused or neglected every 36 seconds. That is 3,000,000 reports of abuse received by child protection agencies every year. We know the number of children traumatized by abuse and neglect is under-reported. Annually, over 1,200 reports of abuse and neglect are received by Greene County Children Services, resulting in services to almost 3,000 children. Undoubtedly these numbers will grow as families struggle with uncertain economic conditions, substandard child care, and the frustrations of poverty. The unfortunate reality is that the need for a facility like Michael's House, to help with the most serious cases will only grow. Michael's House, centrally located in Fairborn provides a warm and welcoming environment for children who are suffering from all forms of abuse. This is one of many worthy organizations Social Actions supports.

Kim Gros