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Donna Wilhelm, Dorothy Pagosa, Marjorie White, Maxine Smith, Michele Richardson, Rose Grabowski, Rose Marie Bommer, Shannon Fox — Social Justice Committee

Bits and Pieces *by Sr. Marge White*

Dear Friends,

I have subtitled this month's Social Justice Newsletter *Bits and Pieces*.

I have included several informative ways you can witness to our Franciscan values of peace and nonviolence and have taken this information from several websites to which I am connected. I hope you find

these *bits and pieces* both informative and helpful.

This issue also contains two featured articles, one by Linda Szocik, SSJ-TOSF and the other by Helen Huellmantel, SSJ-TOSF.

Linda's article addresses efforts she has begun in Milwaukee to address the issues of prostitution and trafficking, specifically on the south side. Helen's addresses the issue of fair

wages. Often the stores earmarked for justice actions are those that serve the upper middle class but are staffed by lower income employees. Both of these are examples of the strength of efforts when we collaborate with others.

I have also written an article on the migration of peoples.

Marge White, SSJ-TOSF ■

House of Hospitality for Women in Milwaukee

by Sr. Linda Szocik

As you may recall, one of my dreams has been to open a House of Hospitality for women on the Southside of Milwaukee. Before I share what is happening now I want share a little background.

The prototype read:

With a desire to bond with others in ever-widening circles of compassion and peace, we will pursue the possibility of opening a hospitality house for women in Milwaukee. Aware of the statistics and high risk for human trafficking, alcohol and drug abuse, isolation, and homelessness in

the city, we desire to offer a place of welcome where women will find support and rest, make connections, and obtain a variety of needed services, such as:

- *Safe place to gather*
- *Counseling and companionship*
- *Spiritual companionship*
- *Networking for shelter and housing*
- *Health screening and first aid*
- *Connection with various support groups*

Those who have chosen to be part of the steering committee to implement this dream have met with many individuals and

groups to learn about the services that are available in the area and to understand the needs.

A major learning of ours has been around the high incidence of human trafficking and prostitution in Milwaukee. The city has been ranked fourth in the nation for human trafficking and 72% of women arrested for prostitution in Milwaukee in 2011 were from two districts—one of which is our area of focus. In discerning "what is ours to do" we do not want

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Homelessness and Domestic Violence



Domestic violence is often a contributor or cause of homelessness

Escaping abusive situations means leaving the residence where the abuse is occurring and sometimes victims are unable to find shelter through friends, family or

available community resources.

Understanding the challenges of being homeless, and the statistics about homelessness and domestic violence, may help encourage victims to plan how they leave, when they leave, what circum-

stances they leave under and where they go.

Click on the following link below so you can read more about the important issue of homelessness and domestic violence:

[MORE](#)

House of Hospitality ... continued from p. 1

to be in competition with others, but rather to look for ways to collaborate. A primary need that repeatedly surfaced is that of women struggling within the cycle of prostitution.

When the House of Hospitality Steering Committee met in May it was to specifically meet with the director from the Benedict Center to begin to see if it would be possible to collaborate with them, to bring to the south side of Milwaukee what they are offering as an alternative to jail on the north side.

For the past 40 years the Benedict Center has worked to advocate for justice and to provide an educational alternative to jail for women. The vision of our committee is linked with their founding values of compassion, justice, action, and transformation. The Benedict Center has worked with victims, offenders, and the community to achieve a system of justice that is

fair and treats everyone with dignity and respect.

The aim of their program is to interrupt the cycle of the women being arrested for prostitution, placed in jail and returning to the streets in order to pay the fines. The program is designed to help women engaged in street prostitution begin a journey toward a healthier, safer life. This approach offers women, who statistically have been victims of sexual assault, abuse, and violence the option to receive treatment and the opportunity to safely leave the streets and lead healthier lives. The treatment plan needs to be mutually agreed upon. The women know their weaknesses and also need to recognize their strengths.

As our committee met in May we realized that we were ready for some outside facilitation to work with us and Benedict Center to help us crystallize our dreams and to

bring them to reality. We also need to realistically look at the possibility of moving our dream into reality.

After updating this progress with Sister Marge White and explaining that with very limited seed money we were searching for a facilitator, she contacted Debbie Asberry, who has worked with many congregations of women religious. Debbie has offered to work with us pro bono.

With our facilitator's guidance a core group, representative of the House of Hospitality Committee and Benedict Center, are preparing for a special meeting on September 15, 2015. We were encouraged to invite dreamers and deciders. This meant not only the committee members, but elected leaders from religious congregations.

We will have five congregations represent-

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Hospitality...

is just opening
your home the
same way you
open up your



Migration of Peoples *by Sr. Marge White*

I am an email subscriber to the Migration Policy Institute which highlights the issues associated with the migration of people throughout the world. We see what is happening with Syrians and others who are fleeing their country due to civil war. This is repeated over and over. Countries like Turkey, Macedonia, Italy, France, and England are being overwhelmed with these refugees.

I learned an interesting distinction between a refugee and an immigrant. A refugee is one who leaves a country due to threats to human life. An immigrant is one who leaves a country seeking a better life. Today we often see a combination of these issues. Those from Central America and Mexico who come to our country are running from violence. Are they seeking a better life? Yes, but their primary motive for leaving is to save their lives and those of their children. There are protections in place for refugees but our

government sees them only as undocumented immigrants. This perception needs to change.

The world needs to address the underlying causes for the alarming rate of so many refugees seeking asylum. Asylum seeking will continue until the world community addresses the violence that is being perpetrated against so many people. Some children will grow into adulthood only knowing life in a refugee camp. This is intolerable.

However, a different form of migration takes place here in our country. How many poor people, those who are not a part of the *Empire*, as Walter Brueggemann would say, are forced to leave their homes, their neighborhoods every time gentrification takes place? To where do they migrate? Areas that the middle class no longer wants to inhabit. Some cities have contemplated “forced removals,” offering people “better homes” so that they

can tear down the old homes and build newer construction for those with financial means. This is a difficult situation because, often, the homes in the older neighborhoods are dilapidated due to a lack of financial where-with-all, or absentee landlords, sometimes known as “slum lords.”

We think we are doing these residents a favor by moving them to another area where, we think, life can be better. However, it is *their* neighborhood and efforts need to happen to shore up that neighborhood and rebuild affordable housing for the current residents, offering low interest loans to those residents for repair work and better code enforcement for landlords who often “milk” the property and then abandon those properties.

So, when we see the migration of people globally around the world, let us not forget that migration is happening in our backyards. ■



House of Hospitality ... continued from p. 2

ed. For our Lutheran partners at the table, it also meant inviting the committee member from the Lutheran Foundation. Leaders from Benedict Center will be present. We have also invited the directors from the two neighborhood communities that would be most affected by this endeavor. They may also have a pulse on the best location for this project.

Currently the core group is working on a provisional draft—to imagine and concretize what we hope to bring into a reality. What is our mission? How will it be lived out? What services will be provided? What evidence do we bring that demonstrates the need and its possibility? Who are our collaborators? What is our

business plan and preliminary budget? The provisional draft will be shared at the September meeting.

Wouldn't you like to be an observer at the September meeting?

Please bring your invisible, spiritual support to us on September 15th. ■



Social Justice

“Stemming from our Franciscan values and the fact that all life is interconnected, members, vowed and non-vowed, are encouraged to be engaged in ministry with those living on the margins of society and struggling to live with dignity.”

SSJ-TOSF Congregational
Commitments
26th General Chapter



Catholic Climate Covenant

(This is something your local community might want to do.)

The Feast of St. Francis honors the patron saint of those who promote ecology. As an event leader, you too promote better care of creation by sounding the call to solve climate change.

Our Feast of St. Francis event is interactive, hands-on, and thought-provoking. Will you lead an event in your parish or other group?

Here is what we provide:

- 15-minute video on Pope Francis's encyclical and climate change
- Hands-on activity guides
- Advocacy opportunity
- Resources to take this work forward

Our goal is to equip 150 Feast of St. Francis events in parishes, schools, and other communities around the country. These events help people understand climate change and commit to real solutions.

Most importantly, each event is a sign of progress in the midst of the urgent challenges we face.

We provide the Feast of St. Francis program free of charge. The feast day is October 4, but your event can be held any time starting September 1st. Once you register, you will receive important event instructions by email.

Please join us. Click on link to register to [lead an event](#) now. ■

2015 Will Likely Be Earth's Hottest Year on Record...

For planet Earth, no other month was likely as hot as this past July in records that date back to the late 1800s.

And overall the planet is well on its way to having its hottest year on record.

Since July is on average the planet's warmest time of year, it's fair to say temperatures that past month were at or very close to their highest point in the history of instrumental records.

Click on link to read [MORE](#) ■

Act for Mercy and Justice...

As we prepare for Pope Francis' visit to the country, consider sending a message to your congress people to follow the Pope's call to all world governments to Act for Mercy and Justice.

Click on the following link to [send a message](#). ■

Major Islamic Climate Change Declaration Released

In Istanbul, Turkey, an unprecedented Islamic Climate Change Declaration was released, presenting the moral case, based on Islamic teachings, for Muslims and all people to take urgent climate action.

The Declaration calls for a rapid phase-out of

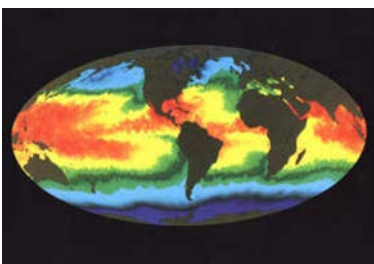
fossil fuels, a switch to 100% renewable energy, and increased support for vulnerable communities already suffering from climate impacts.

Islamic leaders from 20 countries announced the declaration to engage the world's 1.6 billion Muslims on the issue. [MORE](#) ■

Call the White House Comment Line

Do you know you can call the **White House Comment Line** each day and your call will be recorded as a new call?

Call **202-456-1111** and voice your concerns. ■



Justice for Service Sector Employees *by Sr. Helen Huellmantel*

In just over two years, the fast-food workers' fight has completely changed the way the country looks at low-wage work and inequality.

- **Higher Pay for 8 Million Workers:**

Since fast-food workers went on strike in Nov. 2012, a rising tide for higher pay has spurred elected officials at the local, state, and federal level – as well as businesses like The Gap and Ikea – to

implement pay raises that will boost wages for 8 million workers across the country.

- **The Fight for \$15 Has Become a Social Movement:**

Inspired by the leadership of fast-food workers, home care workers, airport service workers, convenience store workers, and Walmart workers are calling for \$15 and better rights on the job, showing that the ripple effects of the fast food workers movement

are being felt in low wage sectors across the economy.

- **\$15 an Hour is the New Standard Nationwide:**

While the fast-food workers' demand for \$15 per hour was at first considered a far-fetched goal, it's now a reality in the cities of Sea Tac, Seattle, and San Francisco, with cities from coast to coast considering way increases to \$15 an hour. ■



Putting Slavery Firmly on Development Agenda Is Just the Beginning

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are expected to include a goal to end human trafficking and slavery, recognizing that modern slavery and development go hand in hand, writes Kevin Hyland, British independent anti-slavery commissioner. Helping victims, bringing perpetrators to justice, and addressing the roots of slavery will speed its demise, he argues. [MORE](#)



Franciscan Action Network (FAN)

In efforts to bring about world peace, FAN urges us to take action to support the Iran Nuclear Agreement. For helpful information please visit www.fcni.org/issues/iran. Watch for further details.

For more background information on this issue, go to:

<http://www.maryknollogc.org/alerts/urge-congress-support-iran-nuclear-deal>

Jewish Voice for Peace: Supports Iran Nuclear Agreement

The U.S. government has reached an historic deal with Iran, preventing Iran from gaining nuclear weapons, and avoiding a pointless and bloody war.

But many in Congress are threatening to sink the deal.

This deal—backed by strict verification measures—is a testament to the difficult, but crucial, diplomatic process.

It's a sign that our problems don't have to be solved through war, and it's a first step towards a

more peaceful future for the Middle East.

Jewish Voice for Peace urges us to contact Congress to let them know Americans want peace, not war.

[TAKE ACTION.](#) ■





Franciscan Spirituality and Cosmology

"We embrace our immigrant roots and identify with the struggle of all people to find a home in this world."

SSJ-TOSF Congregational Commitments
26th General Chapter

The Village Where Men are Banned

Only women are allowed to live in Umoja – a village in Kenya that was founded in 1990 by a group of 15 women who were survivors of rape by local British soldiers.

Umoja's population has now expanded to include any women escaping child marriage, FGM (female genital mutilation), domestic violence and rape – all of which are cultural norms among the Samburu.

The 47 women and 200 child inhabitants are thriving. Click the following link to read more about this village [MORE](#). ■



100 Women to Walk 100 Miles

From September 15th to 23rd, 100 women will embark on a pilgrimage from a site of human suffering – a detention center in York County, Pennsylvania – and walk 100 miles to Washington with hopes of inspiring Pope Francis with the sacrifice and stories of immigrant women and families.

The Pope has called for a world of "charity and cooperation" where no one is seen as useless, out of place or disposable – a vision that has no place for cruel detention and unjust deportation.

Click on the link to read [MORE](#). ■

Human Trafficking ...

Catholics Confront Global Poverty urges us to contact Congress and ask them to fight human trafficking by cosponsoring the Business Supply Chain Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act of 2015.

This legislation would require companies to make information about their products' supply chains public to ensure their products are not the result of child and forced labor, slavery, and human trafficking. [TAKE ACTION](#) ■

Contact us:

Members of SSJ-TOSF Social Justice Committee:

- Donna Wilhelm
- Dorothy Pagosa
- Marjorie White
- Maxine Smith
- Michele Richardson
- Rose Grabowski
- Rose Marie Bommer
- Shannon Fox

"Our Franciscan spirituality inspires and guides us in responding to any needs calling out to us."

SSJ-TOSF Congregational Commitments
26th General Chapter

Migration Policy Institute

[In a new commentary](#), MPI President Michael Fix examines what denial of citizenship to people born on U.S. soil would create: A self-perpetuating class that would be excluded from social membership for generations.

[In an earlier analysis](#) with researchers at Pennsylvania State University, MPI found that repeal of birthright citizenship for those born to two unauthorized immigrant parents would expand the unauthorized population by 4.7 million people by 2050. ■

REMEMBER...

We welcome your submissions in the form of

- "Sightings"
- Brief write-ups of your activities, "prototypes," suggestions for workshops, books, articles, films, resources.

Please send these to **Sister Shannon Fox** by the end of September for inclusion in the October issue of our newsletter, *We Commit Ourselves*.

~Your Social Justice Committee