

**Report of the Social Concerns Committee of St. John XXIII Parish
to all parishioners for January – June of 2019**

1. Study and Reflection

St. John XXIII's SCC (hereafter 'we') is actively studying our faith and community issues. Matthew Desmond's Evicted presents the tense and intricate relationship between landlords and low-income tenants in Milwaukee's housing market. The study delves into issues of homelessness, substance abuse, community decline, marginal income and the abuse of tenants, which plague low income workers. We finished the book in May and started another (The Working Poor by David Shipler) in June.

2. Social Concerns Grant Committee

We make available to parishioners seed grants for organizations creating community impact. During the reporting period, the Volunteer Ministry Center (VMC) received a \$1,000.00 grant to assist in their work among the poor and marginalized. Another parishioner expressed interest but has not yet applied.

3. Gaudete et Exultate

We continued sharing with parishioners the five great expressions of love for God and Neighbor as presented by Pope Francis in "On the Call to Holiness in Today's World". The reflection for Lent dealt with perseverance, patience and meekness as remedies for the anxiety of our world. Easter recommended boldness and passion as virtues to counter a self-centered passivity generated by consumerism. Pentecost promoted Christian community as a countersign to individualism. These reflections are available on the website.

4. Witnessing Wednesdays

About 6 people from St. John XXIII and Church of Our Savior gather on the morning of the 4th Wednesday every month at the Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) office to support the immigrants lined up there to report. Mostly young, some with infants and little children, they stand in the cold, sun or rain for at least 90 minutes. We stand silent with a sign stating the holy words "Love your Neighbor" in English and Spanish. We bring water, (coffee and chocolate in the cold) and cookies. Father Don one Sunday reminded us of the famous statement of St Francis of Assisi, "Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary use Words." We stand together showing support and love filled hearts. Come and See. Come and stand.

5. Justice Knox

Parish team members joined Justice Knox (JK) research efforts and met with public officials to work on our 'asks' this year. JK hosted two information meetings for local stakeholders featuring experts in the areas of Restorative Discipline and Affordable Housing Trust Funds. Our "Between the Masses" meeting at St. John 23 convened in March. Parishioners heard updates on our research. They then urged others to attend the Nehemiah Action Assembly. Sixty-two people from St. John 23 attended supporting our 'asks' targeting Affordable Housing, Mental Health and Restorative Discipline in the Knox County Schools.

6. Homelessness Presentation by Bruce Spangler

Our SCC and JK Team collaborated to host a presentation on Homelessness in Knox County. Bruce Spangler from the Volunteer Ministry Center outlined the extent of this problem. More than 40 people attended. He discussed the major complications and obstacles homeless people must overcome. Poverty in all aspects is the root cause of homelessness. Affordable, safe housing should be viewed as a right by our society.

7. Serene Manor

During these last 6 months, 3 members of the Social Concerns Committee have brought smiles to faces and a glow to the fingernails of about 10 residents each month at Serene Manor, a Medicaid funded nursing home. We are now known as the “fingernail women” and residents ask us to polish their nails. They love choosing the right color and though we aren’t professionals, they are so proud of the results. If you have an hour once a month on the 3rd Monday from 2:00 – 3:00 we would love to have you join us to give residents a boost by making them “pretty in pink”. Residents who don’t have visitors talk freely during the process.

8. Refugee Welcoming Committee:

The Refugee Welcoming Committee is proud to report that Therese, the mother of our co-sponsorship family, passed her driving test and has a license. With a car donated by another church, she drives to work and all her appointments. It is a wonderful accomplishment. Our team now helps by transporting her two young children to summer camp in the AM (Therese must be at work early) but she picks them up after work. Her next project is an online UT course to become a certified dental assistant, the work she did in Namibia. We are proud of her and our 14-member team for finding a path to success and integration into the United States. We hope to begin another group in September since this project makes a real difference for refugees and transforms lives. Think about it!

9. 287g

This title refers to a contract the Knox County Sheriff’s Office signed with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Under this agreement, some deputies are trained by ICE to expedite the deportation of immigrants who lack documentation directly from our jail. Knox county residents thus can be deported for misdemeanors such as traffic violations and as residents in our community lose confidence in the police. If reporting a crime, the caller may be deported. Only two counties in TN have such an agreement and some SCC members have requested that the Sheriff terminate Knox county’s participation.

10. Volunteer Ministry Center Lunch VMC held the annual Carry the Torch luncheon on April 24, 2019.

John XXIII was one of the sponsors. The guest speaker was Alan Graham who shared his experiences working with the homeless in Austin, TX. Ten people from John XXIII joined approximately 1000 people in attendance and donated \$2,5000 to VMC. Prior to the luncheon, a Mission Fair was held where agencies serving the homeless had booths and information about volunteer opportunities.