

Seeds of Justice

Sowers of Justice Newsletter

AUGUST, 2002



Inside this Issue

PUBLIC LIFE IN A CYNICAL ERA..... 1

PUBLIC POLICY
What's My Legislative District Look Like?.....2

EVENTS
TO ATTEND..... 2

ACTING FOR JUSTICE
People and Parishes at Work.....3

SOWERS MEMBERSHIP ASSEMBLY.....4

PUBLIC LIFE IN A CYNICAL ERA

The second principle of Catholic social teaching tells us that the human person is not only sacred, but social. Our development and our dignity as human persons and as a society rely on the depth of relationships we enjoy with other people and with institutions.

This principle is nothing but a nice sentiment (or really dry reading!) if we fail to live it out in our daily lives. But how do we live out this principle? And what would the practical consequences be?

Theresa Hughes, a member of Sowers from St. Ambrose of Woodbury, has spent some time answering those questions this summer. For the past year, she and her peers in Washington County have been working on the affordable housing issue at the state and local level.

They have done research visits, met with public officials, developed strategy, and taken action at Woodbury city council meetings.

Recently, it became clear that the group's efforts would need to include people from other faith communities. The group began to develop a strategy for approaching different congregations.

Theresa started talking to her neighbors. In those conversations, she met two women connected with two different Lutheran congregations. They agreed to meet at Theresa's house to talk about the housing problem and what they might accomplish together.

By the end of the meeting, both women agreed to attend a city council meeting with Theresa, and both agreed to set up a meeting with a pastor from their church.

Theresa had leveraged relationships with two neighbors into potential relationships with two congregations. She took the second principle of Catholic social teaching seriously and understood the importance of being relational with other people. Theresa understood that her own deep desires to do the work of justice could only be fulfilled if she worked in relationship with others.

If we took this second principle of Catholic social teaching as seriously as Theresa, we would be changed and our world would be changed. We would begin to imagine

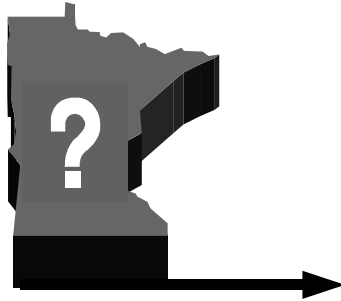
"Many parishes are joining with other churches and groups to rebuild a sense of community. . . participation in such community efforts develops leaders, provides concrete handles to deal with key issues, and builds the capacity of the parish to act on our values"

Communities of Salt and Light
U.S. Catholic Bishops

ourselves as human beings connected by our common concerns, our deepest desires, and our greatest gifts. We would push past the notion that we are isolated, disconnected individuals whose private longings for the world as it should be have no place in the world as it is. With this new sense of ourselves we could begin to imagine our collective capacity to do the work of social change.

Matt Gladue

What's My Legislative District Look Like?



Many of you may be wondering if your legislative district has changed or not. Many will find themselves in the same district. But many will not. Checking out the website myself, I found that in fact my legislative district was switched from 62 B to 62 A. So log on to be sure. You can find out if your district has changed by logging onto:

<http://maps.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/website/districts/>

and plugging in your address. When all of the county lines have been completely entered the full district finder will be available for your use.

You will also be able to get demographic and other data about your district when the 2000 census numbers are fully computerized and the reports are run. This is interesting information on race, poverty, wages, housing affordability, etc. to discuss with your candidates or newly elected representatives. While the material isn't yet complete, stay tuned and we will let you know as soon as it is.

Kathleen Tomlin
Public Policy

Events to Attend

Thursday	September 5, 2002	JustFaith – Facilitators Meeting Hayden Center—Smith Hall, 7—9 p.m.
Thursday	September 19, 2002	Sowers Delegate Assembly Hayden Center—Smith Hall, 6—9 p.m.
Tuesday	October 22, 2002	Sowers Fall Membership Meeting St. Bonaventure, Bloomington, 5:30—9 p.m.
Thursday	November 7, 2002	Immigration Meeting – Location TBA
Friday	November 15, 2002	Minneapolis Housing Convention Minneapolis Convention Center, 1—4 p.m.
Thursday	December 5, 2002	Sowers Delegate Meeting Hayden Center-Smith Hall, 6—9 p.m.
Tuesday	January 7 & 14, 2003	Sowers Institute Basilica of St. Mary's, Mpls., 7—9 p.m.
Tuesday	January 21 & 28, 2003	Sowers Institute Hayden Center-Smith Hall, 7—9 p.m.
Thursday	April 24, 2003	Sowers Delegate Meeting in Smith 6—9 p.m.

So, How are the Children?

You are invited to attend this special weekend retreat focusing on the issues of Children Living in Poverty.

When: **September 27-29, 2002**

Where: Russ Ewald Center for Urban Service in Mpls.

Cost: \$70.00 includes —
 4 lodging
 4 meals
 4 coordination for service events
 4 evening leadership

For more information or to register call The Urban Immersion Service Retreat at 612-276-1563.

People and Parishes at Work

Minnesota offers a variety of summer activities, but a new and unique activity is participation in the County Working Group of the Sowers of Justice. The action was happening at five metro counties, Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington, as Sowers held their second meeting in the ongoing strategic planning on housing and welfare reform for the 2003 legislative session.

This second meeting had a two-fold purpose. First reports on research visits confirmed a general opinion that looking for allies “can be fun”. Sowers reported that the most difficult part of research visits was finding the time when Sowers and the prospective ally could meet. Most people found the selected persons to be not only cooperative in talking about the issues from their expertise, but eager to have more people speak out about the issues.

Visits were made to get a variety of perspectives on affordable housing and welfare reform and included educators, healthcare workers, city officials and county officials, and developers. As the reports were discussed an effort was made to indicate what kind of ally this person could be in the future:

- ; a person who can pull in others to get involved,
- ; a person who can carry a message to a legislator or secondary decision-maker,
- ; a person who can put a face on the issue,
- ; a person who can communicate with the media.

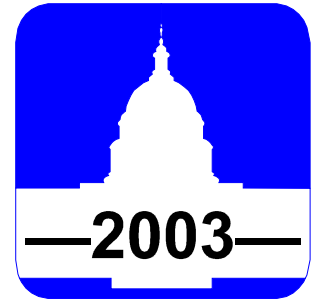
Allies have many different roles and may be more than one type. Having them as allies will be most helpful during the legislative session when specific policies are introduced.

The second goal of the meeting was to think about what other “action” we could get into during the summer months, and the Peppering Plan was introduced. Knowing that the candidates want to get their names and faces out in the public and knowing that many groups will plan candidate and issue forums, the Sowers plan of action is to visit candidates wherever they find them – at a neighborhood meeting, at a sponsored candidate forum, at the State Fair – and introduce themselves and Sowers of Justice. The plan is to “pepper” the candidates with questions about affordable housing and welfare reform. The goal is to learn how candidates stand on the issues, what the candidates know about the issues and in what areas they can be persuaded.

Sound like fun? Accept an invitation to visit the candidates when you get one. Invite your family, friends and neighbors to join you. It is a great way to get fired up for the primaries in September and the elections in November. It is a great way to get to know the candidates and issues and get others involved in the process. Interested? Call the office, 651-363-4477, and get information about the NEXT county meeting in YOUR area.

The strategy planning continues!

Sister Kerry O'Reilly
Parish Organizing



“The voices of parishioners
need to be heard on
behalf of...those who
suffer discrimination
and injustice...”

Communities of Salt and Light
U.S. Catholic Bishops



Sowers of Justice
Office for Social Justice
328 West Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55102

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
St. Paul, Minn.
Permit No. 6085

*Sow for yourselves justice,
reap the fruit of faithful love;*

*Break up for yourselves
a new field, for it is
time to seek the Lord,
until the Lord comes
and rains down justice
upon you.*

Hosea, 10:12

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

SOWERS of JUSTICE

MEMBERSHIP ASSEMBLY 2002

Tuesday, October 22nd
5:45 p. m. to 9:00 p.m.

St. Bonaventure Parish, Bloomington

5:45 p.m. Registration

6:00 p.m. Prayer and Dinner

6:45 p.m. Keynote: BISHOP PATES
Catholic Citizens: Shapers of History



Pre-registration required. Mark your calendars now—flyer to be mailed this August.