

Witness Commission: March 4, 2024
7:00 PM (via Zoom)

Present: Peggy Shaffer, Paula Knudsen-Burke, Sandy Flanagan, Karen Ungemach, Sandy Brubaker, Naomi Kraenbring.

1. Update on the Venezuelan refugee family- They seem to be doing well. Peggy Shaffer is working with them to get information on jobs that may be suitable for them. Zoe seems to be doing well at school and things seem to be falling into place for them. We will continue to support their adjustment to living in the US.

2, Update on Haitian family- after months of not hearing anything, we received word that the mother and daughter were being fingerprinted in preparation for leaving, and then today received word that they received travel authorization to leave. Paul is going to try to talk with Emerson tomorrow and find out his thoughts about how that would be handled and if he had money to buy tickets. They must fly in to New York and be picked up there. We do know that the Haitian airports are closed until about mid-March, so we will have to see what unfolds. Paul and Sandy have started to look at housing and gathering info about available furnishings. We will need to organize a team to support them and are planning to not use the people who are most actively involved with the Venezuelan family, but to recruit new people. These people will not need clearances, and CWS training.

3. We had talked about potentially starting a LGBTQ focus group, similar to our racial justice, etc. groups, and Naomi had put out information to the congregation exploring interest in doing that. About 8-9 people responded, but also Nurture told us that they would like to establish the group under Nurture, so we agreed to turn all of that over to them.

4. Gun Violence Group- Karen attended the organizational session offered by On Earth Peace. Most of what was shared was reasons why we have gun violence, and was closely related to racial justice issues. The meeting was recorded and is available if others want to see it. The COB has started a Gun Violence Action Team and they have asked for volunteers to be an "ambassador" as the contact person for their congregation. Karen volunteered to be an ambassador, so hopefully will receive more information from the denomination. They mentioned that congregations can do two different types of things: 1. Symbolic/meaning to witness or proclaim 2. Instrumental/meaning to enact or change. The feeling is that the congregation is not focused on gun violence right now, so it might not be the time to start an active group. But we can still do things that are symbolic, like host the t-shirt display from Heeding God's Call. Karen shared that at the end of the meeting, Matt Gywen tearfully shared that an On Earth Peace colleague that is located in Gaza is in serious danger and they are trying to save her life. So they have started a go fund me group to raise the \$80,000 that they need to get her and her family out of Gaza.

5. Other activities that we want to participate in this year:

- Chicken BarBQ, on April 13. Sandy Brubaker is working on that and says that it is mostly organized and ready to go.
- Elizabethtown Fair- need to get application in before June 1st, August 19-24
- Welcome Back to School Etown College students, Aug 23 and 24.
- Christmas Bazaar, November 23, There will be a brainstorming meeting at Folklore on Tuesday, Mar 12 at 1:00.
- Kingian Non-Violence Training-date not set yet, but will be in the fall, possibly Sept 21 or first weekend in Oct.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Ungemach, Chair of Witness Commission