



THE THOMAS MERTON CENTER
for Catholic Spiritual Development

**The Thomas Merton Center
26th Annual Meeting
Sunday, May 23, 2021
1:00 – 2:30 pm
(via Zoom)**

APPROVED MINUTES

- 1. *Opening Prayer:*** Gerard McGuire (Fr. John Sandersfeld was unable to connect)
- 2. *Call to Order, Welcome and Guidelines:*** Gerard McGuire/Bob Capriles
There were 36 screens (some with two members) at 1:12PM. Bob reviewed guidelines/norms for the Zoom meeting.
Membership Status, Quorum, Ballot Results: Anna Jaklitsch
There are 92 members and the number continues to rise. A quorum was present. There were 52 votes returned for the election and 100% were in favor of the three candidates. Bob Capriles will now join the TMC Board for a 3-year term and Mary and Ann will extend their terms.
Remembrances of deceased members during the past year: Anna Jaklitsch
A higher number of long time members passed away than normal. Vincent Lefebvre, Nancy Marty, Tom McKay husband of Mary Rita died last year. Kay Williams died Nov. 18; she was “the spark that encourages all parts of the organization” – Anna went over Kay’s many, many roles with TMC and the parish. Dick Freeman died Dec. 18, Dean Judd on Feb. 4th and Rudy Bahr on May 11.
- 3. *Board of Directors Report:*** Gerard McGuire
Gerard thanked Bob for facilitating the meeting and Anna for organizing it. Gerard introduced the other current TMC Board members. He went over the agenda. The financial situation is sound but membership is dwindling. It was hoped that by June 20th, TMC would be able to celebrate mass in person again. Key questions: Kay was a pivotal member of TMC, and people are having to step up – there is still a need to have more people stepping up. Anna has done a great deal filling the gaps for now, but she will need help. Gerard suggested that people consider it a ministry. He indicated that TMC could pay for training or software requirements. Since we no longer have a paper bulletin – will we go back to one or move to a digital one permanently? Gerard suggested we should plan for a future Town Hall meeting to discuss TMC role going forward, revisit key objectives and any outstanding issues when it is safe, and people feel comfortable attending. Do we need to be on social media to attract new members? What should our relationship be with other faith communities? The Board serves in a supervisory capacity. The members in the various committees do most of the work. He thanked the committees for their stalwart efforts and encouraged them to approach the Board if and when they require support in any way.

4. **Financial Report:** Mike McMahon

Mike reviewed a comparison between financial years 2019 and 2020. The revenue was very similar. In 2020 TMC had fewer expenses in some areas (Spiritual Ed.) but also gave more in donations including Adopt-A-Family and the East Palo Alto Ecumenical Hunger Project. A disbursement of \$4,000 was made through the Jane Bahr Fund for Hidden Villa camperships and to St. Vincent de Paul.

5. **Kenya Help:** Margo McAuliffe (This item was moved up in the agenda as Margo had another commitment).

In Kenya a new priest has come into the parish and is not sympathetic to the goals of Fr. Kiriti's work. Fr. Kiriti does not think it appropriate to send new students to the school (St. Francis). Now the girls are going to St. Clare and government schools. The government schools are good and cheaper. The Kay Williams scholarship will fund 7 additional students for 4 years each: now 17 students up from regular 10. The group is still helping to educate young women. If the government gets involved with St Francis it will take over the school. Diana Diamond asked about funding CCD classes instead. Margo explained that the funds get paid directly to the schools that the students attend.

6. **Committee Reports:**

a. **Spiritual Education:** Mary Coady and Jim Davis

Jim and Mary Coady have chaired the Spiritual Ed. Committee for the last 20 years. Jim suggested that next year a written report be requested. The lockdown caused events to be postponed or converted to online events. Members: Anna Jaklitsch, Barbara Kent, Pat McCarthy – and until her death Kay Williams. They would like additional help. Mary Coady reviewed the past year. The last live program was Feb. 8th, 2020 with a presentation by Rosemary Ellmer on “Clergy Abuse and the Church”. The first Zoom webinar was a Zoom webinar by Robert Ellsberg on the book “*Black Like Me*”. In December there was a Zoom retreat with Kevin Ballard – now in Tacoma Washington area. Coming up in June 5th 2021 Sr. Joan Chittister – “The Time is Now”; she is a very sought-after speaker the Committee has been trying to schedule her for many years. There are plans to ask Catherine Stewart to talk about the growing schism between haves and have-nots in the Catholic Church. Despite COVID they have been able to present some robust programs.

b. **Liturgy:** John Arnold

Churches closed a year ago in March. Kay Williams organized the Zoom Sunday “coffee and donuts” meeting. They have tried to provide a liturgical format. Ana and Jim Davis have helped with communications. Bob Capriles is the moderators of the discussion. Larry Schemel provides music. Attendance has ranged from 15 to 30 members. TMC continues to pay stipends to presiders. The survey about TMC's return to in-person mass conflicted with the parish survey. 32 yes 2 no. The parish survey got 87 responses including from parishioners planning to return to TMC. We do plan to return to STA on June 20 with masks and social distancing. The time has been changed from 8:45 to 9:00 am. COVID protocols will be put into place. Vaccination is encouraged! Masks will still be required. Members include Sally Benson, Maureen Locke, Larry Schemel, and Judy Washburn.

c. *Social Justice:* Bob Foley

Bob filed an annual report. The Group was formed shortly after the murder of George Floyd. Core members: Ann Jaklitsch, Henry Organ, Ron and Marci Ariagno, and Terry Atkinson. Their goal is to study what is going on globally and think about what we can do locally, esp. with African Americans. They want to investigate what the bishops were doing with regard to racism. They have written to Bishop Cantu and the USCCB – including several communications with the CA Conference of Bishops. What initiative we can take on our own – what we can do locally? The group could use more support – how to we continue to raise awareness at parish level? They would like to invite Bishop Cantu to TMC and we should look at other faith communities in Palo Alto area. He referenced the group's report to the Board (see as Appendix A).

d. *Wealthy Conservatives Impact on Catholic Media/Catholicism:* Bob Busch

This is a 9-member Committee - including Margaret Capriles, Pat, Shannon, Larry, Vicki. It began with a visit to and concern over the NAPA Institute- especially its connections among very conservative minded Catholics and big money—this is dividing American Catholics. The group is trying to raise some awareness on this issue. They worked with Katherine Stewart on an article for the New Republic “How Big Money is Dividing American Catholicism” which appeared in their March 9th 2021 edition.

e. *TMC Website:* Jim Davis

This is the smallest committee – one member! The website is “thomasmerton.org”. The website is hosted by eCatholic who are terrific to work with. Jim and Anna do all the content. A donation button was added last year, it was difficult to do but has been a great success. Anna currently is doing an online bulletin and it is posted now on the website. Jim thanked Bob Foley for his committee's efforts on racism and welcomes feedback on TMC's website.

f. *Church Site:* Vicki Sullivan stepped in for Helen Baumann.

The gardens around the STA church site are good although we have only been there once about 3 weeks ago....weeding and dead heading. There are plans for adding more soil /mulch at end of June/July. It only takes about 90 minutes for “garden fluffing”

g. *Community Outreach:* Barbara Kent

Barbara spoke about outreach to Seton School. Terry Atkinson, Henry Organ, Judi Swope, Vicki Sullivan and many more are involved—especially as tutors. This year Adopt a Family did not buy individual gifts but gave cash donations to 7 different appreciative families. Recent fundraising was a great success and will allow the school to replace all the students iPads. The recent book drive raised enough money to support the 2nd and 3rd grade summer reading. This year the big fundraiser-the golf scramble couldn't happen as planned so it has been rescheduled for October 4th. There will be silent auction at the dinner afterward. Next spring David Kennedy of Stanford will give a talk.

h. *Hospitality:* Larry Lopez

While we are not meeting in person to eat donuts due to COVID, we still paid the donut store up until two months ago. Larry asked if when we back to church would we still continue to offer coffee and donuts? Donuts at Happy Donuts are still good.

7. *Community Comments/Suggestions/News:*

- Rosanna visited the Thomas House. The common areas in the house are in great need of cleaning. She thought the kitchen floor might not have been cleaned in a year.
- Bob Busch spoke about social media and how much Zoom has helped communicate this year. On Wednesday June 2 he will host a 30-minute reflection – the first demo of a “Motown Mass” – a project to think about racial healing and race justice. This is a personal project not a TMC project.
- Diana Diamond asked Bob Foley about the response the USCCB gave to his letter. She also asked Mike why we are paying \$400/month to the STA parish and what is it for?. She would rather give it to charities than to the parish. Bob did not receive a response from the CA Conference of Catholic Bishops. It is not a hierarchy – each bishop operates independently. Bishop Cantu is Secretary of CA Conference—he encouraged the group to work at parish level.
- Henry Organ asked if the TMC had donated to the N. California Innocence Project. Mike verified that \$1,000 was sent in July 2020.
- Dick Placone. He supports the \$400 a month paid to the parish. TMC has used the parish facilities which is a privilege granted by San Jose diocese a number of years ago when TMC was first formed. He felt it was very appropriate that we continue that contribution – we are part of the parish but an independent group. He reinforced what Mike said – important and necessary thing to do.
- Vicki alerted the group that this has been a challenging time for students– many will be behind – she thought we might need to do some reading support for St. Elizabeth Seton School.
- Margaret Capriles asked who is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the Thomas House. Maureen Locke responded that the parish owns the house and is responsible for the maintenance. Our pastor has hired a group for cleaning the church. It should be brought to his attention. The tenants pay rent to the parish. Anna added that a woman working in the parish office came in on Sunday’s afternoon to clean - including the bathroom and floors. The Foy family has helped find the renters.
- Edna endorsed what Dick had said about TMC’s monthly \$400 donation to the parish. It seemed to her a very fair amount to pay.
- Larry Lopez volunteered to go in to the Thomas House and clean everything up.
- Bill and Sandy suggested the Site Committee review the situation and clean.
- Bob Capriles commented that our community getting together through Zoom has been phenomenal – people got to know each other in ways impossible if not through Zoom; it was a silver lining of the closure of the parish due to COVID. Even though we will soon see each other in person –should we continue to do something like this?
- Dick pointed out that during summers several years ago – coffee and donuts were always out in the garden. He suggested we meet in the garden again and pitch in so Jim is not stuck.
- Diana likes Zoom in that it facilitates more thoughtful reflection.

8. *Thank You to Members of Our Community*

9. *Next Annual General Meeting:* May 22nd, 2022

10. *Adjournment/ Closing Prayer/Reflection:* Diane Marie Herte ended the meeting with a closing prayer and the meeting officially closed at 2:48pm.