

**Voices for a Just Society
Meeting June 5, 2013
Eglinton St. Georges United Church**

Minutes

Present: Marillene Allen, Helen Best, Jan Buchan, Shirley Bush, Dana Clemens, David Clemens, Heidi Fiebig, Audrey Gilpin, Linda Gilpin, Pamela Kormano, Andre LeRoux, Scott McDougall, Heather McPherson, Geegee Mills, Rosemary Pryde, Kathy Salisbury, Howard Watson, Margaret Watson, Rev. Barb White, Peter Wilkins, Maggie Wilkinson

Regrets: Ann Barrett, Beth Baskin, Jan Gardiner-Williams, Norma McIntyre, Rick Parton, Margaret Vandenbroucke, Rev Christopher White

Chair: Rosemary Pryde

Recorder: Kathy Salisbury

Meeting commenced at 7:15pm.

- 1) Opening Prayer: Geegee Mills
- 2) Rosemary extended thanks to the following individuals;
 - a. Geegee, Peter and ESG for their efforts to organize the meeting.
 - b. Audrey Gilpin and Linda Gilpin for their review of the budget and creation of an excellent summary of the ways in which the budget has addressed social assistance reform and minimum wage.
 - c. Dave and Rick for composing the letter sending an invitation to the Premier to meet with interested parties to discuss social justice issues.
- 3) Geegee made available several handouts;
 - a. United Church resolution from 2012 proposing strategies for educating congregations about poverty, homelessness and income disparity in Canada, as well as recommending that they be equipped to take political action to address these issues.
 - b. ISARC Conference :Strengthening the Faith to end Poverty at St. Michael's on June 13th
 - c. Video launch of "Turning the Tide: Beyond Charity to Advocacy in Ontario" Video launch. It is Wed., June 26 from 7-9 at Church of the Redeemer (Bloor and Avenue Rd.). If anyone is able to go, please consider how we might use this video at a Voices meeting or event.
- 4) Minutes of the February 28th meeting approved. Many thanks to Linda Gilpin for doing these notes.

EDUCATION COMPONENT OF THE MEETING:

Food Security and Poverty – Guest speaker Angela ElzingaCheng, Community Food Program Manager FoodShare Toronto spoke about the work of FoodShare. She has been working for FoodShare for six years and finds using food to be a particularly effective way of bringing people together. She has a Masters of Social Work with a focus on community development and anti-oppression. Her expertise is in community development and food security issues, looking deeply into issues of policy and food justice. She lives in Junia Community, a seven-year-old urban intentional Christian community in the Parkdale neighbourhood with her husband and three children.

Angela grows food in her own front yard. "Getting dirty and growing wonderful food delights me. I want to pass on that respect and reverence to my children. I want them to know how to tend the garden. It's hard work to take care of the world. I want us to realize what it takes to grow food. Sweat and labour brings food to the grocery store."

FoodShare focuses on our right to healthy food. It brings community members together with local agencies to build community capacity both to grow and prepare food and to advocate for the right to healthy food. People on social assistance can't afford to buy this food. Food banks are seeing more and more people who are employed in minimum wage jobs. Minimum wage does not allow for rent and food, clothing etc. People are working too hard to afford too little. Income is a factor in food insecurity. People are malnourished because of too much of the wrong food. Others are malnourished because of not enough food.

Agriculture, income and health are the 3 key components to food insecurity.

FoodShare programs include the following elements;

- 1) Universality – people from all income levels can participate
- 2) Community capacity building
 - 1) Networking and forming partnerships
 - 2) Advocacy and policy transformation
 - 3) Long term multifaceted solutions to hunger

Food share programs are involved in locally based food production. Some of their programs include the following; (see their website: <http://www.foodshare.net/> for more information)

- 1) Good food box – fresh produce available to everyone at the same price.
- 2) Mobile and Good Food markets.
- 3) Incubator kitchens – can launch a catering business from their kitchen.
- 4) Cooking, community kitchens, bring soup to shelters over the winter.

- 5) Community kitchens – reintroduced to foods cooked in a healthy way. For more information about community kitchens go to <http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/community-kitchens.aspx>
- 6) Community food animation – bringing produce to life. Community animators help neighbourhoods start a community garden. They do conflict workshops, decision making, how to navigate bureaucracy.
- 7) Rooftop gardens and greenhouses – off the grid
- 8) Harvest fruit trees – Not Far from the Tree
- 9) Urban livestock – currently not legal in Toronto but FoodShare is exploring this
- 10) Farming and Market Garden in the city
 - a. Bendale Technical Institute
 - b. Sunshine Market Garden - CAMH
 - c. Black Creek Farm – Jane and Finch
- 11) Beekeeping – beekeepers coop, bees at Downsview, Royal York Hotel.
- 12) Composting – 300 lbs of fresh food scraps per day. Thousands of pounds of compost per year.
- 13) Student nutrition and healthy food before and afterschool programs – supported by Food Share.
- 14) School education programs to support growing food and understanding healthy nutrition
- 15) Farmer’s Markets – people on low income can’t afford food from farmer’s markets. Food share has created Good Food Markets. Food access and community gathering place.
- 16) Businesses and social enterprises.
- 17) Youth internship and leadership projects based around food
- 18) Food hubs, food centres

FoodShare is working to provide greater and more equitable access to healthy food, to create community resilience and reduce the threat of corporate control of our food.

Questions:

Who funds FoodShare? Donations, all three levels of government and fundraising events.

How could a congregation arrange a relationship with FoodShare? FoodShare would connect them with a local project.

Are there many Good Food Box depots? Can’t really say off the top of my head, but we sell over 4000 boxes per month. Some stops are larger than others.

Is there a minimum number of orders for a food depot? Five, but we would prefer more, which is why we provide the incentive of for every 10 boxes purchased at a depot, we provide one free.

What is the relationship of FoodShare to The Stop? The Stop is an excellent example of a locally based food hub. Food share supports their work, but our mandate is much broader.

Rosemary thanked Angela for her passion and commitment to food security. She was presented with a token of appreciation.

BUSINESS COMPONENT OF THE MEETING:

1) Updates:

- a. Barb White – Bedford Park redevelopment project: 15 reservations confirmed. 46 spaces in total. Working on financing. Neighbours have appealed to the OMB. Lawyers are working on this but Barb is confident that it will eventually be resolved.
- b. Dave and Rick – extended an invitation to Kathleen Wynne to speak at a meeting within her own riding on social justice issues. Request was declined. Disappointment in the NDP in that they have not advocated strongly enough for antipoverty strategies in the budget. Rosemary suggests that we revisit this in another 6-9 months to see if the political climate has changed. Scott suggested that at that time we invite antipoverty critics of all three parties to debate the issues.
- c. Video entitled “Turning the Tide – Beyond Charity to Advocacy in Ontario” will be launched on June 26th. It explores poverty, homelessness and how we should respond. It will be at the Church of the Redeemer (Poverty Free Ontario) Geegee will send details via email to the group. Let the group know if you can attend. This may be something we can use in future.

- 2) **Voices Coordination:** Rosemary has coordinated the group for the last 3.5 years. Tonight is her last meeting and it is time to find a new coordinator. She proposed two coordination options moving forward:
 - a. Someone replace her in the role of Coordinator. To date, no one has come forward.
 - b. Two people to take care of each of the next three meetings.
 - c. Marillene suggested a third alternative. That is that a 3-member steering committee be struck, and that each member take turns with meeting coordination, chairing and minute taking for the next year. There have traditionally been three meetings per year. Dave notes that between meeting times, Rosemary has done a great job of forwarding issues that come up. Rosemary suggests that all members of the group should be responsible for forwarding issues to each other and that this role should not fall to the Coordinator. Marillene and David C have agreed to join the steering committee. **After the meeting. Geegee Mills agreed to be the third member of the Steering Committee.**

- 3) **Branding:** Marillene led us in a discussion about creating a logo to brand Voices. This has the potential to strengthen Voices effectiveness and credibility and give it more visibility. It could be used on letterhead, press releases etc. and would provide us with instant recognition.
- a. We brainstormed adjectives that we feel describe what 'Voices' is. They are as follows:
Cares, wants to make a difference, speaks out, want to become involved, advocates for justice, I want to be one of them, cool crew, on the cutting edge, speak truth to power, with passion, living our faith, active, sticking our necks out, informed, humble, seeking, network, to engage and to love.
 - b. Marillene then asked us if we want to go ahead with developing a brand for this organization. Someone is willing to develop this pro bono. Discussion: Geegee – we are breaking new ground, if we are going to do it, let's do it right. We have no budget to advertise. Howard – we would need to live up to it. Barb White - was drawn in by questions who are you, what do you do and why does it matter? Feels that we need to emphasize that we don't have all of the answers and that we are seeking to understand and that our action is rooted in love. Other comments: Is it too early to do this? Are we interfaith or ecumenical? Right now we are ecumenical, but we want some symbolism that gives us the room to be interfaith. David had reservations about formalizing an informal network. Finally it was felt that a logo could be a 'legitimator' of what we are doing. It may help us to speak out with a stronger voice. What do we have to lose? **Final decision to go ahead with the exercise.**
 - c. Marillene gave us an **ASSIGNMENT:** We need a tag line. What is our mission and vision? North Toronto churches concerned about social justice? Faith groups working for social justice? Advocating in faith for social justice? Speaking out for the disadvantaged? **We need to find a 'catchy' slogan that says what we do. We are asked to give this some thought and submit our ideas to each other via email.**
- 4) **Other Business:** Scott brought up some concerns about the provincial budget and how little it is recommending in terms of poverty reduction strategies. He is particularly concerned about the proposed merger of ODSP and OW in the SAR Report.
ACTION: Scott to follow up – gather more information about this and send it to the group. Is Francis Lankin involved with any of the implementation of the SAR recommendations? Should Voices should write a separate letter expressing its disappointment in a mere 1% increase to social assistance rates?
- 5) **Closing prayer:** Geegee.
Meeting adjourned at 9:35pm.