

**Voice of the Poor Meeting Minutes**  
**3:30 PM April 13, 2009**  
**Vincentian Support Services**

**Opening Prayer** Father Bill Fitzgerald led us in reading “Easter--2009...the rock removed from the Tomb!” We read together a reading from Father Fitz’s book A Contemporary North American Prayer Book entitled “Easter Prayer”.

**Attending** Lucy Howell, Ron Meyer, Fr. Fitz, Kathy Jorgensen, Frank Barrios, Ruth Ballas, Francisco Alatorre, Inge Casey, Graciela Figueroa, Sharon Pearce, and Julie Douglas

Lucy thanked Fr. Fitz for his beautiful Easter prayers and said that Fr. Fitz has another book going to publication soon. Lucy introduced new members Graciela Figueroa, and Sharon Pearce.

**Recent state budget news** was discussed. Although Gov. Brewer has offered a wide-ranging plan that includes many areas of spending cuts and expenditure limitations, etc it also includes raising additional revenue through a temporary tax increase ( a 1% sales tax increase has been discussed at the capital). It appears that many of the safety net programs that aid the poor will be greatly decreased or eliminated without the combination of both these types of approaches. We talked about what we can do to raise the consciousness concerning this. A letter regarding the SVdP view will be presented to the SVdP Board meeting this Wednesday night.

Lucy reported on the budget forum called by Gov. Brewer, on Thursday April 9<sup>th</sup> at the Tempe Center for the Arts. Over 800 people attended the event. Lucy said that there was discussion of how Arizona raises revenue, and it is predominately achieved via retail and construction activity. Barry Broome, Pres and CEO, Greater Phoenix Economic Council made a presentation and stated that there is no way around the fact that Arizona needs to raise more revenue, he strongly suggested a temporary increase in the income tax. Graciela said that Kevin McCarthy of the Arizona Tax Research Assoc might be a good contact for us to have. He has great influence with the lawmakers and is very knowledgeable about the stimulus dollars available. He has a constituent group of very large corporations like APS, SRP, etc. She also noted that Kevin is very involved in his parish, St. Mary’s in Chandler. Lucy said the state will lose up to 1.6 billion in stimulus funding for AHCCCS if we don’t have a legislative change in eligibility regulations (certification annually instead of every 6 months). Also, without action by our legislature, Arizona will not be eligible to receive \$97 million in unemployment benefits to extend unemployment for 30,000 Arizonans an additional 13 weeks. In addition, TANF (cash assistance) could be eliminated or greatly reduced.

**Bills pending the House impacting low income Arizonans** were discussed including HB2269 which will mandate that landlords give tenants 30 days advance notice of pending foreclosures on properties they are living in. The Senate is still not hearing bills until the budget is agreed upon.

Kathy talked about the upcoming **Navigating the Benefit Maze Part 2 on May 9<sup>th</sup>**. She said that AZ Self Help and Health-e Arizona will be spotlighted with a live demonstration by

Eddie Sissons. Hope VI will be the location. We will be able to provide coffee and donuts, available from the SVdP kitchen. Julie, Francisco and Ruth offered to come early to help set Kathy set up. 20 people are already signed up. Lucy is working on a speaker from the Phoenix Workforce Connection. Feedback from Vincentians who attended the first workshop is that Vincentians are looking for additional information about jobs and housing. Julie will bring SVdP signs from St. Thomas the Apostle.

Ruth and Lucy talked about the **May 16<sup>th</sup> trip to the Kino Border Initiative**. Ruth offered to handle a majority of the planning for the trip. Lucy reminded everyone that a passport or birth certificate would be highly advisable. Ruth said that it would probably be easier to park our cars on the U.S. side and take cab across the border. We will leave at 7AM from Watkins. Ruth said that the Jesuit priests and two orders of sisters run the center. It has 8 beds, serves 200-300 meals/day and helps ease people back into Mexico. We feel that it is good that a small group is going to assess how we can be most helpful. We discussed the items to donate. Ron said that he will purchase toothpaste, Julie sugar, Lucy men's briefs and men and woman's socks. Frank B. said that he will check into the possibility of children's clothing from St. Paul's. Ron and Frank have other obligations later on that day, so they plan to go with us, but head back early.

**Constant Contact database update:** Kathy said that so far they have tested 250 e-mails. David Staudacher had been helping with the conversion, but he is no longer with SVdP. Kathy said that we can upload info, as well as take people out of the database who no longer are Vincentians. Kathy said that overall the database cross over is looking good.

Lucy encouraged all to attend Fr. Sean Carroll's presentation on The Kino Border Initiative this Sunday, April 19<sup>th</sup> from 2-4PM at Thunderbird High School. She also reminded us of the April 29<sup>th</sup> meeting hosted by the Arizona Coalition to End Homelessness. Lucy and Tom plan to attend.

**Closing Prayer** Fr. Fitz led the group in reading the "Easter Prayer"

Meeting adjourned at 4:20PM