

**2019 BTC Journals**

**Day Three - West Hartford to Hartford to Meriden**

We began gathering at breakfast around 7:15 to a wonderful warm buffet breakfast layout at Holy Family similar to yesterday morning, but thi time French toast, bacon, mixed fruit, yogurt, cereal, etc. Absolutely wonderful as usual. Thank you again Fr. Terry!

We talked about yesterday’s events and thought about the upcoming day while our support folks again made sandwiches for our lunch later in the day.

We lost Patrick for the rest of the ride but Sue and John Ryan were back. Patrick will be greatly missed. He has been a great addition to the team. We were all anxious to begin the new day’s journey. We gathered around after breakfast, made sure all tires were pumped and Cue Sheets handed out. Johnnie F lead us in our sendoff prayer.

The ride into Hartford was pleasant as the weather was again perfect. We again eventually found ourselves on Park Street heading for ImmaCare shelter.

We arrived at our designation a bit earlier than expected. We waited for Teresa to come over from the Supportive Housing complex across the street from the shelter. As we waited some of us engaged the guests outside. I spoke with Dennis who was concerned about the upcoming renovation. A few others chimed in on the conversation. They asked what we were doing and of course we got into the poverty awareness of the ride and they were impressed and thanked us. It always amazes me how easily these guys can conjure up a smile to talk about their circumstances. We shook hands and we went in for a tour of the facility. We all went in for a tour from Lou Gilbert, Teresa Wierbicki, and Rebekah Lyas. They informed us of the renovation and advised how they have been working through the issues of the residents. They have been working diligently to get each and everyone housed somewhere. Not all residents are happy about being transferred to some other place. I guess you get used to your present environment even if it is a shelter.

ImmaCare Inc. strives to eliminate homelessness in the Hartford region, while building a more vibrant community, by creating safe and affordable housing options and increasing the skills, income and hope of those who struggle with housing crisis.

Because housing is a human right, ImmaCare Inc. will continue to work in partnership with the community to prevent and eliminate homelessness. We will provide a range of services designed to help individuals experiencing homelessness overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of securing and maintaining safe and affordable housing while becoming an integrated member of the community.

The Emergency Shelter is a year-round program, open daily, 24 hours a day. Most of the individuals served through this program are under-employed or unemployed, ineligible or not yet signed up for government benefits and lacking formal education. Many also have serious mental or physical health problems, issues with substance abuse and often are estranged from their families. The shelter provides a safe place to sleep, a healthy meal and access to clothing, showers, laundry, and referrals for mental health and substance abuse counseling, medical services, transportation assistance, entitlement assistance, and comprehensive case management. In addition, groups that focus on personal growth will be offered, such as Job Training, Activities of Daily Living, Building Social Skills as well as groups focusing on substance-free socialization including dominoes, card games, and other board games. ImmaCare’s shelter is intended to be a short-term, emergency intervention focused on assisting men to gain more permanent tenancy of some sort in non-shelter housing in their region.

Shelter Restoration Project is underway. Major areas of renovation include:

Licensed Medical Clinic; Adequate Bathing Facilities; Sprinkler and Fire Alarm Systems; Accessibility; Energy Efficient Windows; Exterior Brick Restoration; Functional Kitchen; Emergency Generator; Landscaping

So, we left ImmaCare and headed over to Blumenthal’s Office for our regular annual visit. We intend to present our five topics of discussion, Immigration; Affordable Healthcare; Income Inequality; Food Insecurity; Care for God’s Creation.

Along our route while on Main Street we see Senator Blumenthal involved in a peaceful demonstration regarding the Immigration boarder crisis, outside the ICE Federal Building. We stopped to say hello and informed him we were on our way to his office for a meeting with Joe Rodrigues. It was a good opportunity to get in his face for a photo shoot and remind him who we were. He seemed to recall the last time we ran into him in his office a few years ago.

We continued along Main Street dodging cars and buses and mad it safely to his office. A bunch of us went upstairs to be greeted by Joe and another aide, Michael Jordan who indicated he might ride with us next year. He lives in Vernon.

After introductions we presented our topics individually and requested Joe pass on our concerns to the Senator. We know Senator Blumenthal is on our side but still we had to hammer home our concerns. Joe was very receptive and provided good answers to our questions and concerns. He took down a lot of notes especially on what we highlighted. John Ryan was very passionate about the regressive tax structures we live with and Joe thanked him for his passion and promised to get some answers back to us.

Tom Sacerdote presented some concerns one of the guests from Sparrows had texted him requesting us to convey to our Senators. When Tom had engaged Chris at Sparrows he was told of the poor living conditions at McKinney Shelter, mold in the bathrooms, in the showers, loose fitting on the toilet bowls allowing smells to permeate throughout, not enough outlets to charge cell phones. Tom promised he would mention these problems to legislators. Joe was very concerned and requested that Tom give Chris his cell phone number because he wanted to her directly from Chris. Tom was surprised and grateful. Here is a perfect example of us being the voice of the voiceless and it working!

We thanked Joe for his attentiveness and we moved over to Chris Murphy’s Office.

It was a short ride over to Murphy’s office. Pretty much the same people went in to visit with Brittany Fould, one of Murphy’s aides. She was pretty good and more attentive than Kenny Curran has been. She seemed very engaged with us and took notes and indicated she would pass on our concerns to Senator Murphy. It was a good visit all in all.

Before heading off to Meriden and our Lady Queen of Angels we stopped near by Chris Murphy’s office for lunch. We found some shade and took our respite. Sue went over and asked the workers cleaning up the nearby school of we could use the facilities there and they were accommodating. They were impressed with our mission.

We timed our leaving perfectly so we would arrive at the parish at our designated time. There were no incidents on our ride over. The miles seemed to glide by. Support was great as usual.

When we arrived at the parish Fr. Tom Sievel was out there to greet us. Carol, his office person, advised us where the showers and our respective rooms would be. Terry showered and was expecting to stay for the presentation but was not feeling all that well and decided she would not stay. When her husband arrived, he was not doing all that well himself so they left early and we wished them a speedy recovery. It was great having Terry be part of this team. She added a lot to our dynamic. She would be missed.

So, all took our showers quickly as the food was coming soon. Some of us went over to the Rectory to shower. Seems it worked out perfectly.

We had a great supper and began preparing for the presentation that would take place in the church basement. As it was getting closer to the time of the presentation, we began to notice the lack of a crowd. Claudia and I went outside to see if we could get people to show up. No luck. Debated whether we should go through the presentation as we had an audience of four. John reminded me that Jesus would not walk away from one person so we soldiered on and did the full presentation. It was good because we got Tom Sacerdote’s son, Tim, to participate. He did a good job explaining why he rode this year. There was no lingering afterwards but we were thanked for what we are doing and that’s what is important. Maybe that person was touched in a way that she will do something that will touch or affect many. Only the Holy Spirit knows.

After the presentation Tim and his wife bid us farewell and surprisingly so di Tom. He, too, would be missed a lot since he is integral to this team as well. But things happen. Life goes on.

Also, Wendy left to go back to Manchester to get Doris who would be joining us tomorrow for support.

So the rest of us gathered back in the living room of the house we would be staying in. I believe it was the old rectory of St. Joseph parish.

We discussed the events of the day. And then we did the Word of the Day.

**Day Three’s Word of the Day:**

Johnnie F Disappointed

Claudia Perspective

Lauren Importance of being heard

Joan Miracle

Tom B Familiar/Unfamiliar

Claire Privilege

John Don’t worry about being effective

Sue Happy to be back - Human

Lou Taken aback – “Let it go”