

Summer 2026 Ignatian Companions Newsletter

July 2026



Mission Statement

Rooted in Ignatian Spirituality, we foster the formation of our members through prayer and community as they accompany the poor and marginalized.

Companions in Ignatian Service and Spirituality
1611 Oak St.
San Francisco, CA 94117
www.IgnatianCompanions.org

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This Board's Not Boring!

by Rita Mitchell (Xavier East Bay)

Behind the scenes, the Board of Directors works hard to ensure that Companions continues not only to survive but to thrive. We meet monthly, mostly via Zoom. But we meet occasionally at the Ignatian Spiritual Life Center, or ISLC, in San Francisco to feast on amazing burritos from nearby Papalote!



We also have an annual retreat. The morning is devoted to prayer and to deepening our own spiritual lives. Grace Salceanu, the former director of the ISLC and friend of Companions, facilitated the morning for us. In the afternoon we tend to the business of Companions. This year we focused on the Strategic Plan, which is based on what you told us in last year's survey. We celebrated our accomplishments and planned for next year.

Some of our accomplishments include the following:

- Establishing our own website. Check it out at www.ignatiancompanions.org. Thanks to Bob Hernandez and Marco Matute for their hard work to make this happen.
- Having our own Facebook page to allow members to connect with each other and to let the broader community know about us. Thanks to Candee Lucas and George Fruehan for their efforts on this. Here is the Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61579086642881>. You can also search for "Ignatian Companions Bay Area" in Facebook.
- Developing guidelines for Xavier groups and having a meeting with representatives of the groups to discuss the guidelines and allow folks to share ideas and support each other. It was helpful and participants asked that we meet with them at the beginning of each program year.
- Increasing participation in Epiphany parties by having separate parties in the south bay and east bay. See an article and pictures in the Winter 2026 Newsletter.

And then there's all the ongoing efforts of planning two retreats, monitoring progress of the Strategic Plan, registering folk for the program and retreats, engaging facilitators and ordering curriculum materials for the first two years, developing the budget and paying the bills, updating lists of service opportunities and spiritual directors, keeping us legal and so many other tasks to keep us afloat.

Members of the board include Rita Mitchell, Chair; Marcos Herrera, Secretary; George Fruehan, Treasurer; Marco Matute, Program Coordinator; Bob Hernandez; Lynne Lukenbill; and Kathie Sheehy. If you would like to become a board member, contact Rita Mitchell at rita@ritamitchell.org.





Ignatian Companions 2025-2026 Closing Retreat

by Marco Matute (Xavier East Bay)

We closed the 18th year of Ignatian Companions with a retreat on June 6 at the Dominican Motherhouse in Fremont. Of the 55 attendees, 11 were candidates who wished to learn more about the program. Thank you to the Companions who invited them!

We began our day with a truly memorable Mass presided by our guest speaker Fr. John Pedigo. After which we headed to the Dominican Center for registration and to enjoy some breakfast snacks.

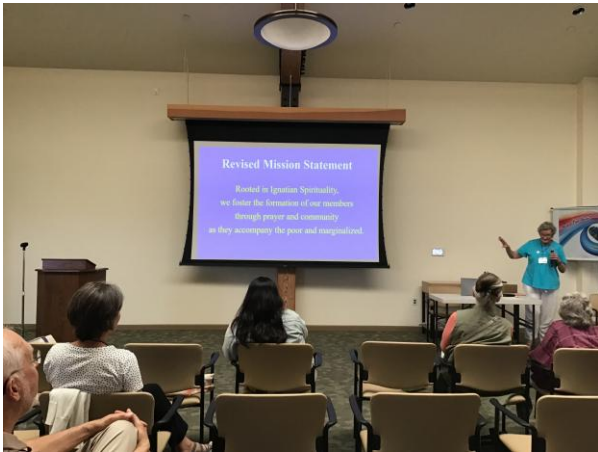
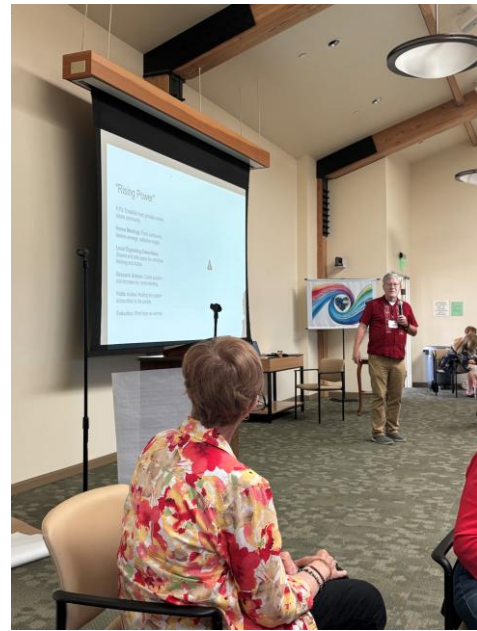


Fr. John then engaged us with his presentation entitled “We are the Power: Because we have power.”



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After our lunch break, Rita started the afternoon session by updating us on the status of the Strategic Planning initiatives that the Board worked on throughout the 2025-2026 program year as well as our accomplishments. For details, see the article "This Board's Not Boring" in this newsletter.

Bob Hernandez and yours truly gave a brief presentation about our new website. However, due to technical difficulties it was not possible to demo the new website. But the website is definitely up and running.

During the latter half of the afternoon session, the Montserrat cohort from the South Bay shared with us the story of the Woman at the Well found in John's Gospel. We ended the day with a very moving Conversation with the Spirit activity that involved:

- Naming the Wound Before the Well
- Seen and Still Sent: After being fully known – her whole complicated truth laid bare – she becomes the first evangelist in John's Gospel, running to tell her whole town.

Thank you Marcos Herrera for the photos.

Have a great summer and we'll see you in August!



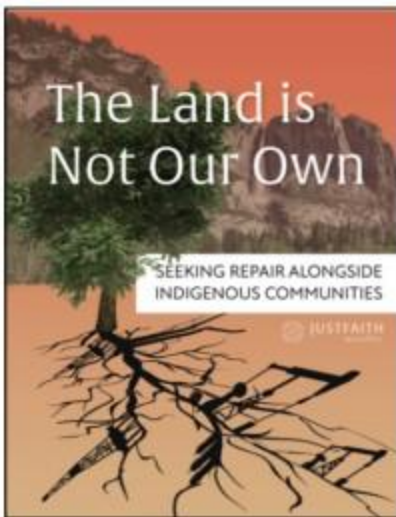
Racial Justice and Social Healing in South Bay, Manresa Companions?

by Kathy Mattingly (Xavier South Bay)

In the Diocese of San Jose, CA (DSJ), ministries dedicated to living out Catholic Social Teaching are coordinated under the Office of Life, Justice, and Peace (LJP). The range of ministries includes Care of Creation, Respect Life, Mental Health Ministry, Catholic Campaign for Human Development, and Restorative Justice. When George Floyd was murdered in May of 2020, Donna O'Connell and I, now South Bay Manresa members, reached out to JustFaith Ministries (JustFaith.org) and began a ministry facilitating Faith and Racial Justice programs.

As LJP organizers reached out to include our ministry of Racial Justice and Social Healing, they also recognized that all of the LJP ministries either address manifestations of racism or intersect strongly with the need for ethnic and social healing in society. They quickly joined with Fr. Angelbert Chickere in the effort to bring seemingly disparate LJP ministries together and to include Faithful Citizenship within the Racial and Social Healing (RSH) designation of our ministry. As members of LJP, they set two additional goals for their ministry: Encouraging communication and collaboration among LJP leadership teams and elevating our ministry of increasing racial healing ministries to the diocesan level.

Donna and I continue to offer and facilitate JustFaith programs, including the Racial Justice series, as well as "The Land Is Not Our Own; Seeking Repair Alongside Indigenous Communities," and "Want to Talk; Communication Skills for Divide Times." We are also excited about the JustFaith courses for youth and newer series including the environmental series, Sacred Land, Sacred Air and Sacred Water. They offered "The Land Is Not Our Own" in collaboration with the Care of Creation Ministry and "Want to Talk" together with Mental Health Ministries.



What has been especially gratifying to Donna and myself is the way in which information and awareness spread by JustFaith programs has found fertile soil and encouraged already flourishing gardens of spirituality and service. We think especially of St. Clare of Assisi Parish in Santa Clara and of a Roaming Catholic who frequents and serves in several parishes in and around West San Jose, as well as civic and non-profit organizations. This ministry has added an awareness of Catholic Teaching on Racism as an original sin with many tentacles both individual and social in our community and also in our Church. For example, St. Clare's Peace and Justice Commission added a series on non-violence sparked by a visit from Fr. John Dear and is currently working with Rapid Response Network to accompany individuals who are facing encounters with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) processes. "The Land Is Not Our Own" course reached across state lines and spawned a learning, resource and advocacy group, Braiding Together, meeting monthly on-line, building a resource manual, and sponsoring field trips for local participants.

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Working with LJP leaders Fr. Michael Carson and Michael Shirley, Donna and I are now preparing an Anti-Racism Conference: Telling Stories, Listening, and Healing, for the Diocese of San Jose. Presenters and panelists include both Bishop Oscar Cantú and Auxiliary Bishop Andres Ligot. The all-day event includes both Spanish and English tracks and looks at both the experience of racism and many efforts to address racism in our community. Opportunities to take action in response to the conference will include signing up for two new JustFaith small group programs: the first bilingual or Spanish offering, “Encuentro de Esperanza (Encountering Hope),” and Faith and Immigration Justice. There are more details in the flyer below.

Both Donna and I were drawn to join Companions in Ignatian Service and Spirituality (CISS) because of the dual emphasis on Service and Spirituality. Although we have individual friends and family members that we accompany and we participate in some traditional hands-on service ministries, our work in spreading awareness and understanding of social and structural racism has become our primary ministry. Our companions in the Manresa group and the broader CISS community both support and inform our work of Racial Justice and Social Healing.



The flyer is for an Anti-Racism Conference. It features a dark blue background with a large yellow arrow pointing right. Inside the arrow, there is a photograph of many hands of different skin tones reaching towards the center. The text is in white and yellow. The title 'ANTI-RACISM CONFERENCE' is in large, bold, yellow letters. Below it, the subtitle 'Telling Stories, Listening, and Healing.' is in white. The speakers are listed as 'BISHOP OSCAR CANTÚ AND BISHOP ANDRES LIGOT' in white. The date and time are 'SATURDAY, AUGUST 22, 2026' and '8:00 AM - 2:00 PM' in yellow. The location is 'ST. LUCY PARISH, 2350 WINCHESTER BLVD., CAMPBELL 95008' in white. A description of the event is in white: 'A MORNING MASS THEN SPEAKERS, PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF RACISM IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY WITH BOTH ENGLISH AND SPANISH TRACKS.' A section titled 'WHAT TO EXPECT.' in white lists several bullet points: 'BISHOP CANTÚ ADDRESS', 'SPEAKER TOPICS' (with sub-points: 'OPEN WIDE OUR HEARTS', 'INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCE', 'SILICON VALLEY PAIN INDEX'), 'ASK THE BISHOPS', 'CALL TO ACTION', 'PANEL TOPICS' (with sub-points: 'EXPERIENCING RACISM', 'ADDRESSING RACISM'), and 'REFLECTION AND SHARING - HEART, HOPE, AND ACTION'. At the bottom, there is a yellow banner with the website 'www.dsj.org/ARConf' in white. To the right of the banner is the Diocese of San Jose logo and a QR code with the text 'Scan QR Code to register' above it.

ANTI-RACISM CONFERENCE
Telling Stories, Listening, and Healing.

SPEAKERS:
BISHOP OSCAR CANTÚ AND
BISHOP ANDRES LIGOT

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22, 2026
ST. LUCY PARISH
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A MORNING MASS THEN SPEAKERS, PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF RACISM IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY WITH BOTH ENGLISH AND SPANISH TRACKS.

WHAT TO EXPECT.

- **BISHOP CANTÚ ADDRESS**
- **SPEAKER TOPICS**
 - OPEN WIDE OUR HEARTS
 - INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCE
 - SILICON VALLEY PAIN INDEX
- **ASK THE BISHOPS**
- **CALL TO ACTION**
- **PANEL TOPICS**
 - EXPERIENCING RACISM
 - ADDRESSING RACISM
- **REFLECTION AND SHARING - HEART, HOPE, AND ACTION**

www.dsj.org/ARConf

Scan QR Code to register

DIOCESE OF SAN JOSE

What Do the Following Words Have in Common with Ignatian Companions?

by Sharon Bouska (Xavier South Bay)

St. Phoebe

Paragraph 60

THE DIACONATE

Synod Final Document

How About...

Lively

Hope-filled

Not a Debate

Discerning

Companions are invited to discern and to contribute to the Church's new teaching on the Diaconate, Paragraph 60.

Across the globe, Catholics are actively discerning about women's access to diaconal ministry—and your voice matters.

Where does Pope Leo stand on women's leadership? What has the Vatican recently shared about the path forward for women? How can ordinary Catholics participate in shaping this synodal chapter of our Church?

Many Catholics have never learned the history of the diaconate—why it exists, what a deacon does, and how it differs from the priesthood. Fewer still have heard of St. Phoebe, the deacon Paul entrusted to carry his letter to the Romans.

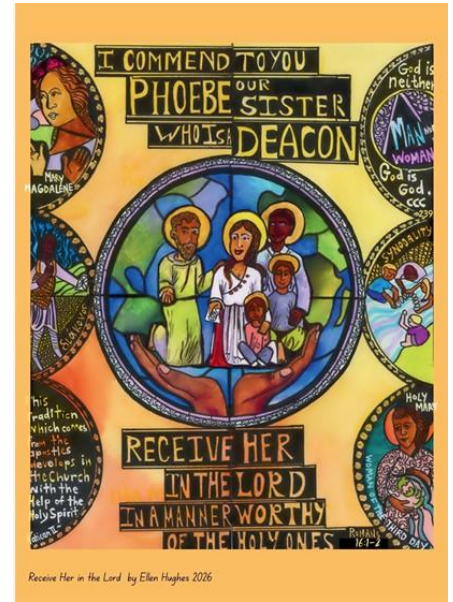


During the afternoon session of our Opening Retreat on Aug. 29, in one of the sections, we will participate in a Forum (titled *Phoebe's Daughters: Women, Service, and the Catholic Church's Future*) which covers the history of the diaconate, current obstacles and signs of hope, a concrete action invitation and how you can participate—through prayer, learning, and sharing your own voice as part of a national synodal consultation.

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The afternoon Forum promises to be lively, hope-filled and grounded in Church teaching—not a debate, just an honest and prayerful look at where things stand and what the Synod's Final Document teaches about women's participation and leadership in the Church, Paragraph 60, how the implementation phase works, and how our Ignatian Discernment will be shared with Pope Leo.



Save the Date!

2026-2027 Opening Retreat – Aug. 29 (Sat.), 9:00 am to 3:30 pm

The retreat will be held at the Dominican Center of the Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose, **43326 Mission Boulevard, Fremont, CA 94539**. Here's a link to the [map](#). Please **RSVP by Aug. 15** (Saturday) to Marco@IgnatianCompanions.org.



If you have not been active for some time in Companions, we invite you to consider coming back and joining us in the upcoming program year. If you are interested, contact Marco at Marco@IgnatianCompanions.org or (415) 669-4117.

When Pope Leo XIV published the encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, first a lot of theologians, religious and lay leaders, educators, etc. explained what it was about. Pope Leo is addressing human dignity and the ethical challenges posed by artificial intelligence (AI). Now comes the challenging part – identifying the *Who* and *How*.

The *Who* would be *us* (i.e., the end users, students, educators, etc.) and *them* (i.e., the tech giants, AI designers and developers, politicians and policy makers, etc.)

At the Companions Board Retreat last July 6, our facilitator Grace Salceanu mentioned the **DELTA** framework as a means to preserve our humanity as the Age of AI grows exponentially. The voices in the wilderness are crying out “Slow down!” or “How is AI supposed to help people if they are being replaced by AI and getting laid off?”

Maybe the DELTA framework can provide a way to answer the *How* of the challenge. Here is a more apt description of this framework taken from the Institute for Ethics and the Common Good website:

As artificial intelligence becomes more powerful, Christian institutions must look beyond an “ethical floor” of safety, privacy, and transparency. [DELTA proposes a deeper, faith-informed approach](#) rooted in enduring Christian values: **Dignity**, **Embodiment**, **Love**, **Transcendence**, and **Agency**. We need, as Pope Francis put it, a growth in human responsibility, values, and conscience that is proportionate to the advances posed by technology.

The Institute for Ethics and the Common Good is leading the development of the DELTA network, which will provide practical resources for scholars, religious leaders, tech leaders, teachers, journalists, young people, and the broader public to help navigate challenges posed by rapidly developing AI.

What is the DELTA framework?

Dignity

Every human being possesses inherent worth—not because of productivity, intelligence, or economic value, but because they are made in the image of God. As Pope Leo XIV reminds us, “The person is not a system of algorithms.” In an age of comparison to machines, we must reaffirm that human dignity is non-negotiable. This includes how we design and regulate AI in ways that honor the dignity of workers, learners, patients, and users.

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Embodiment

We are embodied, relational, and mortal beings—our lives unfold in space, time, and community. Christian ethics centers the Incarnation: God takes on the vulnerability of human flesh. While AI can extend capabilities, it must not obscure the sacredness of human presence or diminish authentic experience. Policies must guide appropriate use of AI in healthcare, education, and other areas where embodied life matters most.

Love

Christian ethics begins with love: a radical, unconditional call to see and serve others in their full humanity. AI may simulate care or companionship, but cannot replace the messy, mutual, and grace-filled nature of real relationships. From social media to chatbots, we must evaluate technologies based on whether they foster compassion—or distort it. Emerging adults, in particular, need space for genuine formation and human connection.

Transcendence

Not everything of value can be created, optimized, or sold. Wonder, beauty, truth, and gratitude draw us beyond ourselves to rejoice in the gifts that God gives us. As AI unlocks new forms of creativity, Christians must resist the temptation to confuse innovation with ultimate meaning. We must nurture practices—like worship, contemplation, and awe—that root us in something higher than the digital.

Agency

To flourish, humans need to pay attention and exercise freedom and moral responsibility. The Christian tradition teaches that agency is not just task completion, but the capacity to choose truth and good. As AI systems suggest, filter, and even act for us, it is vital to guard the kinds of decisions only human consciences should make. Discernment and virtue must be taught alongside technological fluency.



If you wish to learn more or get involved, click [here](#) to visit the DELTA web page on the Institute for Ethics and the Common Good website.



Blessings and Farewell to Marck Ngwenya, SJ

by Rita Mitchell (Xavier East Bay)



In May I had the privilege of attending the graduation ceremony for Mark Ngwenya, SJ, who received his Doctorate in Sacred Theology from Santa Clara University. He also became a lifetime member of Alpha Sigma Nu, the honor society for Jesuit Colleges and Universities which recognizes students who distinguish themselves in scholarship, loyalty and service. As was fitting, Mark was chosen to give the student address at the ceremony.

Mark was a scholastic at JST in Berkeley and has been an important part of the Companions family for several years, facilitating the first-year cohort and presiding at Mass at our monthly gatherings. We are blessed that he chose to enrich our lives and our program. Thanks, Mark!

Mark and some of his friends celebrated Christmas with me and my family a couple times. He contacted his Aunties in Zambia to send a special recipe for delicious Christmas Zambian Chicken that we had for dinner. We'll miss him this year.

After graduation Mark returned to his home in Zambia to minister and spend time with family. In the fall, he will be teaching Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Counseling at the Jesuit School of Theology at Hekima University College in Nairobi, Kenya.

God be with you, Mark! We will miss you. Our love and prayers follow you to your new position.



Migrants: Messengers of Hope

by Bob Hernandez (Xavier East Bay)



For almost 2 years, I have been on the board of directors of the Oakland Catholic Worker (OCW), an independent community founded with the principles of the Catholic Worker Movement established by Servant of God Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin.

Located in the Fruitvale District, OCW was founded in 1986 in response to the need for short term housing for the hundreds of homeless immigrants who were fleeing the war in El Salvador. Today, OCW continues to accompany immigrants by helping provide transitional housing, hosts a large food security program, and offers comprehensive case management and educational opportunities.

Most families and individuals who come through the doors of the Oakland Catholic Worker face continuing obstacles. These include poverty, housing and food insecurity, lack of healthcare, language barriers, illiteracy, wage theft and now the intimidation from current immigration enforcement. I often wonder if I was facing these stressful challenges, if I would be able to maintain my own faith and hope.



About a year ago, I was asked to come and help with the weekly food security program. Staffed by volunteers from the immediate community and greater Oakland, this food bank serves about 400 families each week.

I am fortunate to get to know a few of the regulars that come by. I sometimes hear the traumatic stories of immigrants of why they left their original home, their migration journey, and even harrowing experiences once in the states. I find that many I've spoken with maintain a profound hope in their hearts, coupled with a faith that always astounds me.

Two stories stay with me. One from Honduras, a father of three and living in Oakland for several years. I met him the morning after a fire tore through their apartment building. He and his family got out safely, but lost everything they owned. After hearing his story, I noticed that he was wearing a Virgen de Guadalupe medal around his neck. As I commented about it, he grasped that medal and praised aloud that *La Virgencita* kept everyone safe.

A week later, I was speaking with a mother, someone from Guatemala with an asylum application. As I was speaking with her, I saw someone wearing a sweatshirt with a huge image of Guadalupe on the back. I pointed and said, "*¡mira, la Virgencita!*". She responded in Spanish, "Guadalupe is the source of all miracles". She then proceeded to tell me a story of when she first arrived in Oakland, that she was on a walk with her husband and three-year old son.

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The son darted out into an intersection where he was hit by a car. They didn't know if their son would survive and while sitting at his bedside in the hospital, they prayed to *La Virgencita*. She told me that right after their prayer, the boy woke from his unconsciousness. Now 10 years old, the boy has some issues with his ankle, but is otherwise very healthy.

Reflecting on these stories and others not being offered here, I agree with Pope Leo: migrants really are messengers and witnesses of hope. Coupled with the solidarity and community offered by the Oakland Catholic Worker, I continue to be taught in matters of faith and hope.



Reminder: Companions Fees

Just a friendly reminder -- don't forget to send in your yearly fees as soon as possible. If you are fully paid, thank you!

- 1st & 2nd Years -- \$500
- South Bay Xaviers -- \$300
- East Bay Xaviers -- \$350 (the additional \$50 helps to cover the facilities fees at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley)

Check Payment: Make check payable to *Ignatian Companions* and mail to Ignatian Companions, 1025 Masonic Ave., San Francisco, CA 94118, Attn: Marco.

Online Payment: Click this link: [Ignatian Companions](#), and click the Donate button.



2025-2026 End-of-Year Financial Report

Income

Participant fees	\$ 23,479
Individual donations & Other Income	\$ 1,291
Holiday & Summer Appeals	\$ 9,473
Total Income	\$ 33,243

Expenses

Facilitators	\$ 7,932
Program Coordinator	\$ 6,830
Operating Expense	\$ 299
Tax Preparation	\$ 750
Liability Insurance	\$ 1,767
Website Development	\$ 2,013
Retreat Expenses	\$ 4,212
Facilities	\$ 1,925
1 st and 2 nd year materials	\$ 527
Total Expenses	\$ 26,255

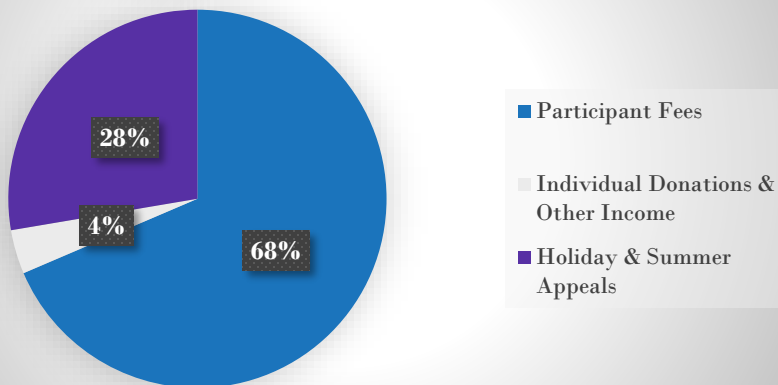
Net Profit/Loss **\$ 7,987**

Notes:

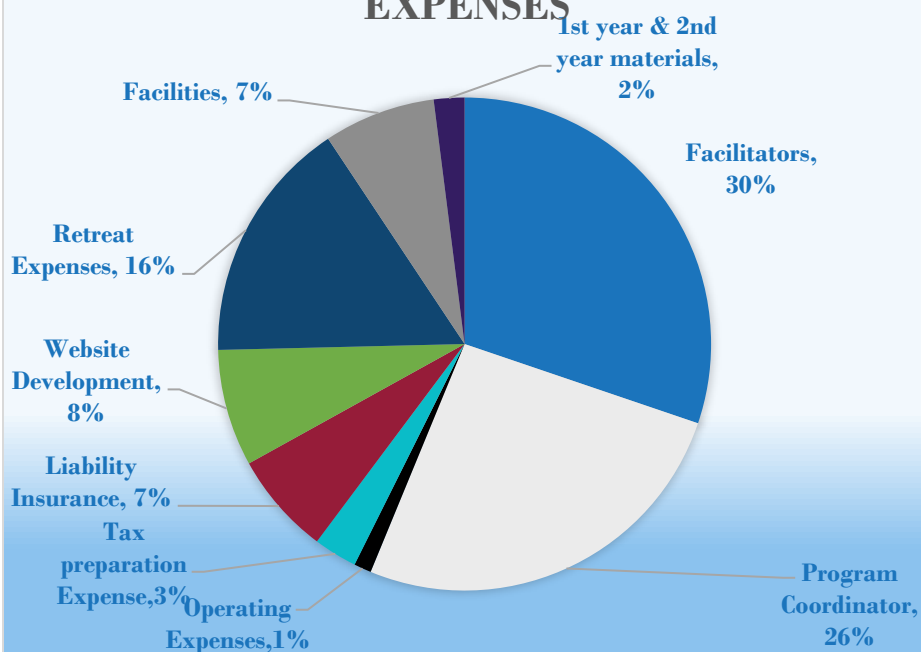
- Cash balance on hand as of June 30, 2025 -- \$24,689.14 (adjusted).
- Cash balance on hand as of June 30, 2026 -- \$32,768.48.



INCOME



EXPENSES



2025-2026 Holiday & Summer Appeals

We did it again! We surpassed our target of \$8,000 and raised **\$9,473** for this year's appeals.

Through your generosity, we raised \$8,117 for the Holiday Appeal and \$1,356 for the Summer Appeal!

THANK YOU so much to everybody who made this year's Holiday & Summer Appeals a great success!

