

Faith Weavers of St. Mary

Fall 2020 Newsletter
www.faithweavers.org

Mission Statement

We are a faith community formed to support one another in working to build the kingdom of God through service to others in all aspects of our lives. We are committed to creating an environment open to new expressions of growth and maturity by expanding our vision of ourselves, our church, and our world, and through our commitment to social justice.

Prayer for a Pandemic

By Cameron Bellm

May we who are merely inconvenienced remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country, let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other let us yet find ways to be [the] loving embrace of God to our neighbors. Amen.

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Faith Weavers Activities During the Pandemic

The Faith Weavers community remains active during the pandemic even though we have suspended our monthly prayer services and social gatherings. Our committees are functioning through email exchanges and virtual meeting over the internet. We are focused on offering assistance to people adversely impacted by the pandemic.

The People-Helping-People committee stands ready to help those in need in our local community. If you need help:

- * Picking up groceries or medications,
 - * Getting to an appointment, i.e. doctor's visit,
 - * Coping with isolation due to social distancing,
- members of the People-Helping-People Committee are available to serve you. Please contact Martha Goncer at mkgoncer54@gmail.com or 989-330-3230.

Our Faith Weavers email distribution list is an important tool in keeping community members together. People are using it to request prayers for those in need and keeping up on what is happening in their lives.

The Service and Justice Committee has been working hard this year to identify organizations in need of our assistance. So far this year they have given \$30,800 in

grants. See the article on Charitable Contributions in 2020 in this newsletter.

The Friends of El Salvador Committee has also been very active. They received a \$63,000 grant from the Celbelak Foundation that is being used for water projects in El Salvador and have used other funds to support educational projects. For more details read the Friends of El Salvador article in this newsletter.

The pandemic has not slowed the work of our community.

Gatherings Suspended during Pandemic

Community gatherings have been suspended until we can meet without having to practice social distancing. This means we will wait until we can safely meet with close contact and a communal meal.

Cancelling monthly services was difficult to do. Praying together and sharing a common meal are important ways of maintaining our sense of community.

However, we must do our part to help control the COVID-19 virus. Social gathering is one of the ways the virus gets transmitted, and we do not want to risk an outbreak within our community.

As difficult as it is not to get together, we feel it is better to wait to have a “normal” gathering, rather than one constrained by social distancing requirements. The pandemic will end one day, and our community will gather again.



Fr. Thelen giving his homily at our March Service.

Who would have thought that our last gathering in 2020 would be last March? We had a wonderful service with Fr. Fred Thelen celebrating mass with us. This was the first time Fr. Thelen was with us.

We also invited Raymond and Ramona Deleon to this service. Raymond is the president of the Mexican American Council, the organization Fr. Joe Schabel worked tirelessly to support. The Deleon’s presented us with a plaque honoring the service Fr. Schabel gave to the Mexican American community in Saginaw. We, in turn, gave them a \$1,000 grant in honor of Fr. Schabel.



Raymond and Ramona Deleon presenting a plaque honoring Fr. Joe Schabel.

At this service we emphasized the need to support migrants at our southern border. We announced our donation of \$9,000 to Al Otro Lado, the Kino Border Initiative, and Annunciation House, three organizations working to help with the migrant crisis.

Ed and Marilyn Lorenz gave a presentation after the meal on the plight of migrants. They talked about factors that have led to the influx of migrants, the current status of the crisis, and what is being done to help people trying to enter the United States.



Ed and Marilyn Lorenz border crisis presentation.

Tornado Picnic Comes to an End

The tornado picnic has been a summer tradition since the formation of the Faith Weavers' community.

The Angera's and Galgocí's started the picnic and have faithfully run it for thirteen years. We are thankful to them for giving us years of good food, an opportunity to socialize, and games for kids of all age.

Jeff and Laura provided brats and hotdogs as the main dish while everyone brought great salads and desserts to complete the picnic feast. Todd and Tracey had games ready to make the event a traditional picnic experience.

Participation in the Tornado Picnic has dwindled over the past few years, so we decided to see what the community would like to do with the Picnic.

We surveyed the community last winter on the Tornado Picnic and the August Party. The consensus response was to have one event in the summer. We decided to have the summer party in August. We are going to have the meal along with games for people to play to incorporate features of both the Picnic and Anniversary Party.

We were planning on having our first Party this August, but we decided to wait till after the pandemic subsides.

Memories from past Tornado Picnics



Jeff grilling brats and dogs. 2019



Giving thanks for all our blessings. 2012



Enjoying all the great picnic dishes. 2018



Laura helps Xavier with games. 2012



Todd and Tracey organize the games. 2015



Pitching wet sponges is lots of fun. 2014



The wet sponge games remained a favorite. 2017



Donuts on a string, what fun! 2015



Donuts continue to be a hit! 2017



A time for friends. 2014



A time for family. 2015

Charitable Contributions in 2020

The Service and Justice Committee meet quarterly, or as needed, to select recipients for Faith Weaver grants. So far this year, the committee has authorized grants totaling \$30,800. In addition, the Steering Committee made a \$1000 gift to the Mexican American Council in memory of Fr. Joe Schabel, and a \$1,000 gift to Hope for Haiti in recognition of the service Fr. Joe Fix has given to Faith Weavers.

This year we gave grants to three charities that work to assist immigrants at our southern border. We gave \$9,000 (\$3,000 each) to Al Otro Lado, Kino Border Initiative and Annunciation House.

Al Otro Lado is a national social justice and legal services organization serving indigent deportees, migrants, and refugees in Tijuana, Mexico. They provide legal services to defend the rights of migrants. They work with other agencies and volunteers to fight for families that have been separated by unjust immigration laws.

The Kino Border Initiative promotes US/Mexico border and immigration policies that affirm the dignity of the human person. They provide direct humanitarian assistance; social and pastoral education; and participate in research and advocacy to transform national immigration policies.

Annunciation House provides hospitality, advocacy, and education to migrants, refugees, and economically vulnerable people. Annunciation House operates in three locations (houses). Annunciation House, Cas Vides, and Nazareth House. Each house addresses specific needs of migrants who are looking for work, or fleeing violence in their native country.

In addition to the three grants listed above the Service and Justice Committee gave these grants from the Faith Weavers tithes. \$1,500 was given to the Isabella County Restoration House to shelter homeless in our area. Global Compassion received \$2,000 to assist the poor in India who are suffering economic hardship because of the pandemic. \$2,800 in grants were given to the Community Compassion Network to support the Infant Pantry Program and the School Age Nutrition Program. The Mexican American Council received a \$1,500 grant, and the Care Store got a \$2,000 grant. The Capuchin

Mission/Soup Kitchen in Detroit was given a \$1,000 grant, and a \$1,000 grant was given to the Gleaners of Detroit. The Gleaners distribute food to the needy.

\$10,000 in grants were also given from the Faith Weavers Foundation. \$2,000 was given to each of these charities: Christian Counseling of Mid-Michigan, Doctors Without Borders, Goodrow Fund, Isabella County Soup Kitchen, and Rise for Shelter.

R.I.S.E Advocacy

We like to highlight in the newsletters charities that we support through the Service and Justice Committee grants

R.I.S.E Advocacy, formally called Women's Aid Services, is a nonprofit organization that serves survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault throughout Gratiot, Isabella and Clare Counties.

R.I.S.E accomplishes this through various services including a 24/7 crisis line, legal and outreach advocacy, residential services, counseling, and sexual assault response.

If you or someone you know could benefit from R.I.S.E services or would like to volunteer with R.I.S.E call (989) 773-0078 or look at their website www.riseadvocacy.org for more information.

A Prayer Against Racism

God of Heaven and Earth,
you created the one human family
and endowed each person with great dignity.

Aid us, we pray, in overcoming the sin of racism.
Grant us your grace in eliminating this blight
from our hearts, our communities,
our social and civil institutions.

Fill our hearts with love for you and our neighbor
so that we may work with you
in healing our land from racial injustice.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Friends of El Salvador

The Friends of El Salvador Committee has remained active during the pandemic. A delegation from the Committee visited El Salvador this spring just before the Covid-19 pandemic dramatically reduced travel around the world. The Committee received a \$63,000 grant in June from the Bernard J. and Camille Cebelak Foundation to support water-related projects. This is the second large grant from the Cebelak Foundation. It also provided \$50,000 in 2018. The Friends of El Salvador has used these and other donations to fund projects to improve the lives of the people of El Salvador.

Delegation visit and El Salvador Community Needs

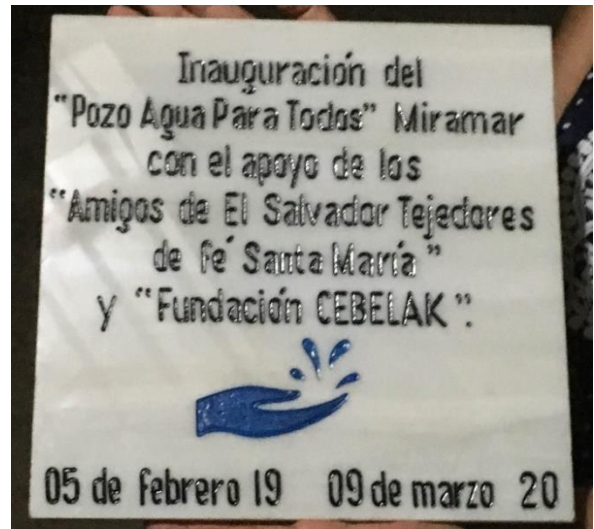
Robert Knapp, Jana Pisani, Mike Pisani, Kim Summers, and Tom Moore visited El Salvador last March 8 thru 12. They visited the communities of Miramar, Granzaso, Fe y Alegria, and Llano Grande Segundo. They also visited the K-9 Guajoyo School. There were a lot of productive meetings stuffed into this short visit. The needs of these communities were discussed, and most importantly, our friendship with the rural poor of El Salvador was affirmed.



Miramar Directiva with the Friends of El Salvador

In Miramar there was a celebration of the new well and water distribution system completed for the communities of Miramar and Flor de Fuego. A prominent plaque was placed at the well site to recognize the Friends of El Salvador (*Amigos de El Salvador*), Faith Weavers of St. Mary (*Tejedores de Fé Santa Maria*), and the Cebelak Foundation for the funding provided (photo above). Appreciation of the

Miramar and Flor de Fuego communities was generously expressed.



Plaque recognizing the Friends of El Salvador, Faith Weavers of St. Mary and the Cebelak Foundation for donating funds for the water well.

From this visit priorities for additional projects in El Salvador were established. The Miramar Directiva requested a water tank be constructed to support the water distribution system to Miramar and Flor de Fuego. This water storage facility would reduce the demands on the new well pump that now runs whenever water is used, and it would provide water security in the event of power failure. This project has been funded by a Cebelak Foundation grant (see above), and work is ready to begin.

The Directiva for the community of Granzaso requested a water well project like the one drilled for Miramar. Granzaso, near Miramar, has 135 households with limited access to potable water. Work has already started on preparing the site for drilling the well, the electrical connections are being made to supply power, and piping to houses is ready to be installed.

The Guajoyo School's principal, Iris Canas, re-emphasized the needs for a storage building to house food, kitchen equipment, musical instruments, and other valuable items. This project was proposed last year to prevent damage by rodents and inclement weather. Two projects in progress are new windows and air conditioning for two classrooms. Friends of El Salvador funded the cost of \$13,921.



Kim Summers distributes Red Noses at Guajoyo School.

Natural Disasters Affect Communities in El Salvador

A wildfire occurred in cultivated land near Miramar just prior to the Friends of El Salvador delegation’s arrival in March. At least hundreds, probably thousands, of recently planted cashew, cacao, and mango trees were destroyed or damaged.



Community members tour the fire damage near Miramar.

It appears to be an agricultural disaster, and it could have become a human disaster had it not been for a vigorous response of community members and government agencies. Sixty-eight people were evacuated for safety as well as for medical attention due to smoke. Thankfully, no serious injuries occurred. The damage would have been much worse had it not been for the water supplied to firefighters from the recently installed water well.

The Miramar Directiva asked for our help to buy water pumps to irrigate the damaged trees. We immediately responded with \$1,700 to purchase two portable pumps.

Education Continues during pandemic

At the Guajoyo School education is continuing. Students with cell phones or other technology at home are engaged in online learning. For students without access to technology, the school is delivering printed learning materials weekly. The Friends of El Salvador recently provided \$750 for the school to buy a new printer-copier to support this educational service.

Participate in the Friends of El Salvador

For more information about the Friends of El Salvador, or to become part of the Committee, please contact Tom Moore (773-3250, moore1tj@cmich.edu).

Christmas Outreach

By Eileen Jennings

Christmas Outreach will be helping needy families again this year. The leaders of the group were unanimous in believing that the need will be greater than ever and that we just had to find a way to help serve this need.

There will be some important changes. Registration and collections will be much earlier. Registration will be October 12-16 and October 19-21. Distribution will be on December 10, 11, and 12.

We will distribute gifts from a different location. Campus Crusade has offered its building – the old Coca Cola plant on High Street. We will collect items there, let them sit to be rid of any virus, then fill large plastic bags according to family requests. We will then again let the bags “rest” before giving them out to families. Families will collect their items at a drive-through.

We will be giving out coats, boots, hats and gloves, bed linens (sheets & blankets only), baskets of household items (mostly donated by Bandit Industries), and children’s stockings and teens’ gift bags. We will not be giving out children’s books, Christmas decorations, and linens other than sheets and blankets.

We will reach out as usual to the community for donations of money and items, but we suspect that those able to donate may be down. We will also accept new and gently used blankets and sheets (I am told queen and king sheets are most popular) and boots.

Those most involved with Christmas Outreach feel strongly that we should continue to give out children's stockings and teen gift bags. Because we anticipate a shortage of cash this year, we will not be giving out adult gift bags. You have already received my first request for help with the stockings and gift bags. I have received a large number of contributions of school supplies for them. But we always need more. Right now I am short of glue sticks.

We have lost a major donor of items for teen gift bags because a class at CMU is meeting remotely. As we get closer to Christmas, I will provide lists of suggested items, and we will find some way to collect gifts for the stockings and gift bags. There is a box at St. Vincent's where you can leave items now. You can also drop them off at my house, 1323 S. Watson, Mt. Pleasant. I will soon put out "the plastic box" outside my front door.

Thank you to Faith Weavers for your past generous support. We will appreciate any ways you can help us this year.

Christmas Outreach Coat Distribution

by Jim Hornak

CHRISTMAS OUTREACH is alive and well. Distribution will look different than in years past because of COVID. Distribution will be held December 10-12 at the Campus Life Building located at 1200 W. High (corner of High and Adams in Mt. Pleasant (old Coca-Cola building)).

The need seems to be greater than ever. New and gently used coats are needed for girls and boys, women, and men with a special need for plus and big and tall sizes. Snow pants are also needed for girls and boys. New coats can be purchased on-line or at local stores such as Walmart, Sam's, Kohl's, Target or Meijer's. As in

the past, gently used clean coats and snow pants are appreciated also.

Donations can be brought to the Campus Life Building Tuesday November 24, 9-12 and 1-4. Also, I will be happy to pick up your donations, so call me, Jim Hornak, at 989-560-2443 if other options do not work for you.

The generosity of Faith Weavers members has been phenomenal, and I know you will do your part again this year.

Contact Jim Hornak at 989-772-5851 or horna1je@cmich.edu, if you have any questions about this project, or if you prefer to have your donations picked up.

Donations during the Pandemic

Your generosity has not been dampened by the pandemic. So far this year you have donated \$31,595 to Faith Weavers. This is more than we normally get in donations by October. People are mailing their donation to our postal address:

Faith Weavers of St. Mary
2020 S. Mission Rd. # 404
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858-4425

or donating through our website by using PayPal at:

www.faithweavers.org (click on the Donate tab).

Your support for Faith Weavers during these difficult times is a tribute to the value you place on our community.

They are helping us live our Christian Call through concern for one another and concern for those in need.

During these trying times we see the needs of so many in our community, and you are responding to that need. This newsletter has highlighted how you have been giving of your time, talents, and treasure during this pandemic.

Thank you for your continuing support!