

Faith Weavers of St. Mary
Winter/Spring 2021 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.

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Faith Weavers during the Pandemic

Faith Weavers remain active during the pandemic. We are transmitting video prayer services each month over YouTube, and we plan to continue these monthly video services through the winter and spring. With the roll out of COVID 19 vaccine we are hoping to resume regular services this fall.

Karon Latham and Joe Frankenfield have done a great job of leading these prayer services. Joshua Lukens is doing double duty, running the technical aspects of video recording and leading our songs. We are so fortunate to have Karon, Joe, and Joshua bring us together in this online format.

These online services are great, but they are not the same as gathering in prayer and sharing a common meal. We are looking forward to the time we can unite our voices in prayer and fill St. Vincent’s Parish Hall with conversation and laughter.

Much of our energy has been directed towards charitable outreach. We had a record year for charitable giving with \$133,028 given. See articles in this newsletter on charitable giving and Friends of El Salvador for more on this.

Along with cash grants, Faith Weavers have been busy working at local charities. We have participated in providing meals for the homeless through the Isabella County Restoration House; and volunteered at the Strickler Center Food Pantry. We have also helped with Christmas Outreach (see articles by Eileen Jennings and Jim Hornak).

We had a record year for donations to Faith Weavers. \$139,940 was received in donations and grants in 2020. You have been very generous in your financial support. The Faith Weavers Foundation also had a good year. The portfolio had a 20% return on its investments. See the financial review in this newsletter for more information on this.

Use PayPal to Donate during the Pandemic

PayPal is a convenient way to donate during this pandemic. You can do this through our website, www.faithweavers.org . Just click the Donate Tab above the pictures on the Home Page. Click the tab under “Donate now via PayPal.” Alternatively, mail your check to the address on this Donate webpage.



Reflecting on Social Justice

The very last sentence in our mission statement contains the phrase, “our commitment to social justice.” Most of the information in this newsletter addresses that commitment.

Karen Lee found the following quote from Richard Rohr on the meaning of social justice. It is something to think about in terms of how best we serve “our commitment to social justice.”

“I think there are three basic levels of social ministry, and none is better than the other. I believe all are the movement of the Holy Spirit within us for the sake of others. I like to imagine a river flooding out of control—symbolizing the circumstances and injustices that bring about suffering—overflowing its banks and sweeping those in its path off their feet.

At the first level, we rescue drowning people from the swollen river, dealing with the immediate social problem right in front of us: someone hungry comes to our door and we offer them some food, or invite them inside. These are hands-on, social service ministries, like the familiar soup kitchen or food pantry. Such works will always look rather generous, Christian, charitable, and they tend to be admired, if not always imitated.

At the second level, there are ministries that help people not to fall into the swollen river in the first place, or show them how to survive despite falling in. In general, these are the ministries of education and healing. Most of the religious orders in the Catholic Church in the last three hundred years went in that direction, filling the world with schools, hospitals, and social service ministries that empowered people and gave them new visions and possibilities for their lives.

Finally, on the third level, some ministries build and maintain a dam to stop the river from flooding in the first place. This is the work of social activism and advocacy, critique of systems, organizing, speeches, boycotts, protests, and resistance against all forms of systemic injustice and deceit. It is the gift of a few, but a much-needed gift that we only recently began to learn and practice. It seeks systemic change and not just individual conversion.

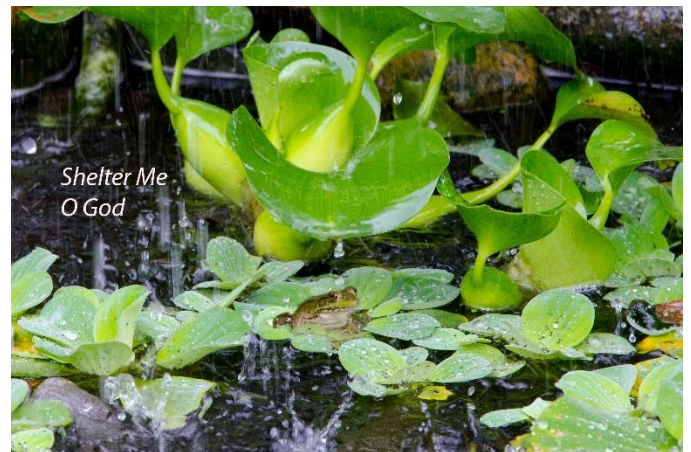
I don't think most people feel called to activism; I myself don't. It was initially humiliating to admit this, and I lost the trust and admiration of some friends and supporters. Yet as we come to know our own soul gift

more clearly, we almost always have to let go of certain “gifts” so we can do our one or two things well and with integrity. I believe that if we can do one or two things wholeheartedly in our life, that is all God expects.

The important thing is that *we all should be doing something for the rest of the world!* We have to pay back, particularly those of us born into privilege and comfort. We also must respect and support the other two levels, even if we cannot do them. Avoid all comparisons about better or lesser, more committed or less committed; those are all ego games. Let's just use our different gifts to create a unity in the work of service (Ephesians 4:12–13), and back one another up, without criticism or competition. Only in our peaceful, mutual honoring do we show forth the glory of God.”

Reference: The Center for Action and Contemplation website, www.cac.org, Adapted from Richard Rohr, *Dancing Standing Still: Healing the World from a Place of Prayer* (Paulist Press: 2014), 84-86.

Pandemic Reflection



“All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of being shall be well” Julian of Norwich, Mystic

“This belief, that ultimately all of us and everything in the world are safe, lies at the base of every major religious tradition. Thus, we can live free of fear and let our lives flourish“

Ronald Rolheiser, *Wrestling with God*, (Image: 2019) p 195.

A comforting thought during these stressful times.

In Memoriam



Julie Stinson

Julie Stinson passed away last September after a long struggle with cancer. She and her husband, Mike were members of St. Mary's Parish and the Faith Weavers community. Mike died in 2018, and their daughter, Megan is still living in Mt. Pleasant.

Megan thanks Faith Weavers for the help we gave Julie during her illness. We provided rides to many of her doctor's appointments; brought her meals and helped with chores around her house.

Here is a reflection on Julie written by Megan:

"Julie did everything with an effortless sincerity that inspired and comforted everyone she met. Her patience and unconditional love made her not only an exceptional mother, but an excellent teacher and a friend to all animals.

She had a special love for cats, British History, and the color pink. She never missed a chance to appreciate the little things in life and found great solace in simplicity.

She loved with her whole heart and her impact will far outlast her time with us."

Nearly Three Quarters of a Million in Charitable Giving

Total giving over the past 15 years is \$773,111. \$343,187 (44%) has been given to local charities, and \$429,864 (56%) to national and international charities. This is a tangible sign of your continuing outreach to those in need.

Faith Weavers also had a record year for charitable grants in 2020. We spent \$133,028 for charitable outreach. \$62,995 was given through the Service and Justice Committee, and \$70,033 through the Friends of El Salvador Committee.

This year we focused on grants to organizations that are helping those suffering from the economic fallout of the pandemic. Local organizations we supported were the Capuchin Food Kitchen in Detroit, the Care Store, Christian Counseling Services, Christmas Outreach, Community Compassion Network, Gleaners Food Bank of Detroit, the Goodrow Fund, Isabella County Soup Kitchen, Isabella County Restoration House, the Mexican American Council, Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health, the St. Vincent DePaul Parish, the Stitch and Prayer Group, the Student Food Pantry at CMU, and R.I.S.E Advocacy.

International charities we supported were Annunciation House, El Otro Lado, Global Compassion for a water-well, Kino Border Initiative, Hope for Haiti, Pure Water for the World, and Doctors Without Borders.

Do you know of an organization that would benefit from a grant? Please contact Karen Lee at grandmakaren68@gmail.com or call (989) 772-6349 on how the charity can request funds.

Alternatively, visit our website at www.faithweavers.org, and click on the Community Outreach tab for a description of the charities we have supported and information on how to submit a grant request.

The Care Store

The Care Store is a charitable organization offering hygiene, and household cleaning products to needy families in Isabella County. It supplements family needs for these types of items that are not covered by government food subsidies. It provides for personal hygiene products like soap, deodorant, shampoos, and toilet paper. It also provides household cleaning products.

The Care Store does not receive government support. It is completely funded by grants from private organizations such as the Community Foundation, and the United Way, and donations from individuals. Last year Faith Weavers gave \$2,000 to support its outreach. Their merchandise is purchased from retail stores such as Merchandise Outlet and Dollar Stores. They are staffed by volunteers, so all donations are used for their outreach.

For the past three years the Care Store has been in the Strickler Center. It works in cooperation with the Food Pantry and serves between 150 and 250 families on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays and Saturdays of the month. Collectively, families have made 6,000 visits to the Care Store during the pandemic.

The Care Store works with over 30 agencies, such as EightCAP, who recommend clients in need of assistance. The amount of support is recommended by these referral agencies, and clients decide the products they need by using "Care Dollars" given to them to spend in the store.

In certain cases, the Care Store will help someone set up a household. They will stock new home with personal care items and cleaning products. In certain situations, they can also stock a new kitchen with pots, pans, and cooking utensils.

New distribution procedures have been put into place during the pandemic. Since the Strickler Center is closed, clients cannot shop in the Care Store. Items are prepackaged for families with bags of personal hygiene products, and bags of cleaning products. The amount given depends upon the needs of the family receiving them.



Volunteers serving people at weekly distribution

For more information about the Care Store, contact Kim McBryde, its founder and executive director, at kim.mcbryde@thecarestore.org

Christmas Outreach

By Eileen Jennings

Christmas Outreach was completed in a very different way this year, but we feel it went very well.

We took "orders" for sizes and choices in different areas of distribution, filled large plastic bags with the items, and gave them to families in a drive-through distribution. We served 429 families and a total of 1,387 people. In addition, we served about 20 families who had not pre-registered but came at the end and received items as best we could meet their needs. Distribution on the final day was quite a challenge in the midst of a snowstorm, but volunteers worked in the cold and wet with enthusiasm.

We provided a large laundry basket of household care items like laundry detergent, toilet paper, etc. These baskets were purchased and filled by Bandit Industries.

We continued the tradition of giving Christmas stockings and gift bags to over 566 children and teens. Jim Hornak and Ray Johnson led the coat distribution as well (see Jim's article on the coat project).

This year again, members of Faith Weavers were instrumental in our success. Jim Hornak continued as co-chair of coats, and several Faith Weavers helped him to fill orders. I was again chair of stockings and gift bags. I received cash donations and many needed items. One member of Faith Weavers arranged for the Kiwanis to purchase large quantities of pens, children's

scissors, colored pencils, glue sticks, markers, and pencil sharpeners. Volunteers from Faith Weavers formed the backbone again, of the crew who filled the stockings, and gift bags, and assisted with distribution.



Eileen Jennings with some of the Christmas stockings and gift bags distributed through Christmas Outreach

I notice that every year Christmas Outreach is serving more older adults, and we do not see much of an increase in the number of children served. I believe this is because of the growth of Adopt a Family programs by many service organizations and churches. Families with children gravitate towards these services where the children can receive precisely what they want and need. Older adults are not served by these programs and the number of older adults in need is very large. Christmas Outreach continues to fill a need in our community, although the clients are shifting some.



Gail Moore organizing items for distribution at Christmas Outreach. Gail is smiling behind that mask!

We look forward to providing our full range of services next year; Christmas decorations, chaired by another Faith Weaver, Karon Latham, and gift bags for adults.

Thank you to all of you who have helped to make Christmas Outreach 2020 a success in difficult circumstances. We simply could not do this without you.

Christmas Outreach Coat Distribution

By Jim Hornak

Like most things in 2020, COVID caused Christmas Outreach to make changes to safely distribute items. Coats, boots, snow pants, hats and mittens, stockings, and bed linens, were given out. The venue also changed to the Campus Life Building, the old Coca-Cola building on High Street.

Items were prepackaged in large plastic bags. Then families arrived at assigned times and drove through the distribution center to pick-up their goods. Volunteers put the bags in the car trunks or back areas of the vehicles. Volunteers used masks and sanitizers to make distribution as safe as possible.

Both the new distribution method and new location for Christmas Outreach worked out extremely well. We have found the new venue to be wonderful and plan to use the Campus Life Building in 2021.

Ray Johnson and I ordered, received, and stored coats throughout the year. Churches and organizations were contacted during the fall, and because of the great generosity of Faith Weavers members and others, we collected over 1500 coats.



Jim Hornak, Ray Johnson, and a volunteer prepare items for distribution at the Campus Life Building

We hope to go back to the preferred method of distribution, using sign up times where families try on and choose coats. This year any exchanges are being handled through Clothing, INC.

Thank you for your unwavering generosity.

Friends of El Salvador

by Tom Moore

The Friends of El Salvador Committee continued their support of our friends in El Salvador through the pandemic. Work continued on two projects funded by the Bernard J. and Camille Cebelak Foundation. A record \$70,033 in grants were spent in 2020 to support infrastructure and educational projects in rural El Salvador. We also had a successful fall fundraising campaign with \$10,650 donated.

Miramar Water Project

In Miramar, a 55,000-gallon water storage tank is nearing completion. This brick and concrete tank will provide gravity distribution of water from the well drilled in 2018. This system is providing water to residents in Miramar and Flor de Fuego. The storage facility will extend the life of the new well pump that now runs whenever water is used, and it will also ensure plenty of water in case of electrical failure.



Miramar water tank nearing completion

Granzaso Water Project

The water system for the community of Granzaso will provide running water to about 120 households. This project is nearing completion too. The well is drilled, the pump is installed, and the electrical substation is in place. Clean, fresh water is now abundantly available. Permanent connection of the electricity by the power company, completing of pipe-laying to homes, and the installation of water meters remain to be done.

For the pipe-laying, community residents are using an excavator on loan from the Municipality of Tecoluca, available on some weekends, and supplementing with hand-digging by volunteers.



Volunteers from nearby Granzaso help move building materials from the road to the construction site



Volunteers carry pipe in Granzaso



Miramar residents help build the water tank

Guajoyo School Improvements

Two projects at the Guajoyo School have been completed. The first is the construction of a storage building to house food, kitchen equipment, musical instruments, and other valuable items. The second is improvements to two classrooms with air conditioning, new windows, and an electrical upgrade.



Guajoyo School bodega de cocina, a storage building



Air conditioners installed in Guajoyo School

Miramar Festival

The Blessed Virgin Mary is the patron saint of the Miramar community. Residents hold a *fiesta patronal* for several days leading up to December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. It is a time of special celebration as a religious holy day and, as the official anniversary of the founding of the community. It is also a prelude to Christmas festivities.



Sports activities, a part of the Miramar fiesta patronal



Preparing for the Festiva



Fun and games at the festival

Join the Friends of El Salvador

Are you interested in participating in the Friends of El Salvador Committee? If so, contact Tom Moore (773-3250, moore1tj@cmich.edu).

Financial Review

Donations received in 2020 were \$139,940. This amount was divided between \$75,365 designated for the Friends of El Salvador, and \$64,575 available for Faith Weavers use.

This year's Faith Weavers gave \$113,028 in grants to charitable organizations. The Faith Weavers Foundation provided \$20,000 towards these grants, and the Friends of El Salvador gave \$73,033 in grants to communities in El Salvador. The remaining \$42,995 in grants was supported by your donations.

Overall, charitable giving was the main use of our money with 96% of what we spent going to charitable grants. Two percent went to conducting our worship services, and 2% for administrative costs.

The Endowment Fund benefited from the stock market advance in 2020. The Endowment's portfolio

return was 20.%. We had dividend income of \$9,079 and paid grants of \$20,000. Even though our charitable grants exceeded our dividend income, the market appreciation of \$37,765 increased our fund balance by \$26,844.

The Endowment Fund has a permanent fund balance of \$183,806 that represents donations that will remain in the fund to generate income. The non-permanent portion of \$84,374 is available to give out in grants.

Faith Weavers have a cash balance of \$94,735. This consists of \$46,850 reserved for the Friends of El Salvador and \$47,885 available for Faith Weavers activities.

Faith Weavers of St. Mary Statement of Financial Activity For the Year Ending December 31, 2020	Faith Weavers of St. Mary	Endowment Fund	Combined
Donations	\$139,940		\$139,940
Program Revenue	0		0
Dividends and Interest	23	9,079	9,102
Other Income	98		98
Total	140,061	9,079	149,140
Expenditures			
Charitable Giving	113,028	20,000	133,028
Monthly Services	3,415		3,415
Programs	0		0
Administration	3,058	0	3,058
Total Expenses	119,501	20,000	139,501
Revenues over (under) expenditures	20,560	(10,921)	9,639
Increase (decrease) in Market Value		37,765	37,765
Increase (decrease) in fund balances	20,560	26,844	47,404
Beginning Fund Balance	74,175	241,336	315,511
Ending Fund Balance	94,735	268,180	362,915
Restricted and Unrestricted Fund Balance			
Reserve for Friends of El Salvador	46,850		46,850
Permanent Funds		183,806	183,806
Unrestricted Funds	47,885	84,374	132,259
Ending Fund Balance	\$94,735	\$268,180	\$362,915