

Faith Weavers of St. Mary  
**Winter/Spring 2023 Newsletter**  
[www.faithweavers.org](http://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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Date	Time	Activity
February 12	4 p.m.	Prayer service with Joe Frankenfield
March 12	4 p.m.	Prayer service with Karon Latham
April 16	4 p.m.	Mass with Fr. Bert Gohm
May 21	4 p.m.	Mass with Fr. Fred Thelen
June 11	4 p.m.	Prayer service with Karon Latham

**Upcoming Events**

Services are scheduled to be held at St. Vincent DePaul Parish in Shepherd starting at 4 p.m.

February 12, 2023, Joe Frankenfield will lead us in a prayer service followed by a spaghetti and lasagna dinner. **Please bring a dish to pass.**

March 12, 2023, Karon Latham will lead us in a prayer service. Shepherd Pie and Irish Stew will be prepared for our Irish celebration dinner. **Please bring a dish to pass.**

April 16, 2023, Fr. Bert Gohm will celebrate mass with us. We will have a ham and cheesy potato meal. Josh Zimmerman will be our pianist at this service. Maira, Elise (3 yrs. old), Eleanor (4 months old) will be with us too. **Please bring a dish to pass.**

May 21, 2023, Fr. Fred Thelen will celebrate mass with us. We will honor women in our community and graduates at this service. **Please bring a dish to pass.**

June 11, 2023, Karon Latham will lead us in a prayer service. We will recognize retirees and honor men in our community at this service. We will have BBQ Spareribs and hot dogs for dinner. **Please bring a dish to pass.**

Please invite a friend to attend one of our services. A simple invitation may be a great gift to your friend.

**Fr. Joe Griffin Presides at Mass in January**



(Fr. Joe Griffin)

Fr. Joe Griffin presided at our January 8<sup>th</sup> Faith Weavers gathering. Many of us know Fr. Joe from his time on the pastoral team at St. Mary’s University Parish.

Fr. Joe retired last summer and is living in Midland. People who knew him from St. Mary’s were happy to see Fr. Joe and renew acquaintances with him. We were all drawn into the mass through his heartfelt sense of the community’s unity in Christ through the Eucharist. We look forward to future services with Fr. Joe.

## Getting to Know Fr. Fred Thelen



(Fr. Fred Thele)

Fr. Fred Thelen began presiding at mass with Faith Weavers in the fall of 2019. Since then, he has been an active member of our community; presiding at mass, joining us in social events, and participating as a member of the Friends of El Salvador Committee. This article will give you a little more background on Fr. Fred's career and his commitment to social justice.

Fr. Fred was ordained in 1980 in the Diocese of Lansing. He served as an associate priest at St. Casimir's in Lansing for five years and St. Thomas in Ann Arbor for three years. During this time, he felt a call to missionary work and with the help of his mentor, Fr. Al Koenigsknecht, he became an associate with the Maryknoll Missions.

After a five-month training program in missionary work and the Spanish language he was assigned to the Diocese of Juli in Peru. There he was assigned to the Parish in the town of Yunguyo. This town is located on the shore of Lake Titicaca on the Bolivia border.

Fr. Fred served in Peru for 5 years (1988 to 1993). While there one-third of his time was spent on parish work, one-third at the Human Rights Office at the Diocese, and one third on the Seminary Commission of the Diocese. He also taught a faith formation course to pre-seminarians while there.

He had many interesting and wonderful experiences with the people of Peru. Insurgents were active in Peru at this time and Fr. Fred's work with Human Rights brought him into potential conflict with this group. The insurgents wanted to destroy social institutions in Peru so they could rebuild society from the ground up. The church was a target for them and being a priest working for human rights made him a potential target as well.

He also experienced the warmth of the Peruvian people, of the Aymara culture with traditions that were thousands of years old. They have a deep respect for mother earth, their Pacha Mama. Many of their traditions would intersect with Christian beliefs. For example, the Blessed Virgin Mary was deeply associated with Pacha Mama in that the life and blessings of earth flowed from her.

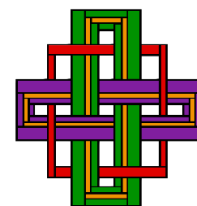
Upon returning to the Lansing Diocese in 1993 Fr. Fred was assigned to Cristo Rey Parish in Lansing. Parishioners at Cristo Rey are predominately Hispanic, so Fr. Fred's experiences in Peru and fluent Spanish made him uniquely qualified for this position. He served there until his retirement in 2019.

Fr. Fred's vocation has always had a focus on social justice. While pastor of Cristo Rey Parish he formed a local affiliate of the Gamiel Foundation. This Foundation organizes faith-based groups to work on social justice issues. He was also a member of the Immigrants Taskforce to advocate for their needs.

In 1977 he joined Pax Christi of Michigan and attend their first state conference at Aquinas College while at St. John's Seminary in Plymouth Michigan. From 1981 to 1985 he was the State Coordinator of Pax Christi of Michigan. He is currently a member of the Pax Christi State Council and the Pax Christi USA National Council. He works to initiate and organize events in Michigan and nationally. These Boards work to promote peace and justice, non-violence, racial justice, and LGBTQ rights.

Upon retiring in 2019 Fr. Fred moved to his cottage on Lake of the Hills in Weidman. This is now his permanent home. He met with members of the Faith Weavers community in the summer of 2019 and has been an active member since. He is staying active with his work with Pax Christi, and he occasionally presides at mass in Hispanic communities in the Lansing Diocese.

We are very fortunate to have Fr. Fred as an active member in our community.



*Weaving Faith Into Life*

## Christmas Outreach

Article by Eileen Jennings and Jim Hornak

Another year of Christmas Outreach has been successfully completed. We served 482 families, for a total of 1,609 individuals. This was an increase in families of over 90 households.



(Fr. Fred and Eileen working on filling stockings)

Once again, we could not have done it without you. Not only did Faith Weavers and you individually give money, but you donated items and your time. You helped deliver gifts to the Campus Life building, you helped set up the coats, you set up assembly lines for Christmas stockings and then helped to fill the stockings and gift bags. You were in nearly every section during distribution, as well as serving as escorts. Everywhere we looked during distribution, we saw people from Faith Weavers!!



(Ken getting items ready for stockings)

Faith Weavers really does put Faith into Life. WE are blessed to have this organization enrich our faith and to support each other. Thank you, more than words can say.



(Jim and helpers setting up racks for coats)

## Friends of El Salvador

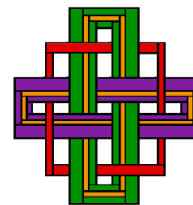
by Tom Moore

The Friends of El Salvador Committee met recently and made decisions about projects to fund in 2023. This was only possible, of course, because of the outstanding generosity of Faith Weavers and friends. Thank you!

## Guajoyo School Projects

The Guajoyo School topped the list of beneficiaries once again this year with approved projects totaling \$18,327. College scholarships continued as a perennial area receiving support with \$5,000

The very dilapidated school kitchen, which in its current condition cannot be used, will be renovated so that, once again, the customary in-school meal can be served to the children.



*Weaving Faith Into Life*



(Guajoyo School kitchen area to be renovated)

Furthermore, funding will be given for purchase of extra foods to diversify the menu and enhance the nutrition of the food prepared. Because of the economic circumstances of many families, the school meal is a key part of the students' overall diet.

Another facility-improvement project will remodel and enlarge the entrance to building #2 and replace corridor and classroom floors. The floors are cracked and uneven creating the potential for falls. This is especially dangerous for a new student with a mobility disability.

The Committee is continuing to fund improvements to teaching and learning technologies at the Guajoyo School. Funds were allocated to purchase a video projector, three LCD screens, and upgrades to the internet-related infrastructure in building #1.

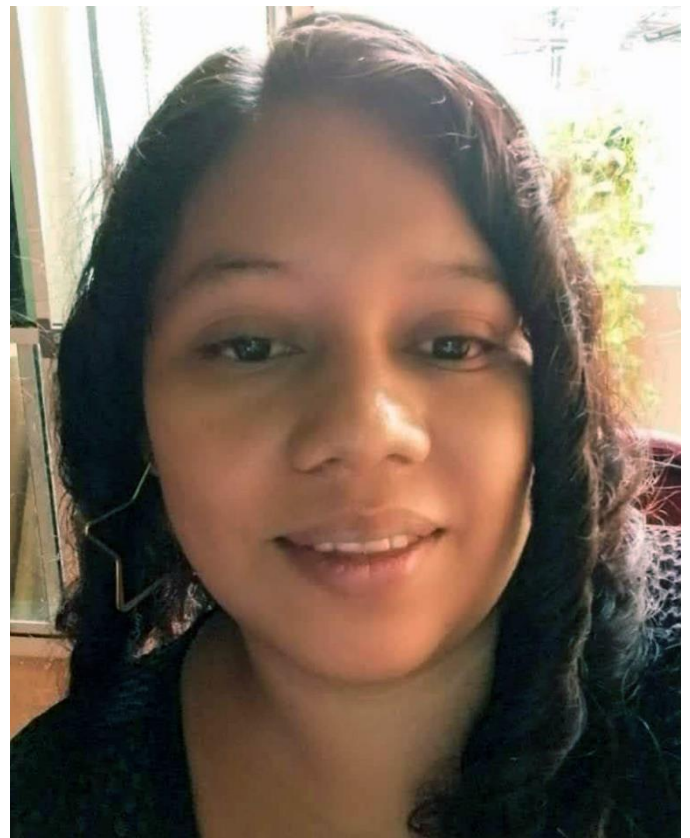
Funds were also granted for purchase of several horns, guitars, and flutes. A recently hired English teacher also plays multiple musical instruments. She will teach basic musical skills as part of an expansion of the arts-related curriculum.

Funding support from the Friends of El Salvador since 2013 has been credited by the school's staff as making a large difference in the strength of the curriculum and the appearance and usability of

school facilities. Over 200 students and eight teachers have benefited.

**Getting to know Elizabeth "Iris" Cañas, Guajoyo School Director, and her work to improve education.**

The relationship between the Friends of El Salvador and the school has relied on a partnership between the Committee and the school's administrative leadership. This 10-year partnership began with Efrain Torres as director and has strengthened with the current director, Iris Cañas.



(Elizabeth "Iris" Cañas, Guajoyo School Director)

Iris is from the city of San Vicente, perhaps 25 miles from Guajoyo. She's a graduate of the Universidad de El Salvador, the nation's major public institution, in early childhood education. In 2009 she joined the staff of the school and since has increasingly assumed multiple responsibilities leading to the director role in 2019. With recognition as an excellent teacher by peers and the Ministry of Education, Iris has frequently been called upon to

offer leadership and training on pedagogical practices to teachers of the region, especially in educational technology.

The virtual learning imposed by the pandemic was a significant challenge. Iris responded with admirable ambition. With funding from the Friends of El Salvador, she provided extra tech support to teachers and distributed printed-learning materials to students unable to participate in online learning.

In the last few years our on-going communication and active relationship with Iris has helped focus the Committee's aid to the school in very effective ways.

### **College Scholarships**

For 2023 the Committee has allocated \$3,200 for the excellent San Pedro Nonualco college scholarships. This program is truly distinctive because of its quality mentoring and integrated academic-social-cultural features.

In addition, we continue to provide support for our Miramar student, Heri Cruz. We pay for tuition, fees, and related educational expenses so Heri can complete his degree at the Universidad Luterana Salvadoreña. Heri expects to graduate in 12-18 months.

### **Miramar Poultry Project**

Phase 1 of the Miramar Poultry Project, funded last year, has been proceeding very well following a slow start because of a series of initial obstacles to implementation. The overall objective is to introduce systematic, family-based poultry production into the community. Beginning with 15 families and, if successful, expand to the remaining 30 families in Phase 2 of the project.

After construction of poultry pens and training by government agricultural specialists, baby chicks and feed were distributed to Phase 1 families. Thirteen families remain active in the project and

chickens are developing well with negligible loss to disease.



(Chicks quickly grow to become productive chickens)

There will be a formal evaluation of the project when the first batch of chickens reaches maturity in March. At that time the chickens will be laying eggs and large enough to consume as food. If Phase 1 is deemed a success, we expect a request to fund expanding the project to 30 families.

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

### **Charitable Contributions in 2022**

In 2022 your generosity has supported grants of \$77,500 to local, national, and international charitable organizations. This money has come

from your monthly donations, and income from the Faith Weavers Endowment Fund.

\$22,150 (29%) of Faith Weavers grants went to local charities. Members of the Service and Justice Committee identified several local organizations to support with grants. Giving locally is a priority for Faith Weavers. It is important to us to support local organizations that may not have access to other funding resources.

In 2022 we gave \$10,000 to Christmas Outreach. The need for coats, snowpants and boots along with Christmas gifts has grown during the pandemic. This was a record year for giving through Christmas Outreach. See the related article by Eileen Jennings and Jim Hornak for more information on Christmas Outreach this year.

\$2,100 was given to Christian Counseling Services to support work of providing affordable help for children, adolescents, couples, and families in the mid-Michigan area.

The Midland Community Former Offenders Advocacy and Rehabilitation Program received a \$1,000 grant. The money is used to purchase bedding if needed, sponsor an Impact Weekend Financial Support program, and Sobriety House Move-In and Emergency Rent Assistance.

A \$2,000 grant was given to the Mustard Seed Shelter for the women's shelter in Saginaw.

St. Vincent DePaul Parish received \$1,400. This grant is in recognition of the support the parish gives to Faith Weavers through the use of their church and parish hall for our services.

We also gave \$500 to the Stitch and Prayer Group. This is a Midland based interdenominational group of over 50 people who knit, crochet, quilt, and sew items for nursing homes, hospices, hospitals, and school in our area. They pray for recipients while crafting these items.

Faith Weavers also give grants to charities in honor of the priests who preside at mass with us. The priests select the charities to receive these donations. Last year we gave a total of \$4,000 in honorarium grants to: Pax Christi of Michigan, Catholic Service Relief, Sisters of St. Clare, Hidden Harvest, the Grand Rapids Dominican Sisters, the East Side Soup Kitchen of Saginaw, and the Isabella Community Soup Kitchen.

\$13,750 (18%) went to national charities.

- The Ruth Ellis Center received a \$5,000 grant. The Ruth Ellis Center provides trauma-informed services for lesbian, gay, bi-attractional, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ+) youth, and young adults.
- A \$3,000 grant was given to Everytown For Safety Support. This group seeks to improve our understanding of the causes of gun violence and help to reduce it.
- Youth On Their Own (YOTO) received a \$5,000 grant. YOTO is a dropout prevention program for students in grades 6-12.

Internationally \$41,600 (54%) was given in grants.

- The Josefino Orphanage in Mexico was given a \$2,500 grant. This grant was used to feed 40 children at the orphanage.
- \$5,000 was sent to the Bethal Lutheran Church for Puerto Rico Hurricane Relief.
- Global Compassion was given \$8,000 for the leprosy relief program. See the related article below.
- The World Central Kitchen was given \$5,000 for Ukrainian Relief.
- The Friends of El Salvador Committee spent \$20,600 on projects in El Salvador. See the related article in this newsletter for details on this outreach.

## Global Compassion's Leprosy Project Empowering 40 Leprosy families to self-sufficiency with chicken distribution project.

article by Indira Oskvarek

In our Fall 2022 newsletter we highlighted the work of Global Compassion Inc. Global Compassion is a Midland based 501(C)(3) Nonprofit public charity founded by Indira and Ed Oskvarek and has been in operation since 2006. Indira and Ed are also valued members of Faith Weavers.

This article is a follow up on Global Compassion's program to support 50 families suffering with the disease of leprosy. Last year Faith Weavers gave \$8,000 to support this program.

The project is being carried out by Rural Christian Leprosy Welfare Association, a nonprofit in the state of Andhra Pradesh in India who also successfully finished the phase 1. The first phase repaired mud huts with thatched roofs that were damaged in a storm in late 2021. The affected families were also given warm clothing, bed sheets, woolen socks, food packages and some basic medicines.



In phase 2, forty families benefited from a poultry project designed to provide food and a source of income for the families. Eight hundred chickens were purchased from the Faith Weavers' grant. Each family received 20 chickens, the feed and all the necessary training to take care of their chickens.

The families can use the chickens and their eggs for food, and they can also sell them to provide money for other needs. The project is designed to become self-sustaining with families practicing good husbandry techniques to maintain the flock for a continuing source of food and income.

Our special thanks to Faith Weavers of St. Mary, for funding this worthy project. These families were overjoyed and overwhelmed with gratitude, and we will never be able to fathom the blessings with which they have blessed us all.



Their joyful faces tell the story of your love, support, and compassion for these "Outcasts" of society. You have made them "whole" in Jesus' love.

Thank you.

### Amazon Smile Program Comes to an End

Amazon will end the Amazon Smile Program on February 20, 2023. In announcing the end of this program, Amazon stated that the program had not fulfilled expectation set when it was started in 2013. Faith Weavers joined the program in 2015 and has earned \$654 from it since that time.

You still have a little time left to get a donation from Amazon Smile. Go to: [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) to do your shopping.

## Financial Review

Donations received in 2022 were \$83,306. Of this amount \$15,750 was donated to the Friends of El Salvador, and \$67,566 to Faith Weavers.

In 2022 Faith Weavers gave \$72,500 in grants to charitable organizations. Faith Weavers gave \$51,900 to local, national, and international charities, and the Friends of El Salvador gave \$20,600 for projects in El Salvador.

Overall, charitable giving was the main use of our money with 93% of what we spent going to charitable grants. 4% went to conducting our worship services, and 3% for administrative costs.

The Endowment Fund had a negative 15.25% return on its investments. We had dividend income of \$10,096 and paid grants of \$5,000.

The Endowment Fund incurred losses in the market value of its investment portfolio of \$51,617. This was a substantial drop in value

but consistent with percentage losses in the general market.

Our investment strategy is to manage our portfolio risk and accept the market return for this risk level. Unfortunately, when markets are falling our returns can go quite negative as they did last year.

The Endowment Fund has a permanent fund balance of \$180,184 that represents donations that will remain in the fund to generate income. The non-permanent portion of \$42,077 is available to give out in grants.

Faith Weavers have a cash balance of \$93,534. This consists of \$27,285 reserved for the Friends of El Salvador and \$66,249 available for Faith Weavers activities. We plan to use most of this cash balance for charitable grants in 2023.

Faith Weavers of St. Mary Statement of Financial Activity For the Year Ending December 31, 2022	Faith Weavers of St. Mary	Endowment Fund	Combined
<b>Donations</b>	\$83,306		\$83,306
<b>Program Revenue</b>	0		0
<b>Dividends and Interest</b>	10	10,096	10,106
<b>Other Income</b>	<u>120</u>		<u>120</u>
<b>Total</b>	83,436	10,096	93,532
<b>Expenditures</b>			
<b>Charitable Giving</b>	72,500	5,000	77,500
<b>Monthly Services</b>	3,762		3,762
<b>Programs</b>	0		0
<b>Administration</b>	<u>3,074</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3,074</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<u>79,336</u>	<u>5,000</u>	<u>84,336</u>
<b>Revenues over (under) expenditures</b>	4,100	5,096	9,196
<b>Increase (decrease) in Market Value</b>		<u>(51,617)</u>	<u>(51,617)</u>
<b>Increase (decrease) in fund balances</b>	4,100	(46,521)	(42,421)
<b>Beginning Fund Balance</b>	89,434	274,242	363,676
<b>Transfers</b>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Ending Fund Balance</b>	<u>93,534</u>	<u>227,721</u>	<u>321,255</u>
<b>Restricted and Unrestricted Fund Balance</b>			
<b>Reserve for Friends of El Salvador</b>	27,285		27,285
<b>Permanent Funds</b>		185,644	185,644
<b>Unrestricted Funds</b>	66,249	42,077	108,326
<b>Ending Fund Balance</b>	<u>\$93,534</u>	<u>\$227,721</u>	<u>\$321,255</u>