



Weekly Newsletter

FEBRUARY 22, 2024



Thomas and Jennie Harris, UMC Missionaries to China and Sarawak. See story on page 6.

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From the office of
Robert D. Farr
Bishop

BISHOP'S STATEMENT ON KANSAS CITY SHOOTING

FEBRUARY 15, 2024

What should have been a day of celebration became a nightmare when shooters opened fire on the crowds gathered yesterday at the Chiefs Kingdom Champion Parade near Union Station in downtown Kansas City.

I invite you to join me in praying for the victim who died, and the other spectators who were injured in the attack. Our hearts go out to the family members who are grieving and all who are reeling from the violence. We are grateful for law enforcement and other first responders who acted quickly, aided the wounded and helped those fleeing the scene to seek safety.

I refuse to accept that mass shootings are “normative.” Just because something is, doesn’t mean it should be. Violence of any kind disrupts the peace God wants for all his people. And as United Methodists we embrace a gospel that believes we have been filled with a power to do great things (Jn. 14:12). As people who practice our faith, I urge you to act. Yesterday also marked the beginning of the season of Lent. It’s a season that asks us to do the seemingly impossible — to find quiet in a world full of noise, to repent in a world bent on pointing the finger, to practice self-sacrifice in a world quick to shirk responsibility and to fast in a world obsessed with feeding every desire. As United Methodists, I wonder if we might do the seemingly impossible through the power of the Holy Spirit when it comes to addressing the gun violence raging in our communities?

Our Office of Mission, Service and Justice has compiled resources for you and your congregations to demonstrate that we believe in the power of God working in our midst. May we open ourselves to power of God at work within us and do whatever we can to alter the current course of this behavior once and for all.

News of yet another mass shooting can make us cynical, throwing up our hands that nothing can be done. Such tragedies can make us doubt God’s power and question God’s mercy. We point to the shadows cast by violence in our world as proof that God is not working in the world. But I am convinced that nothing can separate us from God’s love (Rom. 8). If God is with us, then God is with us even in those times and places where it seems that death and darkness have prevailed.

Light of the world, have mercy on us. Guide us in the way of peace.
In Christ,

ROBERT D. FARR



A WORD FROM OUR PASTOR

How Have We Loved?

During the extraordinary cold snap of January, 2024, our friends at InExcelsis housed 16 families at a local motel, including 10 children. It was an expensive endeavor, and put a significant amount of financial stress on their otherwise tight budget. I brought their need to you, and over the ensuing weeks, our church family gathered offerings for their Winter Safe Haven ministry, totalling \$1,745. A gift check was presented to Severin Pelekara, Executive Director of InExcelsis, in the worship service on February 18th.

To see pictures and learn more about this greatly needed ministry, follow this link to the InExcelsis February newsletter: [Click here](#) for the Newsletter.

Well done, good and faithful servants.

Grace & peace +

PASTOR SHARON

Thank You

Dear Church Family,
Natalie and I thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the love and concern you showed us when we lost Michael.

Thank you for pulling together to make a beautiful memorial service. A lot of work went into that behind the scenes, and we definitely noticed. You cared for us as if you have known us for decades. Natalie was especially touched and surprised by the youth and their parents who came to the service on a school and work day.

The reception was lovely and classy; thank you for making the guests feel welcome and giving them a comfortable place to reminisce together. Your warmth and empathy are helping us face each day.

I thank God that Michael and Natalie and I found this congregation.

Sincerely,
Nancy Phillips-Kuelker and Natalie Kuelker



Meet Your Church Leaders Series III



JOAN BALLAM
CHAIR OF STAFF PARISH RELATIONS



Greetings Church,

This is Joan Ballam and I am pleased to call Webster United Methodist my church. My husband, Gordon, and I became members shortly after moving to St. Louis in 1982. I have been involved in a number of committees since joining WUM and, more than anything, have been impressed by the heart of this church for missions. We truly become the hands and feet of Christ through these efforts. Our children, Christina and Bradley, grew up in the church participating in activities through their high school years and continuing to contribute to mission efforts as adults. We thank our church family for helping to raise them.

I am currently the chair of the Staff Parish Relationships Committee (SPRC). One might think of us as a human resource department. Administratively, we ensure fair hiring practices, conduct performance evaluations and make recommendations on staff compensation. On relationships, we are tasked with providing support for our staff and open channels of communication for the pastor, staff and congregation. Our pastor and each of our staff are connected with a member of the SPRC. I can direct you the appropriate liaison if you have any confidential issues or feedback concerning our pastor or staff. The committee strives to keep the congregation, staff and pastor focused on the mission of the church.

This is a transitional year for our church as Sharon, our faithful pastor of 13 years, will be leaving her position and we will welcome a new pastor. SPRC will work with other church committees to ensure this is a smooth transition for both parties.

BLESSINGS,
JOAN

PRAYER CONCERNS



Sharon Wersching; Tom Pacatte; Joan Leslie (Mark's mother); Clyde Gilker; Bev Mesey; Teri-Ann Wallace & Marian Junge (Marcia Kennon); meaningful gun controls; and world peace.

Sympathy to...

- Karl Aufenthie and Jaedyn Parsons on the death of his grandmother.
- Pat Hardin on the loss of her brother Jerry's wife, Mary Robinson.

Wild Wednesday

February 28th from 5:30 to 7:00 pm

God has created the four seasons,
and we are going to celebrate winter!

Children 4 years old through 6th grade are invited to join us for dinner, games, and learning. Please register your children or ask for more information by emailing directorchildren@websterum.org or call 314-961-4133 and leave a message.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

**THOMAS
HARRIS** & **JENNIE
HARRIS**
(1912-2000) (1915-1999)

A PASSION FOR CHINA AND SARAWAK

THOMAS AND JENNIE HARRIS WERE COMMISSIONED IN 1947 AND FIRST ASSIGNED TO SERVE AS TEACHERS IN NANPING, CHINA. BUT WITHIN A FEW YEARS, THEY, AND MANY OTHER MISSIONARIES, HAD TO LEAVE CHINA BECAUSE OF POLITICAL UNREST. IN 1951, THEY WERE APPOINTED TO SERVE IN SARAWAK, THE MALAYSIAN SIDE OF THE ISLAND OF BORNEO. ALTHOUGH A LARGE CHINA EX-PAT METHODIST COMMUNITY RESIDED IN SARAWAK, THE HARRIS FAMILY WAS SENT UP THE BANYAO RIVER TO NANGA MUJONG, WHERE THE DAYAK SEA PEOPLE MADE THEIR HOMES IN GREAT LONG HOUSES. THE DAYAK, ALSO CALLED THE IBAN, ARE THE LARGEST INDIGENOUS GROUP IN SARAWAK. THEIR LONGHOUSE RESIDENCES COULD ACCOMMODATE AS MANY AS 25 FAMILIES, ALL LIVING AND WORKING COMMUNALLY.

THE HARRIS COUPLE EFFECTIVELY BECAME THE MISSION SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE IBAN WORK, BUILDING A RESIDENCE, A SCHOOL, A CLINIC AND AN AGRICULTURAL CENTER IN NANGA MUJONG. THEY WERE WELL ACCEPTED AND RESPECTED BY THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY AND DID MUCH TO IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH, AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE AND ACCEPTANCE INTO THE METHODIST MISSION. THEY RETURNED TO THE U.S. IN 1970.

THIS EXCERPT OF A DECEMBER 1966 MISSIONARY LETTER FROM THOMAS SHOWS THE SEAMLESS WAY THEY INTEGRATED THEIR WORK IN AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION AND SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP. "THE USUAL 'DRY SEASON' OF AUGUST HAS BROUGHT HEAVY RAINS, SWOLLEN RIVERS, AND DELAYED PLANTING OF RICE! THOUGH A HOPEFUL CHANGE WILL COME IN THIS MONTH, IT IS LIKELY THAT THE DELAYED RICE CROP WILL CATCH THE SHATTERING RAINS OF NOVEMBER-DECEMBER WHEN IN BLOOM. WITH CROPS TO BE GROWN AND HUNGER LESSENED; SOULS TO BE CLAIMED AND NURTURED; AND THE MINDS OF YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE CAPTURED BY THE THRILLING NEW EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING, WE WILL FIND PLENTY TO DO THAT WILL NEED YOUR PRAYERFUL SUPPORT."

Source: *World Outlook*, November 1957



Jennie and Tom Harris with their daughter, Diana, in a longboat on the Rejang River, Sarawak, Borneo, Malaysia. PHOTO: GENERAL COMMISSION ON ARCHIVES AND HISTORY





UMCOR SUNDAY SPECIAL OFFERING

MARCH 10TH, 2024



Through the UMCOR Sunday Special Offering, local churches underwrite all the operational costs of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). This offering allows UMCOR to use 100% of all funds given to humanitarian response and recovery efforts directly to communities in need. These gifts ensure UMCOR can respond swiftly to disasters around the world and as a source of hope and healing for those left most vulnerable.

Special donation envelopes will be available at the March 10th worship service. Please designate UMCOR on the memo line of your check to the church. Thanks for your support of these life-changing ministries. You can also donate via our website under the GIVE tab. <https://websterunitedmethodist.org/give-2-2/>



There is Still Time to Join a Volunteer-in-Mission Work Team

May 13-16

Recruitment continues for this year's mission work week at Midwest Mission near Springfield, IL., and we hope some new people will join us this year! The dates are Monday, May 13th – Thursday, May 16th 2024.

Lodging in the spacious dormitory building is both convenient and comfortable; we are just a short walking distance from our daily work site building. Work shifts have morning and afternoon breaks as well as a long lunch break, and the day is over between 3:30 and 4 :00PM. Serving others while working beside fellow volunteers from all over the Midwest is definitely a break from routine, but also quite enriching.

***What is Midwest Mission? It is a United Methodist-affiliated disaster relief facility providing disaster relief kits, school desks, educational & medical supplies, etc., locally, nationally, and internationally.**

*** The work: There is something for every ability—packing kits, sewing school bags, building & refinishing school desks, repairing bicycles and sewing machines, organizing materials, unloading items, filling shipping containers, etc.**

***Cost: will be determined based on number of people going, but it will be quite reasonable for dormitory lodging and supplies, plus food & gas expenses. Scholarships are available if needed.**

Have questions? Please call Jan McCurley at 314-781-3969 (h) text or call 314-378-5504(c) or email janis.mccurley@gmail.com no later than March 3.

CLIMATE CHANGE - PART 2

REASONS FOR OPTIMISM?



In this second piece on Climate Change I focus on recycling of plastic materials where individuals, corporations and governments each have a role to play.

Petroleum based polymers (plastics) require high levels of energy in their manufacture, and these materials, unless captured and recycled, create major environmental damage, most notably in the oceans. Plastic recycling is an issue that needs major improvements. There are a number of companies in the field and a variety of methods in use or under development. A number of major companies are investing in large plants as they see this as a growth opportunity. Some of the methods have little if any impact on climate change, although having positive impact on the environment, while others show significant potential impact. For example, pyrolysis (heating at high temperatures) produces liquids that can be used as fuels but requires much energy for heating. Similarly, melting and reforming plastics provides some useful products but also uses much energy. More environmentally friendly are methods to convert the plastics back to their original components. These can be used to make new plastic materials reducing the need for petroleum-based raw materials. For several years biodegradable polymers (plastics) have been commercially available. These materials have found a limited market. For many uses the properties do not match those of petrochemically derived materials and their biodegradation is slow. Biodegradation actually yields CO₂. The lack of infrastructure is a major factor that inhibits the potential amount of plastic recycled.

An alternative approach to plastic recycling is legislative action to reduce plastic use. Legislation in the EU now bans single use plastic items, such as cutlery, plates and straws. Reduced use of food containers and other products from expanded polystyrene (Styrofoam) is also part of the legislation. We as individuals can follow these mandates. Responding to the Justice team questionnaire is an aid to reminding us how we as individuals are doing.

Watch for part 3 in which more examples of projects addressing Climate Change will be shared.

Derek Redmore

FEBRUARY FOOD DRIVE

FOR LIFEWISE STL &
WEBSTER ROCK HILL MINISTRIES



Thank you to all who have donated so far to the February Food Drive! As of February 11th, we've collected 167 food items toward our goal of 400. So, we are not quite halfway there.

Take a moment now to write a few of the items from the list below on your shopping list for this week!
Collection containers will be in the Sanctuary Lobby & First Floor Lobby (aka Elevator Entrance).

FOODS REQUESTED FOR THIS DRIVE:

- Rice
- Pasta
- Grits
- Cereal
- Oatmeal
- Cream of Wheat
- Spices
- Peanut Butter
- Cashew Butter
- Almond Butter
- Olive Oil
- Soup
- Canned Chicken
- Canned Tuna
- Dried Beans
- Grocery Store Gift Cards
- Canned Vegetables
- Canned Fruit

Please check labels and avoid foods high in salt and sugar content.

Webster Rock Hill Ministries Really appreciated the donations last week from our February ingathering. However, they noted that while they received a lot of peanut butter, they would appreciate some jelly to go with the peanut butter.



LET'S WEAVE!

HERE ARE SOME OPPORTUNITIES IN FEBRUARY

Now that we have completed two plastic sleeping mats, let's make more! During the month of February, we are offering 4 sessions to work on our loom with guided assistance, if you need it. Our team hopes you will come to one or more sessions. It's really pretty fun as well as rewarding!

So, please come and learn, continue to weave if you've done it before, or show someone else how to do it. Someone with experience will be on hand to monitor and assist.



HERE ARE THE DATES & TIMES THIS MONTH IN THE STAGE PORTION OF FELLOWSHIP HALL:

**Thursday, Feb. 22,
12:30-2:00 PM**

**Wednesday, Feb. 28,
1:00-2:00 PM**

Alliance for Interracial Dignity presents

February 25, 2024, 2-3:30 pm



Featuring trailblazers:
Eleanor Brown Rogers
Irene Thomas
Henrietta Ambrose

Pillars of Community

A celebration of women in local Black history

Families welcome ~ music, food, history!

Eden Seminary - Wehrli Chapel*

**new location*

475 East Lockwood Ave., Webster Groves



UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH WINTER GATHERING

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2024

BRUNCH (\$10) SERVED AT 10:00 A.M.

PLEDGE SERVICE, BUSINESS MEETING,
AND PROGRAM FOLLOWING BRUNCH

GUEST SPEAKER ELLEN MOSES
RIGHT TO READ COALITION

**INGATHERING: CHILDREN'S BOOKS
FOR HODGEN ELEMENTARY**

**Please choose books with
diverse characters for ages 3–10**

If you prefer, monetary donations can be made to purchase books.

**Sign up on the Connection Card during
Sunday worship or contact Mary Taylor
or Marcia Kennon**



THE MOUNTAIN SERVICE

COMING UP
SOON...

JOIN US FOR
MOUNTAIN SERVICE
MEAL ON THURSDAY
2/29 AT 6:30 PM,
WITH THE SERVICE
TO FOLLOW.

If you have questions, dietary restrictions, or would like to help, email juliaharalson@gmail.com or call/text 206-799-6441

GUIDED LENTEN RETREAT FEATURING THE CHOSEN

Guided Lenten Retreat featuring The Chosen, Tuesdays, Feb. 27, Mar. 5, 12, 19, 26, 9:30 AM-2:00 PM at Mercy Conference and Retreat Center in Frontenac.

*\$40 individual session; \$175 for whole series.
Lunch included. Register at mercycenterstl.org.*

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE DEADLINE

All articles and submissions must be sent to secretary@websterum.org by Monday at 5pm to be in that week's newsletter.