We are beginning the 3rd year of our congregational fundraising efforts, with a $2,000 commitment goal in support of AZ Immigration Law and Justice Network, formerly AZ Justice For Our Neighbors.

I have recently spoke with Scott Morris, of St. Francis In the Foothills UMC in Tucson, who is a predominant force for the Network, whose primary focus is in the provision of free or low cost immigration legal services for those seeking asylum. Asylum is seldom granted without the assistance of an immigration attorney. Many more attorneys are needed, as there is an enormous backlog, with a wait time of several years, for migrants seeking asylum. Additionally, the Network provides education and promotes advocacy. Scott has resumed his role, post Covid, in planning and conducting Border Education Tours. One of the greatest impacts of these tours has been the realization by participants of just how many local organizations, faith communities, and individuals combine their efforts and work together in the Tucson border community in trying to alleviate some of the most harmful and horrendous impacts of our broken and tragic immigration system, for which there is no functioning Congress to ‘fix’ and update.

I recently received an email from Scott which included a front page article from the Tucson paper. The Tucson Samaritans, whom I and another friend have accompanied into the Sonoran Desert on two occasions, met on February 1st with the Sheriff of Pima County to discuss the escalation of aggressive confrontations with vigilantes on the border.

Migrant aid groups and humanitarian volunteers are increasingly being confronted and accused of working with traffickers, terrorists and organized crime, by armed vigilantes, right wing propagandists and extremists who are encouraged by dehumanizing and racist rhetoric from conservative politicians, who are deliberately stoking fear about migrants.

A former Catholic run migrant aid shelter, which is run mostly by volunteers, now has to boost security after harassment by multiple
right wing media personalities, who claim it’s a “secret facility; none of the American people know about,” and which is accused of being a human trafficking center! In reality, the facility has been in the news for months, as Pima County is in the process of purchasing it. County officials are saying that “Without the work of Casa Alitas, in close coordination with Border Patrol and the County, Tucson’s smaller border communities would be facing large numbers of unsheltered migrants on the streets.”

Humane Borders is seeing increased destruction of its water stations, which try to prevent migrant deaths in the desert. Those water stations are available to anyone – migrants, hikers, hunters – in dangerously remote areas. A spokesperson for Humane Borders states, “To deny water to someone knowing another person may die as a result, I don’t have any words except to say that’s pure evil.”

A convoy of vehicles, part of “God’s Army,” gathered at the Arizona border to hear speeches elevating conspiracy theories about humanitarian volunteers and pushing the racist “great replacement” theory. According to a researcher with the advocacy group, Western States Center, “this convoy has animated the far right, anti-immigrant movement.”

Arizona aid groups are all being targeted. Right-wing activists are targeting volunteers providing water, food and blankets to asylum seekers often dropped off by human smugglers in remote areas, calling the volunteers, terrorists, pedophiles, child traffickers. As the Pima County sheriff states, “the surge in aggressive encounters is partly driven by politicians using the border to score political points in an election year.” And he says of the Samaritans, “I appreciate what they’re doing, which is taking care of people in need. They’re staying out of politics. They’re giving them water and food. They are not taking them into the country. In fact, most of the time, they just sit there with the migrants and wait for Border Patrol.”

My friend, Gail Koucorek, a Tucson Samaritan, who spends 3 days per week at the border providing water, food and blankets to migrants, states, “What’s frightening about them is they carry guns, we carry water.”

Tucson human rights advocates have decided to counter hate with facts. “Stop the Hate Collective” was started in 2020 during another election year surge in hate speech. One of the co-founders, an immigrant rights activist and attorney has stated, “There’s a lot of hatred, but it goes on top of a lot of ignorance. In our country, we don’t teach the history of immigration... without education, and with ignorance and lies, comes violence.” She said, “We’re trying to tell people to look at how communities that have large numbers of immigrants have less crime. Border towns are safer than other places.”

And the aid workers? They say the presence of angry, armed extremists is worrisome, but they won’t be deterred from their work. A member of Humane Borders stated, “While they’re out there playing soldier, we’re in the desert saving lives every day. It only strengthened our resolve to deliver water.” And my friend, Gail, agreed, saying she’s also given water to stranded vigilantes. “I don’t care who you are. If you need help, I will help you. I was not raised to judge. I was raised that only God can judge.”

For more information, please contact me at gg4justice@gmail.com. Thank-you, Gail Gilman.
Common Good Missoula Updates

Our church’s partnership with Common Good Missoula (CGM) continues to bring us many great opportunities to participate in building a more sustainable, connected and equitably inclusive community. Here’s what’s on deck:

The Neighborways campaign is growing! Neighborways?? Find out more about this Missoula-made solution to improve safety, mobility, and connectivity here: https://www.commongoodmissoula.org/gardenwalk

With a likely demonstration project to start East of Reserve in the Franklin to Fort Neighborhood (F2F) in early summer, there are at least two ways you can help move it forward.

A. Take the “Share your story” survey at this link: http://tinyurl.com/streets-survey
B. Help turn out folks to the April 2nd F2F gathering at Franklin Park. We need help putting up door-hanger info cards in the F2F Neighborhoods in late March. Learn more by sending me an email: joeloos7245@gmail.com
C. Common Good continues to partner with City Planning engagement staff to support turnout by everyday Missoula residents to add their voices to Our Missoula – the Growth policy update and code reform project. Our Missoula’s next set of public participation workshops are about to take place. Titled “Expanding Housing Options in Neighborhoods” please join us March 6, 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m., Burns Street Community Center, 1500 Burns St.
D. Finally, stay tuned for a Civic Academy on Housing challenges in Missoula as can be learned through stories from our indigenous neighbors. Likely date: March 28th.

Church Pledges and Donations
The donation page via the Breeze website can be found at:
https://firstumcmissoula.breezechms.com/give/online
If you give online there is a dropdown menu under the line with the amount that allows you to designate where the money goes. You can also text to give at (406) 998-1982 with a donation amount and keyword like pledge or building. You are also welcome to mail in your donation.
Leslie Uhlenbruck, Financial Secretary

HOW TO CONTACT

The Office
Weekday Hours
Monday-Thursday 9-12
Phone: 406-549-6118
E-Mail: FUMCmissoula@gmail.com
Website: www.firstumcmissoula.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/1stumcmissoula
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/missoula1stumc/

PASTOR JOHN
Office: Available Monday-Friday
By phone: 406-549-6118 or 406-396-8966 (cell)
E-Mail: john@FUMCmissoula.com
Hospital visits: Please call John or the office if you know of someone in the hospital.
Home visits: upon request

For more information or to reach First UMC staff, please call the church office, 406-549-6118, or E-Mail us at FUMCmissoula@gmail.com
INSPIRATION TOOLBOX

Despite the forecast, live like it’s spring. Lily Pulitzer

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

GENERAL MEETING: Thurs. March 7, 1:30 pm in the Kay Duffield Memorial Library. The program on Prayer and Self-denial will be given by treasurer Kathie Snodgrass. Hosts are Vespers. Questions? Please call Elaine at 406-529-1325.

RUTH: Thurs., March 14, 10:00 a.m. in the KDM Library. Please join us! Contact Judy at 406-239-4187 for more information.

VESPERS: Wed., March 20, at 1 p.m. in the KDM Library. Visitors and new members always welcome. For additional information please call Patsy at 406-493-0961.

GEMS: Thurs., March 21 in the KDM Library at 6 pm, to work on Easter treats and plans for the Spring Fling Cinco de Mayo luncheon. Women who are busy during the day, should check out this evening group that meets for one hour. Call Lisa, 406-552-2936 for further information.

BOOK: Fourth Tuesday Book Group, March 26 at 11 am, in the KDM Library to discuss Beating Guns: Hope for People Who Are Weary of Violence by Shaine Claiborne and Michael Martin. Come whether you’ve read the book or not. Please contact Kathie for Zoom info at 531-1569.

LOOKING AHEAD:

FAIRMONT EVENT April 5-7, Western Mountains District sponsors, “Soul Care: A Women’s Retreat for Mind, Body and Spirit.” (See article for further information.)

SPRING FLING and Cinco De Mayo all church Mexican luncheon, Sunday May 5, following church.

January Food Bank Drive - 2024

Food orders/cash donations: $2,262.33 collected and delivered. Donated items: 47 lbs. of food delivered. Birthday kits: 15 Birthday Kits put together/delivered. A very special “thank you” to our congregation for the generous donations, Genevieve Padget Slote and family for all the support, and to our Sunday School children and teachers for helping to assemble the Birthday Kits.

“Soul Care: A Women’s Retreat for Mind, Body and Spirit.” April 5-7, Fairmont Hot Springs. After a long COVID hiatus, the retreat is back! Keynote speaker is our DS Lynn Miller Jackson. Registration is $125 per person at https://form.jotform.com/240034920443143. Call Fairmont for room reservations at 406-797-3241, deadline is March 15. Room price is for four people. Attendees don’t have to be a UWF member. Contact neilsenhca@hotmail.com for info.

NOTE: our local unit is offering a $125 scholarship for registration. Contact Tish at tishsaffron@gmail.com for an application, deadline for submission is March 10.
Handbell Choir Secures Grant for Bell Repair and Maintenance

Missoula First UMC’s Foundation recently awarded our JuBELLation Handbell Choir a $1,000 grant to begin work on the maintenance and repair of our five octaves of handbells.

With some of the bells now 25 years old, it is time for an all-out effort to repair the equipment – which includes not only handbells, but carrying cases, mallets, tables, foam padding and covers.

Scott Bixler, the handbell choir’s maintenance manager, got the ball rolling recently by applying for the First UMC Foundation’s annual nonprofit grant program. The foundation responded with a $1,000 award, a wonderful start for the effort.

Bixler explained the need in his letter to the Foundation’s board:

Twenty-five years ago, First UMC’s handbell choir began with an anonymous donation of three octaves of Schulmerich bells. Over the following five years, members of the choir held fundraisers to acquire the final two octaves.

The estimated replacement cost of these bells is more than $35,000. This is a considerable asset for our church, and it needs regular maintenance.

But since our handbell choir’s inception, First Church has only been able to afford limited maintenance on the bells. During our last community concert, two bells failed and we had to do emergency repairs to get through the concert.

Last year, we used the balance remaining in our bell choir fund to have a qualified repairman who previously worked for the Schulmerich Handbell Co. repair 2 of our 5 octaves. He is factory qualified and does excellent work. That was Step 1.

It is estimated that to service the rest of our bells will cost about $3,500. The new $1,000 grant from the First UMC Foundation will help us start that effort. In addition, the locks on several of our protective carrying cases are broken, and the mallets we use for many of our songs have come unraveled over the years and need to be replaced. Much work remains.

JuBELLation choir members sincerely thank the First UMC Foundation for the maintenance grant. We’ll get more work done this summer, and will continue our fundraising until all the maintenance, repair and replacement needs are met. AND, we’ll keep on ringing bells for worship services and special events!

Holy Week Worship Schedule

Maundy Thursday, March 28 - 7:00 p.m. at Grace UMC

Good Friday, March 29 - 7:00 p.m. at First United Methodist Church

Easter Sunrise Service, March 31 - 7:00 a.m. at Caras Park

Easter Service, March 31 - 10:00 a.m. at First United Methodist Church
IN OUR PRAYERS...

~Healing and Comfort ~

✧ Prayers for peace and safety for the people in Gaza, Israel and the Ukraine.
✧ Prayers for discernment, wisdom, and God’s guidance, for the United Methodist Church delegates who will be meeting for General Conference in April.
✧ Prayers of comfort for the Super Bowl fans in Kansas City affected by the shooting.
✧ Prayers of quick recovery after a successful knee replacement surgery for Jim G.
✧ Prayers for Bob and Dorothy A. during this time of struggles.
✧ Prayers for stable housing for those struggling.
✧ Prayers of a rapid recovery for Kathie S’s granddaughter Nora, who has tonsillitis.
✧ Prayers for safety for the Regional Missionaries who serve the worldwide church.
✧ Prayers for assistance for those without medical insurance.
✧ Healing for retired pastor Jack M.’s brother Mark, who has multiple sclerosis and is the hospital with pneumonia.
✧ Prayers of strength for young people to realize their potential and meet the challenges of growing into life.
✧ Prayers of healing for members of the congregation who are struggling with health concerns.
✧ Prayers of successful surgery and a quick recovery for Bryan S. following his foot surgery.
✧ Prayers of healing for the Slote’s friend who had surgery on the 12th.
✧ Prayers of healing for Aubry following her surgery.
✧ Prayers of healing for Tish’s sister Sharon who suffered a fall.
✧ Prayers for the veterans and all the sacrifices they made, and continue to make, for our freedom and democracy.
✧ Prayers of continued healing and good spirits for Linda J’s niece Amy as she continues chemotherapy for breast cancer.
✧ Prayers of healing for Justin, recovering from a blood infection.
✧ Prayers of comfort and healing for the family, friends, and LGBTQ people everywhere following the beating death of Nex Benedict in Oklahoma.

~In Sympathy~

✧ Prayers of comfort for the family and friends of Lee Gores, who passed February 1.
✧ Prayers of comfort for Connie B. following the loss of her husband, Michael D., who died of a heart attack at age 65. Both were dedicated itinerant ecology and science evangelists and authors who spoke at least twice in Missoula at FUMC.
✧ Prayers of comfort for the family and friends of Charlotte G., who passed in February, and especially for her husband Mike.

~Praises and Joys~

✧ Prayers of joy that the scouts worshiped with us on Sunday.
✧ Prayers of Birthday Joy for Linda J., Donnalee, Marie, and Nancy H.!
✧ Prayers of joy that John T. and Mark C had quick recoveries from bad colds!
✧ Prayers of joy and thanksgiving for the bell choir and Jason’s clarinet solo that added so much to our worship.
✧ Prayers of gratitude for snow in the mountains and continued prayers for more moisture.
✧ Prayers of joy for all the helpers!
✧ Prayers of joy that Nancy H’s health tests turned out well!
✧ Prayers of thanksgiving that the church so gracefully hosted the memorial service and refreshments for the friends and family of Logan J.
✧ Prayers of joy for James C’s mom Elizabeth’s 90ths birthday in Havre.
✧ Prayers of joy that Bob M. is home and doing well after his heart surgery.
✧ Joy of a successful consultation with a neurologist for Joe (Sue’s mom’s husband).
✧ Prayers of thanksgiving that Randy M, Kay R’s younger brother, had successful prostate cancer treatment.
✧ Prayers of joy that George’s cousin received his heart transplant and is doing well.
✧ Prayers of gratitude that the Missoula City Council upheld the Historic Preservation Committee’s decision to deny a permit which would put luxury housing near the Old Post Hospital.
✧ Praises for Lily’s baptism!
✧ Prayers of thanksgiving that Delaney and her cast members did well and had fun at the Thespian Festival.
✧ Gratitude that Rocky had good people to help her with a water leak.
Green Notes: Read a Book, Share a Book!

Have you read a good book on climate change or another environmental issue recently? Were you inspired to take action – or, at least, to share what you learned?

First UMC’s Green Team just opened a lending library in our Narthex – a place where you can borrow one of the books we’ve provided, or share a book you’d encourage others to borrow and read.

So far, we have about a dozen volumes to share from some of the planet’s best scientific thinkers and writers. We’ve even included notes on each cover about the book and why we think it’s worth reading.

Now we need your help! Check out a book! Share a book! Do both! Join us in learning more about the environmental issues – most notably, climate change – facing our nation and world.

Ever Tried to Read your NorthWestern Energy Bill?

Here’s one place to start your reading and education journey – with that befuddling (and ever-increasing) bill that arrives in the mail each month from NorthWestern Energy.

Montana Free Press, a daily online newspaper headquartered in Helena, recently carried a detailed story explaining all the charges on Montanans’ electricity and natural gas bills.

Nearly 20 rates and charges are factored into each month’s residential bills from NorthWestern Energy, the state’s largest utility company. Reporter Amanda Eggert deftly explains each of those charges, and where to find them on your bill.

Reading Eggert’s story and understanding our bill is one step each of us can take as a prelude to speaking up about electricity and natural gas costs and sources. We need that foundation if we want to be effective in demanding that NorthWestern Energy stop relying on coal and natural gas – fossil fuels – and start truly investing in renewable energy.

Read on! Speak up! Be the change!

Tzedakah Pocket Offers Hope - February offered us the opportunity to assist two families through a rough period by helping them with short-term lodging. In one case, Pastor John worked with us and we were able to combine some of the Good Samaritan funds with ours to support one of the families. Our prayer is that both families will be able to find stable housing. We couldn’t have helped as much as we did without your help and we are so grateful for your faithful support. We never know what will be asked of us and we always do the best we can with what we have. It’s nice to know our congregation is there for us.

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2024 Donations: $1,859.71
March Events

- **3/7:** United Women in Faith Executive Committee will meet 1:30 p.m. in the Kay Duffield Memorial Library.
- **3/14:** Ruth Fellowship will meet at 10:00 a.m. in the KDM Library.
- **3/20:** VESPERS will meet at 1:00 p.m. in KDM Library.
- **3/21:** GEMS will be meeting at 6:00 p.m. in the KDM Library.
- **3/26:** Fourth Tuesday Book Group meets at 11:00 a.m. in the KDM Library.
- **3/28:** Maundy Thursday worship Service, 7:00 p.m. Grace UMC
- **3/29:** Good Friday Worship Service, 7:00 p.m. First UMC
- **3/31:** Easter Sunrise Service at 7:00 a.m. Caras Park and Easter Service at 10:00 a.m. First UMC

Weekly Events via Zoom and in person

**Sunday Worship** - Worship 10:00 a.m. and via Zoom (recordings on Facebook or the church website).

**Sunday School** - during the worship service in the nursery for kids age 4 and up.

**Tuesday** - Pastor John’s class 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. All are welcome! Please contact the office for the Zoom link.

**Wednesday** - Lectionary Bible Class 10:00 a.m. in the Parlor. Contact Rev. Barry Padget at barryumc@yahoo.com for more information. All are welcome to attend!