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Dr. Cheryl Simon

Sherry
founded
Pax Christi
Little Rock
in 2016



Pax Christi
LITTLE ROCK

Dec 31, 2024
Volume 8 Issue 4
Quarterly News-
letter

Peace Offerings

2024 Speaker Series for November

Food Insecurity and Resulting Issues in our Community

On Thursday November 21 PCLR hosted a presentation by Ms. Mandy Davis at Fitzgerald Hall on the St John's Diocesan Campus. At the time of the presentation Mandy served as Community Outreach Director for St Vincent CHI in Little Rock. She is a past Executive Director of Jericho Way in Little Rock, a shelter providing help for people experiencing homelessness. Mandy gave us the basic facts of food insecurity in Arkansas: according the USDA's 2023 Report on Food Insecurity, Arkansas ranks



dead last in the country, with 19% of Arkansas families experiencing food insecurity. This is 5% higher than the national average!

Food Insecurity (continued from Page 1)

Mandy described her collaborative initiative among Leadership, Mission, and Nutrition at CHI- St Vincent Little Rock to reduce food waste and help alleviate food insecurity in the community, an initiative known as **Waste Not**. Leftover food from the cafeteria is flash-frozen and distributed to staff members, no questions asked, twice a week. At the North Little Rock CHI facility leftover food is donated to Potluck Food Rescue to increase the Rescue's impact on hunger in that community. At the Morrilton CHI facility food is donated to Safe Place, a domestic violence shelter. Similar plans are in the works for the Hot Springs CHI facility.

If you want to help address food insecurity please consider donating to the Arkansas Foodbank, Helping Hand of Little Rock, the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, Potluck Food Rescue, or Stewpot Little Rock.

CHI-St Vincent's Impact of Food Insecurity is Growing

The CHI Infirmery President, Dr. William Jones joined the Arkansas Foodbank board. CHI NLR President, Megan Bonney joined the Potluck Food Rescue board. Tonya Baier, Director of Nursing in Hot Springs joined Project HOPE Food Bank board. Eddie Davis, National VP of Physician Relations Compliance joined the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance board recently.

From CEO of the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance Sylvia Blain:

"It's important to note that SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps) is our first line of defense against food insecurity in Arkansas. Unfortunately, the majority of Arkansans who qualify for these critical federal benefits do not take advantage of them. Expanding access to and increasing participation in SNAP would significantly reduce hunger in our state."

Pax Christi Little Rock was a Cornerstone sponsor of the Legacy for Life Banquet on October 17th, the annual fundraiser for the Arkansas Pregnancy Resource Center. It was a lovely evening of fellowship especially so since we share members and shared tables with the Diocesan Council for Black Catholics.



Dr. (Coach) Fitzgerald Hill was the keynote speaker. It was an evening that highlighted the fact that supporting teens who are having children is the key to alleviating so many other problems down the road. Crime, drug use, children in foster care, imprisonment and so many of our social problems are often the result of a broken and/or abusive home life. As Coach Fitz mentioned, when we see bodies floating down the river, instead of pulling them out we should walk up the river to see how they are getting there!

Our own Fr. Harvey closed the night out in prayer.



Arkansas
Pregnancy
RESOURCE CENTER

*God of all life, help us to appreciate
the great gift that is human life
formed in your image, a reflection
of your holiness.*

The APRC is a non-profit, faith-based organization that provides all services free of charge. It does not refer for or perform abortions. It does not profit from any decision its clients make, and it serves everyone who comes through its doors regardless of age, race, gender, financial status, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation. To learn more call 501-227-4357.

Pax Christi Little Rock Encounters

Peace of Christ in the Borderlands



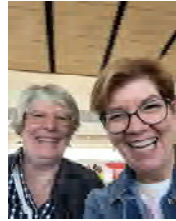
Car Travelers

Seven members of Pax Christi Little Rock (Isabel Adams, Phyllis Baltz, Mary Hunt, Ann Lassiter, Jan Pipkin, George Simon, Sherry Simon) travelled to El Paso, Texas to take part in [The Encuentro](#)

[Project](#), a seven-day border immersion program that provides an experiential education on immigration issues at the US-Mexico border. Travelling from several locations, participants arrived in El Paso on October 22-28.

This was Pax Christi Little Rock's third trip to the border, with the first two completed in 2023 after conducting a 3-part series on Immigration in their monthly speaker series. Sr. Norma Pimentel, executive director of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley located in McAllen, TX inspired Pax Christi to undertake its own learning experience and share with others the truth found at the border.

Every project that Pax Christi Little Rock undertakes is conducted through a process of Prayer-Study-Action. This journey began with a novena, asking for the intercession of the patron saint of migrants, St. Francis Xavier Cabrini. The novena ended on the first day of the Encuentro experience.



Air Travelers

Over the course of the first 3 days, participants attended 12 seminars conducted by educators, border patrol officers, community activists, priests/religious, social workers, immigration attorneys and migrants. Sites were visited in both El Paso and Ciudad Juarez. The amount of information shared was overwhelming and often very different from the information provided through the media. Here is a small sample of the interesting facts learned over these first few days:

1. El Paso is the 4th safest city in the US.
2. Fentanyl is not coming over the border in the backpacks of immigrants. It is coming in large amounts through ports of entry on planes, trucks, ships, containers. 80% of the fentanyl seized at ports is from US citizens.
3. There is not a clear path to citizenship for migrants at the southern border. Processes for family based petitions are backlogged for years.
4. President Biden placed significant limits on asylum petitions on June 5, 2024. An individual now can't petition for asylum without being formally admitted to US by some other process. Now many people are waiting on the Mexico side of the border with nowhere to go, no money, no means of making a living. They are at the mercy of the cartels.
5. The increase in southern border crossings that began in the 1970's was due to multiple social forces. The Cold War led to many proxy wars being fought in Central American, which was disastrous to the economies of these countries and destabilized the region. The war on drugs also contributed to increased organized crime, human trafficking, and increased immigration.
6. Undocumented immigrants paid \$96.7 billion in federal, state and local taxes in 2022. They do not receive benefits from this contribution.
7. Our country has created an abusive reliance on migrants whom we give no opportunity for citizenship.
8. The immigration system is broken, with political parties doing nothing to fix the problem.

A Moment of Grace: A Prayer for Refugees
(through the intercession of Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini)

God of our Wandering Ancestors, Long have we known that
your heart is with the refugee:
That you were born into time in a family of refugees fleeing
violence in their homeland.

Who then gathered up their hungry child and fled into alien
country.

Their cry, your cry, resounds through the ages: "Will you let
me in?"

Give us hearts that break open when our brothers and sisters
turn to us with that same cry.

Then surely all these things will follow:

Ears will no longer turn deaf to their voices.

Eyes will see a moment for grace instead of a threat.

Tongues will not be silent but will instead advocate.

And hands will reach out-

Working for peace in their homeland,

Working for justice in the lands where they seek safe haven.

Lord, protect all refugees in their travels.

May they find a friend in me and so make me worthy of the
refugee I have found in you.

Amen.

October 22-28, 2024 Pax Christi Little Rock & 9 Srs of St. Joseph (As of Oct 19)									
	7:30	8:45	9:00 - 10:00	10:30 - 11:00	11:45	1:00 - 1:30	2:00 - 2:30	3:00	3:30
Day 1	Arrival	Registration / Orientation	Registration / Orientation	Registration / Orientation	Registration / Orientation	Registration / Orientation	Registration / Orientation	Registration / Orientation	Registration / Orientation
Day 2	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 3	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 4	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 5	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 6	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 7	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 8	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 9	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 10	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 11	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 12	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 13	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 14	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 15	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 16	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 17	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 18	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 19	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 20	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 21	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 22	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 23	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 24	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 25	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 26	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 27	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 28	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 29	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Day 30	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast

The Encuentro Project Schedule

The schedule shown above provides information on the different educational experiences provided by the Encuentro Project. All of the seminars were informative and many facts and figures were provided. But facts, while extremely important, do not change hearts. Hearts are changed when you hear the stories of these very real individuals and families who are attempting to cross the border and all that they have gone through to reach safety.

Here is the story of Maria, an immigrant who shared her story and gave permission to share it with others. Her name has been changed for the sake of confidentiality and safety.

Maria is a 34-year-old woman from Chihuahua, Mexico who came with her husband and two young children to the US border seeking asylum. She and her family left Chihuahua in 2020 to escape death threats from gang members. They made it to Juarez but were unable to cross due to Title 42 rules denying asylum at the time. In 2022, Maria witnessed the murder of her husband by members of a drug cartel who were attempting to extort money from him that he was unable to pay. She and her children were hiding in the floor of a car and were not harmed. Maria attempted to contact the municipal police in Juarez to let them know, but they would not help her. Instead, they began to harass her, contacting her in the middle of the night to get statements from her and then began accusing her of crimes. The cartel members also called her, describing how they were going to kill her and her children if she reported the crime and telling her that the police would not help her because she had paid them off. She began recording all of the calls and finally took them to an immigration attorney in Juarez. This provided enough evidence to get a hearing granted. After her hearing in October of 2022, based on the information she provided regarding persecution, she was allowed to cross the border and was sent to the Holy Family refugee center. They

helped her get a work permit and a social security number. Her final court date was scheduled for November 21, 2024. Maria's chances of receiving asylum are poor. Only 2% of asylum requests are granted in courts located in Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Oklahoma, or Arkansas whereas the odds go up to 85% in California or New York courts.

A Day in Ciudad Juarez



Fr Bill and Kristina

On the second day of the Encuentro experience, Pax Christi members drove across the border into Ciudad Juarez, specifically into the very poor area of Anapra. They visited several different places there, including Corpus Christi Catholic Church located "in the shadow of the United States." While there, they met Father Bill and Kristina, a lay minister who has organized 5 major ministries for immigrants at

the Catholic Cathedral in Juarez. Fr. Bill's parish was established 40 years ago and he has been pastor for 10 years. He spoke about the work life of immigrants waiting to cross the border and the brutality of the police force in Juarez. Kristina has worked with many immigrant women to learn skills that they can use to make a living while they wait at the border. One example was the bags that migrant women sew and embroider to sell in order to make money for their families.



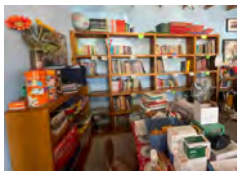
Bags Sewn by Migrants



Proyecto Santo Nino

Encuentro participants also visited Proyecto Santo Nino, a clinic established in 2003 by the Sisters of Charity in Cincinnati that serves children with special

needs. These sisters cross the border several times a week to work in the clinic. Sister Carol is also working to establish a Montessori school where they currently have around 50 children enrolled.



Anapra Biblioteca

and maintaining this biblioteca (library) and their scholarship program that assists children from elementary school through college. They have now independently assisted over 50 children, 10 of whom have completed college. They described how educating their children is changing the town.

While in Juarez, we also visited a 10-year-old library run by Estella and Berta in Anapra. They shared their own traumatic stories about coming to Juarez and then provided information about establishing



Tour of Library

Papa Francisco Refugee Center



Team Pollo

On Saturday and Sunday, following educational seminars, the Encuentro group shopped and made dinner for around 50 residents of Papa Francisco refugee center. The group had fun creating Team Pollo (Saturday's cooks) and Team Hamburguesa (Sunday's cooks), with half the group cooking and serving each night while the other half visited with residents, played games with the children and worked on their Spanish skills! Everyone helped clean up



Team Hamburguesa



Papa Francisco

visiting with the residents and playing with the children as they awaited transportation to different parts of the country. It was a sobering experience, however, to hear the stories of immigrants and see young parents with ankle bracelets



Families at PF

placed on them so they could be tracked by ICE. It left the group pondering what it must feel like as an immigrant to be made to feel like a criminal when you are simply seeking shelter from harm in the safest place you can find. It also brought home the importance of how we might, as a country, be more welcoming to our neighbor.



George Serves the Cake

One of the long-term residents was a woman with special needs who had lived with her mother at the center for the past 6 months. She had a long history of abuse while living in Mexico. The group helped her celebrate her birthday on Sunday. She had a special place in her heart for George, so he presented her with a birthday cake while everyone sang happy birthday to her.

Mission Reflections



Homeless Jesus

Inspired by Matthew 25:41-45, this sculpture entitled Homeless Jesus by Timothy Schmalz is a representation that suggests Christ is with the most marginalized in our society. The Christ figure is shrouded in a blanket and laying on a park bench. The only indication that it is Jesus is the visible wounds on his feet.

All of us involved in the Encuentro Project sat in a circle around this statue on our last night to give reflections on what we were taking away from this experience. Most of us were so overwhelmed that it was difficult to put our experience into words. It was an incredible week. There was no way to express the gratitude we had for the presenters, staff, priests, women religious, volunteers and especially the migrants we had the honor of meeting and who made this such a life-changing experience.

To summarize the this encounter at the borderland, it became clear that accompanying our neighbor at the border was a sacred task that changed the lives of everyone involved. The people who live "love of neighbor" out in their daily lives have a light that shines from them and this light attracts the love of others. And the many helpers at the border shared their light freely with all of us. It was hard to leave those



The Border

who walk the gospel message every day of their lives.

Perhaps what was most humbling, though, was the fortitude, bravery and through it all the gratitude expressed by the immigrants themselves. It would be hard to imagine what they went through to get to where they had heard would be a place of safety in this country. And even though the road in front of them was still uncertain and held the likelihood of rejection and return to their own country at some future point, still they were grateful to be here. I think we were all in awe. We found the peace of Christ in El Paso in the borderlands in the most unexpected and humble of places.

Catholic Principles of Migration

- I. Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland.
- II. Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders.
- III. Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.
- IV. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.
- V. The human dignity and human rights of undocumented immigrants should be respected.

CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES
OF MIGRATION
(USCCB)



“Behind me stands a wall that encircles the free sectors of this city, part of a vast system of barriers that divides the entire continent. . .those barriers cut across. . .in a gash of barbed wire, concrete, dog runs, and guard towers. Farther south, there may be no visible, no obvious wall. But there remain armed guards and check points all the same-still a restriction on the right to travel, still an instrument to impose upon ordinary me and women the will of a totalitarian state.”

President Ronald Reagan
Remarks at the Brandenburg Gate
West Berlin, Germany
June 12, 1987

ACTION



Encuentro Group

After returning home from the mission, the group took a few weeks to process all they had learned. They came back together on Tuesday, December 10 to unpack their experiences and share with one another the information and new perspectives brought back with them. The group was particularly focused on the importance of this experience in the context of the election that took place shortly after their return. President-elect Trump was promising to “deport millions of immigrants on Day One.” The group pondered, based on their experiences, what action they would take to make a difference.

Ann had been appointed to lead an Immigration group at her church in Raleigh, NC. She was working out how she might share this information with others in her parish. Sherry developed a PowerPoint of the Encuentro experience and shared it with several Pax Christi groups in Texas during their quarterly meeting on November 20. George, Mary, and Jan were also a part of the zoom presentation. Sherry will be presenting the “Southern Border Encounter” at the next Pax Christi Little Rock Speaker Series meeting in January. Isabel worked it out with the Primetimers group at Christ the King Catholic Church to present the PowerPoint presentation at their January meeting. Several members of the group will be present to share personal reflections. Sherry also set up a meeting with Bishop Taylor and shared the Encuentro experience with him. They discussed how the threat of mass deportations might be dealt with in Arkansas. Bishop Taylor gave permission to use his 2008 pastoral letter on immigration and he wrote a letter that was read to all parishes on November 24 that included the upcoming threat to immigrants and the importance of caring for our neighbors. Phyllis is talking with several of her cohorts in Hot Springs about how they might share the information with their parish. Phyllis also brought up other possible study opportunities around Catholic Social teachings.

In addition to the concrete actions already being initiated by this motivated and inspired group of missionaries, it is clear that the time in the borderlands is working on their hearts. It is impossible to accompany your neighbor in their time of need and not have a conversion of heart, a call to make a difference in this often violent and inhospitable world.



2024 Thanksgiving Baskets

Once again this year, thanks to generous donations, Pax Christi was able to furnish Thanksgiving Baskets to the families and individuals we had settled in 2024. Baskets full of traditional Thanksgiving feast items were delivered the week before Thanksgiving including: Chickens, potatoes, green beans, corn, rolls, and pumpkin pie. In virtually every case the food was graciously, and warmly welcomed. This year we helped settle inhabitants or clients from, Jericho Way, Our House, Compassion Center, and the Salvation Army. It is truly a joy to see people turn their lives around, with just a little help. from homelessness to housed and settled through the work of these agencies and Settled Souls and Pax Christi. Thanks all.

Volunteers helping to fill the baskets this year included Isabel Adams, Lee and Agnes Bass, Jan and Tony Pipkin, Sandee Haslauer, Alicia Dixon, Tamara Tahat, Tim and Roz Pruitt

Christmas 2024

A time to share

Christmas is always a special time of the year and Pax Christi's generosity was evident again this holiday season. A family was referred to Pax Christi through Board Member Margaret Douglas, a staff member for Helping Hand of Greater Little Rock. This beautiful family of 8 created their wish list and each board member selected one person and purchased those items. The family also received gift cards to Walmart and Kroger that were purchased by the general membership of Pax Christi. The joy on the faces of this family was so beautiful when the presents were delivered by Margaret on December 13th. We are so thankful for our Pax Christi membership.



Thu, Dec 12

Pax Christi Little Rock Christmas Party Potluck

Do you know what this word scramble spells (p-h-d-o-r-u-l)? It's "Rudolph" and of course that's just one of the games played at our Pax Christi Christmas dinner this year. We were once again fortunate to use space provided by the LR Diocese and enjoy delicious potluck foods brought by members and the Pax Christi board. Twenty-five friends gathered and brought gifts for a family from the Helping Hand ministry. We enjoyed fellowship and sang Christmas carols, especially entertaining was the "12 Days of Christmas" led by Al Adams! Fr. Harvey sang his Christmas rap to remind us that "Jesus is the reason for the season"!



After the party Tim Pruitt and Tony Pipkin fill Margaret Douglas' van with PCLR's gifts for its special family for this Christmas.



Sandee Haslauer, with a little help from her friends Lee and Agnes Bass, Jan and Tony Pipkin, and Ros and Tim Pruitt planned and directed a fun celebration for PCLR.

On the Horizon

In his pastoral letter marking the 58th World Day of Peace on January 1 2025 **Pope Francis** calls on all of us to be people of hope and of peace. He sets out the goals for this Jubilee Year, among them:

Rediscover our true relationship to the Father and live with the conviction that “all of us are brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same Father, born to live in freedom.”

Recognize that all that we have is a gift of God and not a sign of entitlement.

Recognize that we may be complicit in many of the injustices that plague our world today and daily ask God to “forgive us our trespasses.”

Join in solidarity with others to “denounce the many situations in which the earth is exploited and our neighbor oppressed.”

Join others in solidarity to call for the wealthy nations of the world to reduce, if not outright cancel, the international debt of the poor countries, call for the elimination of the death penalty, and to redirect part of the current expenditures for armaments to address world hunger and climate change.

Pax Christi Little Rock will strive to take the words of Pope Francis to heart and to truly make 2025 a “Year of Grace”. We invite all Arkansans of good will to join us.

Pax Christi Little Rock Membership Application



Pax Christi Little Rock (PCLR) is a chapter of Pax Christi USA, a Catholic peace and social justice movement rooted in prayer, study and action that works towards both personal and social transformation. We are committed to the peace, nonviolence, justice, and compassion that are the heart of the gospel message of Jesus. More than ever, Pax Christi Little Rock needs people who are willing to help achieve this goal of nonviolence in our world. We invite you to join our efforts to build a sustainable peace in which each person is treated equitably, for it is only through achieving social justice that peace may be attained.

Name _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City, State _____ Zip Code _____

Email Address _____

Please mail your PCLR membership application to

Mary Hunt, 6 Valley Forge Drive, Little Rock, AR 72212

Our only requirement for membership is that you pray for peace and commit to nonviolent solutions to conflict. We also invite you to join in our events with fellow peacemakers!

Please visit www.facebook.com/paxchristilittlerock for the latest updates.

In lieu of membership fees, we welcome donations, all of which go to support our many outreach programs. You may send your donations (checks made to Pax Christi Little Rock) to

Mary or go to paxchristilittlerock.org and press the **DONATE** button. Questions and suggestions may be sent to paxchristilr@gmail.com

Welcome to PCLR membership! May the peace of Christ be with you!