

Fall 2021

MONTHLY
NEWSLETTER of
HARLEM ROAD UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH

HRCUpdate

Getting to Know You:

Kris Thomas

Each month, we'll feature one HRC member in this space.

Tell us about your family.

I grew up in a loving family, the youngest of 3. My parents have been a guiding force in my life, and both worked in public education. I joke with them that I observed what they did well (and emulated those qualities) and not so well (and avoided those behaviors). I have an older brother and sister. We are all within 3.5 years in age. We grew up on 60 acres without many neighbors, so we were close and played together all the time. My Dad is one of 7 kids so the Thomas side of my family is quite large – and we are naturally talkative, outgoing, and just plain crazy! Most of the our family still live in Ohio so we are able to see each other quite often. It's fun seeing my kids play with my cousin's kids. I'm married to my beautiful wife, Holly, and we have two children (Tyler is 13 and Brynn is 10). Our kids attend Westerville schools and are involved in soccer, hockey, and skating.

How did you and Holly meet?

Holly and I met at Miami University. We were both members of an honor/social organization. Our first date lasted around 7 hours (dinner, putt-putt, and a movie), I'm told that's a long time for a first date and her roommates started worrying about her.

For more about Kris, see page 2.



Better Together: Church and community

We had more than 170 people register online to be a part of our first community service day - and there were dozens of folks who helped behind the scenes to make BETTER TOGETHER a success. On August 1 we served our community by: painting curbs, cement pillars and benches at all Big Walnut schools, painting the exercise stations and gazebo at the Harlem Township park, building a 48' x 63' dog park at Westerville Estates, and providing school supplies, new shoes and new personal clothing items to 92 kids.

Channel 4 TV was on hand to film the event and 104.9 The River radio was there to provide music and support. One of the greatest things was that over 60 people were from outside Harlem Road church...it truly was a day where the community came together to help the community!! If you haven't seen the Channel 4 news clip, click here: [Better Together news](#)

Thanks to everyone who participated, and special thanks to the mission planning team who made this happen: Judy Sharpe-Kosmatka, Sara Shaw, Dave Wheeler, Lisa Riddle, Rocky Riddle, and Mishelle Soule.

Fall Worship Updates

At this point, we expect that in-person & online worship will continue at 10 am through the fall.

We'll be starting up our fall "Kingdom Impact" campaign soon – be on the lookout for some amazing and inspiring stories from inside and outside our congregation!

Children's Ministry News

By Kate Leskovac

Sunday School Still Needs You

Sunday school teachers are needed for these areas:

- * 1st and 3rd Sundays in the Nursery
- * 1st Sunday in the 1st-2nd grade class
- * 5th Sunday (4x a year) in the pre-K/K class

Contact Pam Leskovac at pam@harlemroadchurch.org or fill out a volunteer form in the Sunday bulletin and drop it in the offering plate!



Children's Christmas Musical

We're getting everything ready for our 2021 Children's Christmas Musical! Kids 4 years old through sixth grade are invited to participate. Watch for the "try-out table" where you can pick up try-out scripts, a parent letter and one CD per family. Rehearsals start Sept. 19 immediately following the 11 am service! Lunch will be provided. Rehearsals end promptly at 1pm. Don't miss the fun!!

Here are some more dates to add to your calendar:

- * Mock dress rehearsal: December 1 at 6 pm
- * Dress rehearsal: December 4 from 10 am – noon
- * Performances: Saturday, December 4 at 6 pm and Sunday, December 5 at 10 am

If you'd like to prepare, serve, and clean up a simple lunch for our kids, please contact Pam or Kate and we will contact you with dates and simple menu ideas.

Friday Night Live: Trunk or Treat

We won't have Friday Night Live in September, but plans are underway for a weekend of fun in October, beginning with Trunk or Treat! Watch for details on Facebook, the church website and also check your mail for postcards! We are gladly accepting candy donations for this event now. Please label items "Trunk or Treat" and leave them in the church office. We appreciate your help!

Questions? Please contact Kate Steele ksteellie@gmail.com.

Youth Ministry News

The first Youth Group meeting of the season will be September 19, right after church until 1 pm. We'll let you know about other plans as they evolve.

Group leaders are Lisa Riddle and Liz Stimer. If you have any questions, feel free to email us at harlemroadyouth@gmail.com.

Stepping Up – Conference to Encourage Spiritual Maturity

Have you ever wondered what it would look like for you to grow into a deeper relationship with Christ and experience following Him at the next level? Have you wanted more time to worship Him in spirit and in truth and listen to His voice for direction and encouragement?

In February, Tonya Marvin from Transformed, Revived and Renewed ministries will lead us in times of equipping and encountering so that we can experience more of the kingdom of God in our spiritual walks. Watch for more information in later emails and newsletters.



Global Outreach

Helping with the Immediate Crisis in Haiti

The August 14 earthquake in Haiti has left more than 2,100 dead, more than 12,000 wounded, more than 300 still missing, and an estimated 30,000 families now homeless. We can be thankful that the quake did not damage the Imagine Missions school but our kids did feel the rumblings. Sadly, a partner mission, Lifeline Christian Mission, whose Haiti headquarters are on the southern peninsula of Haiti, did suffer damage.

If you would like to make a financial donation for disaster assistance, please consider donating to UMCOR (UM Committee on Relief). 100% of your support will go to the needs of the people of Haiti.

Ongoing Help for Our School in Haiti

Please see the letter from Imagine Missions later in this newsletter.

If you can find it in your heart (and wallet) to provide \$30 or \$60 each month, you can make a tremendous difference!! \$30/month will help a family survive financial challenges and help Imagine Missions provide counseling and social support. \$60/month will help Imagine Missions provide TUITION-FREE education to a child. You can go to www.imaginemissions.org to learn more and to sponsor a child.

Do you shop at Amazon.com? If so, please consider using SMILE.Amazon.com instead. It's the exact same Amazon except that you can select a non-profit to receive a donation from Amazon equal to a percentage of your purchase. Chose a charity of your choice!! Perhaps Imagine Missions could be your designee.



Missions News

by Judy Sharpe-Kosmatka

Harlem Road UMC focuses its Mission Outreach efforts in two key areas....our local Big Walnut community, with an emphasis on Westerville Estates....and our global Haitian community in the Imagine Missions orphanage.

Local Outreach

Our Local Outreach is done in partnership with other churches and organizations....and we call our combined group "SidebySide." The other organizations are Galena UMC, Church of the Saviour UMC, New Albany UMC, Chapel North Church, and Harlem Twp. Helping Hands.

Neighborhood Bridges

This is a website and a Facebook page for our community. It's a way for YOU to get an opportunity to help students and youth in our community! Needs can be seen immediately by actively going into the website. If a need exists longer than 24 hours, emails are sent out to all who have signed up. Please go to www.neighborhoodbridges.org. On that first screen, enter "Big Walnut" in the search bar and then select it when it shows up. Then, on the next screen, you'll have a "Subscribe" space in which to enter your email so that you are notified of upcoming needs. Also on that screen, in the middle of the picture, is a "Donate" button. If you know of a need, please let Judy Sharpe-Kosmatka know so she can post it to the Bridges website.

Bountiful Backpacks

The Bountiful Backpacks program provides food to Big Walnut students who need food over the weekends. Thank you to ALL who have already donated food for this program!!!! Sara Shaw is the leader of this ministry. If you have any questions or would like to help, please contact Sara at smwolfieie3315@gmail.com.

Produce Giveaway: Fall Update

This team meets every third Saturday from March-October to help neighbors in need select fresh produce for their families. Volunteers serve from 8:45 am – 1 pm and enjoy time together and forming new relationships in our community. Our fall produce markets will be held on the 3rd Saturday: September 18 and October 16.

If you are interested in serving in this ministry, please contact Mishelle Soule at bristol2425@yahoo.com.

Getting to know you (continued)

Kris Thomas...

We dated a few years. Knowing I would be bald by my mid twenties and that my better looks were behind me, I proposed the spring semester her senior year. Luckily she said yes! She got a job at Groveport Madison Schools (where she still is teaching today). After a year, we got married and moved to Westerville and have lived there since.

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? What did you end up doing in your career?

I thought about becoming a Church Camp director, or a basketball coach, or a high school math teacher. My career turned out differently. I graduated college with a Business Management degree and no job. I ended up working for Delaware County Bank for 6 years and then moving over to US Bank for the past 14 years. No one ever plans to have a career in banking, most bankers just fall into it if they don't have any other options. Also, don't ever ask a banker what they do because every answer is boring! I have learned a lot about personal finance and have been blessed to work for two great companies the last 20 years.

Tell us about your most memorable vacation.

In the summer of 2000 I had the opportunity to study abroad in London for 7 weeks with 60 other Miami students. This was my first time out of the country and truly a life changing experience. We were able to travel each weekend to places like Scotland, Ireland (the prettiest green place I've ever seen!), Wales, Paris, and Normandy (overwhelmed with emotion seeing the beaches and wreckage still on the shore).

What gives you the most joy?

I have loved the game of basketball my entire life. I played and watched basketball anytime possible growing up. I still play once a week with a group of guys, just for fun – to relive the old glory days. I enjoy playing golf, camping/canoeing, and recently started mountain biking. Any time spent with my family is great – playing games, watching movies, and going to the beach.

What do you love about HRC?

From the first day we attended HRC, I have always loved how the atmosphere and building never felt like a corporate experience. From the message being shared each week, to the Praise team, to the children's activities, to the outreach ministries, all of it feels genuine with the 100% purpose of serving the Lord. I tell friends and neighbors: All are welcome and come as you are! I am so blessed to witness my children connect with Jesus in this environment and grow in their faith for the last 8+ years.

I want to thank HRC, the entire staff, the volunteers, and all those that attend. This place has become very special and very important to myself and my family. We have truly received back more than we have given. I encourage every single person to get more involved with the ministries and missions of the Church.

What ministries have you been involved in?

Over the years we have been able to get more involved with the ministries at HRC. After a few years of attending HRC, I was asked to join the Finance Team. Having a banking background, I am happy to serve in the church finances. Holly has had a chance to join the mission team to Haiti twice and we are thankful to be able to sponsor one of the children (Lony). What I mostly enjoy is serving the youth - helping with Sunday school classes and assisting with the games for both Friday Night Live and Summer Nights Live. While their energy can be exhausting, seeing their joy and excitement is worth it.



Market Place Reminder

By Ellen Jacobs

Come enjoy this great day of shopping and take time to enjoy lunch in the cafe, all while supporting our children in Haiti. All proceeds go to Imagine Missions, which provides family and educational support for underprivileged children in Haiti. You'll find great specialty items from local artists and crafters, and our cafe food is the best around. It's a fun day that you don't want to miss!

Put it on your calendar and plan to be there: October 2, 2021

Hours are 10 am - 3 pm.

You can be involved in this great event any number of ways: set-up or tear-down, helping in the cafe, donating items for the HRC table, or donating an item (or items) for the silent auction.

Contact Ellen at 614-406-4337 or at jacobsell53@gmail.com if you would like to be used by God in this way. Thank you to all who have volunteered so far!

Update on Imagine Missions and Our Kids in Haiti

The letter below from the president of Imagine Missions was written to HRC before the earthquake. Although the quake did not directly affect our kids in Despinos, Haiti, it has scared them and also affected the distribution of food and supplies to all of Haiti.

We finished up the 2020-2021 school year! Kids were able to come to school despite all of the unrest and we were able to complete the school year. We have prayed continually that God would just shield us from the gangs, that he would make us invisible to those who may cause harm, and to this point, the Lord has done exactly that. School will be starting in just a couple of weeks. At this time we are praying that we are able to bring back all students and staff on time to start the school year out. We will continue to pray for the right decisions about bringing students on the campus and seek counsel from those on ground who know what is safe for everyone. We have boosted security at the school, so there are more guards on the grounds during the school day. We continue to provide quality education to the kids who once lived at Imagine Missions and to hundreds of students in Despinos. Our teachers and staff at Imagine Missions have done a fabulous job with students despite a year of political unrest and COVID19. This past year we were able to provide a daily nutritious lunch to every student who attended our school. For many of our students, they relied on this meal to be of substance and nutritious, and for many in the community, it may have been the only meal they ate each day. We are praying desperately that the Lord provides funds for this program to continue. We believe students learn best when they are not hungry and that we want to know that all of our students are receiving nutrients. The cost of food is high in Haiti and it is not always safe for families to get out for food, so this program is one way for families to know their children will be eating. This program is at risk due to the financial burden to feed over 400 kids a day, so we are praying for partners who will help to sustain this program for the 2021-2022 school year.

As for our families, the kids are doing really great with their families! We love knowing kids are with their families and that families are growing together. Our social worker Exillien continues to conduct regular check ins with families, and the families are able to express needs to Exillien. At this time, Exillien has not expressed any concerns for placement and all of the kids are doing well with their families. Those who live close enough to Despinos continue to attend Imagine Missions school, and for those kids who live far from Despinos, Imagine Missions is paying for them to attend school closer to the family home. Our next goal with families is to focus on job creation. Families have been together for almost two years now, and we know that through job creation, these families will be much more self-sustaining. Exillien is speaking with all of the parents about jobs, job training, and Imagine Missions will be fundraising in the next year to help families train and start businesses in Haiti. I am just so thankful our kids are with their families and doing so well. We do still have a few kids who are staying with caregivers employed by Imagine Missions, but Exillien has been working closely with the families to reunify the few kids that are still in the care of Imagine Missions.

Our kids are growing and doing well despite the chaos in Haiti. They are doing well with their families and at school. We miss being able to send teams down and building relationships with the families. When we first reunified, my biggest dream was to meet the parents and invest in the entire family, and my prayer is that one day we will be able to get back on ground. At this time, we are not allowing any teams to come to Imagine Missions. Having teams on ground would be a great safety risk to team members and to the staff at Imagine Missions.

Please keep our staff, families, and Despinos in prayer as the gangs have started to move into Despinos. The violence, unrest, and difficulty continues. Our hearts break for what is happening in Haiti. As I stated earlier, the information that we are putting out on the internet is fairly vague because we do not want anyone who may want to do harm to know that there are kids coming to the school regularly. As much as we want our Imagine Missions to be in the know of what is going on, we are taking every precaution we can to keep families in Haiti safe, and right now, that means not providing a lot of details. When things settle and it is safe to share family stories and education successes again, we will absolutely keep our website and social media sites updated. For now I ask that you pray desperately for safety for our school, for our students, and for their families. Pray that God shield them from the eyes of those who want to cause harm and pray that their daily physical needs are met safely. Please pray for our school lunch program and that God provides the finances to keep that program going for the next school year. The board is deeply committed to this program, and I would love to have further conversations with anyone who may want to contribute financially to the school lunches. Please pray for Exillien as he continues working closely with families, including safety in traveling to see the families. Please pray that the job creation program can take off this year despite the challenges that the country of Haiti currently has. Finally please be in prayer for all of Imagine Missions as we undergo changes in directors. Melissa has made the decision to resign as International Director effective August 31, 2021. I cannot thank Melissa enough for our leadership and commitment to Imagine Missions the past eleven years. She has led Imagine Missions well and has faithfully sought the Lord in her leadership. I watched as Melissa struggled to make this decision, but Melissa has seen Imagine Missions through so many changes and she has done such a great job. I am excited to see her be able to rest, recharge, and be able to see her sons through the next seasons of their lives. I have no doubt that Melissa will continue to be an important piece of Imagine Missions going forward. [The interim director, announced last week, is Crystal Whitmire, who has been a board member for many years.]

Please feel free to reach out to me at any time! thank you again for loving and supporting Imagine Missions.

Best,
Amber Zwick



Instilling Faith in Children

(Reprinted from United Methodist Communications) Helping kids learn about God may seem daunting. The good news is that a theology degree isn't required and it has less to do with words than with actions. Check out these tips from United Methodist children ministry leaders for how to make faith real in the lives of the kids we love.

Every day presents teachable moments

"Every moment of every day is a teachable moment and that doesn't stop with your faith," says Aimee Cox, director of children's ministry at Christ United Methodist Church.

"People think you have to be in a worship setting in your sanctuary to have sacred moments," Cox explains. "When you allow your kids to talk about how they are feeling and how to approach things in a Christ-like way, you're having that sacred moment without naming it." Sitting around the table at mealtime, taking a walk, snuggling at bedtime are ideal holy moments, says Melinda Shunk, the Arkansas Conference's children's ministry coordinator. "Adults can take these routine opportunities to tell children that you thank God for them or for the time you're spending together.

Engage all five senses

Asking children what they see, what they smell, what they hear in the world helps them experience God's creation in a variety of ways, Cox says. Employing this tip isn't just for nature walks or outside settings, Cox clarifies, suggesting the same questions can be asked following all activities, including church. "Always engage kids after worship by asking, 'What did you see today? What smells did you smell?'" "Help them walk through the experience of being at church," she says.

Allow kids to have their own experiences

Sometimes, parents fear how their child may react to a Bible story. Leaders suggest we share the story anyway without editing and introducing personal biases. "Children take it in and they understand what they understand for their age," explains Cox. "Let them ask questions."

Take time to wonder

"I think the greatest gift our kids give to us is the curiosity they bring to the table," McRay shares. "The wondering about how God works in our world creates more biblically literate children and creates lifelong lovers of Jesus."

Being present is a spiritual act

"Showing up, being there and listening to your child is the cornerstone of faith," McRay says. She explains that numerous studies indicate the understanding of God, ourselves and the world comes down to five foundational relationships in a child's life.

Authenticity rules!

Admitting you don't know the answer or that you messed up is OK too. "Being authentic is really key, because our kids see through the (façade)," McRay explains. "I want to model what it means to be a believer, but we have to remind ourselves that life is hard and we are going to struggle.

Be a faith storyteller

Children love a good story, particularly when someone they love is the main character. "Tell stories about when you were a child, what you thought about God, how you first came to your faith," Shunk suggests. Grandparents, especially, make excellent faith storytellers because they have the time and experiences to share those stories.



Prayer Requests

Requests:

Diana Robertson, Pam Leskovic,
Kristen Macklin-Lanning, Elizabeth
Jones, Ken Hubbard, Donna Goff,
Brad Rahr, Frank Farkas, Kelly Ager,
Marilyn Reams, Maranda Hill, Vicki
Doyle, Barb Gerwe, Kathy Strohm,
Judy Weinenberger, Tim Noble,
Virginia Grove, Brent Cahill, Peg
Collier, Jim Bernhardt, Clyde and
Jenny Fravel, Donna Evans, Dwayne
Piper, Tony Hamilton, Petra
Hinterschied, Gerry Duncan, Roger
Davis, Missy Sandy, Tim Saks, Jim
Thornhill, Vicki Troendly, Bill Fling,
Eileen Salmans

Military Service & First Responders:

Michael Albaugh, Tyler Albaugh,
Gage Duncan, Codey Falk, Chaplain
David Hogg, Matthew Humphrey,
Spencer Morris, Mike Neely, Joe
Pasqua, Scott Crowell, Jeremy
Ragan, Matt Robertson, Dave
Wheeler, Dave White, Brian Williams,
Ashley Walker

Community connection groups



Thinking about joining a small group, but not sure which one might be right for you? Contact the leaders to find out more about the people in the group and what they do!

- **Men's Bible Study:** We meet virtually on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month. Contact Jim Bernhardt with your email to get on the mailing list for study notes and other advisories. Leader: Jim Bernhardt (bernharj@gmail.com)
- **Women's Tuesday Night Bible Study:** Ellen Jacobs' small group continues to meet via zoom on Tuesday evenings at 7 pm. Notify Ellen if you would like to join, and she will send you an invite. All are welcome. Leader: Ellen Jacobs (jacobsellen53@gmail.com or 614-406-4337)
- **Women's Wednesday Night Bible Study:** We are starting a new study in September on the 23rd Psalm. We meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays. Current Leader: Eva Wolfe (tnewolfe@yahoo.com)
- **Women's Lunch Bunch:** The Lunch Bunch met at Olive Garden at noon on Thursday, September 3. Check with Bobbi on future lunch dates and times! Leader: Bobbi Pollock (bobbi10820@gmail.com or 614-496-7405)
- **Saturday Couples' Group:** Current studies, occasional dinner out. We take turns hosting. Please contact Lisa Danne for the latest information. Leaders: Ron and Lisa Danne (dannel@columbus.rr.com or 740-341-4645)
- **Ayers' Group:** Our next in-person get-together is Tuesday, September 21 at 7 pm for an outdoor game night and potluck desserts. Leader: Karen Benton (kabee115@aol.com).

HRC Zoom Account

Thanks to the gift of a generous donor, Harlem Road Church is now able to host your team or small group's meeting. With a second licensed seat under the church's account, this will leave room for any team or group that needs a virtual meeting space. This licensed seat allows any group to host up to 100 participants and have unlimited time for their meeting.

In order to reserve your time, please call Diana in the office at (740) 965-4543. Diana will schedule your zoom meeting and send you a link with the proper sign in username and password. We hope this additional seat allows any group in the church to continue to meet and connect with God and one another. If you have any questions, please let us know.