

Our Journey

Spring 2022 • Vol. 40 No. 1



FRANCISCAN SISTERS
OF LITTLE FALLS, MINNESOTA

Our Journey

SPRING 2022 • VOL. 40 No. 1

Our Journey is published three times a year by the Community Relations Department of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, for donors, associates, friends, relatives and employees. This publication shares the journeys of our Franciscan community as we work in joyful service in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare.

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Cover: Sisters Carol Virnig
(standing), Joanne Klinnert and
Annella Henger (seated)

Photo by Amanda Lampert

Our Mission:

We, Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, are a community of women religious whose members are called to live the Gospel joyfully and to reverence the earth and all of God's creation. In the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare, we embody a life of prayer, simple living and service to those in need.

We are committed to nonviolence as we recognize the need for healing in ourselves and in our world. We seek to build communities of peace and justice wherever we are called to serve.

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Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls,
Minnesota



Back on stage for Christmas!

Robyn Gray

St. Francis Music Center joyfully presented two Christmas Concerts! On December 12, the St. Francis Community Chorale and Brass Ensemble were welcomed to present their concert at First Lutheran Church in Little Falls, and on December 17, the St. Francis Orchestras presented a concert at the Falls Ballroom. Due to Covid restrictions the groups were not able to perform in Sacred Heart Chapel, which was disappointing, yet the upside was being welcomed into new venues in the community and being able to perform beautiful music! Both concerts are available to view on the St. Francis Music Center webpage: sfmusiccenter.org.

Also in December, the Music Center presented six Christmas recitals featuring students of all ages and all instruments! Over 80 students played in the recitals, bringing the audiences into the Christmas spirit! A highlight of the recitals was the St. Francis Percussion Ensemble playing "Carol of the Bells."

Over 230 students are now taking lessons at the Music Center and 125 musicians are participating in the various ensembles. Students and ensembles are already hard at work preparing for spring recitals and concerts. We're grateful to the many generous donors who support our financial aid program, which ensures that everyone who wants to take music lessons has the opportunity to do so. Thank you!



Dear Friends,

Geronimo, a wise Apache chief, said that we need to give ourselves permission to be happy. I would add at this challenging time, we need to give ourselves permission to be hopeful as well. Can we raise the level of our HOPE meter to the point where we can carry each other, where social solidarity can hold our lives together? Without hope even our best dreams, our well-made plans, cannot have life.

On New Year's Day, I was tempted to use the greeting, "May your 2022 be better than 2021." But wait a minute . . . that doesn't give credit to the many little gifts of grace that blessed us in 2021. We practiced the poverty of carefully observing the protocols of state and national health advisors, knowing for certain the vaccine saves lives. Many students, young and old, returned to the classroom. The launch of the James Webb telescope brought awareness to the magnificence of the cosmos. And here in our little corner of the universe, we established the One Planet Fund to offer small grants for projects that address climate change and care of Mother Earth.

In some situations, hope simply highlights an uncertainty. "I hope my bread turns out OK." "I hope spring comes early this year." Each week, I very much hope that we have no new cases of the coronavirus at the motherhouse.

But in the Christian tradition, hope is sure. We know for sure that Christ walks with us on good days and troubled days. The pages and pages of names listed in this issue of *Our Journey* show that you, our generous donors, have hope and faith in us, in our Franciscan values and our way of being gospel women in the world today. Thank you for your love, your support and your financial gifts. May God be with you.

Peace and all good,

Sister Carol Schmit

Sister Carol Schmit
Community Minister



This issue of *Our Journey* highlights many of our sisters who served in health care. These touching stories are sure to warm your heart. I had a delightful conversation with Sister Colette Toenies, a dedicated nurse and missionary. "One thing I always appreciated was the education I was able to have. I always felt I had a good background. My training as a midwife provided some very interesting experiences, especially in Peru in the 1960s," she said.



In October 2021, Pope Francis formally opened a “Synod on Synodality.” He invited the entire People of God to engage for two years in a spiritual journey by listening, dialoguing, praying, discerning, and making decisions together for the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. All members of the Church are to participate, listen and learn with each other, and grow closer to one another and to the Lord (from the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.).

The Pope declares: “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.” He sees this as following in the wake of the Church’s renewal as proposed by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). By journeying and reflecting together on the journey, the Church will learn through experience which processes might help its members to live communion, to achieve participation, to be open to mission.

In December 2021, Sister Carol Schmit convened the first session of synodal discussion among the motherhouse sisters. She suggested that communion, participation, and mission be discussed and also how the sisters’ experience of a Franciscan rural, feminine reality in central Minnesota addresses the call to be universal. The sisters then discussed the meaning of Church, ending up with the following statement: “The purpose of the Church is to be Christ to the world. It is to bring all people together into loving relationship with God and all of creation.”

Sisters Mary Zirbes and Rose Mae Rausch, because of their notable skills in facilitating conversations that empower participants, were appointed to facilitate future sessions. They understand synod as a situation in which people listen to one another’s hearts and feel with one another. Active Christians bring Christ to the world and bring people into loving relationships. Because the very form, style, and mission of the Church is synodal, everybody should participate in decision-making, leaving no one out. Ideally, the synodal process moves away from a “top-down” structure as we have known it, with so many bishops and priests “ruling” without listening to the people.

The synodal process will provide opportunity at the local level for the full growth of the spirituality of the People of God. Furthermore, it will facilitate the people of all societies to become more aware of today’s great challenges regarding the environment, human health needs, the economy, and the need to participate in social decisions. Religious are privileged for they have had many opportunities to learn about theology and spirituality. It behooves them, therefore, to be effectively involved in this synodal process and share the abundance of their spirituality and mission experience.

Sisters at the motherhouse will gather for at least five sessions of shared reflection, engaging in prayer to the Holy Spirit. They will focus on the Church’s fundamental characters of communion, participation, and mission and share feelings, experiences, and inspirations after the model of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Hopefully, the Spirit will burn within them. Furthermore, they will, insofar as possible, support parishes by their relationships with parish members. At the end of their gatherings, their reflections and suggestions will be sent to the bishop of St. Cloud to be included in the material being prepared for the 2023 Synod in Rome.

Franciscan community launches One Planet Fund!

Associate Rosanne Fischer, Office of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation

“...the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God’s creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet” (Laudato Si, 9).

Inspired by Pope Francis’s 2015 Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si: On Care for our Common Home*, the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls awarded the first round of grants from the newly created **One Planet Fund**. The sisters invite central Minnesota organizations—schools, nonprofits, faith-based groups—to apply for grants of up to \$1,000 for projects that address climate change and encourage sustainable living and respect for the Earth. The ten recipients included religious and community groups, educators, school children, youth and artists. From Parkers Prairie to Isanti, from Little Falls to Starbuck, the recipients came from geographically diverse areas of central Minnesota. Projects included prairie enhancement, park maintenance, clean-up and testing of bodies of water, Earth Day curriculum, environmental art exhibit and speakers, seeds, trees, school recycling and rain gardens.

In *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis states unequivocally that “. . . the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them, in communion with all that surrounds us.” **“Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience”** (LS 217). “We need to do everything in our capacity to limit global average temperature rise to under the threshold of 1.5 Celsius . . . for going beyond that will prove catastrophic, especially for poor communities around the world” (Pope Francis, 2020 World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation).

The Franciscan Community is not only promoting loving relationship with the land and with all of creation, but also participating in care for our common home on the lands where we live. It is a reciprocal relationship in which we care for the land and the land cares for us. We do this through such efforts as prairie restoration, pollinator gardens, community gardens. In the Franciscan tradition, the divine life of God is experienced as flowing outward and being reflected in the created cosmos; the love of God moves in and through creation. May we hold in awe and respect each diverse companion of the land, sky and water gifted to this Earth by our common Creator. Let us each “hear the voice of creation admonishing us to return to our rightful place in the natural created order—to remember that we are part of this interconnected web of life, not its masters” (Pope Francis, 2020 World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation).

For further information, or to apply to the One Planet Fund, please contact Elizabeth Rydeen: erydeen@fslf.org or 320-632-0624—or find the link on our homepage at fslf.org. Applications due November 1, February 1 and July 1.



Sister Carol served as a missionary in Latin America. Here she is in Bolivia in 1984 checking the healing of a young woman's hand.

Some called her *Monseñorita*

Sister Elise Saggau

Sister Carol Virnig became a Franciscan Sister in 1964, having completed her secondary studies at St. Francis High School. After her novitiate, she trained as a practical nurse at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, receiving her license in 1969. Her first assignment was at the community hospital in Onamia, where she enjoyed working in an intercultural situation. Many patients were members of the nearby Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. It was their custom to surround the sick with healing music and ritual. If they could not come to the patient's room, they would stand beneath a window and sing and play their instruments.

In the early 1970s, Sister Carol was assigned to assist the sisters with their health and rehabilitation needs. She developed a summer Personal Enrichment Program, popularly called PEP. Originally designed for sisters aged 50 and over, it soon included any interested sisters. During its first summer, it offered a dozen courses and 72 sisters participated. The PEP vision was wholistic and aimed at integrating physical, spiritual, and intellectual aspects of the individual. The program ran for eight years, four of them under Sister Carol's direction. It eventually included sisters from other communities.

In 1977, Sister Carol attained one of her heart's desires when she was sent as a missionary to Yunguyo, Peru. Here she served for three years as a nurse and pastoral minister. In 1980, she moved with Sister Helen Taffe to Coroico, Bolivia, where they engaged in pastoral ministry, provided health education, and trained health workers. Upon her return to the States, she pursued a master's degree in Pastoral Administration and Leadership with a Hispanic track at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Tex. After completing these studies, Sister Carol served until 2000



A snowy day in 1999 in Chimayo, N. Mex., where Sister Carol served in pastoral ministry.

as a pastoral assistant at Holy Family Parish in Chimayo, New Mexico.

Wishing to continue her pastoral and health services with Hispanic people, Sister Carol took a position in 2001 at St. Joseph's Parish in Waite Park, an area that had a large immigrant population. She continued to pursue a "wholistic" approach. Her ministry broadened to respond to requests from other parishes, schools, and agencies in the St. Cloud area. Eventually, she was addressing the needs of Hispanic families in sacramental preparation, housing, domestic abuse court cases, and translating for medical needs at the hospital, clinics, and schools. She was also reaching out to the elderly and chronically ill in their homes and doing weekly hospital visitation.

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In 2002, Father Ron Weyrens, then pastor in Waite Park, offered Sister Carol a house that the parish owned. She developed it into a ministry center for the Hispanic community and set it up to accommodate health education, parenting classes, Bible reflection classes, sacramental preparation, and ESL classes. The following year, the Hispanic Center moved to the St. Joseph Parish Center beside the church. At the time, it was getting financial support from the Franciscan Sisters, from parishes in the St. Cloud area, and from grants.

By 2012, an expanded and active Hispanic committee in St. Joseph Parish was drawing education resources from St. Cloud State University, health education resources from CentraCare, and engaging local lawyers and the Mexican Consul in the Twin Cities to provide advocacy for new immigrants. Its youth group had representatives from St. Joseph Parish in Waite Park and from St. Boniface Parish in Cold Spring. The committee had also been instrumental in establishing an AA group for Spanish speakers.

In 2015, Sister Carol took a part-time position with Comfort Keepers, a homecare/hospice agency in Waite Park. Now retired, she continues to serve in the area as a

volunteer. She loves caring for elderly persons and the dying in their homes and serving as a resource for the families in their various needs. She takes blood pressures, assists with bathing, and does some housework. She accompanies clients to doctor appointments.

Whether she is performing health or spiritual services, is comforting or cleaning, she understands her accompaniment of others as her particular mission to whole persons. She uses her skills to connect them with whatever resources will best serve their particular needs. She understands the connections between people. So even in her semi-retirement, she continues to do what she loves—meet human beings where they are, provide as far as possible resources for them to help themselves, and direct them when necessary to resources that others can provide.

In her 58 years of serving others as a Franciscan Sister, Carol has journeyed far, physically and spiritually, to support and serve people in need, empower them, and help them along their own journeys. It is no wonder that some of her Hispanic friends teasingly call her *Monseñorita* (Little Bishop)!

New Year's resolution becomes healthy habit

Elizabeth Rydeen



Norm Kuhlmeier is a regular at St. Francis Health and Wellness. You'll see him in the pool, swimming 50 laps three-five days a week. What started out as a New Year's resolution six years ago has become a habit Norm enjoys. His wife, Shirley, was already a member at St. Francis and so he joined, too. He started out swimming 30 laps. When someone told him he should be doing 50, he upped his game, keeping track with an underwater lap counter.

Norm and Shirley met when Norm moved to Royalton after his military service. They've been married for 53 years and have two sons, two grandchildren and four great grandchildren. He retired in 2002 after more than 30 years working as a guard at the Minnesota Correctional Facility in St. Cloud. Shirley has a long history with the Franciscan Sisters. She worked at St. Gabriel's Hospital for 38 years.

Norm has nothing but good things to say about St. Francis Health and Wellness, "I love the staff! Everyone is so friendly."



A ‘nice’ nurse on a mission

Julie Haldenwanger

Born during the Great Depression, Sister Anita Jennissen was the fourth of 14 children of Math and Margaret Jennissen. Growing up on a farm in such a large, close-knit family helped prepare her for living in the Franciscan community of sisters. It also gave her the fortitude to work in the many remote areas where she served as a missionary.

At an early age, Anita found she had a gift for nursing. When she was about 11 years old, her cousin, Adeline, came over to play with her younger siblings. Anita’s baby brother drank from a glass baby bottle and Adeline dropped it on the sidewalk. She tried to catch it but fell on the broken glass, deeply cutting her knee and hand. Anita’s mother panicked when seeing the blood, but Anita calmly took over—putting pressure on the wounds and wrapping them tightly with torn up sheets. When Anita’s mother took Adeline to the clinic, the doctor commented on Anita’s good job of bandaging.

When she was 12, Anita decided not only that she wanted to be a nurse, but also the type of nurse she wanted to be. She needed to have her appendix out and encountered two different nurses. One was an RN who wore a cap and was very kind and caring. The other nurse, who did not wear a cap, was a nurse’s aide and was not nice. Anita remembers needing to use the bed pan and was told by the nurse without the cap, “Don’t bother us—we’re having lunch!” She decided right then and there that she wanted to be a nurse with a cap—a *nice nurse*.

Anita attended a one-room schoolhouse near her home in rural Padua, Minn., and at the age of 13 went to St. Francis High School as a boarding student. During high school she felt the calling to become a Maryknoll Sister so she could work as a missionary in China. She later found out that the Franciscan Sisters were also serving as missionaries and were in need of members. She loved the Franciscans and because of her exposure to them (versus no direct exposure to the Maryknolls) she decided to become a Franciscan Sister missionary instead.

It made sense to become a nurse before entering the convent, so Anita entered the nursing school in Breckenridge. The Franciscan Sisters ran a small 50-bed hospital

From 1982-1984, Sister Anita served as a missionary nurse in Senegal, Africa, providing health care to many people such as these mothers and their children.

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in Sauk Centre, and Anita worked there as a nursing assistant while attending school. Before graduating from nursing school, she felt the call to join the convent and she returned to Little Falls and entered the postulancy, the first step in becoming a nun. She continued her schooling at St. Gabriel's School of Nursing and eventually realized her dreams of becoming both a nurse and a Franciscan Sister.

After earning her RN degree, Sister Anita was assigned to work at Our Lady of Mercy Hospital in Alexandria where she worked as a charge nurse first, and then as night supervisor where she was in charge of the entire hospital. After two years she was transferred to Little Falls and became a surgical nursing supervisor at St. Gabriel's Hospital and educator at St. Gabriel's School of Nursing. Her position at the hospital eventually was changed from the surgical unit to the emergency room, to prepare her for her future work in mission clinics.

Her first mission assignment was in Yunguyo, Peru, where she and three other sisters lived and worked among the Aymara Indians. The sisters were set up in a convent that eventually had a medical clinic built onto it. The medical supplies, sent by the Franciscan Sisters, were sufficient to treat common diseases and conditions. However, the setting was very primitive, and Sister Anita was in charge of making decisions and treating patients without a doctor. She was also called on to be a midwife. Tuberculosis and malnutrition were prevalent, along with extreme poverty. Sometimes she felt inadequate, but in spite of these feelings, she and the other nurses were able to help alleviate the suffering of many patients.

Later, when the government assigned a doctor to a new clinic built in the village, the convent's clinic was closed, and Sister Anita went to work as a volunteer in the government clinic, grateful to be working with a doctor. She stayed in Peru for eight years before being called to serve in other areas.

After a variety of engagements and experiences, Sister Anita returned to nursing and missionary work in West Africa. She went to Senegal where she served basically as a nurse-practitioner in three clinics in remote villages. She, along with other sisters, would go to the "bush clinics" four times a week where they would often treat conditions like malaria, skin infections and parasites. Some days they would see as many as 200 patients in one day. Malnutrition was also a huge problem. Sister Anita recalled one occasion when a 2-year-old boy was brought in, gasping for air. He was skin and bones and she knew there was nothing that could be done for him. It was a heart-wrenching ordeal for her, realizing how unjust it is that in some parts of the world children die of starvation while in other areas (like the United States) food is wasted.

Throughout the years, Sister Anita has served in a number of other countries including Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Kenya and various areas within the United States. She has had many interesting experiences and interactions with people both from her missionary work and from her extensive travels throughout the world. She has collected these stories and is writing her memoirs, titled *The World is My Cloister*, which she hopes to have published by July 14 of this year.

Donating to the Franciscan Sisters

Please, feel free to express any wishes you may have for your gift. However, be advised that in order to ensure that donors will be entitled to a federal income tax deduction, Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota (FSLF), is required by Internal Revenue Service rulings to retain full authority over the assets granted to it and cannot accept gifts that are required by the donor to be paid, or to be used, only to further the work of a specific individual or that are required to be used in another country by FSLF or a foreign charity or religious institute.

Financially speaking...

Sister Cordy Korkowski, Director of Donor Relations

My interest in finances started when I was a young girl. My dad figured it would be good for the Korkowski kids to have a bank account. With my meager savings, I made a trip to the Citizens State Bank of Brandon and deposited my few dollars. I got a book to keep my transactions, recording the date of my deposits. One day, my dad invited me to ride with him to Brandon as he went grocery shopping. I secretly wanted to visit the bank to see where “things were at” with my account. When Dad went to the grocery store, I snuck into the bank and asked the banker how much interest I had gained on my account. He looked it over, smiled at me and said, “One penny!” I was satisfied to be up to date.

Here in the Development Office, our accounts are always up to date. Financially speaking, we had another wonderful year due to the faithful giving of our generous donors. Through estate gifts, special appeals, online giving and memorial gifts, we were kept busy processing your donations—grateful for each one.

We added a new appeal this fall. In September, we sent letters to our St. Francis High School and nursing school grads to seek funds to build up our Sister Judine Cassidy Scholarship Fund. These funds are shared annually with local students who wish to pursue studies in education and health care. Each year, \$1500 is drawn from this account. In addition, the scholarship monies are used to support the financial aid program at St. Francis Music Center. Through the generosity of this special appeal, we now have \$11,225 reserved for future scholarships.

The 2021 Give to the Max fundraiser, held annually in November, was supported by 13 matching gifts totalling \$31,500. When all was said and done, we raised \$87,057 from 175 plus online donations and generous cash gifts. Our goal of \$63,000 was more than satisfied.

Our Christmas appeal designated for the care of our retired sisters raised over \$111,634. The names listed in this Spring issue of *Our Journey*, including all anonymous donors, continually remind us that we are surrounded by God’s goodness through our donors. We are honored to call you partners in our ministries to serve the common good. Be assured of our grateful prayers for you and your loved ones. Many thanks to each and every one of you. You are now up to date!



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

This issue of *Our Journey* recognizes individuals, businesses and organizations that have made cash, planned and in-kind gifts and donations to the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, during the calendar year, January 1 – December 31, 2021. Donors who have passed away during 2021 are identified with an asterisk (*) behind their name.

Every effort has been made to recognize donors according to their wishes, including those who prefer to remain anonymous. If names have been listed incorrectly, omitted or appear against the donor’s wishes, we apologize and encourage you to bring the matter to our attention by contacting Elizabeth Rydeen, (320)632-0624 or erydeen@fslf.org so that error can be corrected. Thank you.

THANK YOU

We extend our sincere thanks to our many donors who wish to remain anonymous.

— A —

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Sisters Aurora Tovar, Janice Wiechman and Isa Berrones serve the mission in San Rafael, Mexico, and travel throughout the widespread parish to provide pastoral care and catechesis to adults, youth and children. Sister Aurora (far right) celebrates with a group of young parishioners from the village of La Casita. “It is a joy to be able to serve those who are least likely to be educated in faith. We, the Franciscan Sisters, train children and parents, so that they receive their sacraments and have spiritual formation,” she remarked.

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The Franciscan Sisters have helped shape my life as a nurse, wife, mother and member of the Catholic Church. I am always grateful that many years ago as a student nurse, the Franciscan Sisters, through their teaching and practice, stressed compassion and how empathy is the result of compassion. Regardless of what stage of life or work, I have always appreciated having that as a backbone for life.
 —Marjorie and Roger Henkemeyer, St. Joseph, Minn.

From anesthesia to long-term care to planned giving

Sister Bernice Ebner was drawn to the sciences as a student at St. Francis High School and eager to become a nurse, more so because she wanted to be something different than her sister and aunt, both Franciscan Sisters who ministered as teachers.

Soon after she graduated from St. Gabriel's School of Nursing, she went to St. Cloud Hospital for nurse anesthetist training. Her first assignment: St. Ansgar's in Moorhead. In addition to working in anesthesia, she received a certificate in respiratory therapy and went on to teach this specialty. Eventually she earned a bachelor's in nursing and master's in health care administration. She served in various Franciscan health care facilities and then moved into long-term care, her favorite area of ministry.

Building relationships with the elderly and their families, helping with difficult end of life care, paved the way for her work in the Development Office as the director of Planned Giving. Sister Bernice is well-known among our donors. She regularly calls our "Donor of the Day" and keeps in touch with members of the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Society (composed of donors who have remembered the Franciscan Sisters in their estate plan). People have especially appreciated Sister Bernice's calls during the pandemic when many have felt isolated. She loves visiting and enjoys these calls as much as the donor on the other end of the phone. It's a win/win for sure!

If you wish to include the Franciscan Sisters in your will or estate plan, please contact Sister Bernice Ebner: 320-632-0699 or bebner@fslf.org.



St. Elizabeth of Hungary Society

Anyone who names the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, as beneficiary of a will or other estate gift automatically becomes a member of the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Society. Saint Elizabeth, our patron saint of planned giving, was a royal woman who embraced the Franciscan values and dedicated her life to the poor. We extend our sincere thanks to the people named below as well as the members who prefer to remain anonymous.

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We contribute to the Franciscan Sisters in thanksgiving and depend on the sisters for their prayers. The sisters have supported us in our health challenges. We appreciate how they utilize our resources and love giving to the sisters' retirement needs. We both feel very good about donating to the Franciscan Sisters. —Ray and Agnes Bernard, Pharr, Tex.

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Mary E. Mulvania

I came to St. Gabriel's School of Nursing in 1948. I paid \$220 for my three full years of training. The Franciscan Sisters said I could pay back the cost of my tuition after graduation, which I did. I loved my education and worked as a nurse for 40 years. My training helped me throughout my lifetime and raising my eight children. Sisters Caroline Torborg and Elizabeth Soenneker were my directors. My donations are in appreciation for all I have received from the Franciscan Sisters. —Dee Hanowski, Little Falls, Minn.

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FINACIAL REPORT 2021

Fiscal Year Oct. 2020–Sept. 2021

Source of Funds

Donations/Grants	\$744,617.51
Memorials	\$72,052.00
Gift Planning	\$392,955.42
Sales/Special Events	\$70,596.43
Total	\$1,280,221.36

Designation of Funds

Franciscan Ministries . . .	\$1,064,786.33
Franciscan Missions	\$23,545.36
Retirement Needs	\$191,889.67
Total	\$1,280,221.36

Dear friends,

Last September, we went “back to school” with the fall issue of *Our Journey* and featured memories from sisters who served in education. It seemed only appropriate to give the nurses and other health care professionals an opportunity to share their stories. After all, the Franciscans are known for being pioneers in rural health care. Over the years, the sisters operated/staffed 20 hospitals, nine nursing homes and four schools of nursing. The motherhouse in Little Falls was completed in 1891; within a year the sisters started St. Gabriel’s Hospital and the year after that, four sisters opened a hospital in Rock Island, Ill. Where there was need, the sisters responded.

Throughout the decades, especially at the very beginning when the sisters were just getting started in ministry, it was generous people who helped them along the way. To fund their hospitals and nursing homes, the sisters went begging, not just locally, but across the country. People responded.

The tradition continues today. When we ask for your support, you respond. It’s your generosity that allows us to be missionaries in Mexico, to reach out to people who live on the margins in California, Minnesota, Texas and Wisconsin, to provide pastoral care and spiritual ministries and promote respect and care of the Earth. It’s your loving support that helps us tackle big projects on our campus as well as care for our retired members—many who have committed their lives to caring for the sick and elderly, to bringing health care to underserved, rural communities. Thank you for being partners in ministry and for supporting our mission and Franciscan way of life. Enjoy these stories of sisters who ministered in health care, knowing generous donors like you have been with us every step of the way. We are forever grateful.

Blessings,



Elizabeth Rydeen

Director of Community Relations



Sisters respond . . .



My 14 years ministering at St. Francis Hospital, Breckenridge, were the best! Of those years I worked as a licensed practical nurse for 8 years and 6 years in pastoral care. At one time there were nine sisters that lived together in the “Park House.” We had hospital Halloween parties and

employee recognition parties, often with a dance. I enjoyed working holidays as a nurse because the patients and families were so appreciative of the attention they received. I remember caring for the Carmelite Sisters when they were hospitalized. They would always want the door shut, so they could watch television! I will always remember the fun we sisters and employees had and the close friendships I established from my years in Breckenridge. Today I serve on the board of directors for St. Francis in Breckenridge.

—*Sister Char Grossman*



I entered the community in January 1957. As a postulant I worked at St. Otto’s Home. After my first profession, I was in charge of Second Floor which housed both men and women. I was told I was well-suited for this assignment because I related well to both men and women. Being

in charge, I supervised employees and high school students, gave injections and passed medications. One day, I was on my hands and knees cleaning a bathroom when a male employee reprimanded me for doing such work in a habit. Our employees had such high regard for the sisters. Later I attended a program in Duluth and became a certified occupational therapy assistant. I graduated in 1964, in the first class in this new occupational therapy assistant program, the first of its kind in the country.

—*Sister Sylvia Opatz*

Tony Wese (chief of police), Sisters Jeanne Winter and Cleophas (Irene) Germer at Trinity Memorial Hospital, Cudahy, Wis., 1959



Looking back, I see my work as a nurse as a means of relieving the pain and suffering of Jesus' members. I served in small hospitals and had the opportunity to function in leadership roles and still be able to do some bedside nursing. I know in my heart that I received much more in my years in health care than what I was able to give.

—*Sister Mary Juanita Mauwer*



Upon graduating from NDCS (North Dakota College of Science) at age 58 with a degree in occupational therapy, I found a job at Marion Catholic Home in Milwaukee. Working with the elderly and the ADLs (Activities of Daily Living), I found joy and fulfillment as each senior made a step

toward better daily life. We used many kinds of adaptive aids to assist the patients—and a small smile made my day.

—*Sister Nancy deMattos*



I had wanted to be a nurse since I was a child. I attended St. Francis School of Nursing in Breckenridge and had many of our sisters as my instructors. I ministered at St. Gabriel's Hospital as director of Obstetrics, in Prestonsburg, Ky., as a public health nurse, at St. Otto's Care Center as

administrator and as a parish nurse at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Berkeley, Calif. The breadth of these nursing experiences has allowed me to meet many wonderful people of different cultures. My life has been enriched in all of its dimensions. —*Sister Susan Knutson*



When I was instructed to practice nursing at St. Anthony's Hospital in Milwaukee, I felt as if I was going to the edge of the earth; Milwaukee seemed so far away. What a wonderful hospital to be part of. Working with and caring for many people was a new endeavor and one of the best

experiences of my life. I served there in the late 1950s. My day hours were spent nursing and early evenings were spent attending Marquette University for extra nursing credits. One great privilege was meeting Henry (Hank) Aaron and his family, plus a few other Milwaukee baseball players. To this day, correspondence with Troy Major, an orderly, continues—a correspondence I treasure. He now suffers from cancer and appreciates prayers for healing and strength. St. Anthony's holds a special place in my heart and memories. —*Sister Sharon Fyle*



I worked in hospital medical records under the wing of Sister Eileen Ghesquiere when I was a senior novice. It was delightful to be at St. Gabriel's Hospital where both Sisters Eileen and Mary Ellen Dinndorf particularly befriended me. Part of my work was hand-delivering

patient records to nursing stations when patients were admitted. We kept records in the 1960s with what tools we had before electronics came on the scene. Sometimes I sat and typed as a radiologist read the x-ray films or as the pathologist dictated his reports to me as he performed an autopsy. I had a good education from our local hospital staff before I went on for my B.A. in medical records at the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth. —*Sister Jan Kilian*



Being the oldest of nine children, I noticed that when my mother returned home after having a baby, she always seemed gentler with me and my siblings. My mother felt better after every delivery. If those sisters/nurses could bring that kind of peace and joy to people they cared for, that's what I wanted to do. I enjoyed my nursing experiences at St. Gabriel's as an instructor in the medical-surgical area. In the 1970s, I was an instructor at the community college in Prestonsburg, Ky. Later, I worked as a missionary in San Felix, Venezuela, and then Managua, Nicaragua. I shared my love for welcoming and hospitality and "being with" the people in both areas. I observed how people care for each other, in sickness and in health.

—*Sister Joanne Klinnert*



Most of my adult years were in health care ministry as a registered nurse or certified chaplain. I served in large and small institutions on critical-care units, medical-surgical floors, dementia and geriatric-psych units and in nursing homes and assisted-living facilities. Everywhere I met

persons who touched my heart. I am most grateful for the privilege of being with those dying and their families. The stories and wisdom they shared continue to enrich my life.

—*Sister LaVonne Schackmann*



I went to our mission in Venezuela to establish a health and social service clinic for the poor. Fr. Mark Willenbring introduced me to other government and social service agencies. When we built our little clinic, I intended to operate it, but I was not allowed to do so because

I did not have my nurses training in Venezuela. Despite my 12 years teaching nursing in Little Falls, I had to hire a well-trained aide to operate the clinic. —*Sister Joan Gerads*



My ministry as an LPN covered hospital care, care to the elderly in nursing homes, home health care and care to the very young and to teenagers at the Children's Home and more. The personal encounter of giving a soothing bath to the sick and suffering or helping the troubled

teenager build self-esteem and a sense of belonging has been mutually enriching and a most memorable and enjoyable time of my life. —*Sister Maurita Niedzielski*



When we were temporary professed, the "to be" teachers were sent to the hospitals during the summer to get to know the nurses. Sister Cordy Korkowski and I ended up at St. Anthony's in Milwaukee. We were nurse aids. I was Sister Tarcisius at the time. A lady I cared for wanted me to

meet her husband one evening. She wanted to remember my name. She finally said it was like a flower. That evening she introduced me to her husband as Sister Tarnation.

—*Sister Ade Kroll*



Each Christmas Eve in Dodgeville, Wis., we sisters would go around the hospital and nursing home singing carols. We'd go from floor to floor pausing by the patients' rooms to sing. All sisters would participate, whether in their 20s or 80s. One Christmas Eve, a family was involved

in an accident that totaled their station wagon. The whole family arrived at the hospital by ambulance. They suffered a few cuts and broken bones, but only one required hospitalization. Soon after the family arrived, our carolers group began to lose members. Some had to draw blood, some had to take x-rays and some needed to stay with the children. Others had to help the surgeon stitch and bandage the cuts. Even Sister Jude, who was blind, was assigned to a child on a gurney. When all were taken care of, they were placed in a "ward" and given food prepared by yet another one of our sisters. The family spent their Christmas Eve in the ward all together while we sisters went on to bed. The next day, some relatives came to pick them up. —*Sister Mary Pat Burger*



I'm the youngest of nine children and I've always considered myself part of a group, and that's how my ministry has been. I never served solo and enjoyed the closeness of working with others. During my ministry at the Children's Home and at Our Lady of Mercy Hospital in Alexandria, I was

always part of a group. My gift was bringing the two major groups in Alexandria together for the good of everyone. —*Sister Patrice Kiefer*



My nursing ministry has stretched and challenged me as I continued to give direct patient care. Whether in a hospital, long-term care facility, parish, home or pre-school education center, I focused on the individual within family-centered care. Patients of all ages were involved: the baby

I delivered in the absence of an MD, or the 104-year-old in long-term care. My favorite niche is hospice, where wholistic care can be realized. These experiences have been a shared blessing, allowing me to be for others and to be gifted by others. —*Sister Jeremy Hein*



Years have passed, but my memories of caring for the sick in a refugee camp in Thailand never fade. In the scorching, humid heat of the day, perspiration running down my face, I walked the dusty dirt path through the expansive, crowded camp, looking for Cambodian refugees who needed

medical care. I found a family huddled together in the space assigned to them in one of the camp sheds. I sat down on the floor next to where a sick, emaciated man lay in the corner. I noticed that the mother standing nearby whispered to a small child, who then picked up a piece of torn, soiled cardboard off the floor. Sitting down right in front of me, not saying a word, the little girl began fanning my sweating face. As I felt the cool breeze cross my face, I wondered how this family in such a dire situation, could still take time to show me such kindness.

—*Sister Grace Skwira*

Sister Germaine Michels helping a little girl in the emergency room at St. Ansgar Hospital, Moorhead, Minn.





From the beginning, I considered being a physician a calling, not a career. When I responded to the calling, the vocation, of being a Franciscan Sister of Little Falls, I found these callings nourished one another (and sometimes conflicted).

As I developed medical skills of diagnosing and treating health issues, it was companioning individuals and families through the ordinariness of maintaining their health, the challenges of serious illness, the transitions of birthing and dying that I treasured most. Learning to practice medicine, in all its scientific and human complexity was rich. Walking with others in their health journeys was where I found the gold of God's goodness and human goodness. —*Sister Mary Hroscikoski*



I was part of an intentional community of five sisters exploring poverty. I would ride a bike to work as a nurse from East Duluth to Park Point Manor Nursing Home where I was an afternoon supervisor. I would wrap zippers around my tires for traction in the winter. One Christmas

Day, I was riding to work over the lift bridge going to Park Point when the man in the little house on top of the bridge said, "Merry Christmas" to me. It shook me up. I thought God was talking to me from heaven.

—*Sister Shirley Mueller*



I believe that nursing is a Christ-like ministry. We are the hearts and hands of Christ to all patients. One miraculous incident I recall was when a sheriff's deputy pulled a man over and the man shot the deputy in his hand. While I was undressing the man at the hospital, a bullet fell out

of his clothes. Turns out the bullet went through his hand and hit his badge which stopped it. His badge had a dent in it where the bullet hit. Unfortunately, the deputy lost his hand from the gunshot. Another time a lady was sitting in the back seat of a car when an accident happened. When I saw her, her head was covered in this yellow stuff, and I couldn't figure out what it was. Come to find out, there were six dozen eggs in the back seat with her.

—*Sister Therese Furnstahl*

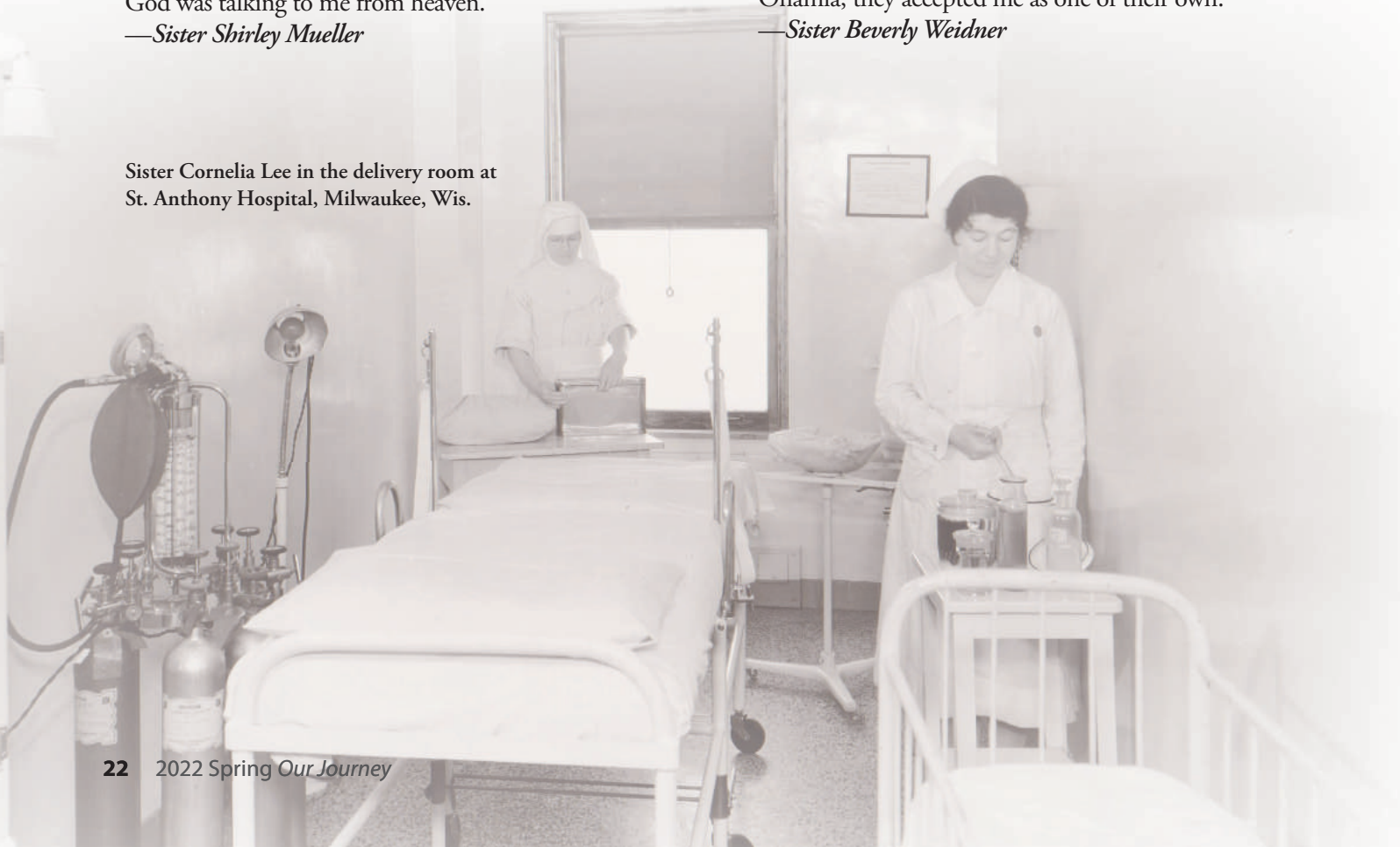


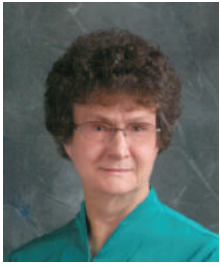
As a nurse I learned how to live on few hours of sleep between baby deliveries, surgery, doctor's rounds and the ER. I delivered my first baby in Onamia on a cart because there was no time for a doctor or a bed! During this time, I also helped an RN on her farm, baling hay and doing

farm chores. She, in turn, helped me out at the hospital. I fell in love with the Native American culture and people in Onamia; they accepted me as one of their own.

—*Sister Beverly Weidner*

Sister Cornelia Lee in the delivery room at St. Anthony Hospital, Milwaukee, Wis.





During my first 14 years as a nurse at St. Francis Hospital in Breckenridge, I recall patients' long hospital stays. I have vivid memories of caring for cardiac patients, especially those in crisis when I had the responsibility to shock their heart rhythm back to normal. As I walked with those who

recovered, it was rewarding to experience their healing. I remember the challenge of explaining the heart's electrical activity to an electrician. As a result of staff developing close relationships with patients and their families, a former patient donated clocks for patient rooms. Mentoring new graduate nurses was delightful as I observed them develop their professional skills. Under the leadership of Sister Pat Zangs, primary nursing was implemented at St. Francis Hospital. When a quadriplegic teenager was ready to leave the hospital, I had the privilege of accompanying him home to support the family in their caregiving role.

—*Sister Caroline Stoltz*



A child taught me how to be a nurse. When I was interning in pediatrics at St. Mary's in Rochester, a 5-year-old boy was tucked in bed by his mother before she left the hospital for the night. Later the young boy woke up and said, "I have to see my mother.

The angels are here and coming for me!" He persisted. The mother came back. She held her little boy, and he died a few hours later. This child and others impacted my entire career as a nurse. Through my 70 years in health care, I tuned into my patients and their families and paid attention to their conversation and their inner wisdom rather than relying solely on "the books." I began my nursing career at 20. I also taught nursing at North Dakota State University and later worked as a hospital administrator at St. Francis in Breckenridge for many years. Throughout these years, I remembered and acted on lessons learned from my pediatric patients!

—*Sister Pat Zangs*



Sister Annella (right) with Sister Jeanette Martell, St. Gabriel's School of Nursing graduation, 1959



Sister Cortona Bentler was a good teacher, and when polio was a big issue, she taught the students about bulbar polio. I went on duty after class and a patient asked for a peppermint, because when she swallowed it seemed it was coming back up into her nose, a main sign of bulbar polio. I looked for an RN, but there was none around, so I picked up the phone and called the doctor and told him his patient had bulbar polio. He and the ambulance arrived in minutes. I was scolded by Sister Elizabeth Soenneker: "Student nurses DO NOT call doctors and tell them what diagnosis the patient has." I prayed I would not be sent home.

While at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, a patient I was caring for had a male visitor who would not leave. I needed to do care before evening meal, so I asked him to step out for a minute. When I was done with care and left the patient's room, the man was still waiting. I told him he could go back in. He held out his hand and said he waited for me, "I am waiting to meet you as I am Dr. Charles Mayo, and I want you to know that the staff of doctors enjoys students from Breckenridge and Little Falls, as you know what you are doing and ask good questions about patients' illnesses." I think I am perhaps the only sister that had the opportunity to shake hands with Dr. Charles Mayo.—*Sister Annella Henger*



The Clay County Sheriff and I had morning coffee together at the County Court House where our offices were located. As he shared stories, I learned of the harsh treatment received by those picked

up by the police and jailed for drunken driving. My heart began to ache noting the need for human compassion. As director of Clay County Public Health Nursing, I was privileged to give leadership, establishing good relationships with the police and new respect for persons jailed. Together, 32 nurse aides and six nurses developed an on-call 24/7 program providing nursing care to persons admitted to jail with this disability. Our care included education with both the police department personnel and the client's family.

During these public health years, we also organized a summer clinic for migrants three times a week. Dr. John Thomas, PHN board chair, and Sister Therese Furnstahl, night nurse at St. Ansgar's, were our backup consultants. We normally saw between 60-80 migrants at each clinic.

Candy, a 10-year-old from Comstock, working hard in the fields, was told he could use his friend's bicycle leaning by the garage. However, the friend's dad did not know Candy had been given permission to use the bicycle and became very upset. When I heard this, I immediately found a bike for Candy to use during the migrant season. That was 1974. Last year, in 2021, I was miraculously reconnected with this family and they, whom I no longer knew but remembered well, invited me to their home in Alamo, Tex.—a happy reunion and continued relationship.

Following my ministry in public health, my nursing turned into home visits in the Barrio of Jose Gregorio Hernandez in Venezuela. The Orinoco River had flooded and filled homes with contaminated water, snakes and infestation, so I began the tetanus vaccines and prevention education in households eliminating disease. Living and working in Venezuela soon taught me that foreigners cannot minister as accredited nurses. My nursing career in the barrios moved to prophylactic measures only. —*Sister Pat Forster*

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We like to donate to the sisters because we believe the Franciscan Sisters are prayerful women. Being members of the Secular Franciscans, we love the Franciscan charism of gospel living. We continue to thank Saint Francis for guidance and protection of the sisters. We truly love the sisters and the Franciscan Order.
—Linda and Bill Ritchie, Chaska, Minn.

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Life in a hospital laboratory

Sister Ardis Cloutier

I first learned about the profession of medical laboratory technologist from Sister Mary Emerita Ohmann when I was a student at St. Francis High School. I remember going home and telling my parents that was what I wanted to be. My stepmother could not imagine how they would find money for me to go to college, as becoming a med tech meant getting a college degree and then doing a year of internship. However, by my senior year, I knew I wanted to be a Franciscan Sister and entered the convent that January. After I made first vows, I was assigned to the x-ray department at St. Gabriel's Hospital to become an x-ray technician under Sister Francis Winter's guidance. After a few months at St. Gabriel's, I was assigned to St. Francis Hospital in Breckenridge to "run" the x-ray department.

Two years passed and then Mother Anastasia Ohmann told me I was to go to the College of St. Catherine, spend two years there and then intern as a med tech. However, that summer our community had elections and Mother M. Thomasine Schmolke became mother general. She immediately told me that Sister Felix Mushel (who made first vows that year) and I would get our degrees in biology and chemistry and, after graduation, would do our internships. We graduated in 1956 and then spent a year at St. Mary's Hospital in Madison, Wis. We then took the national exam for medical technology, passed it, and became registered medical technologists. I was assigned to St. Francis Hospital in Breckenridge. The sister who had been in the lab there left for another mission the day I arrived.

My years at St. Francis were wonderful. The laboratory changed a great deal in that time. For example, we went from doing actual chemistry procedures to obtain a blood sugar result to simply putting the blood (serum) sample into a spectrophotometer and getting a result. That was faster and gave the doctors information much sooner. We went from actually counting tiny white blood cells to putting that serum into an instrument and getting a result in minutes.

About a year after I moved to Breckenridge, we moved into a new hospital with, of course, a new laboratory. When we outgrew that hospital in the '70s, an addition was built with a spacious lab on ground floor. Soon, we acquired an instrument that would give us blood chemistry results within a very short time. I spent two weeks in Houston, Tex., learning that instrument.



Sister Ardis and her trusty microscope, St. Francis Hospital, Breckenridge, 1958



Sister Ardis (Mario) in the lab at St. Francis Hospital, Breckenridge, 1960

The University of Minnesota had begun a laboratory assistant program, and I was asked to take students from that program. As I recall, students spent 3-4 months at the U and then 6-8 months in a hospital laboratory. They then took an examination and became laboratory assistants. I had perhaps a dozen or more students during that time, many of whom stayed on at St. Francis. I very much enjoyed working with the students. In addition, I taught microbiology and chemistry at St. Francis School of Nursing.

After 27 years in Breckenridge, I was told I was needed to be a manager in the laboratory at St. Gabriel's Hospital in Little Falls. It was hard to leave Breckenridge, but I have always liked a challenge. I moved to Little Falls and spent several years managing the laboratory.

In 1984 I was asked to be our community secretary which, of course, meant leaving the laboratory. I did a lot of praying before saying yes to the new opportunity, as I knew that, after four years, it is not possible to return to laboratory ministry without going back to school. But, as I look back, had I said no, I would not have eventually gone to Catholic Theological Union, gotten a master's in theology and worked in Chicago, first for the Passionists in their special ministry to the disabled and then for the Augustinians in their vocation ministry as well as serving as secretary to the principal of St. Rita of Cascia High School.

I am now retired at our convent in Little Falls, helping my sisters in community as best I can. I've been involved in writing obituaries and am honored to visit our sisters in our care center and, especially, to read to sisters who can no longer read themselves.

THANK YOU!

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Back in the days of being a Frannie, when trips to the Dairy Queen had to be limited, I never imaged a role in charitable giving. Now we are happy to contribute. It's a way of saying thank you and supporting the needs of the elderly sisters, many of whom were my teachers.

—Bonita and Tom Malterer, Duluth, Minn.

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Loss of connection has significant consequences

Candace Adams, Associate Minister

The pandemic has heightened a growing epidemic in the world—loneliness. Although statistically we are the most connected society, loneliness has been reported in unprecedented numbers. While Covid-19 has significantly impacted the overall wellbeing of individuals, loneliness was creeping into our reality prior to this insidious disease.

The picture of loneliness is shifting. Perhaps, when you think of someone who is lonely you envision a person who is unable to leave his or her home. While this person may be lonely, the reality is that there are students, employees, and retirees who experience loneliness. Loneliness is something that affects all ages. In a culture that prides itself on independence and “getting ahead,” some would argue that we have created a society destined for isolation and loneliness. In an effort to achieve success and the American dream, too often others are viewed as a commodity, which yields transactional relationships.

As human beings we are created in the image of our Triune God; therefore, it stands to reason that we have been created for relationships. Through our Triune God we are granted a picture of perfect love. The Three-in-One share in a dance of pure love and devotion to one another. Thus, it is natural for individuals to desire meaningful connections with others. Humans were created to be in relationship with God and others. A loss of connection with God and others has significant consequences.

Saint Francis recognized that individuals who were inflicted with leprosy suffered from a horrific disease. Unfortunately, physical impairment was only part of the equation. Individuals with leprosy were removed from their community. The emotional trauma and social isolation were equally painful and even more devastating; it created another layer of suffering.

Saint Francis also realized that loneliness is something that need not exist. It took courage for Francis to reach out. Nevertheless, love allowed him to see the need of another. Ultimately, he addressed his own need by connecting with those he viewed as unworthy.

How we treat one another matters greatly to God. In Matthew 25:36ff we read, “I was naked, and you gave me clothing, I was sick, and you took care of me, I was in prison, and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’” (New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition).

Is there someone that you know who seems isolated? What gifts and abilities do you possess that can support or encourage someone who is lonely? Are you able to write a positive note? Are you a good listener? Simple acts of kindness and love have the ability to end loneliness.

If you are reading this article and experiencing loneliness please reach out. God doesn't desire you to be alone. You are loved and of infinite value. You were created for connection.



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One of the activities I enjoy as a retired priest is celebrating the Eucharist with the Franciscan community in Little Falls.

I always come away feeling renewed and with a sense of peace. I support the Franciscan Sisters financially because

I value their ministry to both our local church and the poor around the world.

When I was a full-time pastor, I valued the ministerial relationships I enjoyed with several members of the Franciscan community.

The sisters keep alive the spirit of Saint Francis in the world filled with so much negativism, division and loss of hope. It seems that as our Church numbers decrease, we are being called to be a more humble church. Saint Francis can help us do that.

—Rev. Vince Lieser, Sauk Rapids, Minn.



Do you want to learn more about Franciscan values? Are you looking for Good News? Consider “Engaging Franciscan Wisdom,” a podcast which offers inspiration for the spiritual journey during these challenging times. Hosted by Sister Michelle L’Allier, new episodes are on the first and third Tuesdays of each month. Tune in at www.engagingfranciscanwisdom.org.



Good Friday April 15, 2022 - 9:30 a.m.

Silent Walk for Peace

Weather permitting

St. Cloud Children's Home remembered

Sister Carol Schmit, Community Minister

Sisters Mary Pat Burger and Carol Schmit joined a group of about 25 people to dedicate a plaque honoring the work done at the St. Cloud Children's Home in St. Cloud during these 97 years of its existence. The plaque is located along Beaver Island Trail, a public walking path along the Mississippi, below the Children's Home property. Mayor Dave Kleis welcomed us, and Bishop Don Kettler blessed the bronze plaque. Catholic Charities sold the buildings and property. The new ministry is being managed by Newport Health Care, where they hope to serve up to 30 girls and 30 boys at a time. It will offer residential treatment for teens with mental health issues.

The statement on the plaque includes this paragraph:

"The Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls cared for these children for over 40 years. Under their stewardship the orphanage was self-sufficient in its operation. Huge gardens, farm animals, and donations of all manner sustained operations. Children left the orphanage by adoption or aging out to join the community and surrounding region."



Sister Corrine Millner (1914-2013) served as a nurse at the St. Cloud Children's home from 1939-1945. Here she is feeding a baby in the Infant Cottage. All told, at least 171 sisters cared for the orphans at the Children's Home. The last to serve was Sister Ida Bursch, who retired in 2007. She also passed away in 2013.



Lent: We are “Splendid Dust”

Sister Elise Saggau

Now it is Lent. If you received the blessed ashes on Ash Wednesday, you may have heard the words: “You are dust and unto dust you shall return.” Lent confronts us with the question: “What are we, really?” Karl Rahner asserts that we are “splendid dust.” “There is always more than enough dust,” he claims, “and one fleck is just as good as the next.”

The image of dust as splendid reminds us that of ourselves we are nothing and by ourselves we tend to make a mess of things. How often we get things wrong! During Lent, we have a special opportunity to examine those aspects of ourselves that are not “finished” yet—those places within us where we feel dissatisfied, unwanted, uncertain, unimportant, and even afraid. Lent calls us to recognize how God is always present and at work in our ordinary, everyday, dusty lives. God gives them meaning. We know that we must find our value and completeness as human beings

in something (Someone) greater than ourselves. We need a turning; we need to face in a different direction. And that new direction is away from ourselves and toward the other, whoever that other might be at any particular moment.

Lent prepares us for Easter, which is the absolute summit of our worship year. Our liturgical rituals always seem to circle around to a place that feels like we’ve been here before. But the fact is, we have never been here before—in this particular place, at this particular moment, as the person we have now become. As we keep changing, learning, growing, becoming, we come to new places that offer new challenges. We understand things in a new and different way.

God’s grace accompanies us on this journey. It is continually helping us become more humble and more grateful. We realize that we are being continually led by a power greater than ourselves, a power that loves us and wills our good. We understand that this loving power asks for our whole selves in return! We become more aware that our own personal story is itself a kind of liturgy. We move from stage to stage and the journey always ends as worship—praise and thanksgiving. This is why we are “splendid dust.” This is what Lent is about.

Lenten

DAY OF REFLECTION

- Living the Paschal Mystery -

March 26, 2022 • 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. • Via Zoom

Sister Elise Saggau will guide us to a better understanding of our Christian vocation to live the Gospel, not just in those aspects in which we serve others as Jesus did, but by entering into and in some way sharing Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection.

**To receive the Zoom link, please register by March 23
by emailing Christi Hartwell at chartwell@fslf.org.**



**Sister Mary Joel (Bernice) Bieniek, 104,
died November 29, 2021, at St. Francis
Convent, Little Falls.**

Bernice Bieniek was born August 10, 1917, near Holdingford, the eleventh of 14 children of the late Joseph and Agnes (Novak) Bieniek. She was accepted as a Franciscan Sister on August 12, 1937. She made first profession of vows on August 12, 1939, and final vows on August 12, 1942.

Sister Mary Joel attended St. Francis School of Nursing, Breckenridge; Cardinal Stritch College; Mount Mary College; and Marquette University, Milwaukee. After interning at St. Mary's Hospital, Rochester, Minn., she received a bachelor's degree in food and nutrition with minors in social science and chemistry. She ministered as a registered dietitian in several Franciscan health care facilities and was an instructor in the schools of nursing in Little Falls and Breckenridge. Later, for many years, she served as a traveling dietary consultant and preceptor for health care facilities in Little Falls, Breckenridge, Sauk Centre, Brainerd, Long Prairie, Onamia, Princeton, Pierz, Browerville, Park Rapids, Walker, Pine River, Clarissa and Bertha. This ministry required learning to drive. Obtaining her driver's license was an exciting happening. In addition to driving for her ministry, she also took sisters to places of interest in the United States, ranging from St. Louis to Spokane to Washington, D.C.

Sister Mary Joel was firmly rooted in her basic religious beliefs and ideals, beginning from her home and continuing through her many years in religious life. She was a dedicated sister and professional throughout her life. With a mind for organizing, she carried her responsibilities to completion with grace and interest.

She generously used her special skills of cooking, baking, making jellies and jams, as well as advising and sharing the many lessons she had learned from life. She will be remembered as a creative person with a special eye for arranging flowers. In her last years, she especially used this gift, making lovely flower arrangements for the convent chapel while serving as sacristan. Sister Mary Joel was a hard worker and had a giving spirit, quietly doing her work, then seemed surprised that anyone noticed the beauty she created.



Holy Week Services

All services will be livestreamed on YouTube.

Palm Sunday
April 10 at 8:30 a.m.

Holy Thursday
April 14 at 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday
April 15 at 2 p.m.

Holy Saturday
April 16 at 8 p.m.

Easter Sunday
April 17 at 8:30 a.m.

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One Planet Fund

Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home is an encyclical letter written by Pope Francis in 2015. He says, "I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation that includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all." It invites people to protect God's creation for future generations, to embrace a lifestyle change for their own good, and to take care of people who are poor and more vulnerable.



Motivated by these challenging words, and our own desire to put into action the call to heal our planet, the Franciscan Sisters have established the One Planet Fund with a goal to encourage and support climate emergency action projects in central Minnesota. All faith-based groups, especially youth groups, are encouraged to develop creative projects that will further climate change mitigation and sustainable living. Other service organizations and community groups may also apply.

Activities supported by the One Planet Fund may include but are not limited to the following:

- Projects/programs that carry out the *Laudato Si* Action Platform:
<https://laudatosiactionplatform.org>
- Carbon reduction activities (tree-plantings, pollinator gardens, LED lighting, cleanups, plant-based diet, reduction of plastics, recycling, composting, etc.).
- Events that educate or promote awareness, especially those that lead to action.
- Retreats, workshops, or forums to promote understanding, bridge-building, and healing related to care of creation.
- Art forms including music, visual arts, and film.
- Classroom instruction/curriculum related to care of creation.

Applications due: November 1, February 1, July 1. Maximum grant: \$1,000. To apply contact, Elizabeth Rydeen: 320-632-0624 Email: erydeen@fslf.org. The application is also available on the sisters' website: fslf.org.