Clare’s Well celebrates 25 years of ministry

“One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, “What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?”

—Rachel Carson

10:30 a.m. Mass to remember Sister Aggie Soenneker 1939-2007: Co-founder of Clare’s Well St. Ignatius Catholic Church, downtown Annandale MN

1:30 p.m. Welcome and short program

2-2:40 p.m. Are You Thirsty? Presented by Heart of the Beast Puppet Theatre A dynamic puppet exploration of the miracle of water—one of our most precious and necessary shared resources. For all ages of children and adults who love the earth and are concerned for their future.

• Enjoy a drink of water from Clare’s Well and a bit of nourishing food
• Interact with Franciscan Sisters, Franciscan Associates, families and friends
• Share memories of and hopes for Clare’s Well
• Visit inspirational and educational booth on water resources
• Go for a paddle boat or canoe ride on Sabbath Pond
• Enjoy the music of guest musicians

Living the Gospel courageously... with energy, spirit, peace.
Still waters run deep

Sister Jan Kilian

Do the trees standing by the pond know themselves any better than other trees know themselves?

“Do you have a real well here?” is one of many questions we get asked. There are multiple answers depending on the real question. “Yes, we have a well,” if you are the fellow looking for drinking water, his pickup loaded with empty containers. If you are referring to our motto, ‘Drink from your own well,’ then, “No, we hope you brought your own.” For 25 years Clare’s Well has been a place where guests gift themselves with time and quiet to go down deep to drink from life-giving waters which can only be found within their own hearts.

When I pull our little red wagon out of our garage across our gravelly yard, a grade school memory comes to my mind. It is the memory of writing 500 times, “An empty wagon rattles most.” I can only guess why I received that assignment, received it with such embarrassment I’ve never forgotten its message. “Still waters run deep,” say the wise. We say reaching those deep still waters has quieted many an empty wagon rattling along life’s surface.

Our June 9th anniversary celebration recognizes the beginning of Clare’s Well by Franciscan Sisters Aggie Soenneker and Carol Schmit on June 9, 1988 and all the years of blessings since then. We appreciate the wonderful synchronicity of this 25-year anniversary coming in 2013, the year designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Water Cooperation. Clare’s Well staff and volunteers throughout the years have worked intentionally to care for our well, the spring-fed pond, creek, wetlands, and aquifers. Through our water sources we are literally connected with the entire world.

“Are You Thirsty?” is the title of a 35-minute puppet show focusing on the wonders of water. We have engaged the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre to perform this wonderful show at 2 p.m. here at Clare’s Well the afternoon of Sunday, June 9th. This performance will especially honor two dear friends who have died: Sister Aggie Soenneker and Mary Krantz Odendahl, whose hearts were particularly dedicated to the mission of this Well.

Yes. Yes. Yes. We have a real well.

“This indispensable resource —water— has come to be taken for granted and, even worse, viewed as an expendable commodity. I shudder to imagine that our children will think water is something you buy in a store.”

—Camille Gage

The Earth Flag waving over Clare’s Well reminds us of shared global responsibilities. An Indian proverb reminds us, “The frog does not drink up the pond in which it lives.”
Through the body to the inner well

Sister Paula Pohlmann

The phrase, “Drink from your own well” might be considered the underpinning statement of our ministry here at Clare’s Well. We use that phrase when we are asked about whether or not we offer programs or other input, or even the availability of staff to offer spiritual direction. You might ask, “How does one drink from it if one is not in touch with that inner well?”

A few thoughts occur to me relative to “drinking from your inner well.” One is that every person has that place of inner well or wisdom within himself/herself. One needs to believe that we have been given an inner guidance system that is uniquely ours. The way to tap into that system requires not so much information or knowledge but a quieting or stillness so as to be able to hear that “small, still voice” that comes from within. It is from that inner place of stillness where our creativity helps us work through problems that confront us.

One way that this quieting might happen is through one of the several types of massage that we offer here. We call it body massage, but it is much more. A good massage touches us on all the levels of being. On a physical level the massage will relax the muscles, stimulate the circulation of blood and lymph, releasing toxins and bringing fresh nutrients, activating healing energies and releasing endorphins into the blood stream. Through the language of touch, a sense of care, understanding, tenderness and love can be communicated. The connection between body and spirit can become heightened. It is as if the body is inviting the spirit to take up residence once again so that the experience can be one of wholeness, of holiness and oneness. In an atmosphere of warmth and quiet, the person can feel safe to explore feelings that might have been frightening but can now be looked at without fear.

Nicaragua mission opportunity

Readers of The Well have heard about and supported a group of Minnesotans going to Nicaragua each January for the last 15 years. The destination for the January 2014 trip will be San Antonio. It is not a village, but a church campus that serves the families of the surrounding area. Members of the mission delegation will enter into the lives of the parishioners, pray with them, share stories, help prepare meals, visit homes and learn from them their simple but effective way of building community. Their growing community needs a larger place to worship. The group will work side by side with the Nicaraguans in preparing the foundation to enlarge the existing church structure.

Are you interested in this kind of life changing adventure? Just call Carol at Clare’s Well.
Lacy in spring

I love May on the farm. Mostly I enjoy a warm freshness on my face. Since I haven’t been able to see for three years now, I listen, sniff and remember. Today I remember ten years ago, how here on this farm, we celebrated our 15th anniversary. For that celebration we had a little program (interrupted by a few rain showers) a program to present a wooden totem pole representing the creatures residing on the farm back then. Each creature represented on this pole spoke, beginning with Earthworm, to say what thoughts they had when they first heard that the Franciscan Sisters were coming to live on this farm in 1988.

Earthworm reported how happy she was that there would again be a family garden planted here! Then it was time for Apple Tree to speak. She pointed out how much we need each other to blossom and bear fruit. Next came sister Loon. In keeping with the theme of this issue of Well, I want to share with you again what Loon on Sabbath Pond had to say.

All of you Minnesotans recognize me. (Loon call) I am the loon. My call speaks of mystery and longing. What lies in the depths of the dark waters? Will you ever know? Until that time when all is revealed I will continue to pierce the misty air with my ardent, soulful cry. “Come home! Come home to Sabbath Pond!” For eons I have beckoned you to come and be in touch with great grandfather turtle… to honor the creative source within you and to be grounded to mother earth. And finally, 15 years ago, two Franciscan Sisters heard my call and came. Since that day in 1988, hundreds have responded to my invitation to dive deeply into their own depths. Sabbath Pond… so tranquil on the surface but teeming with hidden life… part of the life blood system of the entire northern hemisphere. A good place to call home. A good place to call you home. (loon call)

You’ll be able to see the rest of that totem pole when you come to celebrate our 25th anniversary—the barn and animals, the labyrinth, the hermitages, and finally the dining room table. Nice memories. Ever since I was a pup, 12 years ago now, I’ve had a number of personal heroes. Lassie is right there at the top. You say “Lassie” and someone will answer, faithful and smart. You say “Snoopy” and we know that he is a philosopher and are impressed with his willingness to share his supper. Recently an amazing new mentor has come into our life on the farm, that’s Pope Francis. From the beginning of life here at Clare’s Well we have been motivated by the pope’s mentor and ours, Francis of Assisi who, though he lived more than 800 years ago, holds a futuristic message as we walk into an era when care of the earth and being bonded as citizens of the world in a spirit of nonviolence are key to our survival. In his first homily, Pope Francis said, “To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love is to open up a horizon of hope.”

Pope Francis must feel right at home with my other heroes walking toward that horizon of hope.

The Baltimore orioles will be weaving their nests. I hope one comes back to the cottonwood outside Paula’s window. When the wind blows, it sets the leaves dancing to the varied beats of nature.
As part of their time spent in the hermitages at Clare’s Well, many of our guests write a reflection in the journals. The job of typing out all the journal entries for the formation of this WORDLE was daunting. This word cloud gathers some of the feelings, ideas, and dreams expressed in the journals. Enjoy this Wordle, imagining it as a visual expression of our guests over the years. The words most often used appear larger in the design.

A new home for purple martins was hand made by Sister Aggie’s brother, Frank Soenneker. Frank’s son, Paul, and Sister Carol admire the latest addition to Clare’s Well, April 5, 2013.

Troubles for our well this winter reminded us to never take good water for granted.
“Children are the living message we send to a time we will not see.”
—Neil Postman

We are so grateful for all of the children who touch our lives at Clare’s Well.

Thank You

For 25 years of friendship and support, we express our deepest gratitude to all of you.

Thank you to God for how Clare’s Well has helped to change and heal many lives and hearts over these years. God’s grace has been visible through your generosity and presence in routine, every day work and on special occasions, for instance on our recent spring work day. So many hands made it easy. We are grateful.

Thank you for donations of every kind. Thank you for gifts big and small. God bless you.

Wish List

• We will again need fire wood for our several wood-burning stoves.
• Feed for chickens, our dog, cats and goats is always appreciated.
• Scholarship funds for guests in need of financial assistance.
• Funds for general maintenance and replacement of things that simply quit from years of use.
• Volunteers to help with garden, yard work and the many tasks that keep Clare’s Well humming.
• High efficiency light bulbs.