



FRANCISCAN  
SISTERS  
OF LITTLE FALLS  
MINNESOTA

NOVEMBER 2014

# The Well

*A message from the Franciscan community at Clare's Well*

## Minnesota responds to Climate Crisis

*Sister Carol Schmit*

I recently met a woman who has never heard a loon's call! She is forgiven since she grew up in California and is now working in Washington, D.C. To us here in mid-Minnesota, not to hear the loon is like not having summer. To us the loon means that there is a healthy water supply, that the winter and summer habitats are adequate, that the food supply has not been devastated by herbicides and pesticides. But the earth is warming. An Audubon study published in the September 2014 *National Geographic* found that, in a study of 588 bird species, "314 could lose most of the area they currently occupy. Some species will find hospitable conditions elsewhere, but for 126 species there will be nowhere else to go." Our precious loon is in this category.

Progressive thinkers here in Minnesota have announced an all-star gathering on climate change to be held in October 2015. Dozens of former world leaders are expected here to explore ways that "democratic nations can reduce greenhouse emissions." (*Star Tribune* September 2014).

I propose that the loon be designated the keynote speaker at this event. Here are some of the points she will deliver to this enlightened gathering.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Welcome to the land of 12,000 loons. Thank you for giving attention to

the fact that I am one of 126 familiar birds that are on the flight to extinction. Ohhhhh. You can make the difference. I have only three things I would like to share.

**DIVE DEEP.** Decades of study now shows us that the climate crisis is real, that humans face the challenge that Patriarch Bartholomew puts to each of them, "When will we learn to say, 'Enough!' When will we direct our focus away from what we want to what the world needs? When will we understand how important it is to leave as light a footprint as possible on the planet for the sake of future generations? We must choose to care." Study the facts.

**WALK THE EARTH.** Millions of years have brought us to this hour. For centuries human intelligence has created unimaginable products for human advancement and destruction. I urge you, my friends, to touch the earth. Tend the prairies.

Preserve the milkweeds for my sisters, the Monarch butterflies. Avoid putting values in conflict with each other such as the choice of a sustainable earth-home or jobs. Do your part, no effort is too small.

**FLY HIGH.** Have hope. We are entering into a time of higher consciousness, a spiritual dimension known to Saint Francis 800 years ago. He understood that all things are holy and so



Sister Paula Pohlmann on Sabbath Pond

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*Living the Gospel courageously... with energy, spirit, peace.*

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he prayed, be praised my Lord for all creatures, the sun, the moon, each has its place at the cosmic table. Contemporary writer Eckhart Tolle states, “Only when your noisy mind subsides can you connect with nature at a deep level and go beyond the sense of separation created by excessive thinking.” He calls this awareness simply NOW. Yes, now is all we have. Have hope.

That’s all I have to say, protectors of our universe. Thank you for your care to keep the air pure, the waters healthy, and my food supply ample into the endless future. Ooohhhh.

I plan to keep in touch with the Minnesota conference called MN2015, Democracy for a Sustainable Future. Maybe I’ll even hang around when former world leaders converge on our enlightened state. And throughout the winter I will practice the loon call on my native flute, just because.



## Roxy (with help from Sister Jan)



Summer at Clare’s Well was full of duties for me: greeting, accompanying and teaching—I remind myself of a teacher on the playground. It’s no easy matter keeping order in this

yard. The guinea fowl think they belong in the trees, the chipmunks in the bird feeders and the chickens and cats all over the front steps of the farmhouse. At times it’s embarrassing when I have to make a path to welcome new guests and people say I’m the one who is in the way!

Sister Karen Niedzielski, aka, Summer Help, came for a few weeks before moving to Welcoming House in St. Cloud to live with Sisters Rose Mae Rausch and Michelle L’Allier and four Franciscan Community Volunteers. A former seminary student of Sister Karen, Father Deogratias, came to visit. He is one of many priests who owe part of their education to our sisters who worked in Kenya and Tanzania some years ago.

The Franciscan Community Volunteers came for their closing retreat in June; they were very fun to play with, throwing soccer balls at each other and including me. They also came for the spring clean-up day, giving up their day off from the non-profit work sites they volunteer at around St. Cloud, Minn. See [www.FCV@fslf.org](http://www.FCV@fslf.org) for information about this amazing group of young people.

When any of Clare’s Well staff is gone I miss them. Sisters Paula, Carol and Jan each took time away for retreat as well as for a week of vacation this summer. Sister Jan traveled with The Nuns on the Bus as they toured Minnesota to urge everyone to vote in the mid-term elections. The Bus is sponsored by NETWORK,

the Catholic Social Justice Lobby, Washington, D.C. Their theme was “We the People-We the Voters.” Only strong voter turnout can override the influence of big money in politics. Pope Francis says (in *Joy of the Gospel*) people have a moral obligation to pray and work to “bring about a new political and economic mind-set which would help to break down the wall of separation between the economy and the common good of society.” Hope you all voted!

Roxanne is gone a lot to be with her and Richard’s grandson, Isaac, who lives in Seattle. In case you haven’t met Isaac, she might be able to find a picture of him on her phone. He is a little celebrity, but then, I am, too. The *Star Tribune* selected me as the Pet of the Week one Saturday this summer. I don’t recommend becoming famous—it is so distracting. I lose my grounding and am not as centered as is good for my spirit when people make a fuss about what I look like. I agree with Sister Carolyn Law who has to laugh when people say, “Pretty dog,” umpteen times a day. I am grateful to have my home and my duties here. Gratitude keeps me grounded and keeps me truly happy.



We (Sisters Carol, Jan and Paula) gathered on our front steps with Sister Karen Niedzielski and Father Deogratias. Father Deogratias holds a special bag made by the mother of Leoni, another Tanzanian student, who gave it to us for his time spent here while finishing his agriculture degree.



Sister Aggie's brother and sister-in-law, Frank and Janet Soenneker, brought us this 13-pound cabbage from their garden. It soon joined our cabbages in the sauerkraut crock.



Dear friend and Franciscan Associate, Jeff Odendahl, gifted us with a supper of homemade soup while his daughter, Kate Krantz Odendahl, spent a few weeks with us after her return from two years with the Peace Corps in China.



Pat Kasper and Fran Ulfers weeded flower gardens during the 2014 May Work Day.



Nick Anderson and Ian Peoples, Franciscan Community Volunteers, helped prepare the garden during the 2014 May Work Day.



Ann and Roxanne Wagner set up food service in the garage for work day volunteers.



A lot of branches needed clearing during the 2014 May Work Day. Luke and Matt Mader brought tree climbing equipment, saws, and this wood chipper. Steve, Travis and Ed Ritter came with chain saws and wood splitter to facilitate major cleanup of wood.

## Come one; come all!



We invite you all to join us for what will probably be our final Spring Clean-up Day! We hope to have a closing ritual with you on that day, Saturday, May 16, 2015.

As usual, we begin at 9 a.m. with a lunch break around noon. Stay as long or short a time as you wish. Children are welcome! We usually finish by 3 or 4 p.m. with cleaning the hermitages and Wellness Center, yard work, wood work (splitting, chain-sawing and stacking). You know our usual long list of jobs, which can include painting, repair and surprise tasks.

If you plan on helping, please contact us by email at [clwell@lakedalelink.net](mailto:clwell@lakedalelink.net) or call (320)274-3512.

**Thank you!**

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# Reflection

*Michael Obsatz, member of Clare's Well Visioning Circle*

I (as well as Juliana Howard) have been blessed to be a member of the Clare's Well Visioning Circle since the beginning, for 26 years. I have sat around the dining room table with wonderful, creative people—some for many years—some for fewer, and watched Clare's Well develop into a place of peace, safety, hospitality, healing, nurturing and love.

In the beginning, it was Sister Carol and Sister Aggie. We dreamed and planned and watched the building of the chapel, deck, three hermitages and the Wellness Center. With the arrival of Sisters Paula and Jan and with Roxanne joining the group came additional positive, loving energy. I have witnessed a parade of dogs, cats, goats, chickens, cows and countless birds. They say that something does not have to last forever for it to have been perfect. Clare's Well provided the perfect sanctuary for me for over 26 years. I have been nourished and nurtured in the best of times and in the most challenging of times. Clare's Well will continue to live on through me and my children.



Clare's Well friend, Cheri Hample's granddaughter, Kiley, shows off one of our beautiful apples which she helped us pick from our faithful apple trees.

# Thank You

- For all financial contributions to Clare's Well! You continue to make it possible for us to provide this sacred space for anyone seeking nourishment and rest for weary spirits and bodies. You also help us pay for repair/replacement of aging appliances and machines, and worn out boots.
- For financial contributions to all the ministries of our Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minn.
- For many friends and family who gift us with prayer, help and friendship.
- For faithfully caring for our tractors and lawn every week all season long!
- For all who help us with muscle and mechanical challenges and gardening, carrying wood, cooking, cleaning, caring for Clare's Well when we need to be away.
- For food for our birds and animals.
- For every kind of gift imaginable. God bless each and every one of you.

# Wish List

- We always need funds for unexpected needs and general upkeep, as well as for support of our Franciscan Sisters.
- Firewood and kindling.
- Persons with chainsaws to continue to cut wood and trim trees.
- Help with snow removal.

# Update on Clare's Well future

We are still here. You can see we plan to work with you for yet another May clean-up day. As mentioned in our May 2014 issue of *The Well*, "Nothing Stays the Same Forever." Our Franciscan Community is in the process of working with someone else to continue Clare's Well. Because of the complexity of making such a transition, we plan on not taking reservations for guests after March 31, 2015. We will keep you updated as a planned change of ownership unfolds. Thank you for your understanding. We realize Clare's Well is significant in your lives, too.

In preparation for such a change of ownership, it is important that anyone who has unused gift certificates for Clare's Well use those certificates as soon as possible. We will not be able to honor outstanding certificates when we are no longer the owners.

