

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



FRANCISCAN
SISTERS
OF LITTLE FALLS
MINNESOTA

FALL 2014

Vol. 33 No. 1

Our Journey



Whispering Willows

Franciscan Federation honors Sister Donna Zetah

In July Sister Donna Zetah was recognized as a 2014 Peace Honoree at the annual Franciscan Federation conference. Sister Donna studied to become a registered nurse so that she could serve those in need, which turned into a life-long ministry. After serving in various hospitals, she went to Peru in 1968 to work as a nurse. When she returned 10 years later, she worked with Midwest Migrant Health to bring health care and health education to Spanish-speaking migrant workers in nearly 30 locations in the United States and in Honduras and Guatemala. Now, at age 85, she serves the Hispanic population in the Little Falls area, offering translation and advocacy services. She also visits people in their homes, in hospitals or nursing homes—wherever there may be need.



Sisters Donna Zetah and Bea Eichten at the Franciscan Federation conference in St. Louis

New volunteers commissioned



Breanna Wegner, Kevin Trettel, Shaina Lawrence, Pat Schlauderaff (director) and Kristen Wall

Four young adults were welcomed to the Franciscan Community Volunteers program at a commissioning ceremony at St. Francis Convent to mark the beginning of their year of service. With open hearts and open minds they are willing and eager to “let service change their world.” This year’s service sites include St. Benedict’s Senior Center, STRIDE Academy, A Place of Hope, Boys and Girls Club-Southside of St. Cloud and Casa Guadalupe Multicultural Community.

Our Journey

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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 sisters and associates as they work in joyful service in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare.

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Cover: URock band Whispering
Willows. Photo by Kari Ross

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.

© September 2014
Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls,
Minnesota

From the Leadership Team...

Dear Friends,

As the days of summer come to a close, we begin shifting to new schedules and the beginning of classes in elementary and secondary schools, in colleges and technical schools. We feel the energy building as families and children start focusing on supplies, friends and new teachers. Young adults begin navigating the shift from child to adult, focusing on jobs, degrees, technical training or volunteer experiences. Underlying all this are the dreams and hopes of children and young people and how they will be in the world.

In this issue, you will see evidence of the many ways we Franciscan Sisters and our colleagues have been and are involved in educating young people. How we do this is as important as what we do. How? By valuing and respecting them, listening to them and by helping them find positive ways to be in relation with others and our world. Ultimately, it is by letting them know that we care for them as they are and that we trust who they will become.

The fruits of our involvement with young people has been especially evident recently. Gatherings of graduates of St. Francis High School and St. Francis School of Nursing in Breckenridge renewed friendships and reminisced about the impact of sisters as teachers and about the camaraderie and discipline that helped build a community of learners. As we withdrew the last group of sisters from Flensburg, there was tremendous outpouring of love and respect for all that the sisters have done and been for the children and families in that community.

Our involvement with young people continues. Our Franciscan Girls Camp served 20 middle school campers, offering fun, prayer, community building and spirituality. Once again St. Francis Music Center brought young people together to create rock bands which performed at our Green Fair Folk Festival, with proud parents and grandparents watching their achievement. St. Francis Health & Recreation Center hosted a summer sports camp for kids. Sister Anita Jennissen volunteers at her parish in McAllen, Tex., to help immigrant children and families receive caring support and assistance. Hands Across the World helps families navigate the transition in culture and language from their native countries to life in St. Cloud. Our Franciscan Community Volunteer program brings together young adults for a yearlong commitment that combines service among those in need with living in community with Franciscan Sisters and experiencing Franciscan spirituality.

The needs of so many are great and there is much love and care to give. Thank you for the ways you offer love and care to your families, parishes and cities and for the many ways you support us. As we join hands and hearts together, we build the Body of Christ here and now, today and always.

*Sister Beatrice Eichten Sister Rose Margaret Schneider
Sister Susan Knutson*



Sister Grace Skwira named to Leadership Team

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Sister Grace Skwira as Assistant Minister to complete the Leadership term of Sister Carolita Mauer who died July 13, 2014.

Sister Grace most recently ministered in Monterrey, Mexico. Prior to that she was the Vocations minister from 2001-2010; she served in Hispanic ministry in the Diocese of Birmingham, Ala., from 1998-2000; she was the community secretary/corporate secretary for Leadership from 1988 to 1996; she was the director of a Clinic/School Nurse/Midwife/Rural Health Ed. in Bolivia from 1984 to 1987; and she served as a nurse in several locations, including Peru from 1971 to 1980.

We are grateful to Sister Grace for graciously agreeing to become a member of the Leadership Team. We welcome her to this shared Leadership ministry and ask for your prayers and support as she accepts this responsibility.

URock expands, adds violence prevention initiative, receives CHI grant

Deanna V. Boone

The Franciscan Sisters have been awarded a \$91,450 grant to support URock Against Violence, a new mentorship program at St. Francis Music Center that pairs local youth with caring adults and provides activities focusing on music and the arts, including music lessons.

“We welcome everyone,” said Robyn Gray, director of the Music Center. “We are looking for a committed group of young people who want to promote anti-bullying and other unproductive behavior. Perhaps it’s positive peer pressure. Perhaps it’s using music to create a community where people support one another and enrich their own lives as they enrich others.”

The grant is provided by the Mission and Ministry Fund of Catholic Health Initiatives, a national Catholic health care system in which the Franciscan Sisters participate. Kevin Lofton, CEO of CHI, said, “. . . we see the human cost of violence every day as victims come to us for emergency services. Violence prevention is a systemwide, long-term commitment for us. With the help of grants from the Mission and Ministry Fund, our local organizations are doing excellent work. They are

moving ‘upstream’ to find the places and situations in which violence can be prevented.”

URock Against Violence will serve youth throughout Morrison County and contribute to Catholic Health Initiatives’ efforts to prevent negative behavior in communities where CHI serves. “We’re grateful to CHI for supporting our efforts to serve youth of Morrison County and are excited to turn our popular URock summer camp into a year-round program,” Robyn added.

The summer camp, now in its eighth year, is a chance for young musicians to fulfill the dream of being in a band. She said, “Participants learn so much more than playing music. They learn to listen to one another, create harmony, build friendships, interact socially, think critically, communicate, gain self-confidence and learn the power of teamwork. They belong.” The beauty of the program is attracting students who do not normally participate in extracurricular activities or band and choir.

For families that cannot afford lessons, funds are available. “We strive to let music be a vehicle for making positive differences in people’s lives—in and out of the classroom.

“Life is full of choices, as adults well know. We want to teach the younger generation that one positive choice is to turn to music when they feel depressed or lonely. Music, song-writing, performing—it can change lives,” Robyn emphasized.

Robyn Gray, center, and musicians from the 2014 URock summer camp. “We have witnessed the transformation that studying music and participating in the arts can make in the life of a child or teen, especially one that is struggling to make good, healthy decisions.”



Green Fair Folk Festival rocks St. Francis campus

Lots of family-friendly fun, interesting displays, indoor tours, horse-drawn wagon tours of the campus grounds, a variety of speakers, fantastic music and vendors—all with a green message—were the highlights of the 2014 Green Fair Folk Festival held outdoors on the west lawn at St. Francis Convent. This was the eighth year for the Green Fair, which welcomed over 1,200 people and 60+ vendors. Special thanks to the many individuals who helped in countless ways to make this event possible. The Green Fair Folk Festival, an afternoon and evening of music along with environmentally friendly ideas, is a free event sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters.



A variety of musical talent performed outdoors during the Green Fair Folk Festival. One of the on-stage performances was given by The Rick Family, whose members include Jacob Rick, Greta Rick, Elijah Rick, Annika Rick and Quinn Rick. Other highlights included a Fiddle Festival featuring area fiddlers and Sestri, a Slavic women's choir, and Woodland Strings. In addition, URock bands participating in the event included Fovero, Pumpernickel Fitz Patrick, Soup Kitchen, The Banned, Trial By Fire and Whispering Willows. A special performance was also made by Power Plant, a URock band from past years.



Congratulations to Steph Klassen, Little Falls, the lucky winner of a rain barrel, donated by Tom Rothleutner and Team 1548 of Tractor Supply, Co., Little Falls. Pictured: Steph Klassen, Maegan Klassen—her daughter, and Tom Rothleutner.

Servant leaders formed by Sister Joan's work

Deanna V. Boone, director of Community Relations

Sister Joan Gerads goes to bed asking God, “What more can I do for these people? What do they need?” When she awakes in the morning, she praises God. “Christ must increase; I must decrease—which I do naturally with this aging process,” she said and laughed.

The early church was persecuted, yet nothing could stop the Holy Spirit. Sister Joan, through her work with Base Church Communities* in Ecuador, strives to renew the vitality of the original church. An estimated 90 percent of baptized Catholics in the country do not go to church. They think that because life is difficult and they live in poverty, they are somehow evil and must not go to church. However, those same families feel welcome to gather at a neighbor's home, the venue where Sister Joan and Franciscan Associates Iris Prieto De Baque and Glahecer Baque minister, just as Saint Francis heard from Jesus beneath the San Damiano Cross, “Go and rebuild my church.”

Word of mouth spreads when parishioners invite Sister Joan into their homes, always with the knowledge and approval of the local pastor. “We ask people to open their home for five nights so that we can share our love of God, read and study scripture, reflect on our lives and discover our need for God and for one another,” she said. “We experience a conversion to God and neighbors as, together, we form the body of Christ.”

The first night's scripture leads to discussion of individual needs and “the sorry situation people find themselves in,” she said. “That's true for all of us. Even the rich are lonesome, estranged and tired of the rat race. We need to find God, to open our hearts.” The second night focuses on the dignity of the human body, the need for good health and the gift of the body as a temple.

“The third gathering is the most powerful night, a time of deep conversion. We invite them to touch the San Damiano Crucifix and to ask for God's help to live in love and change their lives. Almost everyone goes to the cross and gives their life to God, asks pardon for wrongdoing, seeks grace in leading a new life.”

The fourth night focuses on the New Pentecost, as



Sister Joan Gerads and Franciscan Associates gather in Cumbayá, Ecuador, for spiritual renewal.

envisioned by Pope John XXIII, where we “open the windows to let the Holy Spirit come into the church.” And, on the fifth night, scripture readings are from the Acts of the Apostles and I Corinthians describing the community life of early Christians, especially the gifts of the Holy Spirit to build a community of faith and solidarity in the barrio. “We celebrate Mass in the home, the culmination of the formation of the Body of Christ—the people of God with the Head. Then, before everyone leaves, we lead the group in a prayerful selection of coordinators that we call Servidores (Servant-Leaders), neighbors among neighbors, all walking and growing together.

“When people hear of our five-night gatherings in many different homes—over a span of six weeks in a parish—they cannot believe what happens. After one week, people are ready to move forward in their faith as servant leaders, always in union with their pastor. This deep commitment has long convinced me of the value of this work.”

Conversions like this are equally commonplace and extraordinary with this neighbor-to-neighbor process. After 15 years of connecting people to one another and to God, 65 percent continue the work of the Holy Spirit in Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Chile, Peru and Ecuador, as well as Minnesota, Texas, Nebraska, Florida and New York. Base Church Communities in Latin America total over 1,000. “It's a renewing, a revitalizing

from the roots, from the people themselves, not from the top down,” she said. “A priest once described evangelism as trying to push uninterested people uphill; after the five-night experience, he likened their renewal to running up that proverbial hill. It’s a whole different spirit of church rather than an organization with rules.”

As an opportunity for greater learning, Sister Joan and Maryknoll Father Tom Maney co-founded the ministry and school for spiritual directors 24 years ago. Since 2002, it has been run by Anita de Vargas. Servant leaders of the CEBs are invited to attend and the faculty members of the school have chosen to live in community so that they can offer a better, deeper personal experience for participants.

Sister Joan, a nurse for 20 years, has a Ph.D. in sociology and community development and has studied theology and medical sociology. Her Ecuadorian mission has an eight-member board, started in 1979, dedicated to raising funds for continued ministry. Because the compelling results of the Base Church Community process, the board has requested to experience it first-hand this fall. “They, too, want to be renewed by the Holy Spirit.”

*In Latin America, the groups are called Comunidades Eclesiales de Base (CEBs).

“Before I die, I would like everything I am doing to be taken over by someone else.” —Sister Joan

Sister Mary Obowa finds new ministry in sewing and solitude

Elizabeth Rydeen

Sister Mary Obowa considers herself a Franciscan Sister living in solitude, calling it her sixth period of her Franciscan life. She is a former student, teacher, pastoral minister, therapist (her longest ministry of 18 years) and past community minister for her congregation. Last year’s trip to Assisi revealed to her that Francis spent about half his life in solitude and the other half in active ministry. At this stage, she believes she’s in that same place. While she spends much of her time in solitude, her day-to-day activities reveal a continued commitment to meeting the needs of others.

Since leaving her FSLF Leadership position in 2011, she’s honed her sewing and quilting skills. She sews for the Franciscan Gift Shop, for individual sisters and for special requests. “Whenever I make something, I say a prayer of blessing for whoever might be using it, for the person sitting around the table donned with one of my embroidered runners, for the home where the Christmas ornaments hang on the tree.”

She lives in Rice and is active at Annunciation

Parish in Mayhew Lake, where the people fondly remember Sister Rita Barthel. She co-leads a scripture study group there and sews baptismal garments. Sister Mary also volunteers at the Multicultural Center in St. Cloud giving sewing lessons to immigrants, often to women who don’t speak English, who have never even seen a sewing machine, yet want to learn the craft in hopes of getting a job.

Sister Mary offers her sisters in community special days of prayer, where they too can enjoy the solitude that is her daily experience. The opportunity to practice her craft is pure gift, and the finished product is pure delight for the rest of us.



Sister Mary’s quilting projects reveal her eye for color and expert technique. Her work is on display and for sale in the Franciscan Gift Shop, which is open Monday – Friday, noon to 5 p.m. and on special occasions.

Humor, creativity, simplicity mark the Kroll legacy

Elizabeth Rydeen

“Unless we change our view of our relationship with all beings, we will destroy it. And we will not know God.” —Sister Ade

When Sister Lillian Kroll (eldest of 13) was a young girl, just seven years old, she said, “Mama, I am going to be a priest.” You cannot be a priest, her mother told her, because you’re a girl. “God knew I wanted to be a priest. Why did he make me a girl?” she mused, yet never talked about it again.

Her childhood was typical of the day. She went to school through the 8th grade, but further education was not an option because her family could not afford transportation to the high school in Royalton over eight miles away. She stayed home on the farm for a year, yet yearned for more schooling. Determined, Sister Lillian had a plan to work as a housekeeper for Father Aloysius in Harding. She’d save her earnings and take the bus to St. Francis High School in Little Falls. At the same time she wondered about becoming a sister. When she inquired, she was told to just come. She entered the convent in 1937 as she started her freshman year as a “Frannie.”

Sister Ade, the 10th child, was born while Sister Lillian was a novice. The two never lived on the family farm together—they were one, even two, generations apart it seemed. Growing up after WWII, Sister Ade didn’t know the poverty her family endured during the Depression. By contrast, her childhood included more modern conveniences: electricity, an automobile, a telephone. But as Franciscan Sisters, their values match; they relate on a level with one another that’s different than with their other siblings.

“There were a lot of religious in the family. I knew I would have to try it or never have personal peace. If I stayed, it was a sign. If I left, I’d have peace,” Sister



Members of the Kroll family: Sister Lillian, Father Tony and Sister Ade. They carry the family legacy.

Ade recalled. Her neighbor Donald Popp bet her \$5 that she wouldn’t stay. To this day he gives her \$5 whenever she sees him.

Sister Ade is sure this is where she belongs. “At this point in my life, the fact that I love this group of women who do phenomenal things and stand for quality of living in this universe is an honor. They have encouraged and supported me in expanding and seeking the way to know God. Even at five years old I knew I wanted to understand God. How can you have a living God and have no more ongoing revelation of this God? Today through evolution we know God-with-us is continuing to be revealed, we can grow in knowing more about our relationship with God which is one with our relationship with all beings—the sun, water, air, insects, birds, soil, animals . . . everything in the universe.”

Sisters Lillian and Ade talk about the grand mystery and the oneness which reveals God’s love. In fact, back in the ’70s, they studied, though separately, the works of Teilhard de Chardin, a French philosopher and Jesuit priest. “We didn’t talk about this with each other . . . didn’t understand it enough to have a discussion,” they chuckled. Today, with reverence and grace, they continue to embrace the mystery that is God’s love.

Sisters find Jesus in the poor

Deanna V. Boone

Many girls grow up without a sister. “That’s incomprehensible to us,” agreed Sisters Rose Mae and Tonie Rausch. “When everything else fails, we can count on our sister.”

That’s doubly true for these sisters who had three other female siblings and their community of Franciscan Sisters. Born two years apart, Sisters Rose Mae and Tonie call their relationship “solid, straight-forward, open, unafraid.” Their mother died when they were 16 and 14, respectively. Sister Rose Mae took care of her during her last months. More recently, Sister Tonie took care of their sister Lorraine, 18 years older. “We cover for each other; one can help when the other cannot,” Sister Tonie said. “Our family life has always been strong.”

Though sisters with like minds and values, they are decidedly not carbon copies of the other. Sister Rose Mae shared that, from the time she was a child, she was attracted to being a sister. She set aside the idea for a while but, as a junior and senior at St. Francis High School, the idea resurfaced. She had seen a romantic movie with a couple sitting in a boat. When she got home, she looked at the stars and said to herself, “That’s a beautiful way of life.” Yet, she wanted God as her ultimate spouse. Now, 65 years after having been received as a Franciscan Sister, she said, “I’m impatient to go directly to God and I seek to continually develop my relationship with God; I’m still unfinished, still growing spiritually.”

One day, sitting on the steps of St. Francis High School, Sister Tonie also felt the question being asked. “It was not attractive to me,” she said. “If I could become a priest . . . that would be a goal to consider. If not,” she thought, “I would drop the whole idea. Even at that age, in 1948, I had the questions about the feminine in the church.”

She knew she wanted to work in social justice and help those who are disadvantaged. She considered joining the Grail movement where teens trained to become more conscious of the poor and dedicate their lives to lay apostolate work. Then the parish priest visited their home and said, “Tonie, what are you planning to do? Get married?” At the time, Grail was ahead of its time in the church; it welcomed women, laity, was independent of the church and ecumenical

Sisters Tonie and Rose Mae Rausch: “We’re willing to sacrifice for each other, although we don’t think of it like that.”

in its reach. That appealed to her so she beseeched Saint Anthony (her patron saint) to make it clear to her, not knowing that Sister Rose Mae was praying for her to join the Franciscans. Now, in her 63rd year, Sister Tonie said, “What I was looking for . . . is now my life.”

Sister Rose Mae trained in elementary education and history, theology, Spanish and transpersonal counseling/psychology which prepared her for ministry as a teacher, novice director, adult religious educator, community minister and a missionary in Venezuela and Mexico.

Sister Tonie, with training in history and education, fine arts and African spirituality, ministered in education, tutoring English as a second language, social justice, leadership, art and service to jailed women before missioning to Tanzania for 12 years.

The sisters were separated by their work for 34 years, often on two different continents. “We are real sisters to each other, provide support for one another and are proud of the other’s contributions to the world.” Sister Rose Mae’s prayer, “Jesus, where are you?” was answered clearly in her heart, “You will find me in the poor.” They are Franciscan Sisters and sisters in service to God’s people and creation.



Tonie and Rose Mae in 1940



St. Francis High School graduates gather

Sister Elise Saggau

On Sunday, July 20, a gathering of St. Francis High School graduates, former students, faculty and staff took place at the Motherhouse in Little Falls. The goal of this event is to keep alive the relationships formed at SFHS and to nurture and promote the Franciscan spirit that was instilled during those special

high school years. Over 200 persons came together to celebrate Mass. Father Michael Kwatera, OSB, presided and Sister Elise Saggau gave the homily. Graduates from various years participated in the liturgical ministries.

After Mass, everyone enjoyed lunch in St. Francis Hall and an afternoon of intense visiting. Many took advantage of an opportunity to tour the former high school building and enhanced their tours with wonderful remembrances of what happened in this or that room many years ago. The day ended happily with anticipation of participating again next year as this event becomes annual. It will be held on the third Sunday of July for as long as there are persons to organize it and host it. It will be advertised in *Our Journey* and on the FSLF website. Notices will be sent out only via email so please be sure we have your email address. Next year's gathering: July 19, 2015.



FRANCISCAN
**Harvest
Supper**
November 8, 2014
4:30–7:00 PM - St. Francis Convent
116 8th Avenue SE, Little Falls, MN

Fried Chicken, sausage, garden vegetables, coleslaw, homemade bars and beverages will be served.

Adults \$8.50 • Children (5-12 years) \$4
Children under 5 years - Free

Tickets available at the door or
by calling: (320) 632-2981,
Monday - Saturday

Proceeds will benefit St. Francis Health and Recreation Center
and St. Francis Music Center, Little Falls.



The afternoon included some intense visiting. Seated: Myrna Ohmann, Sisters Karen Niedzielski, Noreen Bentfield, Maurita Niedzielski, Rita Kraemer; standing: Sister Carol Schmit, Martha Prokott Kujawa, Jean Lampert Laueremann, Monica Schwab Douglas.

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, 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 another foreign charity or religious institute.

Faithful Fools expands, focuses on experimental learning

Sister Carmen Barsody

“True to the history and spirit of our Congregation, we engage in ministries that show preference for the impoverished and neglected. We work to change unjust structures that perpetuate dehumanizing situations.” *The Constitutions* p.8

I love the word “**epistemology**.” Brazilian Catholic Theologian Ivone Gebara writes about epistemology in her book, *Longing for Running Water*. Not only do I love saying the word epistemology, I love its meaning: “Knowing our knowing.”

When I lived in Nicaragua, I learned about “Popular Education” from the work of Brazilian educator/writer, Paolo Freire. Popular Education empowers people through reflection on their own experience and moving them to participate in social change. Its premise is that we all are teachers and all are learners.

The work of Ivone Gebara and Paolo Freire were important resources to Kay Jorgensen and me as we formed Faithful Fools Street Ministry. We searched for ways to respond to the needs of people we encountered and to imagine ways to invite people to walk with us into the streets. We watched people come together from all walks of life to respond to others in need and to address the policies, attitudes and naiveté that perpetuate homelessness and poverty. Thus we founded Faithful Fools as an “Educational and Charitable” organization.

The way of Faithful Fools, like that of Saint Francis, is an invitation into relationship with places and people that we are advised to avoid. A few years ago, we were reading our mission statement and I felt an inner tug when I read, “We meet people where they are through the arts, **EDUCATION**, advocacy and accompaniment.” I realized it was time to bring more focus and intention to the educational part of our mission.

Soon we began to imagine the new experiential educational program that we call The Institute for Street Level Learning. Experiential learning is another way of talking about the Faithful Fools practice of



reflection and action. For those who have lived, volunteered and worked with the Fools, learning is the constant companion of art, advocacy and accompaniment. Sometimes the learning comes as a hard lesson in recognizing one’s own assumptions or blind spots; learning also comes while listening to a story that illustrates some of life’s deepest lessons. Faithful Fools learn from the work and are prepared to share that experience with others.

We are grateful to Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI) for a three-year grant to establish The Institute of Street Level Learning. CHI is dedicated to supporting healthy communities. Sam Dennison, educator and Faithful Fool, says, “The CHI grant affirms that learning and health are deeply linked. A community that ignores the need to nurture intelligence will struggle for good health and likewise a community that is healthy, almost by definition, is one where learning is part of everyday life. It becomes obvious when you say it out loud: A community, especially one with marginal economic resources, must have both learning and health in order to thrive—and the two go hand-in-hand.” We are grateful to Sam Dennison for appearing at Faithful Fools at the appointed time and to CHI for believing in our work. Once again I extend an invitation to anyone and everyone: Come walk the streets with us!

Respect

Associate Jeff Odendahl

In April the Franciscan Sisters hosted an evening discussion around the topic of “Tolerance and Respect for Islam.” Some felt this was a peculiar topic. One caller even questioned when we would be having a program on tolerance and respect for Christianity. We do know that Christians are being persecuted in other countries, some by Muslims, but most by a variety of sectarian groups. However, we also know that Islam is a “big tent” faith, much like Catholicism, and that the behavior of a few in the group cannot justly be ascribed to the whole group.

Since the events of September 11, 2001, Muslims (and even those simply perceived to be Muslims) in this country have often been faced with harassment and vitriol. There are people who believe all Muslims are anti-Christian, “un-American” and potential terrorists. The evening’s program was designed to counter this attitude while providing more information about Islam and its rich diversity.

Because few of us have direct exposure to Muslims in Little Falls, we know little of their faith views and how those beliefs affect their lives. Jaylani Hussein, from Somalia, helped us understand a little of what being a Muslim is all about. Hussein described the five pillars of the Islam faith:

- Belief in one God (and that Mohammed was the last messenger)
- Prayer (five times a day)
- Almsgiving
- Fasting
- Making a pilgrimage to Mecca

While there are clear differences between Muslim and Christian faith views, several of Islam’s key beliefs—one god, angels, the scriptures, the prophets, life after death and Judgment Day—mesh closely with those of most Christians. Hussein noted that many of us are ready to believe whatever we hear about Muslims whether it is true or not merely because we have no basis not to. Thus, our perceptions have been largely shaped by headlines and media hype, especially in the aftermath of September 11.

Another speaker was Saly Abd Alla from Egypt. Abd Alla reminded us of the damage this type of

misunderstanding and stereotyping can cause. Throughout our country’s history Catholics and most religious minorities have experienced periods of virulent discrimination and harassment. The persecution has included hate-filled rhetoric, political exclusion, questioning of loyalty, opposition to houses of worship, discrimination in employment, and denial of public accommodations.

A final speaker, Father Virgil Petermeier, OCS, reflected on his 38-year missionary experience in Indonesia, the country with the world’s largest Muslim population. Father Virgil lived and worked with Muslims on a daily basis, and spoke of “living as a brother” with them. He emphasized that there are good and bad Muslims, just as there are good and bad Christians. He also testified to the many times members of the Muslim faith community rallied to the aid of Christians in need or in danger.

The event gathered a group of about 125 including our own sisters and associates as well as members of the community at large. While many were eager to learn, some in the audience were adamant that the panelists were lying, and that Muslims have no goal other than annihilation of all Christians. This hardened, uncritical attitude is difficult for some of us to understand, but it is based on fear of the unknown or, in some cases, on actual negative experiences. We don’t have to accept expressions of hatred or distrust, but we do have to empathize with the pain and fear people sometimes feel when they’re trying to make sense of the world they live in.

When Saint Francis journeyed to meet the Sultan, he thought he could convert the Sultan to Christianity. Instead, his meeting with the Sultan strengthened his own ongoing conversion to Gospel living. As Francis came to understand the Sultan and his deep spirituality, he recognized the spark of the divine in the Sultan and became more understanding and appreciative of those with differing faith views. Until we can “get inside the skins” of the “others” around us, we cannot begin to appreciate their lives. While this event may not have softened all hearts, it is a beginning in helping us to build greater understanding and respect of those of a different faith tradition than our own.



Church Ladies Extravaganza! written and directed by Robyn Gray, shines again; proceeds support Oasis Central Minnesota. Front row: Laura Yorek, Sister Carolyn Law, Robyn Gray, Vicki Spofford and Laurie Koll; back row: Judith Hecht, Laura Wagner, Julie Hochsprung, Sister Elise Saggau, Vonnie Larson, Rhonda Schmitt and Jan Everson. Photo: Jeff Hanson, correspondent with the Morrison County Record.

Feast of Saint Francis



Transitus
October 3, 7 p.m.

Eucharist
October 4, 11 a.m.

St. Francis Convent
116 8th Avenue SE
Little Falls, MN, 56345

All are welcome!
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**Kindle the Fire;
Illumine the Night**
Presenter: David Liedl

December 6, 2014
9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
St. Francis Convent, Little Falls

Through a series of reflections, we will explore how Francis's encounters with Brother Fire illuminate a path of spiritual transformation. This is the illumination that the season of Advent seeks to enkindle so that we may give birth to and embrace the great mystery of the Incarnation.

The day includes liturgy, lunch and snack. Cost: Donation. Register by November 27 with the Franciscan Life Office: 320-632-0668 or franciscanlife@fslf.org.

People from around the world find common ground

Associate Geri Dietz



Cofounders Associate Brianda Cediél and Sister Tonie Rausch created a program to serve both adults and children arriving from countries all over the world.

“And wherever they are, or whatever situation they are in, they should diligently and fervently show reverence and honor to one another.” *The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis*, Chapter III

“What do we have in common?” These are the words Associate Brianda Cediél spoke when I asked her what her main focus is as executive director for Hands Across the World (HAW) in St. Cloud. HAW is the first contact for refugees and immigrants who come with their families to make the St. Cloud area their new home. Brianda literally makes it her business to engage refugees and immigrants in conversation with what they have in common.

So, what do people from Somalia, Mexico, Ukraine, Vietnam, Laos, Kenya, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Ghana, South Korea, China, Senegal, Guinea, Syria and India have in common? “What we share with one another, what we have in common is one world. We need to foster unity and respect for all God’s people in this one world God has given us.” Brianda continues, “It begins with a smile and a hug.” Then some basic information is communicated: What is an apartment lease? How can I buy food and what clothes can I wear? How can I learn to ride the bus and transfer? Can I trust the police? Some of the many educational classes include listening, speaking, reading, writing, basic computer, math, art, sewing, parenting and health classes, early childhood development and citizenship classes. Over

1,000 adults and children have been served by HAW since its founding in 2003.

When visiting Hands Across the World, one can feel like you are indeed visiting one big world with all the diversity present. Often, the HAW classroom is the first formal school environment for these newcomers. Presently 273 adults and 160 children attend. The classroom environment provides a safe community for adults to continue their education and secure employment in the area. Here they also share their stories, concerns and questions as they make a new life.

Brianda writes:

The refugees and immigrants who settle here arrive from countries of violence and discrimination, including religious discrimination. Most of our families are war refugees. As members of our global community they hold within their hearts the same dreams for themselves and their children as we do. They worked hard to make their homeland a safe and prosperous place where their dreams could come true. Tragically, through no fault of their own, those dreams became nightmares of violence and poverty. So, they did what courageous people have done for thousands of years, they sacrificed their dreams of living in the land of their ancestors and moved their families to America—to central Minnesota—away from violence, away from poverty. HAW is their first contact offering a place of safety. It is a place where hope lives and where nightmares fade. And where, once again, dreaming begins.

Francis of Assisi had a dream, too. Because of this dream he made a commitment to serve God. Brianda and her servant leadership way of life serve God with an open heart and hand, offering friendship and meeting the needs of those brought before her.

Flensburg farewell

Sister Cordy Korkowski

The farewell for the Franciscan Sisters who served in Flensburg carried all the emotions of saying good-bye to precious and long-term relationships. At a special Mass, our community was honored for many years of dedicated ministry among the people of Flensburg. The five sisters who lived in Flensburg most recently were each escorted into church by a parishioner: Sisters Mary Fabian Schneider, Bernarda Sanoski, Christelle Watercott, Doretta Meier and Donna Zetah.

Sister Bea Eichten relayed the history of our years at Flensburg at the liturgy:

Our Franciscan community has had sisters ministering and living in Flensburg since 1936—that is 78 years! We started teaching religion and had a catechetical mission here until we opened a house in 1941. Sisters Josine Schneider, Paschaline Stenglein and Laura Bieniek were the first to arrive. Over the years we taught religion classes, then, from 1953–1969, our sisters taught in the new three-room school which was built in 1941. When the school closed, sisters continued to live here. The convent, built in 1957, housed the sisters involved in catechetical programs and some who worked in Little Falls. It served as a House of Prayer, as a home for our novices and postulants, briefly as a vacation place, and then, from 1973–1980, and from 1989 to the present, it was a convent for a Sister Community. A total of 60 sisters have lived or taught in Flensburg, including two native “Flensburgians”: Sisters Bernarda and Fabian.

We have loved being part of your community here in Flensburg and have stayed as long as it was possible. Recognizing the limitations that age put on many of us—difficulty with steps, the need to travel and the need for support—it is with sadness that we close the house. Thank you for how you have shared life with our sisters and blessed them with your goodness.

We promise that we will continue to hold you all with affection and in prayer.

We all felt the love, saw the tears, heard the humor and laughter of stories told and the great gift of faith that was shared between the sisters and the parish community during our years at Flensburg.



Father Jimmy Joseph celebrated the Mass, honoring Sisters Christelle, Bernarda, Fabian, Bea, Doretta and Donna.

“We thank you and all the sisters that have come before you for your many years of service to our parish and to our community. I doubt any of us will ever know the countless hours you offered to so many of us and our families. Your warm, loving, peaceful presence will be missed. We humbly ask that you please keep Flensburg forever in your prayers.

I know that many of us here have our own special memories of one, two or many of our dear Franciscan women. It is certain that the work and presence of your community in Flensburg is one of the primary reasons for the deep and strong faith of so many. It is sad to know that after Mass there will be no one at the door of the convent to offer the warm greeting of Jesus, gracious hospitality and wonderful chocolate cookies. It will be sad to see the third pew from the front on St. Joseph’s side of the church no longer seated with

dear sisters. It will be a loss not to see you at bingo, at local festivals and family celebrations. Flensburg will indeed miss you dear women.”

—Lynette Gessell,
Sacred Heart
parishioner

Nurse, missionary, donor

Marie Heim Emmer

I never feel I work alone. Saint Francis and all who keep our work in prayer are with me. Thank you, all.

I graduated from St. Gabriel's School of Nursing in 1957. At the time, I did not realize the impact my nursing degree would have on my life. Three years of living with the guidance, expectations, teachings and friendship of the Franciscan Sisters carved and sharpened my natural interests and gifts of my soul. My self-confidence and compassion grew beyond what I possessed or had known. The sisters opened a new world. Sister Camillus befriended me. When she left to serve in the missions, my desire to follow deepened. Sister Delores demanded perfection from us and received it. Sister Elizabeth was ever present believing in and encouraging each one of us. I love these women and all the others unmentioned. I hope I have served them and God well.

After graduation I worked in a small local hospital near my father's home. The nursing experience offered was fantastic! From there life took me to the University of Minnesota Hospital and classes in public health. Years later I expanded my education to include a master's in counseling. My nursing career took me to a number of states and cultures. After decades of steady employment, I am able to say that I never wished for a different profession. Nursing gave me joy and energy. When retirement came, I knew there were two things I did not want to do: play golf and learn bridge. I felt there was something else waiting for me. Apparently, God didn't quite have me ready. I joined a group of women with like interests and went on retreats. Solitude gave me answers. I did not choose; I was called. It was time to give back. What I came to learn was oneness. Real oneness. Walking with Christ, all are brothers and sisters.



Marie Heim Emmer: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. I feel I am one with the Franciscan Sisters."

Years earlier I had sponsored a Guatemalan child. Upon visiting, I looked no further. I simply packed my bags, got rid of my stuff, sold my house, drove to the Guatemala highlands and started volunteering at the San Lucas Mission. Fifteen years later, I'm still here, living in one room, a converted garage. I do my own cooking and cleaning and visit the States twice a year. The work I do has evolved over the years. First I volunteered in the hospital, which grew into a home assistance program and still exists. Referrals came from priests, neighbors, doctors, families with aging parents, nurses, anyone who had a medical concern. We had no physical therapist, so I used what I had been taught at St. Gabe's and was grateful for the elementary P.T. skills I had acquired.

I also came to see that children were quietly starving and pregnant women were without proper nutrition. With the support of friends in the States, I started a woman's vitamin program. Our health promoters chose the neediest communities. This program no longer exists but vitamins are still being given. Illnesses, such as cancer, are prevalent, along with injuries due to burns, cuts from machetes and gun wounds. There are dressings to be changed, medicines to be shared and home visits to be made. The concept of home healthcare had not previously existed. When I realized the need, I started visiting the small communities up and down the mountain, riding in the back of pick-up trucks stuffed with travelers

needing to be shuttled to and from the villages.

The work is endless, yet I enjoy every moment. As I said above, my work has evolved and my travels have lessened, tasks vary. At Christmastime we distribute new blankets. A family is being helped to purchase property and build a home. An 18-year-old needs a new arm after a farm accident. Interested in organic gardening, I help to provide labor, seeds, a watering system and cheerleading for a local grower. Education is also top on my list. I've been able to find sponsors for junior high students who are unable to afford school. Plans for a new adult literacy program are underway. I cherished the joy of walking with the Guatemalan people and joining in their happiness and celebrations, their pain, illness and sorrows.



Donor response: over the top

Sister Cordy Korkowski, director of donor relations



Sister Cordy Korkowski

If there ever was a campaign entitled “Over the Top,” the response to the latest appeal from the Franciscan Sisters is just that. During the wet spring, our chapel roof let us know it was “see-through” in many places. Our weakened roof and shingle system gave way to puddles in our worship space. Immediate action needed to be taken. Our roof is fully repaired and Sacred Heart Chapel is secure from the elements once again. On the down side, we are left holding the \$114,000 bill.

Our minds immediately went to our generous donors. Letters were sent to a selected group of donors in addition to donors that we had not heard from in a few years. We felt that our urgent need would elicit a response and, within a short time, we have received over \$26,000. We are deeply grateful for the gifts and the generosity of our donors. We are now inviting all of our readers and friends to contribute, as able, to this “Over the Top” appeal.

In the last issue, I encouraged you to tug gently on the envelope enclosed. Again, I ask you to do the same . . . this time in support of roof repairs for Sacred Heart Chapel. Please indicate your intention on the memo line. If you prefer to donate electronically, go to www.fslf.org and look for our DONATE button. Reminder: Your thank-you letter serves as your receipt for tax purposes. No year-end statement will be sent.

As we give, so we receive. The Franciscan Sisters continue to be grateful for the blessings that allow you to share your generosity with us. Saint Paul says, “You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity.” (2 Cor. 9:11) Our gratitude for your goodness is without end.

Planned Giving

Please let us know if you would like more information on remembering the Franciscan Sisters in your will and estate planning.

Contact: Sister Bernice Ebner
116 8th Avenue SE
Little Falls, Minnesota 56345
(320)632-0699 • bebner@fslf.org

Prefer  to donate online?

It's easy and convenient.
Visit www.fslf.org to learn more.

Living the Gospel courageously . . .



Sister Christelle Watercott devoted 40 years of her life to ministry in parishes of the St. Cloud Diocese as an elementary teacher, principal, religious education coordinator, parish music

coordinator and pastoral associate. Then she decided it was time to share in direct ministry to her Franciscan Community. In 2004 she began work in hospitality at the Motherhouse (St. Francis Convent) and St. Francis Center in Little Falls; she serves both sisters as they come and go and guests from all parts of the world. "One of my greatest joys in this ministry is getting to know so many good people who are searching for meaning in their lives (as all of us are) and to make connections with people who have become acquainted with our sisters in various locations. I like helping people feel comfortable and enjoy their stay with us and interacting with many departments and staff members. We are so blessed.

She was named the September Employee of the month by the Little Falls Area Chamber of Commerce.



Sister Kay Watts volunteers at Catholic Charities Emergency Services in St. Cloud. She works in the clothing department where they distribute clothing and household items to needy families or persons

displaced by home fires or homelessness. Many clients do not speak English so, at times, she says it's like playing charades to learn their needs. "After we share a few laughs together, we get the picture of what they need. We have a good staff of volunteers who treat our clients with respect and dignity. This is a very rewarding job."



Sister Callista Robinson lives in Milwaukee and is the assistant administrator at the Adult Learning Center, a GED program. She also serves as the coordinator of the Brother Booker Ashe Lay Ministry

Program for African American Catholics who want to be lay ministers in their parishes. She is the president of the National Black Sisters' Conference (NBSC) which was founded in 1968. Black religious women from many religious communities are members of the National Black Sisters' Conference. One of the objectives of the National Black Sisters' Conference is to develop and utilize fully the potential represented by NBSC, through effective participation in National Black Catholic Organizations, and through initiation and endorsement of all activities and programs which support and enhance the growth of Black Catholic leadership within the Church and in our religious communities.



Sister Siena Wald, originally from Napoleon, N. Dak., lives in Turlock, Calif., and ministers in geriatrics. She has served as therapeutic recreation director, volunteer coordinator, consultant, and now as an interim

long term care administrator. She teaches CCD and is an RCIA instructor, participates in Rotary, leads the rosary before Mass and serves as lector and communion minister. She's involved with AAUW and diabetic support groups. For fun Sister Siena likes to read, use the computer, engage in good conversations, oil paint, crochet and carve wood. Her philosophy is to never get bored. There are so many things to do that can be great fun which include getting to know new people with different ideas and ways of looking at life and the world around us.

with energy, spirit, peace



Sister Sylvia Opatz returned to the Motherhouse in 2012 after having ministered in the Senior Companion program through Lutheran Social Services in St. Paul and Good Samaritan Care Center in Inver Grove Heights. Now she is a volunteer wherever

she is needed: preparing produce from convent garden or orchard, organizing sheet music and folders in St. Francis Music Center, serving on Conversation Coordinating Team and Earth Healers committee, creating new and recycled greeting cards, helping with prayer services. She enjoys her semi-retirement.



Sister Ruth Lentner grows a garden with Little Falls Community High School students and their student advisor. In addition, she serves on a sustainable

farming association board and works on the Festival of Farms in the St. Joseph area where people can visit four farms throughout the day.



In loving memory

Sister Carolita (Marie) Mauer, 76

Sister Carolita Mauer, originally from Fergus Falls, was accepted as a Franciscan Sister of Little Falls, Minnesota, on July 31, 1956. She made her first profession of vows on August 12, 1958, and final vows on August 12, 1961.

Sister Carolita was a very detailed person and a great organizer, who valued the importance of living each day to the fullest. She enjoyed learning new skills, visiting new places and meeting new people. She loved the outdoors, beautiful scenery, wildlife and the mountains. A great experience was her camping trip with her brother in Alaska. Reflecting on her life, Sister Carolita said, “These years have

been ones of continual change both in the Church and religious life. It has been most exciting to be a part of this process and to be involved in this unique time in the history of the Church and our Franciscan Community.”

Sister Carolita felt fortunate to belong to a profession—occupational therapy—whose purpose is to help others function effectively in daily life, despite physical and mental handicaps. Her studies began at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul where she received her bachelor’s degree; last she earned a master’s degree from New York University, New York.

Her ministry began in occupational therapy at St Gabriel’s Hospital in Little Falls and St. Ansgar’s Hospital in Moorhead. However, teaching the skills of occupational therapy became her passion for 38 years at North Dakota State School of Science at Wahpeton, N. Dak., where she served as an instructor, department chair and associate professor of the Occupational Therapy Assistant Program. She was loved and highly regarded by both students and fellow faculty members. During her years of teaching, she resided in Breckenridge and Wahpeton with her feline friends, which were a source of companionship and diversion.

After years of teaching, Sister Carolita felt called to the ministry of Spiritual Direction and most recently served as part of the Franciscans Sisters’ Leadership Team.

McAllen parish serves children crossing border

Sister Anita Jennissen

No doubt you have read or heard of the many Central American children crossing the U.S./Mexico border into Texas as they seek refuge from violence and widespread poverty in their countries. It is beautiful to see the outpouring of love and concern for these people who come by the hundreds into McAllen. I believe the Church and city see it as an opportunity to share with those who suffer. I am impressed and feel so blessed to share in this outpouring of love. The volunteers come from all churches and provide food, water and clothing.

Children accompanied by a parent are held by the border patrol for several days and then given papers and told that they must appear at the immigration office in the city of their destination. The thousands of children without a parent are sent to facilities throughout the United States. The border where they crossed is just 10 miles from McAllen, so they are brought to the bus terminal to purchase a ticket. They have traveled with only the clothes on their backs. Most of them have a paper pressed in their hands with the phone number of a family member who could pay for a ticket and receive them in their home. Patiently, the bus agents contact the family member and make arrangements for the purchase of the ticket.

Catholic Charities, along with volunteers, meets the people at the terminal and offers assistance. They are bused to Sacred Heart (two blocks away) where our parish hall and parking lot have been established as a refugee center. The city of McAllen has provided tents, mobile showers, toilets and security as well as the bus service. Every newcomer is met with warm smiles and given clean clothing, access to a shower and warm food. My service has been to be a listener. It is heart breaking to hear their stories of why they left and also of the suffering they endured on their treacherous journey. Some never make it as they are abducted along the way. Each one tells of how they had to pay from \$2,000-8,000 to the “coyotes” who helped them cross. We are not sure what will happen when they reach their final destination, but we are happy that we could make this part of the journey a pleasant one.



Sister Anita Jennissen ministers to refugees from Latin America.

Our Journey

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