

REFLECTIONS
&
Connections

FEBRUARY 2017

STORIES OF MISSION
& MINISTRY



CSA

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Promoting Justice, Building Community

Dear Friends,



This past December, the Sisters of St. Agnes lit a peace tree for the 25th time. We closed the “old” year and began a new year with a continued longing in our hearts for peace. We ask ourselves how it is possible that 25 years later, we are still praying and pleading for a peace that continues to elude our world, our cities, and even our neighborhoods. I was even more astounded when I turned to the message from Pope Francis for the World Day of Prayer for Peace. He noted that this year’s message is the 50th such plea to the world’s peoples and nations. The first message proclaimed that, “Peace is the only true direction of human progress.” This year’s message recognizes the need for all peoples to cultivate nonviolence as a way of life. In his closing, Pope Francis states, “All of us want peace. Many people build it day by day through small gestures and acts; many of them are suffering, yet patiently persevere in their efforts to be peacemakers. In 2017, may we dedicate ourselves prayerfully and actively to banish violence from our hearts, words, and deeds, and to build nonviolent communities that care for our common home. Nothing is impossible if we turn to God in prayer. Everyone can be an artisan of peace.”

The invitation is to become an artisan of peace. From our earliest beginnings, our venerable founders knew that commitment to peacemaking was key to our very survival as apostolic religious women. In their own words:

- “We knew how to get along, we had faults as others. But we did not keep anger in our hearts, it was gone in a minute – at least with me.” Mother Agnes, 1870
- “Each person’s traits are God-given, and in order to understand oneself, and be understood by others, there must be communication. Keep going with courage . . . Where communication fails to improve situations, I would prefer to let Divine Providence take over in Love and gentleness.” Father Francis Haas, 1886
- “Love must unite us beyond all difficulties.” Father Caspar Rehrl, 1880s

What a different world we would have if all of us were willing to commit to being artisans of peace! Let’s be creative in all the ways we can make peace and be peace each and every day.

With a grateful heart,
Sister Jean Steffes, CSA
General Superior

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ON THE COVER:

“By Paths Unknown...” © Doris Klein, CSA, used with permission

We move through the mystery of transformation, winter to spring, Lent to Easter, death to resurrection asking to trust God’s assurance that “By paths unknown, I will lead you!” (Isaiah 42)

Blessed are the Peacemakers!

BY SISTER SALLY ANN BRICKNER, OSF
COORDINATOR OF JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Although we easily recognize individuals who promote harmony and cover wounded relationships with healing balm, we may not be as adept at acknowledging the ways that organizations contribute to peace within our communities. The Sisters of St. Agnes, however, perceive that many organizations in Fond du Lac have missions that help plant the seeds of peace. In varied ways groups help create an environment for health and well-being throughout the year.

The Congregation of St. Agnes honored more than thirty local organizations during its 25th Annual Lighting of the Peace Tree on December 15. About 150 people gathered to pray for peace and to celebrate the gifts these organizations offer. During the service a representative from each organization received a certificate of commendation for advancing peace and goodwill in the Fond du Lac area.

How do they do it? Some organizations build peace by meeting basic human needs for safety, food, shelter, and clothing. Others help to end domestic violence, break the cycle of poverty, or address addictive behaviors. The library promotes lifelong learning. City and county parks help people connect with one another and with the beauty of God's creation. Physical fitness centers and clubs for youth and seniors support health and wellness. Some groups enhance a climate for diversity within the community; others support individuals as they seek to transform their lives.

What joy it brings to see so many organizations nurturing the seeds of peace! "Blessed are the peacemakers" and all who benefit from their contributions to society.

*And a harvest of righteousness is
grown from the seed of peace planted
by peacemakers.*

— James 3:18
(International Standard Version)



Some members of the Sustainability Committee: (left) Katie Reinke, Marge Whiting, Pamela Deich and Donna VanBuren



Igniting Passion for Sustainability

BY SISTER MARY NOEL BROWN, CSA
EXECUTIVE LEADER OF SPONSORSHIP

In the words of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'*, Agnesian HealthCare is undergoing an “ecological conversion.” Sustainable initiatives are increasing through the contagion of enthusiasm of the Sustainability Committee. Committee member Marge Whiting commented, “Each associate on the committee is passionate about the committee’s mission to *affirm our value of stewardship and to actively pursue ways to minimize our impact on the natural environment.*”

The Sustainability Committee was concerned about the escalating opioid issue and the negative impact on the environment of inappropriate medication disposal. Through funding from the Agnesian HealthCare Foundation, medication recycling safes were installed at St. Agnes Hospital and Waupun Memorial Hospital. These safes, which are regulated by the Drug Enforcement Agency, provide a simple, secure, and environmentally-friendly way for anyone from the community to dispose of expired prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, and unwanted pharmaceuticals.

Katie Reinke, PharmD, noted, “We collected more than 600 pounds of unused medications in just a few months. In the past, these would have accumulated in bathroom cabinets and kitchen cupboards, eventually being improperly disposed into our waste water system or potentially posing a temptation for someone addicted to drugs.”

Another huge initiative involves transitioning away from Styrofoam. Styrofoam cannot be recycled, is the main pollutant of all water sources, and can take over a million years to decompose. The Sustainability Committee educates and encourages departments to utilize reusable products whenever possible and, if necessary, to use environmentally friendly disposables.

“The poet W.H. Auden wrote, ‘A culture is no better than its woods,’” stated Donna VanBuren. “We are developing a culture of incorporating the six R’s - refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, repurpose, and restore – into all decision-making about which products to use. Our desire is to ignite passion among all associates to improve the quality of our environmental life, thus bringing greater hope, health, and wholeness to the communities in which we live and serve.”



Students like these help Sister Marie, second from right, turn the Marian campus into a place of friendship and joy: Meghan Schwobe, Claire Kalas, Rachel Lederer, Halle Castonia, and Rebecca Garcia.

Marian University Campus *Minister*

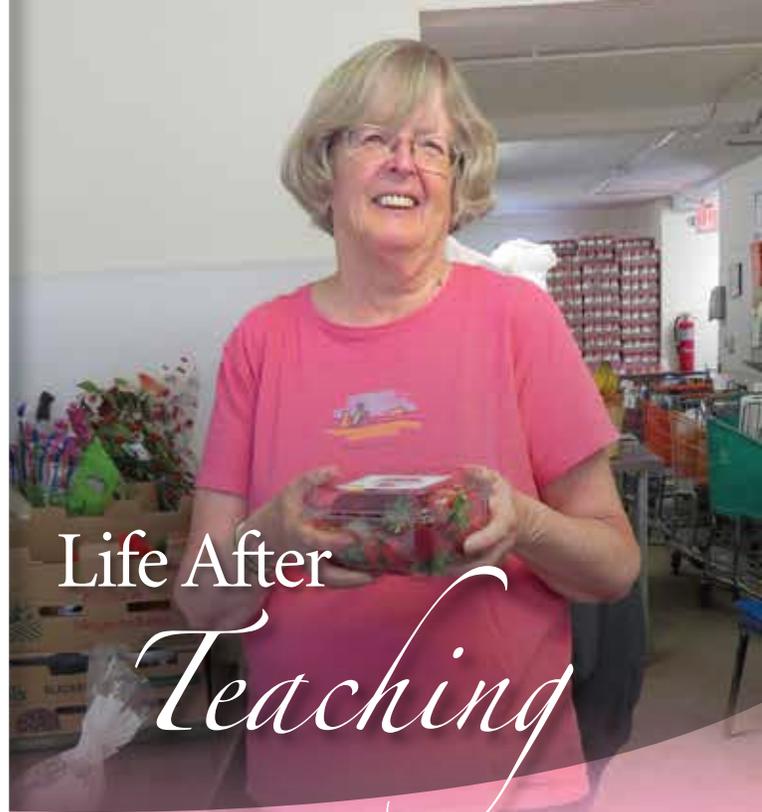
BY SISTER DEBORAH GOLIAS, CSA, WHO
INTERVIEWED SISTER MARIE SCOTT, CSA

*M*y mission is to be an example of the mission of Jesus which is central to Campus Ministry. That example includes being an ambassador of the Gospel, offering hospitality and providing service to all. Hospitality is offered to faculty and staff who meet for lunch monthly. The Campus Ministry doors are open for faculty, staff, and clubs to meet in a welcoming environment.

What do I enjoy? Creating ways to address spiritual and physical needs. One of the best projects I initiated is that of a weekly good will offering taken up at the Sunday night Masses. This is emergency money for anyone who is in need. This helps students, faculty or staff buy school supplies, groceries and other necessities. I also enjoy offering spiritual direction to students, staff and faculty. The students and I look forward to doing outreach to Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Loaves and Fishes and taking a trip to the South to participate in Habitat for Humanity over spring break.

Campus Ministry opportunities, hopefully, can help transform students' lives by offering a place to share faith and values. This kind of dialogue can be both challenging and transforming as students interact with others who have different values and faith. Another growth experience for students is Encounter, a young adult conference sponsored by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. This annual faith experience is massive with over two thousand university students participating.

I have served here at Marian University for 20 years and hope to continue for years to come. However, I found that my greatest challenge comes from time constraints. Ministering to hundreds of people on Marian's campus in meaningful ways, spiritually and personally, is a constant goal of mine.



Life After *Teaching*

BY VALERIE GRACZYK, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

*I*t all begins with a box of strawberries. After washing, sorting, and removal of any berries covered with mold, the strawberries are repackaged and placed on a cart for distribution in the food pantry. Three mornings a week, Sister Barbara Gause volunteers at the People's Resource Center in Wheaton, Illinois. "This is not glamorous work, but it is important work," said Sister Barbara. "It is a way I can show dignity and respect to the people who come here for food. This attitude is one of the things that attracted me to volunteer because it is so much in alignment with our congregation's mission statement."

The Center's 2400 volunteers are trained to treat with dignity and respect the 6900 families served annually at two different locations. Annual Income for these families is less than \$23,000. Other services offered to clients include a clothing closet, social services, budget relief, computer access and training, job assistance, adult learning, and art and literacy classes.

"Retiring after 46 years of teaching, I found I needed to reinvent myself," continued Sister Barbara. "My volunteer work has introduced me to a community of caring people with this as our slogan: 'Neighbor taking care of neighbor.' Through this ministry, I have found the clients are so grateful for the time spent with them and for the services we offer them. For such an enriching experience, I cannot help but be happy."

A photograph of Bill and Kathy Emmer in an office setting. Bill, an older man with glasses, is seated at a desk, writing on a document. Kathy, an older woman with glasses and a red top, is standing and smiling while talking on a mobile phone. The office has a desk with papers and a printer in the background.

Bill and Kathy Emmer
volunteering in the St.
Vincent de Paul office.

Extending

CSA Values

BY CAROL BRAUN, DIRECTOR OF ASSOCIATE RELATIONSHIP

Bill and Kathy Emmer, associates of the Sisters of St. Agnes for nearly three decades, call their association with CSA an amazing journey. Throughout the years, they have been supported in prayer, ministry, and mutual relationship with associates and sisters. “We learned inclusiveness and acceptance from CSA and have extended those values to our family and the community in which we live. It has made a difference in how we treat each other, our children, grandchildren and those we encounter in ministry. We have learned to love, no matter the differences,” shared Bill.

Bill completed studies in the Certified Lay Ministry Program in 1992 and was encouraged by Sister Martin de Porres Orford to join her in ministry to prison inmates. When Bill accepted the invitation, he did not know that he would proceed to minister to the spiritual

needs of inmates in six different correctional facilities for 16 years. “As associates we have been involved in a continual learning experience. We have gained an increased awareness of the presence of God in every person and everything in creation. God can be seen everywhere,” said Bill.

Today Bill and Kathy remain committed to loving and serving their neighbor. They bring joy and companionship to residents of area nursing homes by calling bingo and continue their mission of service to others by volunteering with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. “God has worked through us as associates for the past 29 years. We belong to a community of faith and prayer that has helped us to discover who we are and how we relate to God,” said Kathy. Bill continued, “Our spirituality is very simple: sharing the gifts we have been given to meet the needs of others.”

Sister Francis Sánchez,

Child Advocate

BY VALERIE GRACZYK,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Sister Francis, the principal of Santa Rosa of Lima high school and elementary school in Rosita, Nicaragua, shared a story about nine-year-old Marciela and her eight-year-old brother Juan. She said: “When the father came, asking about enrolling the children, he had two major concerns: because he was unemployed, he was unable to pay the monthly tuition of \$3.50 and because the children came from the country, he feared that they would be mistreated by the city children. Having been a country girl myself, I knew what it felt like to be in school with city children so I told the father that I would keep a close watch on Marciela and Juan.

“Once the children were enrolled, I tested them to determine their grade placement. Both were very eager to learn. Soon we became friends and every day I would hug them. Both were also very thin and pale. It was obvious that they did not have enough food to eat at home so I gave them small jobs around school to earn food money. What they ate at school was probably the only food they had each day. It consisted of rice, beans, corn, flour, wheat and oil – all of which was provided by the World Food Organization.” Sister Francis added: “These children are one of many such cases in our school.”

The staff for the school consists of 32 teachers and aides for 550 children. The monthly salary for a teacher aide is \$157; a teacher with a degree receives a monthly salary of \$228.



Soup Supper Saturday

BY SISTER EDIE CREWS, CSA
CSA VOCATION DIRECTOR

On Saturday, December 3, 2016, the *Marian Sisters and Students* group, comprised of several Marian students and Sisters Edie Crews and Alice Ann Pfeifer, hosted a special activity for the sisters who live at St. Agnes Convent. The main purpose of this group is for sisters and students to become better acquainted with one another and to provide opportunities for interaction. Since the feast of St. Nicholas is celebrated on December 6, the group chose a St. Nick theme to provide a soup supper for the sisters, followed by a game with prizes for the winners.

The students, Claire, Meghan, and Natalie spent the afternoon with Sister Edie in the convent kitchen preparing potato soup and chili made from scratch. They enjoyed making the soups, baking the brownies, and then meeting with the sisters during supper. Following the meal, sisters and students enthusiastically enjoyed the game of “Elimination” led by Claire.

Marian Sisters and Students meet bi-weekly during the school year to share a meal, pray together, and plan service projects and future opportunities for interacting with the sisters in the Fond du Lac area. They will be inviting new members to join the group at the Marian University Campus Ministry building during the spring semester.



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320 County Road K
Fond du Lac, WI 54937

Ways to connect with CSA:

CSA web site:

<http://www.csasisters.org/>

Adelante Mujer/Advance Woman

<http://www.womanadvance.com/>

(in the front page of our web site)

Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation

<http://justicepeacecsa.blogspot.com/>

(in the front page of our web site)

Just Saying

<http://csa-vocations.blogspot.com/>

(in the front page of our web site)

Streams 'N Stirrings

<http://csa-vocations.blogspot.com/>

(in the front page of our web site)



<http://www.facebook.com/sasisters?sk=wall>

(in the front page of our web site)



[http://www.youtube.com/user/](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheCSAChannel1)

TheCSAChannel1

(in the front page of our web site)

Program Offerings

CSA Women's Leadership Breakfast

Keynote speaker: Karen Vernal-President of Vernal Management Consultants

A highly skilled, creative professional Karen spent 7 years working with the Green Bay Packer leadership team. She and her team seek to build vibrant, results-oriented institutions in the nonprofit, for profit and governmental arena. Karen believes in living your life to the fullest with integrity and intention and living it with JOY!

Thursday, March 2, 2017 • 7:00 to 8:30 A.M. • Whispering Springs-Fond du Lac • Reservations on line at www.csasisters.org or call CSA Development Office at 920-907-2336. Admission \$25.

It's Lent Again!

Meatless Fridays, extra prayer, fast from food.... Or does Lent have a deeper meaning for us as adult followers of Jesus? Join us on **Saturday, March 11, from 9 a.m. - noon** for input, reflection, and sharing. Sister Patrice Rog will explore the Sunday Lenten readings to deepen our understanding of this season and to listen carefully to God's message of love and reconciliation. A free will offering of \$25 is suggested. Location is Founders Hall, 320 County Road K, Fond du Lac, WI 54937.

Catholics at the Capitol

Tuesday, March 28, 2017. For details go visit www.wisconsinatholic.org

The Film *Priceless*

On **April 10, 2017**, Fair Trade Towns FDL together with Marian University's Social Justice Committee will show the film *Priceless* at Marian University's Stayer Center from 6:30-8:30 p.m. The film depicts a trucker who is contracted to deliver young girls for sex trafficking.

2nd Annual Earth Week Fair

On **April 22, 2017**, at Founders Hall, Sisters of St. Agnes Motherhouse.