

REFLECTIONS & *Connections*

DECEMBER 2022



STORIES OF MISSION
& MINISTRY



CSA

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

Dear Friends,

Advent, Christmas, and other holy days gracing this time, celebrate the paradoxes of our lives: the already and the not yet, darkness longing for light and light for darkness that gives it meaning, presence and absence, the joy and melancholy of our daily existence. One thing is for sure—we do not have to ask Holy Mystery to come. God is already here. We must ask for the grace of deepening awareness of the beauty and truth of God's incarnation among us in so many wondrous ways.

Divine Love is manifest in the commitment of our newest associates, in the visionary dedication of our Chapter 2022 Statement, in the openness and availability of our sisters to praying with you during Advent, even in the tiny, rare Rusty Patched Bumble Bee found on our property! This season speaks of God's ongoing incarnation in our cosmos and our humble place in the midst of it all.

The challenge is how to respond as CSA in this world of paradoxes: terror and courage, division and collaboration, violence and peace, greed and generosity. We will respond with contemplative, compassionate,



Pictured L to R: Sisters Sharon Pollnow, General Superior; Lael Niblick, General Councilor; Madeline Gianforte, General Councilor; and Peg Spindler, General Vicar

courageous, and caring hearts. We will make the path by walking it and we will “get there.” *

Sisters Sharon Pollnow, Peg Spindler, Madeline Gianforte, Lael Niblick

CSA's Leadership Team, 2022-2026

** We are going, heaven knows where we are going, but we know we will get there. We are going, heaven knows how we will get there, but we know we will.*

Lyrics from Woyaya (We are Going) by Osibisa, sung by Wiyaala. Used at closing of CSA Chapter 2022.

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Editorial Board Members:

Sister Jeremy Quinn, Sister Jean Perry,
Sister Patricia Hayes, Dusty Krikau,
and Suzanne Flood.

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Welcoming New *Associates*

On September 25 at 2:00 p.m., the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes and their Associates celebrated the formal commitment of four new Associates. Committing to the associate relationship includes a year of discernment with one-on-one assistance from a Sister of St. Agnes. Each associate is pictured with their sister mentor.

During discernment, Kelsey Beine experienced “what it means to connect at the level of the sacred—that place so deep and scary, yet so peaceful and familiar, where human minds, hearts, and souls dance together with grace. This is my new understanding of mutuality—where we are both moved and enriched on a deep level, letting the Spirit move within and through us to support one another on our journey.”

John Hammond shared, “The discernment process ... continued to strengthen my faith ... [and grew] my commitment to share the mission of CSA. To live for each other, to be stewards of Earth, to foster opportunities

for people in danger of being left behind, and to give strength to the voice of the marginalized are all so powerful ... I both wish to share that charism and to live out my attempts to meet those goals in my daily life.”

Jane Langenecker was drawn to become an associate through her relationship with several Sisters of St. Agnes. Her “wish is to have a relationship with like-minded people; a community who care for Earth, who have empathy for those who are ill-treated and vulnerable, forming a world in which all are respected and treated with love.” With CSA she found a “sense of community ... belonging [and] ... movement forward all with the same mind and heart.”

Joanne Sheridan sees CSA’s charism in her service of “15 years in the prison ministry at Taycheedah Correctional Institution ... [and as] a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, serving as secretary and coordinator/trainer for the call center volunteers. We

serve our neighbors in need every day ... [we] see the face of Christ in everyone we serve. I am blessed to know many associates personally and have witnessed their dedication to the charism. I look forward to joining them in this mission to grow in spirituality, faith, and service to God and his children on my life journey.”

All are invited to find out more about what it means to enter into an associate relationship with CSA. For more information, please contact Sister Mary Noel Brown (mnbrown@csasisters.org).



Pictured L to R: Sister Marilyn Winkel with Jane Langenecker



Pictured L to R: Kelsey Beine with Sister Mary Riedel



Pictured L to R: Joanne Sheridan with Sister Beatrice Lindsay



Pictured L to R: John Hammond with Sister Sharon Pollnow



Remembering

CSA General Chapter 2022

BY SISTER MARY CHRISTINE FELLERHOFF, CSA

In the Catholic Church, general chapters are meetings of the entire religious congregation or representatives thereof. The chapter “fosters spiritual and apostolic vitality, protects [the] founding charism and spiritual heritage, makes decisions affecting the life and welfare of the entire congregation, and elects the general superior and her councilors.” [CSA Constitutions, § 91] When it is in session (and only then), the general chapter is “the highest authority in the congregation.” [CSA Constitutions, § 92] The general chapter, which CSA ordinarily convenes every four years, is a deeply sacred moment for a congregation.

Delegates, arriving at chapter titled “Together, embracing the transformative journey,” had for months been involved with the community in identifying themes for

direction-setting. After hearing detailed reports on the state of the congregation, delegates, in small groups and in the whole, refined the themes, eventually developing statements for future direction. From these statements, a writing committee drafted a “chapter statement.” The chapter body reviewed and tweaked each draft until it was ready to approve the final Chapter Statement (pictured on page 6) to move the congregation into the future.

Interspersed between bouts of direction-setting was election of new leadership. This process involved nominating sisters with gifts needed for the directions developed and formally electing the general superior and three councilors to lead the congregation for the next four years. It was a time of sacred discernment for electors



and of vulnerability and trust for the nominees, who are also electors. These processes were guided by a trained facilitator under the leadership of the outgoing general superior and councilors.

All this work of chapter was woven together with prayer, song, liturgy, contemplation, deep sharing and listening. These movements shaped the heart and spirit of the chapter, remembered by delegates long after chapter is over. Sister Jean Steffes' opening remarks identified three themes key to the work of this chapter: listening, discernment, and kindness. Beginning the first full day, a prayer-poem opened the delegates to *listening* with these inspired questions:

Who is this miracle speaking to me?

And who is this miracle listening?

What amazingness will [we be] creating?

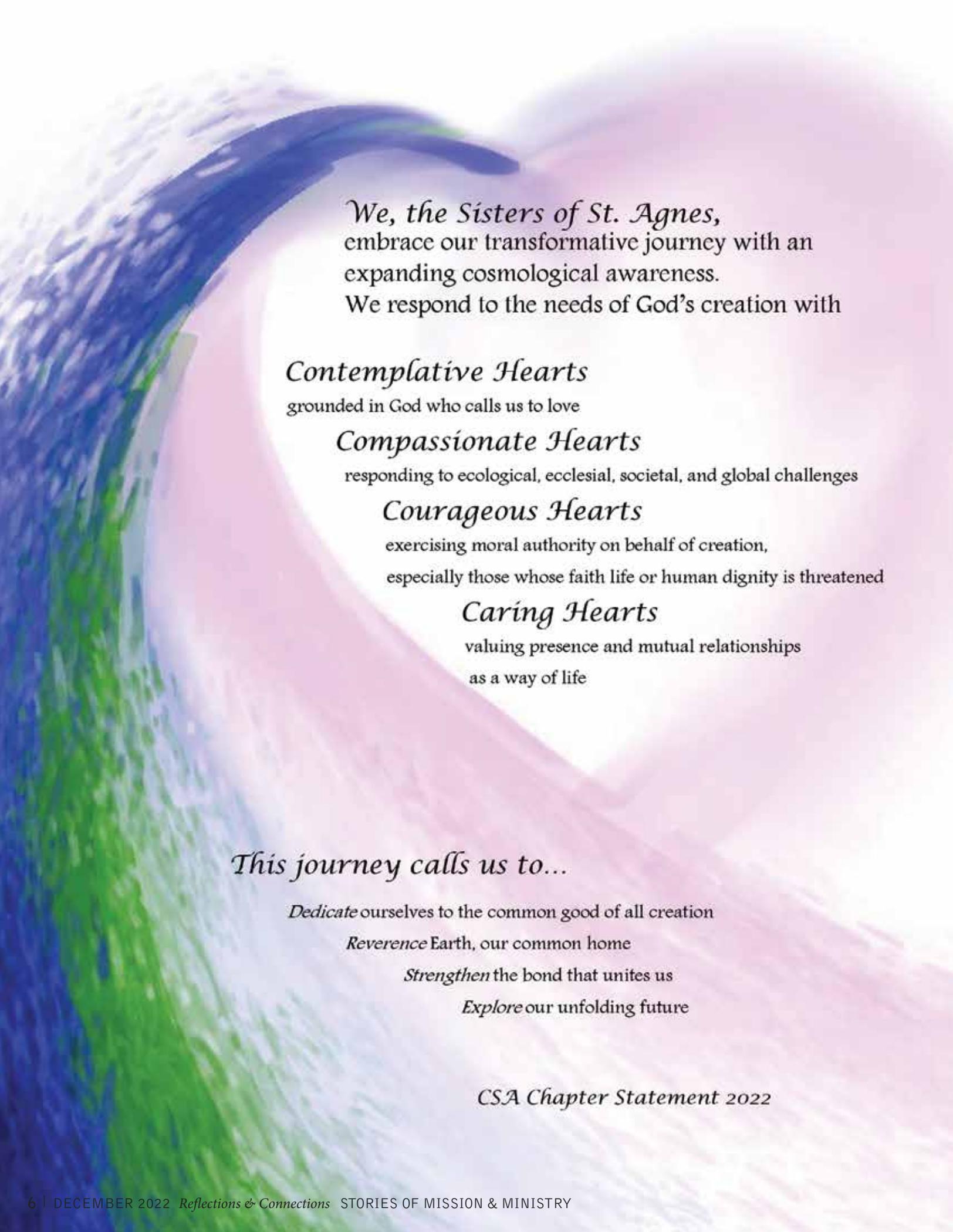
Discernment requires listening deeply to the Holy Spirit. It asks not what *I*, nor what *we* want, but what God wants. Keynote speaker, Sister Mary Pellegrino, CSJ, placed

discernment in a global perspective, viewing the journeys we are on as a world, as a country, and as women religious through the lens of the paschal journey. Resurrection disrupts all our assumptions, she said, calling us to recognize the new and to frame a new story with new purpose. Contemplative spaces throughout the chapter drew delegates into deep discernment about direction-setting and elections in light of global realities as they listened for God's call to CSA now.

A contemplative "Prayer of Loving Kindness" opened the fifth day of chapter. But kindness was experienced and expressed throughout the days by attentive listening to one another, working through differences with respect, holding sacred the vulnerability of those who opened themselves to leadership consideration, blessing Earth and the entire world in prayer, and showing appreciation for all the people and work that made chapter a blessed event.

Chapter was not the end, but the beginning of "Together, embracing the transformative journey."

Together, embracing a transformative journey
Juntas, acogemos un viaje transformativo



We, the Sisters of St. Agnes,
embrace our transformative journey with an
expanding cosmological awareness.
We respond to the needs of God's creation with

Contemplative Hearts

grounded in God who calls us to love

Compassionate Hearts

responding to ecological, ecclesial, societal, and global challenges

Courageous Hearts

exercising moral authority on behalf of creation,

especially those whose faith life or human dignity is threatened

Caring Hearts

valuing presence and mutual relationships

as a way of life

This journey calls us to...

Dedicate ourselves to the common good of all creation

Reverence Earth, our common home

Strengthen the bond that unites us

Explore our unfolding future

CSA Chapter Statement 2022



Pray with a Sister During Advent

Each year during Advent, Sisters of St. Agnes offer an opportunity for the general public to join with them in one-on-one prayer over the phone. Winter weather and holidays often cause us to seek comfort and companionship with one another. The general public is invited to call 920-907-2300 each Wednesday during Advent from 1-4 p.m. Central Time to join with a sister in prayer. Upon calling, your name and number will be collected, and a sister will call you back momentarily to pray with you privately.

Prayer dates for Advent in 2022 are November 30 and December 7, 14, and 21.

Prayer requests of all varieties, large and small, are welcome and personal information will be kept confidential.

In Memoriam... Walking with God



Sister Nancy Derhammer, CSA

Sister Nancy Derhammer, CSA, died peacefully September 25, 2022, at St. Francis Home, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Nancy was born in Battle Creek, Michigan, on May 7, 1938. The family later moved to Beloit, Wisconsin, where Nancy graduated from Beloit Memorial High School. She entered St. Agnes Convent in Fond du Lac in 1970 and made her first profession of vows as a Sister of St. Agnes on June 16, 1973.

Sister Nancy earned a BS in Elementary Education from Marian College, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and an MS in Special Education from St. Francis College, Ft. Wayne, Indiana. She served as an educator, pastoral minister, musician, and case worker in schools, parishes, and mental health agencies in Wisconsin, Indiana, New York, and Pennsylvania. From 2002–2012, Sister Nancy lived with her CSA sisters in Nanty-Glo, Pennsylvania, while volunteering as a pastoral minister at St. Mary's Parish and working for a brief time as a mental health case worker in Cambria County.

In July of 2012, health concerns led Sister Nancy to join the community of sisters at Nazareth Court and Center in Fond du Lac. In March of 2019, Sister was admitted to St. Francis Home where she was cared for until the time of her death. Sister is survived by her beloved foster sister, Jessica Alexander, and the Sisters of St. Agnes, with whom she lived, prayed, and ministered.



Sister Donna Gottschalk, CSA

Sister Donna Gottschalk, CSA, formerly Sister Philip, was born in La Crosse, Kansas, on May 6, 1940, the ninth of fourteen children. When the family moved to Hays, Kansas, so that the children could receive a Catholic education, Donna attended elementary and high school taught by the Sisters of St. Agnes. Following a year at College of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kansas, she entered St. Agnes Convent in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and made her first profession of vows on August 15, 1962. She earned a BS in Elementary Education from Marian College in Fond du Lac and taught primary grades in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Kansas for thirty-one years. After retiring from teaching, Donna continued her ministry of service as a member of the parish ministry team in Colby, Kansas, and later as a cook for residents at St. John's New Horizons Assisted Living community in Hays. In 1998, she returned to Fond du Lac to serve the sisters at Nazareth Court and Center with care and attentive presence, providing for their needs, shopping for them, driving, baking, and preparing special meals. In 2018, illness caused Sister Donna to resign her position. She herself, became a resident at Nazareth Court and Center and later at St. Francis Home where she received loving care until her peaceful death on November 2, 2022.



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Or call 920-907-2300

Welcoming a *Rusty Patch*

In early August, CSA recognized a new inhabitant on the motherhouse prairie: the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee. The Rusty Patched Bumble Bee, listed as Federally Endangered and State Special Concern, is extremely rare in Wisconsin, and is considered both state- and globally-imperiled.

“This is a new location for Rusty Patch Bumble Bees in the state,” said Jay Watson, a Wisconsin DNR Conservation Biologist. “Having the Ledge provides great nesting area in the woody zones and a wonderful mix of resources throughout all of the seasons in the prairies and wetlands close by.” Both male and female bees have been identified on the property since the initial sighting. The closest other area where they are found regularly is Oakfield Ledge State Natural Area, more than 20 miles away, indicating that the group seen on CSA’s conservation easement is likely its own nest.

The congregation will continue to partner with Glacial Lakes Conservancy and the DNR to be good stewards of the land that supports this and other species vital to the ecology of Earth.

CSA property is privately owned. The solar site is open for public viewing any day of the week from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. We request that visitors stop at the main entrance to sign-in or call 920-907-2300 prior to touring the array. Tours of the remaining portions of the CSA conservation easement must be scheduled in advance.



Photo courtesy of Jay Watson, WIDNR