

REFLECTIONS & *Connections*

NOVEMBER 2017

Elected during Chapter 2017, the recently installed CSA General Council includes L to R: Sisters Susan Seeby and Cyndi Nienhaus, General Councilors, Sister Jean Steffes, General Superior, and Sister Rhea Emmer, General Vicar.



STORIES OF MISSION & MINISTRY



CSA

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

Dear Friends,



The Sisters of St. Agnes are graced by the call of this summer's chapter to participate in communal discernment and contemplative dialogue on topics close to our hearts. Our chapters are central to our on-going commitment to participation in the mission of Jesus. We studied, prayed, discerned, listened deeply to one another, and elected leadership for 2017-2021. We are grateful for the service of Sisters Jomarie Zielke and Anita Henning these past 4 years; look forward to the continuing service of Sister Susan Seeby and myself; and welcome Sisters Rhea Emmer and Cyndi Nienhaus to roles of service. Sisters called each other to be open to the designs God wishes for CSA as we weave our way into a future that evolves as we continue to incarnate all that we profess.

We commit to ground ourselves in contemplation and embrace with courage our charism amid the complex realities of the 21st century. We go forward knowing that the past cannot give direction to the needs of today and tomorrow. Profound changes have marked our way of life over the decades of renewal. New needs beckon even as we grieve treasured ministries that have provided identity and meaning throughout our history. We trust that these ministries continue, secure in the mission they have embraced over the past 159 years. Elements of fulfillment, evolution and vision engage us in reading the signs of the times.

The needs of our current times are quite different from those which faced Mother Agnes and the founding members of our congregation. Schools, hospitals, nursing homes, orphanages, a hostel for travelers, a university and outreach to Latin America claimed our energies for much of our storied history. Some of these ministries continue, even as the needs of the society and culture in which we live – as well as our own realities – call us to pay attention to new threads in the grand design of our Creator. The message is clear. Our lives must be about communion, relationship and a contemplative approach. This is a dream to dare and to share.

The work begins now: “We, the Sisters of St. Agnes, grounded in a contemplative heart, God’s mission and our charism, embrace with courage our call to articulate the identity of CSA as it interweaves with the reality of the 21st century. We face our future with honesty and hope . . .” *CSA Chapter 2017*

In the peace and love of Christ,

Sister Jean Steffes, CSA
General Superior

Contents



- 3 Contemplative Quilter
- 4 Caring Heart, Helping Hands
- 5 In Memoriam... Walking with God
- 6 A Woman of Compassion
- 7 Building Relationships: One by One, Two by Two
- 8 Dreams Do Come True

Contemplative Quilter

BY CAROL BRAUN, DIRECTOR OF
ASSOCIATE RELATIONSHIP

Recently retired from a 35-year career at St. Agnes Hospital, Nancy Schmitz, an associate of the Sisters of St. Agnes, continues ministry to those in need.

“Being an associate has helped me to follow a path that has deepened my spirituality. I am more prayerful, I try to be compassionate rather than become judgmental of others, and I am more aware of and respond to the needs of the world,” said Nancy.

Nancy is a founding member and is a current member on the board of directors for *The Center to Be*, a non-profit spirituality center. *The Center to Be* offers retreats and supports a spirituality program for health care organizations developed by Sister Rhea Emmer, CSA.

Enjoying quilting and crocheting, Nancy donates her works of art to adults and children through several charitable organizations. She considers her quilting a contemplative component of her spirituality, balancing being productive with quiet contemplative time.

For the past six years, Nancy has volunteered for *New Beginnings*, a non-profit pregnancy care home which provides a nurturing environment for pregnant women in crisis situations. As a resident assistant, she provides a presence and support for women during their stay.

Throughout her seventeen years as an associate, Nancy has been involved in development of the associate relationship. She also participates in several prayer groups where members gather to communicate on a deep level, where trust is built, and where deep spiritual connection is made. “A gift of being an associate is the ability to relax and have fun with people with whom you have a deep connection,” added Nancy.



CSA associate Nancy Schmitz

L to R: Sisters Jean Braun, Caryl Hartjes, Jeannine Funk, Marie Kees



Caring Heart, Helping Hands

BY VALERIE GRACZYK, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

*G*od Bless Volunteers! They are needed and they are truly valued at the Hospice Home of Hope, a service of Agnesian HealthCare since 1980. Through a comprehensive wholistic approach, Hospice Hope provides emotional, physical, spiritual, social and financial support to people near death as well as to their families. Both inpatient and home care are available to families. Volunteers serve in both areas.

The Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes and associates have embraced volunteering at the Hospice Home of Hope. Five sisters and two associates are regular volunteers giving their time and their hearts to caring for the dying. For associates Linda Becker and Madelyn Rambo, volunteering has followed long careers as health care employees at Agnesian HealthCare. “As a volunteer, I get to do all the

heart stuff,” shared Linda. “I serve as an extra pair of hands for the CNA assisting with bathing, hand massages and back rubs. I look forward to serving in this way, it is perfect for me.” Madelyn’s role is as an Eleventh-Hour volunteer. “There are times, often in the middle of the night, when a patient’s family is not able to be there, that I can volunteer. I find it to be a very prayerful, peaceful time.”

Of the five CSA members, each brings her own unique gifts to volunteering. Sister Jean Braun, a retired hospital chaplain, Sisters Caryl Hartjes and Anne Jude Van Lanen, retired nurses, and Sisters Marie Kees and Jeannine Funk, former educators, all have a deep passion and commitment to serve the dying.

There is space for twenty patients at the hospice home, where a recent expansion has enabled more patients and

families to be served. Serving as door greeters are Sisters Marie and Jeannine. “We are the first people that visitors meet when they arrive; we strive to create a welcoming presence.”

Spiritual care and support is at the heart of serving for Sisters Caryl, Anne Jude and Jean. “To companion anyone preparing to enter eternity is a profound experience,” said Sister Caryl. “I can sense their closeness to reaching the fullness of life. It is a very sacred time. As a spiritual companion, I listen and let God guide me in being as supportive as I can. Sometimes I read a psalm or sing a hymn. For others, I massage their hands or feet. Each person is different and I honor where they are and what they are comfortable with.”

Sister Anne Jude was one of the founders of the hospice program. “My mother died in the 1970s without the benefits of hospice care. After her death, I was passionate in wanting to create an environment for the dying that offered a full range of options for the family and the patient. In my retirement, I could not think of a better use of my time than to be a Spiritual Care companion. I hold gently the honor of being in the presence of a dying person. I strive to channel God’s presence to all patients, no matter their faith or religious traditions. I simply place the person in the loving hands of God and assure them that God loves them and will never abandon them.”

Sister Jean finds joy in listening, distributing communion, and praying with the family and patient. “For me, this is a ministry full of blessings.”



L to R: Betty Suprenand, CNA, who has worked at Hospice Home of Hope since it opened in 2000 is seated with Sister Anne Jude Van Lanen, CSA

In Memoriam... Walking with God



Sister Clare Haman, CSA

July 27, 2017

Sister Clare Haman, formerly known as Sister Harriet, was born in Tiffin, Ohio, on August 24, 1923. She made her first profession of vows on August 15, 1942. Sister Clare received a BS in Education from Marian College of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, an MA in Education from Catholic University in Washington, D.C., a Certificate in Social Doctrine from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and a certificate from the Theology Institute of the University of Albuquerque, New Mexico. She was a teacher for 31 years and principal for 5 years in Wisconsin, Kansas, and Indiana. She became a Religious Education Director and a Pastoral Minister for 19 years in Arizona, California and New Mexico. Later she served part-time as a primary reading tutor in New York and Arizona for 3 years. She served as a greeter in the front lobby of the Fond du Lac Regional Clinic. She enjoyed visiting with people.



Sister Agnes Kircher, CSA

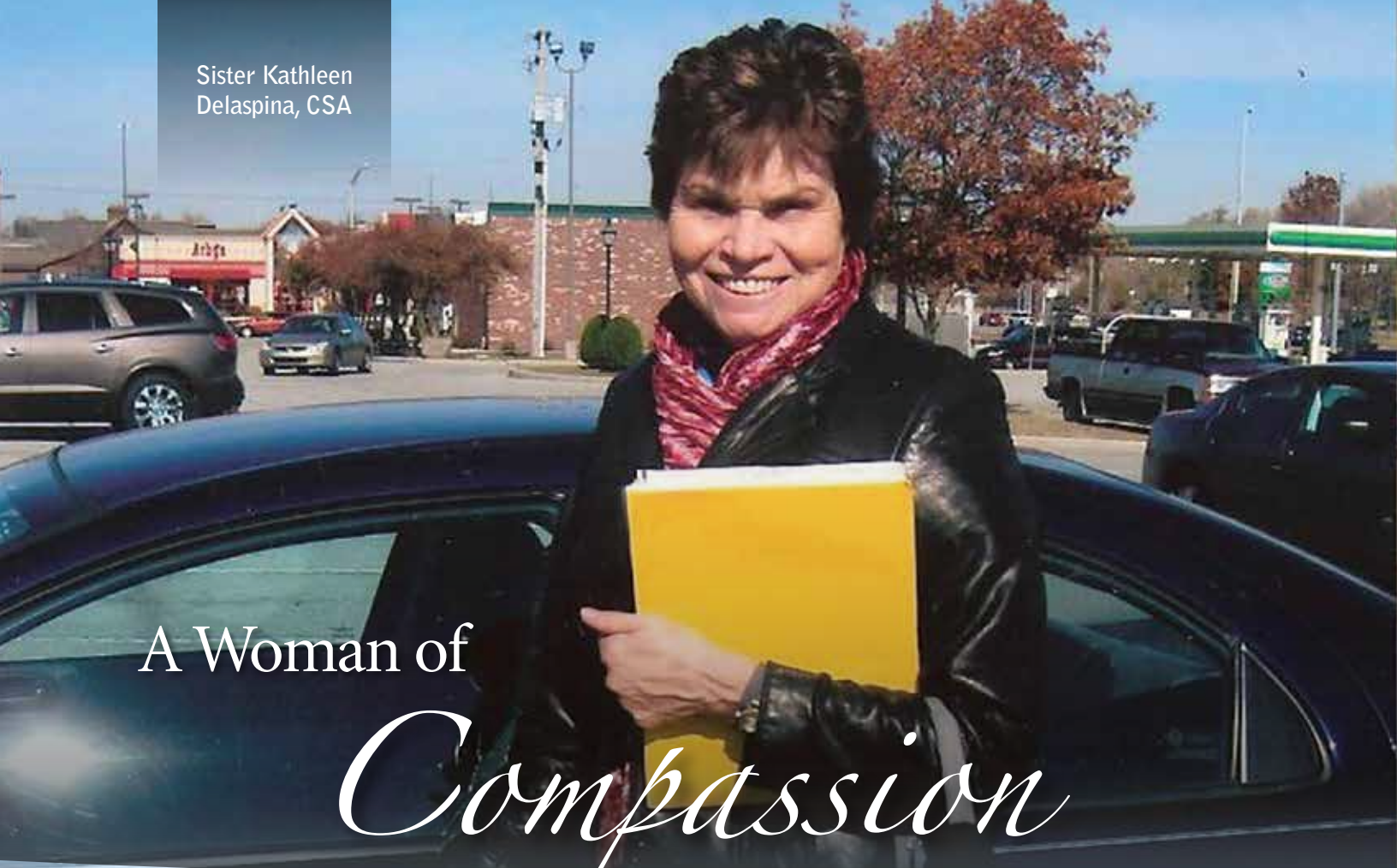
October 5, 2017

Sister Agnes Kircher was born on April 20, 1933, in Bronx, New York. She made her first profession of vows on August 15, 1953. Sister Agnes received her BS in Education from Marian College of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, earned an MEd in Curriculum Direction from De Paul University, Chicago, and became a Certified Chaplain in 1988.

Sister Agnes was a grade school teacher for 27 years in Illinois, Ohio, Kansas, Minnesota, Wisconsin and New York. She served as a principal at Sacred Heart School in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Later she did pastoral ministry to the elderly and infirm, AIDS ministry, pastoral care and hospital chaplaincy in a variety of settings including Kansas, Monroe, and Wisconsin.

In retirement she assisted in the sewing room at Nazareth Court and Center, was sacristan and excelled at creating decorations for the worship space. She shared her artistic talents with others through drawings and calligraphy. She also liked to share witty stories.

For full obituaries go to www.csasisters.org. Memorials can be sent to the CSA Development Office or through the website.



Sister Kathleen
Delaspina, CSA

A Woman of *Compassion*


BY SISTER ANITA HENNING, CSA
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

The elderly, some of the most vulnerable people in our society, often require assistance with the smallest tasks. Sometimes they just want company. Sister Kathleen Delaspina provides such ministry to those she serves. Having previously worked in hospice care, she is now in her tenth year of working for Comfort Keepers in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Sister Kathleen recently remarked, “I feel honored to be with the elderly, and to walk with them on their journey.” She does this through in-home personal care for individuals who want to remain in their homes. The number of days and hours she works with a client varies, depending on their needs and what the family wants for their loved one. Sister Kathleen tries to treat her clients the way she would treat her own parents. Because she respects them and recognizes that they have few choices at this time of their lives, she tries to give them choices, or inquire if anything should be done differently.

For Sister Kathleen, her work is life-giving. She accompanies clients as they experience the multiple dynamics and complexities of aging and end of life issues. She also serves as a liaison between client and family. Knowing that each client has specific life changes and needs, her goal is to help the person feel comfortable and safe. She serves people of any or no religious denomination. Because Sister Kathleen worked for hospice for so many years, she is often placed with families whose loved one has been placed on hospice.

Comfort Keepers website says, “Our work allows seniors and disabled individuals to live independently and as comfortably as possible. With our expert caregivers in your loved one’s home, you can rest assured knowing he or she is receiving the best care possible.” The Statement of Mission for the Sisters of St. Agnes states: we “respond to those whose faith life and human dignity are threatened.” Sister Kathleen is a living response to both, and the elderly benefit from her compassionate presence.



Sister Dulce and CSA associates gather together in Belén, Nicaragua.

Building Relationships:

One by One, Two by Two

BY VALERIE GRACZYK,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

The associate relationship in Nicaragua, dating back to 1988, owes its beginnings to the efforts of Sisters María del Carmen Avendaño and Inmaculada Leiva, members of CSA, who lived and ministered in Belén. In this small town of 1000 people, located an hour from Managua, they gathered biweekly with men and women who had a strong desire to participate in the spirit and charism of the Sisters of St. Agnes. As they prayed together, reflected on and shared the gospel message, they found a way. It was by becoming associates of the congregation! From this strong foundation, the associate relationship has expanded and now includes more than 60 adults, teenagers, and children from the rural communities of Picapica, Chacalapu and Belén.

The present coordinator of associates in Latin America is Sister Dulce María Rodríguez. She meets regularly with enthusiastic adults who are totally committed to their associate relationship. Teenagers and children belonging to these adults have caught their spark and participate in the liturgy and in activities following. A welcoming atmosphere draws them together for fun, for meals and for celebrations.

In a conversation with Sister Dulce, she said, “Each year we choose a theme on which to focus our study and sharing. Themes already chosen include ‘Women in the Bible,’ and ‘Lay People in the Church.’ This year’s theme is Pope Francis’ encyclical on Mother Earth, *Laudato Si’*. There is also a strong interest in learning about St. Agnes.”

“There is a deep sense of belonging among the associates,” continued Sister Dulce. “The sharing in small groups has deepened the bond among all of them. Through these meetings, the associates have become as much a part of my life as my community members. United in prayer, we share and try to live the gospel faith. I believe it has been transformational for them and for me. Even the priest who serves our group has the feeling of belonging; he remarked, ‘Sister, I, too, am an associate.’ For him it is a privilege to be part of the group and he is grateful for the presence of sisters and associates in the parish in Belén.”

In the younger ones, sons and daughters of the associates and the peers they invite, Sister Dulce sees hope for the future as one generation inspires the next!



CSA

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

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)

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)

Dreams Do Come True

INTRODUCING SISTER RUTH BATTAGLIA, CSA
COORDINATOR OF JUSTICE, PEACE, AND INTEGRITY
OF CREATION

“I have a dream!” Although not actually her words, that famous remark was behind the decision of Sister Sally Ann Brickner, OSF, to resign as CSA’s Coordinator of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation and pursue her dream to write a book about Pope John XXIII’s encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (*Peace on Earth: On Establishing Universal Peace in Truth, Justice, Charity, and Liberty*). As of July 1, 2017, with the blessing of the leadership of her congregation for a writing sabbatical, she began what she hopes will be the fulfillment of a dream.

The encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, directed to all people and promulgated shortly before the death of John XXIII in 1963, was developed in the context of the Cold War and the nuclear arms race. “Peace between all peoples,” Pope John said, “must be based on truth, justice, love and freedom.” He urged leaders to settle conflicts by negotiation, not by recourse to arms, and strongly emphasized the need for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. With these same themes in the forefront of world relations today, we look forward to how Sister Sally Ann’s dream will be realized as she shares her insights and makes

timely and practical applications of the principles found in *Pacem in Terris* to our current world situation.



Whether or not she had a similar dream, Sister Ruth Battaglia, CSA, was God’s providential answer to the need for someone with a passion for social concerns to accept the vacated position. The first inklings of an interest in social justice issues surfaced when she wrote her first high school term paper on the topic of open housing in Milwaukee during the racial tensions of the 1960s. As she continued her education, she completed work in social studies, theology, and pastoral ministry. Through various aspects of these, she got involved in demonstrations at the Nevada nuclear weapons testing site, at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia, on street corners protesting the war in Iraq; and, most recently, in support of care for Earth. Besides the issues of peace, non-violence as a way of life, and care for Earth, Sister Ruth is passionate about addressing racism and human trafficking. Serving in her role as coordinator of CSA’s Office of Peace, Justice, and Integrity of Creation, she will keep alive and further the commitment of the Sisters of St. Agnes to “... a pastoral concern for all whose faith life and human dignity are threatened.” (CSA Constitutions, #4)