

REFLECTIONS  
&  
*Connections*

FEBRUARY 2023



STORIES OF MISSION  
& MINISTRY

**CSA**

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

# Dear Friends,

March is Women's History Month. How serendipitous that it includes Mother Agnes Day (March 6), honoring one of our founders, and Catholic Sisters' Week (March 8-14)! But, for us sisters in CSA, every day, every month is history-making. Every day, we emulate Mother Agnes and every week we celebrate women religious. We cannot be "contained" in a day, a week, or a month.

St. Agnes, our patron, could not be contained by the expectations of her time. Mother Agnes could not be contained by smaller visions of religious life. We cannot be contained. No woman should be contained. History is as much HERstory as it is HIStory. We claim the giftedness of women throughout the centuries, and we keep making history every day.



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

Jesus learned to see women with eyes of respect and equality, and they followed him. Let us follow him and, along the way, celebrate women and the narrative we create together!

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

*CSA General Council*

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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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# Tales from the *CSA Archives*

AS TOLD BY ARCHIVIST JENNY LUKOMSKI

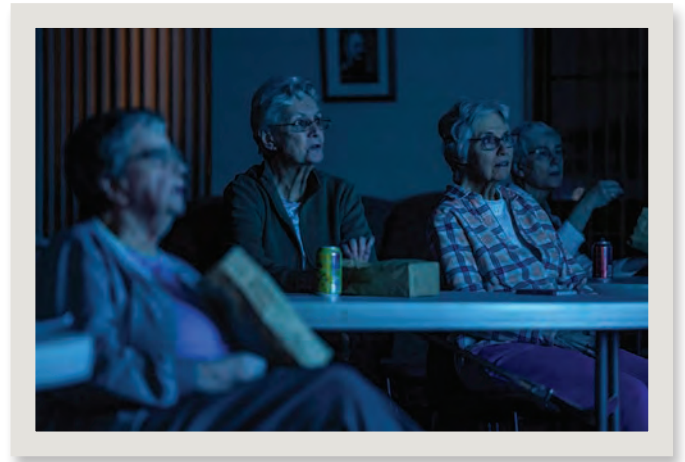
When I first started working for CSA, I began with an inventory of the archive's holdings and was excited to find several canisters of 16mm film. I couldn't wait to see what was on them. The problem was most didn't have any identifying information on them. Later, I found a DVD called "CSA Films" that I assumed contained the footage of these films, but they were all combined into one jumble of a digital file and there was no way to match the contents to each of the original films.

I thought of running the films through a projector in order to identify them but immediately found broken sprocket holes and worse, the scent of vinegar. As the acetate in the film base begins to decompose it off-gasses acetic acid which produces the vinegar scent. Once this chemical process called "vinegar syndrome" starts, it cannot be stopped and will speed up over time causing shrinkage and brittleness to the film base and dye fading of the images. I knew I had to preserve them soon before any further damage made it impossible.

Six 16mm and two Super8 films were sent to SceneSavers, a company specializing in archival media preservation. They cleaned and repaired the films before converting them to digital files.

The six 16mm films date from the 1940s and include both color and black and white footage of nursing students entering and leaving St. Agnes School of Nursing; laying the cornerstone of the hospital addition in 1942; investing and profession ceremonies; visiting Sunday with sisters and their families; and candidates

and novices at recreation on CSA's grounds involving volleyball games, dancing, and cookouts. The two Super8 films contain footage of a celebratory Mass for Sister Judith Schmidt at St. Joseph's Church in Hays, Kansas, after her election as General Superior in 1977.



Sisters in the motherhouse came together on December 6, 2022, to watch the one-hour premier of the compilation of films. They enjoyed popcorn and walks down memory lane as they worked together to see who they could identify in the films.

*It's your turn!*

Head to  
[www.csasisters.org/archives](http://www.csasisters.org/archives)  
to view the films!



The wellspring of the sacred flows into and through all of us. Regardless of faith tradition, recognizing when you have lost touch with that source is step one. Getting back in touch with it is step two in replenishing our energy and connection with the world around us. CSA invites the public to join us for a morning of refilling your metaphorical cup together with other women from the Fond du Lac area community.

The event will feature an interactive keynote address by Sister Dianne Bergant, CSA. In 2014, as part of an interview for *Global Sisters Report*, she shared her thoughts on people's relationship with the transcendent. She said, "It can be a sense of a relationship, or it can be a search for a relationship; so much depends upon the individual, but somehow or other there is a dimension of the transcendent. Searching for meaning, searching for God, having a relationship. Then we all live it out differently."

*Breakfast with Women: Energizing Spirits* will be held March 16, 2023, in Fond du Lac, WI, in downtown's historic Hotel Retlaw. Check-in and breakfast will be available at 7:30 a.m. with the event starting promptly at 8:15 a.m. Our keynote address and formal discussion will last until 9:30, after which, attendees are welcome to stay for continued reflecting and connecting with others in the room until 10:00 a.m.

## Tickets

We hope to welcome women from all walks of life to energize their spirits and have kept the cost to attend the breakfast low in an effort to make it accessible. Please join us!

Tickets are \$15 per person when purchased prior to March 1. After March 1, prices increase to \$25 per person.

Get your tickets today at  
[www.csasisters.org/breakfast](http://www.csasisters.org/breakfast)



# Winter Solstice at the CSA Motherhouse

The CSA motherhouse welcomed 42 visitors for a Winter Solstice Celebration in partnership with Glacial Lakes Conservancy. Hailing from five different Wisconsin counties—Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Calumet, Milwaukee, and Fond du Lac—and a few visitors from Japan, the attendees celebrated the shortest night by exploring CSA's conservation easement with GLC Volunteer Naturalist David Kuckuk.

Together the group learned about the gaits of "bounders" and "pacers," differentiated the tracks of buck and doe deer, identified native trees without the benefit of leaves, and explored the tunnel of North America's tiniest carnivorous mammal—the shrew.

Back inside, sweet treats and hot cocoa helped everyone warm up in anticipation of sunset. While they waited, they could learn more about different conifer cones and owl pellets or enjoy the company of others who appreciate and value Earth in the spirit of Laudato Si.

"If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, ... our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs." (Laudato Si, 11)  
GLC Director Jennifer Rutten and Willow Creek Preserve Project Manager Isabel Mueller offered remarks and Sister Janet Ahler marked the end of the event with a special prayer.

Tours of the solar array and/or  
CSA easement are available  
by appointment.

**Call 920-907-2300**  
to set up a time for your group to  
learn more about solar energy or  
the larger property.

# BENDING THE ARC



These cloudy, winter days, it's hard for people to keep their spirits up. But Amanda Gorman reminds us that, "...there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it; if only we're brave enough to be it." CSA justice and peace efforts shine light on the dark corners of our world whether those efforts are large or small. The Chapter 2022 Statement urges the congregation to find new and creative ways to do so, together. To that end, we invite you to sign up for a new, twice-monthly digital newsletter from our Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation office.

The name of the newsletter, *Bending the Arc*, references a quote by Rev. Dr. King who said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

The newsletter will showcase the work of changemakers, opportunities to learn, and opportunities for you to help "bend the arc" toward justice.

Save the date for our April 22 Earth Day Fair!

Details will be shared in the newsletter, sign up by visiting

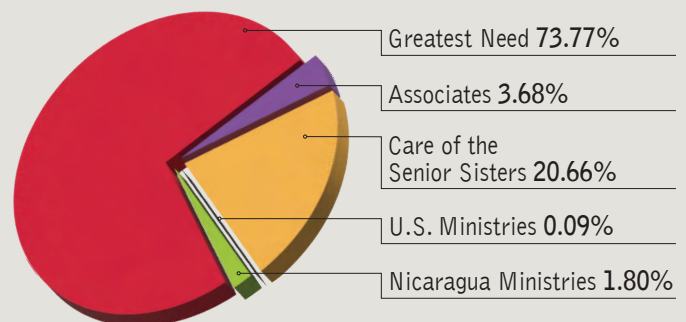
[www.csasisters.org/JPIC/resources](http://www.csasisters.org/JPIC/resources)

## Annual Report Now Available

Your donations, both large and small, are what allow CSA to continue participating in the mission of Christ by joyful service in the Church, always aware that we, too, are among the needy and are enriched by those we serve. All donations go to funding the ministry of your choice.

The full annual report is now available at [www.csasisters.org/donate](http://www.csasisters.org/donate)

### Donation Designations from October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022



Total Giving: \$451,136



## *Sisters and Seekers*

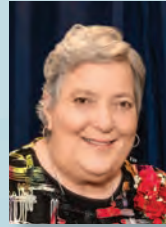
In 2020, a small group of Sisters and Seekers gathered together on March 5 to share their stories of spirit. A few days later, the world shut down and, in the interest of safety, the gatherings were put on indefinite hiatus. We are excited to end that hiatus and renew the opportunity for Sisters and Seekers to connect with one another.

Modeled after the national Nuns and Nones program, Sisters and Seekers gatherings ...

- ... are more than events. They are places for relationship, dialogue, spiritual practice, and social action.*
- ... are joyful, spirit-led, and held by the capable hands of committed organizers.*
- ... are rooted in mutual learning—not the persuasion of belief.*
- ... aim to bring forth a more just and loving world, no longer dependent on systems of extraction and oppression.*
- ... are pluralistic, welcoming of all identities, and are LGBTQ affirming.*
- ... at their best, grow into committed community.*

To express interest in joining a Sisters and Seekers gathering, please email [dkrikau@csasisters.org](mailto:dkrikau@csasisters.org)

## *In Memoriam...* Walking with God



Sister Patricia Robinson, CSA  
November 21, 2022

Patricia (Campbell) Robinson was born in Watertown, New York, on April 17, 1949, and grew up in Washington, DC, and Annapolis, Maryland. In 1969, Patti married Jack D. Robinson. They settled in Garber, Oklahoma, where they owned and operated their own business and raised their two sons, Jeff and Jason. After her husband died unexpectedly in 1994, Patti raised her sons while also earning a BS in Accounting and Finance from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, and working as a financial analyst at St. John's Hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma. When her sons were settled with families of their own, Patti felt a call to live out the rest of her life as a woman religious. After some time with the Sorrowful Mother Sisters, Patti met the Sisters of St. Agnes. Drawn to their spirit and mission, she entered St. Agnes Convent in 2003 and made her first profession of vows in the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes on July 14, 2006, in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, with her children and grandchildren present.

Sister Patti's sixteen years of active ministry in the congregation included Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as accountant for CORE El Centro, and Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, as database program developer for the archives at St. Agnes Hospital, administrator and local coordinator at Nazareth Court and Center, and volunteer at Solutions Center.

In April of 2019, Sister Patti became a resident at Nazareth Center to receive care for her failing health. Throughout this time, she remained a "sister mom" connecting with her sons and grandchildren while sharing life with her sisters in community until the time of her death on November 21, 2022.



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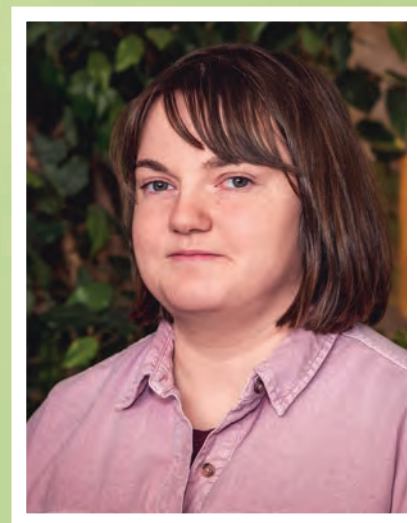
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Or email us at **[csaadm@csasisters.org](mailto:csaadm@csasisters.org)**

Or call **920-907-2300**

# Welcome *New Staff*

**C**SA is pleased to welcome Kate Harms to the CSA archival staff. Kate joined the CSA team as assistant archivist on November 28 and finds joy in the minutiae of the past. “I love history, particularly finding the little details, and that’s my favorite part of working in the archives,” she said. Prior to working at CSA, Kate was a full-time student graduating from Plymouth High School, then earning her Bachelors in History and Writing at Drake University in Des Moines, before completing her Masters in Information and Library Science in August at UW-Milwaukee. Outside of the office, she builds scale models, reads, and works—very slowly—on co-authoring a book with her best friend.



Kate Harms