

REFLECTIONS  
&  
*Connections*

NOVEMBER 2016

STORIES OF MISSION  
& MINISTRY



**CSA**

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

PARIS KLEIN, CST

# Dear Friends,



*“If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel’s heartbeat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence.”*

— George Eliot, Middlemarch

How essential it is for each of us to experience our “ordinary life” with a reflective mind and heart. As the seasons slide from fall into winter, I am so aware of the varied forms of beauty that captivate me as I drive from home to the motherhouse each day. As I edge past the city, I become aware of the farmland on the north side of the highway that has just been harvested and now awaits the winter frost. Soon the Niagara escarpment comes into view and I am easily overwhelmed by the seasonal medley of green, gold, bright yellow, orange, red, and touches of brown that dance in the morning breeze dappled by the sun’s early rays. Turning into the motherhouse drive, I note the lush lawn carpeting the grounds which await the healing snows of winter. The creek wends its way down the hill and disappears as it turns in a southerly direction under the walkway. Birds flit and fly between bird feeders and trees before taking off for nests or for new places to sojourn away from the formidable Wisconsin winters. All this beauty offers itself each day.

The beauty of nature is a reminder of the bounty of God who invites us to appreciate, enjoy and respect what Pope Francis calls “the Gospel of creation.” All we have to do is take the time to notice what surrounds us. Autumn brings us the beauty of harvest and the bounty of creation. To read this gospel of creation we must recognize that according to *Laudato Si’*, “The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God.” (#84) As we approach Thanksgiving Day, words from a traditional Navajo song resonate. What if we also read it switching God’s name for that of the beauty described in the chant?

*Now I walk in beauty  
Beauty is before me  
Beauty is behind me  
Above me and below me  
Around me and within me.*

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

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### ON THE COVER:

*“Unfolding Gratitude”* © Doris Klein, CSA, used with permission

In the midst of the autumn paradox of harvest and dying, we are called by the Mystery of Grace to thank for abundance and letting go, gift and challenge, joy and sorrow, remembering we are always held in the spacious heart of God.

# Ministry of Presence

BY SISTER ANITA HENNING, CSA  
GENERAL COUNCILOR

In response to a need at Agnesian HealthCare, a group of senior sisters has begun a new volunteer ministry this year. These Sisters of St. Agnes responded to the need and now visit patients in the clinic waiting rooms, the hospital lobby, and Hospice Home of Hope. When the sisters introduce themselves to patients, staff, or visitors, conversations begin naturally. People are surprised and delighted to meet them. The sisters, too, find it enriching to interact with patients, families, and staff. Sister Mary Ann Schippers stated, “I share a little about my life and have found each person shares something of his or her life. I often find this an inspiring experience.”

It is interesting to learn that many of the people they meet were born at St. Agnes Hospital. Others share stories of sisters they knew. One person related that she was named after a sister who once worked in the maternity wing; she was so excited when Sister Jean Perry, a volunteer, was able to obtain a photo and the obituary of that sister for the person to share with her mother.

Sister Sonia, a nurse practitioner at the clinic, sees this as a ministry for the whole person. “The people...may

be experiencing very difficult times. We have to take care of the body, mind and spirit of the individual.”

The volunteer coordinator for Agnesian, Barb Van Egtern, spoke of how the patients and staff look forward to the sisters’ presence. Other departments are now asking for this ministry in their waiting rooms.

This ministry of presence carries on the mission and charism of the Sisters of St. Agnes. Thank you, Sisters, for entering this new initiative.



L to R: Sisters Ruth Ann Baudry,  
Janet Ahler, Collean Walsh,  
Mary Ann Schippers, Jean Perry  
Not pictured: Sister Ann Walters,  
Emily Schug, Jeannine Funk, Marie Kees

L to R: Sisters  
Clare Lawlor and  
Julie Ann Krahl



# Nuns on the Bus

2016

BY SISTERS CLARE LAWLOR AND JULIE ANN KRAHL

*Sisters of St. Agnes, Clare Lawlor and Julie Ann Krahl, share their recent experience of traveling with sisters from various religious communities on the “Nuns on the Bus 2016” as it made its way to Cleveland and Philadelphia, the sites of the Republican and Democratic conventions. Stopping at ten cities along the way, the sisters met with individuals, groups, and elected officials in efforts to influence, support and effect change in the U.S. political scene.*

“The Bus was a phenomenal, life-changing experience. As we traveled from city to city we observed and participated in creative, awesome programs for changing lives. We felt the exhausting efforts of leaders to support their neighbors. We cried with people and prayed with them. Although the national party conventions have ended, the bus has stopped, and the nuns have gone home, the political processes continue and the goals of the “Nuns on the Bus” move forward. We carry with us the unforgettable people and stories of people with whom we were engaged along the way. We listened as they shared powerful experiences and responses to societal gaps in the economy and their struggles to work for the common good.

“Throughout this experience we resonated with the encouragement and appeal of Pope Francis which impel

us to further action. We continue to find ‘story’ people; we take their stories to politicians to be included in their policy development; we share the stories so that others will be inspired and determined to mend the gaps in our economy and understand the importance of including all eligible citizens in exercising their right to vote. Lastly, we cannot ignore our own transformation throughout this experience.

“We felt the support and pressure from our sisters and associates and from the hundreds and thousands of signatures written on the bus in every city. We hope that all of us remain affected and committed to the message of the bus, and that the enthusiasm engendered becomes contagious!”



L to R: Peace Corps volunteer Terry Slyvester, Assistant Library Director Aurelia Dobjanschi and Ellen Swan

# Mercy has no Boundaries

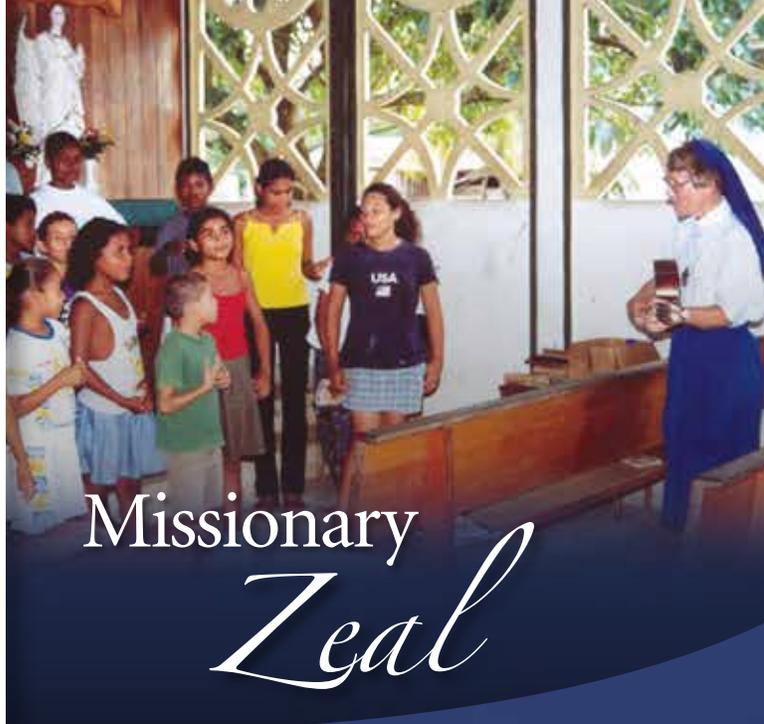
BY CAROL BRAUN, DIRECTOR OF ASSOCIATE RELATIONSHIP

“*B*eing an associate of CSA for 15 years has shaped and opened my heart and mind. I don’t have to look far for examples of women who have reached out to others,” shares associate Ellen Swan. “I admire the tradition of service that CSA sisters and associates have modeled for me. It is so much a part of who they are, giving their hearts and lives to working with people.”

When Ellen retired from the Director of Associate Relationship position with the Sisters of St. Agnes, she felt that she had more to give and, even more importantly, more to learn. Within a week of retiring she joined 74 Peace Corps volunteers headed for Moldova, a small country sandwiched between Romania and Ukraine in Eastern Europe. After a two-month training period, Ellen was sent to her assignment in the Telenesti district for the next 23 months.

Ellen found the Peace Corps experience challenging, especially the need to learn and speak the language. It was exciting to work with the people in community and organizational development. Not long into her service, she began to teach English and yoga to high school students and adults. She discovered that she loved teaching!

Ellen came to appreciate the slower pace and embraced the simplicity of having less. She enjoyed the freedom of shopping in the piata (open air market) for items she needed that day, whether it be ingredients for soup, a single Band-Aid, or a bar of soap. “Looking back on hardships such as a lack of fuel, a need to haul water, or to adapt to only two hours of electricity per day, brings appreciation for living in the moment along with a realization that nothing is permanent,” shared Ellen. Ellen is adjusting to being back in the United States, thankful to be “within arm’s reach” of family and friends.



# Missionary Zeal

BY VALERIE GRACZYK, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

“*I* always wanted to be a missionary. When I was in sixth grade, a Maryknoll sister spoke to our parish about her missionary vocation. I knew from that moment that I would be a missionary when I grew up,” said Sister Rose Kowalski. For the past twenty-five years, Sister Rose has been a missionary in Waspam, Nicaragua.

“Some years later, a neighbor girl who lived down the road from our family farm in Belgium, Wisconsin, invited me to see the trunk she had packed for going away to college and entering the convent to become a Sister of St. Agnes in Fond du Lac. Since I had always wanted to go to a Catholic college, I soon followed her to the convent, and the rest is history,” continued Sister Rose.

“After entering the convent I became a teacher in various Wisconsin schools. I also learned to speak Spanish, and in the mid-1970s I was asked to go to Nicaragua as a missionary. My desire was to serve the poor, and I was soon surrounded by the poor in the small Miskito village of Waspam. I feel complete. For me this has been God’s calling and I am where I was meant to be. Though I have now retired from full-time teaching, I continue to teach religion, art, and music while also assisting with the school lunch program at Santa Inés elementary school in Waspam. It has been a good life, a fulfilling life, as I continue to stand on the shoulders of so many strong missionary sisters who came before me.”

A photograph showing three women in an office environment. On the left, a woman with short brown hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt, is smiling and looking towards the center. In the middle, a woman with short grey hair and glasses, wearing a white cardigan over a patterned top, is looking towards the right. On the right, a woman with short blonde hair and glasses is seen in profile, looking towards the other two. They appear to be in a meeting, with the woman on the left holding a white folder or document. The background includes a window with blinds and a framed certificate on the wall.

## A Place at the *Table*

L to R: Sheila Kohl, Sister Donna Innes, CSA, Sister Catherine Stewart, OP, discussing Sheila's dissertation plans.

BY SISTER MARY NOEL BROWN, CSA  
EXECUTIVE LEADER OF SPONSORSHIP

“*A* amazing, life changing, and so much more than I ever expected” are just a few of the words in Sheila R. Kohl’s lexicon that describe her experience as a doctoral student at Marian University in Fond du Lac. “My graduate and doctoral education has enabled me to approach life situations from new and ever-deepening perspectives.”

Sheila noted that Sister Donna Innes, CSA, advisor, and other faculty have inspired her to look at issues through the lens of those most impacted by the concern. They have been instrumental in helping expand her thinking and teaching in ways she never imagined.

“I now realize the importance of being grounded in the present and, at the same time, to be future-oriented and open to change,” Sheila observed. “I try to inculcate what I learn into my classes, helping students become more successful, adapt more easily, and assume more

responsibility in school, at home, and in their other activities. Parents have commented on how their children are coming out of their shells and are doing things that they would not have dared to do earlier.”

“Everyone needs to have a place at the table and everyone needs to shine,” commented Sheila. “I have found my place at the table through my Marian education. Now my life-focus is to help my students to achieve their place at the table and to shine, both in the classroom and in the global community in which they live.”

A sixth grade science teacher at West DePere (Wisconsin) Middle School for the past 19 years, Sheila plans to graduate in May 2017 with a Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Leadership. Marian University is sponsored by the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes.

# “You’ve got to be carefully taught...”

(from *South Pacific*)

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

Each of us has a story to tell about racism. I grew up in Northeast Wisconsin near the Menominee Nation Reservation. I absorbed attitudes and stereotypes about Native Americans and, later, about other groups that differed from mine. Only gradually have I come to understand how my whiteness has privileged me in society – a white, highly educated, professional woman religious. I have been confronted with the ways that whiteness affects people of color. I now own that white racism exists and that I am part of that “culture.”

In their 1979 pastoral letter, “Brothers and Sisters to Us,” the US Bishops called racism an evil, “a grave sin” that denies the mystery of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. More than thirty-five years later, our country continues to struggle with the persistent pain and sin of racism. It manifests itself in what we do and in what we fail to do. Overt acts of prejudice might be rare. But we are called to do more. We must recognize and work to dismantle the structures that our society has put in place to secure and maintain the privileged status of being white.

Undoing racism is an arduous process. One recent initiative was CSA’s sponsorship of a workshop, the Racial Justice Tipping Point, held at Marian University on September 17, 2016. A five-member team from the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice (WNPJ) presented an anti-racism training program. Its goal is to get 3.5% of Wisconsin’s citizens (just 200,000 people) to work actively for greater equity and an end to racism in the state. 3.5% represents a “tipping point.” If that tiny percentage makes a strong commitment to end racism, social change is unstoppable!

L to R: Laurice Snyder,  
Sister Sally Ann Brickner,  
Judy Goldsmith,  
Margaret Jarek



## *In Memoriam...*

### Walking with God



Sister Magdalena Langlois, CSA  
September 15, 2016

Sister Magdalena Langlois (Dorothy Ann) was born in Fond du Lac on January 4, 1934. She made her profession of vows on August 15, 1954. Sister Magdalena received a BS in Education from Marian College, MS in Education from St. Francis College, and Certificates in Theology from St. Norbert College and Mt. St. Scholastica College. After ministering as a teacher for 35 years, Sister Magdalena served as a pastoral assistant in Mobile for 24 years. She spent her last years ministering as a volunteer at St. Francis Home in Fond du Lac.



Sister Mildred Ryan, CSA  
August 7, 2016

Sister Mildred Ryan (Aquin) was born in Muncie, IN, on December 15, 1915. She made her profession of vows on August 15, 1941. She was a member of Marian College’s first graduating class. In 1956 she earned an MS in Secondary Education and Business and state certification in French from Duquesne University. She taught business, social studies and French for 38 years. In 1973 Sister Mildred worked in the business office at Marian College. She later served as secretary general of CSA. In 1987 Sister moved to Mobile, AL, and ministered as secretary/bookkeeper at the Service Center of Catholic Social Services.



Sister Mary Louise Scheuerell, CSA  
July 17, 2016

Sister Mary Louise Scheuerell (Mary de Sales) was born in Oak Park, IL, on March 3, 1927. She made her first profession of vows on August 15, 1951. She graduated from Marian College in 1958 with a BS in Education. She was an elementary school teacher in Indiana, Kansas, New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. She also was an instructional skills assistant in the nursing program at Marian College. Her last several years were spent serving the sisters and staff at the motherhouse.



Sister María del Carmen Avendaño, CSA  
June 12, 2016

Sister María del Carmen Avendaño Sequeira (Trinidad Alejandra) was born in Belén, Rivas, Nicaragua, on July 17, 1929. She made her profession of vows on August 15, 1953. Her education included Public School Administration at the National University of Nicaragua; she also studied to become a nursing assistant. She could speak three languages: Spanish, English and Miskito. She was a teacher who taught many children to read and write. She also was founder and coordinator of the associates in Belén, Nicaragua. From 1993 to 1998 she was assistant director of novices in Nicaragua.

For full obituaries go to [www.csasisters.org](http://www.csasisters.org). Memorials can be sent to the CSA Development Office or through the website.



# CSA

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes  
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## 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://csajustsaying.blogspot.com/>

(in the front page of our web site)

Streams 'N Stirrings, Sister Jean:

(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/TheCSAChannel)

**TheCSAChannel**

(in the front page of our web site)

# Program Offerings

## Peace Corps Experience Presentation

November 13, 2016, at 2 p.m., at Sisters of St. Agnes Convent, Founders Hall, *Home Is... A Community of the Heart*. Associate Ellen Swan will give a presentation on her experiences as a Peace Corps volunteer. For more information, contact Carol Braun, Director of Associate Relationship at [cbraun@csasisters.org](mailto:cbraun@csasisters.org)

## Advent Reflection

Preparations for Christmas with buying gifts, attending holiday parties, decorating the house can take away the spiritual preparation for celebrating the day. You are invited to step back from the bustle of activities for reflection on the meaning of Advent and the coming of Christ. Join Sister Patrice Rog on Saturday, December 3, 2016, from 9 a.m. till noon in Founders Hall. A suggested offering of \$25 includes materials and light refreshments.

Please register by November 30 by calling Chelsea at (920) 907-2300 or emailing [ckoenigs@csasisters.org](mailto:ckoenigs@csasisters.org)

## Peace Tree Lighting

Join CSA for the 25th anniversary of the Peace Tree Lighting program. Mark your calendar for Thursday, December 15, 2016, at 6:30 p.m. in Founders Hall.