

Footprints



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Published quarterly, Footprints reflects the mission, spirit, and values of the Sisters of St. Francis, Dubuque, Iowa.

Mount St. Francis
3390 Windsor Avenue
Dubuque, Iowa 52001
Phone: 563.583.9786
Fax: 563.583.3250
Web site: www.osfdbq.org

Editor/Designer:
Pam Brookens, Associate

Proofreaders:
Sr. Veronica Bagenstos
Sr. Mary Merici Oehrlein

Communication Advisory Board:
Sr. Carol Hoverman, Sr. Eileen Miller,
Sr. Lois M. Friedman, Sr. Maureen
Smith, Sr. Marci Blum, Sr. Michelle
Balek, Sr. Mary Jane Koenigs,
Sr. Nancy Schreck

Cover Photo



Tulips bloom in the garden of Mount St. Francis.

Photo by Phyllis Manternach, OSF

Footprints

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A message from *Leadership*

WILD GEESE by Mary Oliver

*You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting...
...the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees, the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.*

In this issue of Footprints we are reflecting on our congregation's commitment to deepen our relationship with Mother Earth and Sister Water. We are seeking to find our "place in the family of things." As Sister Elaine Prevallet, SL says so clearly, "We know that our planet is ailing because of our human lack of care. The human species is collectively engaging in behaviors that risk not only our own self-destruction but the destruction of millions of years of Earth's life-giving creativity. How can we develop a kind of sensitivity that is alert to our human capacity to wreck irreparable damage to our planet and its splendid diversity of species, and at the same time commit ourselves to do whatever we can to enhance the ongoing process of life for all of us? ...The future of planet Earth is in our hands."

As Franciscans we are walking in the footsteps of Francis, who expressed a great love for the natural world around him. He was overcome by the reality of the incarnation-God becoming one of us. Since God is the source of all beings, Francis addresses all of creation as brother and sister in his Canticle of Creation:

*"All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Water,
so useful, lowly, precious and pure.
All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Earth, our mother,
who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces
various fruits and colored flowers and herbs."*

This issue touches on another concern for Franciscans, our option for those who are poor, marginal and oppressed. As we strive to cherish and protect the diversity of all creation, we are also called to respect the diversity of cultures and races. Presently in the United States we find ourselves at a critical juncture regarding our openness to newcomers. Though most of us are children of immigrants, we find it difficult to welcome the refugees and displaced persons that are presently knocking at our doors. Jesus establishes the love and care we show for immigrants as the standard by which we shall be judged, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Mt 25:35) Let us find ways to break down the barriers in our hearts so that we may truly welcome Christ in the immigrant. ■

— Sister Carol Besch, OSF, vice president

Our Mission

Rooted in the Gospel and in the spirit of Sts. Francis and Clare, the Sisters of St. Francis live in right relationship with all creation.

Focus 2008 - 2014:

In our personal, communal and public life, we commit to ongoing conversion as we: deepen our relationship with Mother Earth and Sister Water | stand with persons who are poor | make peace and practice nonviolence.

This is who we are; this is what the global community can expect of us.

Leadership Team

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Sister Marge Staudt
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vice president

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vice president





Sister Michelle Balek (left) works with Cori Burbach as a VISTA (Volunteer In Service To America) volunteer with Sustainable Dubuque.

PHOTO BY KELLI BUCHENAU

What's in a VISTA? by Sister Michelle Balek, OSF

V*ista: a panoramic or distant view or prospect; a comprehensive mental view of a distant time or a lengthy series of events.*

Let's start with the last definition and explore, briefly, a lengthy series of personal events – a personal vista. God's creation has always resonated with me in a special way. As a child I loved playing outdoors and discovering its wonders. Various PBS series on the cosmos and nature fascinated me; I took chemistry for fun in college; I'd get wrapped up in poetic descriptions that spoke to the inner spirit about the mystery, this interconnection with nature. I participated in Common Venture on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and loved learning more deeply from the Lakota Sioux their holistic worldview. I savored exploring South America and its many cultures as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ecuador. Somehow service to/with the least among us was always connected to my understanding of creation – we are one. It was no surprise then that I joined the Dubuque Franciscans and that I always seemed to find myself volunteering for our community's various committees on creation care. One of my greatest teachers has been and continues to be creation. This all naturally led me later in life to pursue a Masters degree in Sustainable Development, convinced that we

humans need to find the healthy balance between the ecological, socio-cultural and economic spheres of our lives in order to be in right relationship with all God's creation.

When, due to the recent economic downturn I was now among the newly unemployed, finding a new ministry that would encompass all (or even most of) these interconnections was not an easy feat. The City of Dubuque advertised a position for a VISTA (Volunteer In Service To America) Volunteer in its Sustainable Dubuque program. Having lived outside of Iowa for the last 18 years, I was aware of the sustainability initiatives here but was not well versed in them. I applied for this one-year-at-poverty-wage volunteer position, interviewed, was offered and accepted it - all in less than a week!

"So, what is a VISTA volunteer and what do you do?" are two questions I hear often. In the simplest terms, VISTA is the "domestic Peace Corps" - a service program, an idea of President Kennedy, and now under the umbrella of AmeriCorps. VISTA volunteers work in poverty reduction programs by concentrating on capacity building, empowering local communities rather than giving direct service only. Would it surprise you to know that VISTA volunteers over the years are responsible for launching such programs as Head Start,

Upward Bound and the credit union system? VISTA is keeping current by including environmental and sustainability projects. Sustainability is about equity, so has everything to do with poverty reduction. I am one of two volunteers in Iowa breaking new ground by serving in city sustainability programs. Having served as a Peace Corps Volunteer after college, it seems I have now come full circle to serve in this domestic version. I bring to this very local situation, the “vista” of my vast lived experience.

It is a cultural immersion experience for me to be working within the city structures and not in a faith-based or non-profit organization. There has been a steep learning curve, but I also could tell early on that the city staff I work with is comprised of very dedicated, committed individuals who care about the community. I do interject some Franciscan joy and humor amid the politics, and have been known to offer and give hugs when I could tell they were needed. Working with Dubuque’s Sustainability Coordinator and my VISTA supervisor in Des Moines, I have a set of goals to accomplish. These include helping to integrate the city’s sustainability principles into the projects of each city department as well as train and launch a Green Team; create public outreach, training and educational materials on sustainability; create a volunteer management plan and database of green assets; attend meetings and trainings with state and local leaders to develop new partnerships; research model projects; research and assist in grant applications. Of course I know from my Peace Corps experience that things look great on paper and the real-life situation is often very different. Some of these goals take a back seat to emerging priorities.

One of the public outreach pieces I’ve been involved in was the city’s 3rd Annual Growing Sustainable Communities Conference held on March 9. My responsibilities on the planning team included inviting and communicating with the presenters and moderators for the various workshops, budget work, liaison with the Grand River Center, help in arrangements for the luncheon, drafting text for publicity, printed and web materials, among many other behind-the-scenes details. In order to help build capacity rather than “let the volunteer do that” I started a “how-to” manual as I went along. It is now completed with sample forms, listing of documents, budgets, and final reports collected in one place, so that whether there is a volunteer or city staff person that takes up these tasks in the future, they do not have to start from scratch, but have something to guide them.

In addition, I view part of my role as that of an “outsider looking in” and have offered several recommendations and suggestions for future conferences for consideration.

I’ve been part of meetings with different community groups such as Dubuque 2.0, Community Reads for the Environment, and the Multicultural Family Center, to name a few. These are not meetings for meetings’ sake – but to help discover how we can best work together to further sustainability initiatives in, from, of, and for the community, whether that means improving eco-literacy or developing community gardens. I especially have my eyes and ears open for ways to include those on the margins in such plans and to prevent sustainability from being co-opted into “business as usual.”

It takes the whole community to make the community sustainable. It will not happen overnight nor from top-down dictates, though strong leadership is crucial. In valuing the diversity of people, cultures, ecosystems, needs and gifts that comprise Dubuque, we can find ways to move forward together towards a more sustainable future. As a VISTA, this is the “vista of the future” that I see as possible – not just here in Dubuque, but all across the globe, and I invite each of us to play a part in making it a reality. ■

Rest in Peace

Sister Vanora Pfeifer

Sister Angela Goedken

Sister Mary Elsbernd

Sister Mary Lenz

Norma Wessels

Sister-in-law of Sister David Wessels

Hans Kollshegg

Brother-in-law of Sister Bernice Schuetz

Roy Davis

Brother-in-law of Sister LaSalle Nanneman

James Farrell

Brother of Sister Patricia M. Farrell

Clarence Eisenbarth

Brother-in-law of Sister Marcellita Gisch

Coletta F. Boeding

Sister-in-law of Sister Mary Elaine Boeding

Glenn Stalzer

Brother-in-law of Sister Christella Heil

Robert Schultz

Brother of Sister Angelica Schultz

John Heuer

Brother of Sister Patricia Heuer

Bernice Crane

Sister of Sister Jeanne Ann Cantin

Franciscan Spirituality & Justice

by Pam Brookens

Associate Susie Paloma (L) and Sister Virginia Jennings receive the Franciscan blessing.



Sisters and Franciscan Associates gathered together Saturday and Sunday, April 17-18, for a weekend of prayer and commitment.

On Saturday, 91 persons participated in the day held at Shalom Retreat Center.

Sister Virginia Jennings and Associate **Susie Paloma** directed the day-long workshop entitled “Franciscan Spirituality and Justice.” Susie and Virginia integrated the major themes of Catholic social teaching with the life and spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi. Susie spent some time encouraging people to see gospel justice in a new and different way. She also spent time broadening the definition of what it means to be people of justice. Revisiting the story of Francis and the Leper, Virginia encouraged the group to be mindful of the “defining moment(s)” in their own story of conversion and what still might stand in the way of living gospel justice more authentically. She also spent time distinguishing between “Holy Poverty” and “worldly poverty.”

Sister Virginia and Susie shared about the Franciscan call to compassionate solidarity and living in right relationship with others and all of creation. Time for quiet reflection and small group sharing was provided throughout the day.

The day concluded with Susie sharing some ideas about how we respond to the needs of the world around us in realistic and tangible ways, while Sister Virginia encouraged Sisters and Associates to create a “bucket list” of five things they could do to enliven gospel justice before they die.

Finishing the day was a presentation and slide show honoring **Sister Helen Nelson** for her many years as Associate Director. Associate Gwen Nilles will be ministering as Associate Director. **Sister Mona Wingert** was also thanked for her years as secretary for the Associate program.

The farewell for Sister Helen was an overwhelming and humbling experience. She says, “As I watched the slide show and received the blessing of the Sisters and Associates, I was filled with gratitude for the privilege of being able to journey with so many beautiful people – both Sisters and Associates. I could never have done what I did without the wonderful support, dedication and help that has been given to me. As I reflected on the experience later that evening, these words of Francis came quickly to mind: ‘I have done only what was given to me to do.’ May all continue to be blessed with the values and charism of Francis and Clare.”

Gwen also enjoyed sharing the weekend with “so many wonderful Sisters and Associates.” She says, “Susie and Sister Virginia challenged us in so many ways while **Sisters Nancy Schreck** and **Carol Besch** broke open the mold to all kinds of new possibilities of continuing the charisms of Francis and Clare. Who can know the places we shall go? Our open hands and loving hearts with God’s help will lead us.”

On Sunday at Mount St. Francis seven Associates were welcomed into full association with the Dubuque Franciscans: Candice Chaloupka, Bill Hickson, Dolores Maas, Darlene Mauss, Bill Mauss, Jane Starr and Jo Myers-Walker.

Bill Hickson shares his thoughts about what drew him into Association. He says, “The opportunity to become an Associate seems an acknowledgement of the lifelong association with the Franciscans that already exist, and an opportunity to grow more deeply in understanding their spirituality and values.

“Tradition indicates that Francis was a deacon, and I believe his teachings and passions can inform my own vocation to the diaconate.”

Living out her vocation as a Franciscan Associate is part of Candice Chaloupka’s lifelong plan. She says, “I hope God’s plan for me involves being able to be a part of something wonderful that makes a difference in the lives of others. Whether it’s through Common Venture opportunities,



Sister Helen Nelson gives witness to Darlene Mauss's official signature in the Associate book.

educating others on conservation of earth and water, or being a role model for the Franciscan life, I am proud to be a part of it all!” ■



(L-R) back row: Associate Director Gwen Nilles, Bill Hickson, Jo Myers-Walker, Bill Mauss, and past Associate Director Helen Nelson. Front row: Dolores Maahs, Jane Starr, Darlene Mauss and Candice Chaloupka.

Vardaman's Catholic Charities Opening Doors, Helping Poor

by Joel McNeece from Calhoun County Journal

nal

Sister Terri Rodela came to Mississippi 13 years ago to answer her “calling to serve the poor.” That “call” has led her to Vardaman where she heads the North Mississippi office of Catholic Charities, Inc.

The facility is located on Main Street in Vardaman in a building donated to the town several years ago by Fred Nabors. An open house is planned for next Monday, May 17 from 5-7 p.m. to allow citizens to see the renovated facility and learn more of the many services it offers.

Rodela, a Mexican-American originally from El Paso, Texas who became a Franciscan nun, is working to spread the word of the many services offered in Vardaman from a migrant education program to disaster assistance.

“Our goal here at the Vardaman Family Life Center is to strengthen families,” Rodela said. “When they are strengthened the community is strengthened.”

That strengthening comes through the array of programs aimed at the poor.

“We try to help move them out of poverty, make them self-sufficient,” Rodela said. “We do that by teaching them skills or connecting them with the necessary resources to succeed.”

The center is currently working with the MSU Migrant Education Program who are conducting the ESL (English Second Language) classes at the Vardaman center. Other services the center is working to provide through various cooperatives include a fatherhood initiative program, parenting education programs, drug and alcohol counseling, after-school help for students, and emergency services in which they actually help with rent, utilities and other expenses for struggling families. The financial help comes with a requirement that the family participate in the programs offered by the center and perform community service.

“We're still in the infancy stages here,” Rodela said of the facility. “We're looking for volunteers willing to give of their time to serve in a variety of roles.”

One of the primary needs right now is a secretary. Rodela is operating the new office by herself right now, but she is responsible for 20 counties. She has spent the past few weeks working with tornado victims in Choctaw County and flood victims in Corinth.

“We're working on some grants to pay office help, but right now we really need a few volunteers that wouldn't mind answering phones and just being a re-

ceptionist for a little while each week,” she said.

Gary Guthrie shows the hearty vegetables that are grown on his farm in Nevada, IA.

The Vardaman office is a branch of the Catholic Diocese out of Jackson. The first satellite office was in Natchez. Vardaman was the second. A third is planned for the Delta.

“We have a lot to do but we feel like there are a lot of needs here we can help with,” Rodela said.

She is in the process of creating regional councils in each county to help identify local needs. The center also coordinates with local churches and other non-profits to ensure it's not duplicating services.

“We collaborate with a lot of different organizations,” Rodela said. “Our intention is to get people the help they need wherever that may be.”

The Vardaman facility is now ready to begin more outreach thanks to the work of many. The major renovation on the building was done by “Justice For All” – a non-profit organization primarily from the Christian Reformed Church out of Rock Valley, Iowa. The center



Feeling the presence of Christ in St. Lucia

by Sister Janet Haverkamp, OSF

Sister Janet Haverkamp reads to an eager group of school children.

At the beginning of December, a four week stay in the eastern Caribbean was not even remotely in my plans. But with in the space of two days, I had committed myself, along with **Sister Marian Einck**, to assist Sister Mary Lee Cox in St. Lucia.

It was already night when we landed in the Vieux Fort airport, very near to the convent where **Sisters Mary Lee Cox** and **Frances Nosbisch** live. Warm winter clothing was soon shed in the presence of the warm tropical climate of St. Lucia!

During the following days, Sister Marian and I, became acquainted with foods and juices native to St. Lucia. We ate the common foods the poor people of St. Lucia eat. Sister Mary Lee took us on a walking tour of Vieux Fort – places it would be helpful to know – grocery store, bakery, bank, etc...

We used public transportation called “buses” (a van seating 15 people) to travel longer distances. Children going to school and adults going to work rode the bus with us. Sometimes people squeezed in and there were more than 15!

I accompanied Sister Mary Lee to five of the eighteen schools in which she works. We were out of the house by 7:30 a.m. and walked to the various designated spots to catch the bus going where we wanted to go – up the eastern or western coasts of St. Lucia. Generally we rode the bus a distance up the coast, then got off the bus, walked across the road and up another road to wait for a bus going up to the mountain school.

Mountain roads are narrow and winding. The mountains are steep and valleys narrow. People tend to build on the ridges to catch as much breeze as possible in the hot climate. The Atlantic or Caribbean were visible on the horizon from many of the schools.

Amidst the verdant, tropical beauty, the native peoples work to make a living and educate their children.

Sister Mary Lee works the schools in the southern part of St. Lucia. Resources in the schools are meager. I saw no art work, not a single crayon, and very few books for the children to read. None of the five schools I visited had a library. The reading ability of many of the children is below grade level.

A great many of the houses were very small, crowded together, perched on whatever space is available. The narrow, winding and hilly streets have open cement gutters on either side to catch waste water from the houses and to drain the water in the rainy season.

The children at the schools were welcoming, full of energy, and delighted in running as fast as they could, often barefoot. They all wore brightly colored uniforms so that the poor children didn’t stand out.

I was touched by the simplicity and generosity of the women with whom we worshipped at the daily 6am Mass. They were older women whose deep faith brought them to Mass. They sang loudly, with gusto. The words of the songs were very meaningful and addressed today’s issues. They walked to Mass in the January darkness, as we did. Only I had on sturdy shoes with good arch supports, and they had on flip flops.

Water was precious and scarce in January when we were there. For several days there was no water pressure. The Sisters do have a large black plastic tank that holds extra water, but that too is used very carefully and needs to be carried into the house. Since there is no water pressure for days at a time, we pray for rain and fresh drinking water for St. Lucia.

Being in St. Lucia with Sister Mary Lee helped me to understand the difficulties and beauties under which she and Frances labor to bring the presence of Christ. I am grateful for their presence among the people in St. Lucia. ■



Sister Michelle Balek (left) assists Sister Rose Mary Thillen with a bird feeder.

From what Waters do you come?

by Sister Michelle Balek, OSF

An aboriginal greeting asks, “From what Waters do you come?” I come from the banks of the Winnebago River in Mason City, IA. Tribal elders say the word “Winnebago” means “the people of the sacred language.” Looking back over my life, I think this meaning has indeed helped to define my call.

I was taught by a variety of sisters from grade school through college: Presentation, Charity, Dominicans... “So how come you’re a Franciscan?” I get asked frequently. I have come to believe that I was born a Franciscan and that it just took me a while to discover that fact!

God and my spiritual life have always been important to me. One of my earliest memories of being “called” was around second grade, thinking I wanted to be just like my godmother who was always so joyful (Sr. Louann Doering, PBVM). Of course, that thought soon faded as I got involved with the stuff of life growing up. Watching my dad’s witness to living justly and watching out for the underdog developed a mantra in me whenever

I saw injustice: “It doesn’t have to be this way.” This was further instilled in me by a scripture quote my high school guidance counselor (Fr. Patrick Geary) laid out for me when discerning about taking an honors course: “For those to whom much is given, much is required.” I found myself involved in all kinds of volunteer experiences throughout the years, usually with those on the fringes of society.

To add another layer to this discernment, I remember a line from a theology professor in college (Sr. Mary Ellen Caldwell, BVM): “God is like this – only MORE!” I realized that most of my life I’ve been looking for the “MORE” in life; not the more of material accumulations, but a depth, meaning and purpose in my life. My greatest fear all along has never been of making commitments, but of “just settling for” something. There has been a hunger wanting to be satisfied.

During college I participated in the Dubuque Franciscan Common Venture program, spending

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Sisters Shirley Fineran, Camilla Hemann and Carol Besch attend the Ecumenical Advocacy Days conference held in Washington, DC.

A Place to Call Home

Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, DC *by Sister Carol Besch, OSF*

Frustrated by an immigration system that fractures families and is neither fair nor humane, 750 participants at this year's Ecumenical Advocacy Days conference (March 19-22, 2010) met to educate themselves and to take action on legislation that will welcome immigrants, protect refugees, and prevent displacement for millions. Three Dubuque Franciscans, Sisters Shirley Fineran, Camilla Hemann, and Carol Besch, joined in this ninth annual conference. Sister Shirley reflects on what the experience meant for her: "It was a journey of hope and faith and a renewed commitment to justice for our undocumented sisters and brothers who are seeking a safe, humane, and productive life in the United States."

Saturday morning included a moving testimony from Sr. Mary McCauley, Dubuque BVM, who spoke about her experience in ministry during the Postville, IA raid of May 12, 2008. Laura Rico, a U.S. citizen, related the challenges of life since her husband was deported and then imprisoned when he tried to return to their family of four children.

She now singly supports her children as she also copes with cancer. Laura concluded her testimony with these words: "It's not fair to strip a family of its dignity. We need strong effective laws while providing families with the option of staying together. It is not fair to keep a father from his children. It's not fair to keep a husband from his wife."

The remainder of Saturday and Sunday morning was spent in a series of workshops across multiple tracks (Africa, EcoJustice, Global Economic Justice, Latin America, Middle East, Peace and Global Security and U.S Domestic). Each 1.5 hour workshop was filled with information and statistics of the global migration of peoples. Often the data was supported by personal testimonies of people whose lives have been impacted by the global injustices that force so many people to migrate from their country of origin.

Sr. Camilla reflected on her experience in one of the workshops. She said, "Those present believed that in the eyes of God, all are created equal and

that everyone needs to be treated with respect. I continued to learn how every one of us has a family history of being an immigrant at one time or another. As we shared our stories, it became clear that the reasons why people immigrated in the past are not that different from those of the people who arrive today.”

On Sunday afternoon the Advocacy participants traveled by the Metro train to the National Mall to join 200,000 persons for the “March for America” rally in support of comprehensive immigration reform.

This event featured a range of local, regional and national faith, civic and political leaders, including Cardinal Roger Mahony, a staunch supporter of immigrant rights. “Being part of the march made me think that one small voice cannot be heard,” Sr. Camilla observed. “However, when we come together in numbers, our voices are strong. There was a lot of energy in this group of people who came from all over the world.” After returning to the conference center, Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ (anti-death penalty activist and author of *Dead Man Walking*) inspired the gathering with the story of her life journey of awakening and committing to the call to love through justice.

The first light of Monday morning found the advocacy crowd out of the hotel and onto seven huge

buses taking them to Capitol Hill where they visited with Senators and Representatives from their home districts. Sr Shirley visited with Rep. Steve King (IA District 5) to convey her views on comprehensive immigration reform and urged him to provide a legal means for citizenship for the millions of undocumented workers. Srs. Carol and Mary McCauley joined a larger Iowa delegation that traveled by bus from Des Moines to participate in the march. They visited the offices of Representatives Braley, Boswell, and Loebsack and those of Senators Grassley and Harkin.

Reflecting on her experience of the weekend, Sr. Carol commented, “After more than ten years of working with immigrants in Iowa and knowing close up the difficulties they face every day, this weekend was a wonderful opportunity to join with others and advocate for a just solution for all the displaced persons who seek a new home in our country. It is clear to me that Christ appears in the person of the migrant, who comes to us as the stranger waiting to be welcomed”. ■

About the author

Sister Carol Besch is part of the Leadership Team for the Dubuque Franciscans.

God has given us Sisters

Continued from page 10.

six weeks on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in SD with a team of sisters and college-aged women. I remember being impressed and inspired by this group of Franciscan women, striving to walk the talk. I will never forget the feeling of peace that enveloped me the first time I walked through the doors of Mount St. Francis. Something resonated within me in that moment and it felt like I had come home. I stayed in touch and I knew after serving two years in Ecuador as a Peace Corps volunteer, it was time to try this life.

I never concentrated on the "No" to marriage and a family but saw the beauty of the "Yes." Saying YES to one door, shuts off access to other doors, but leads to a whole other hallway with new doors opening to experiences and opportunities that would not be available had I said no to this particular door.

In the nearly 30 years since entering that door, I have been encouraged and challenged by my

Franciscan community to be the MORE of what God has in mind for me. I've been privileged to serve in a variety of ministries, including my current position as a VISTA volunteer with the City of Dubuque in its Sustainability programs. The Franciscan charism embraces respect for all creation, builds bridges between and promotes collaborations among people - all in a joyful spirit. This is part of what I bring to do my part so that sustainability, as it takes shape in Dubuque, rings true - mindful of ALL members of the community and their needs. Sustainability is about integrating ecological, social and economic justice. It is the work that Francis of Assisi was about and is the work for us in the 21st century.

For me sustainability is a way of life. In my local living group we support one another's efforts to walk gently upon this earth and to promote justice. We strive to live simply, to reduce, reuse, recycle, and to care for God's creation in a myriad of ways.

Joining the Dubuque Franciscans has given me opportunities to respond to God's call to offer the sacred language of my life in dialogue with others' in meaningful service to the earth community. ■

My time in Mississippi

by Sister Bernice Shuetz, OSF

People who know me will tell you that I have always had a problem with time. I never seem to have enough of it. When I was pushing 80 I realized that if I ever want to experience another culture I had better get started. All my life I have lived among loving, educated, Catholic, white people. After speaking with **Sister Nancy Schreck** we decided that I could fit into a program of service called WE-MAPP: “We Minister Among People who are Poor.” Since a number of our Sisters already serve in Mississippi, it was decided that I should look into the needs there that could match the gifts and services I could provide. The EXCEL after-school education program, begun in Okolona by Sisters Nancy Schreck and Liz Brown, CSJ 23 years ago, was a possibility, but education was not exactly what I had in mind.

After negotiation, we decided that I would work with **Sister Terri Rodela** who was serving in Catholic Charities in Vardaman, MS, and also with **Sister Liz Donahue** in the Okolona “One of a Kind” store, sponsored by EXCEL. That was a wonderful choice for me – days with Sister Terri entailed clerical, sitting-down work, while at the store I was on my feet most of the time. In the store Sister Liz had me work with books mostly, to get them from the storeroom to the front so people could see what was available. The religious books were the ones most in demand.

For the five-plus weeks I was in Mississippi, I spent most of my time between these two jobs, but I was able to get to Calhoun City to observe the Excel program there. I did not get to Morton, which is about three hours from Okolona, but talking with the Sisters from Morton I am convinced that the same community-building spirit I sensed in Okolona and Calhoun City was very much alive there also.

Our Sisters are enablers: whether they are encouraging a teen that she really can succeed in high school, making soup for the twenty or so people who gather for the Wednesday evening soup and bread suppers during Lent, or even getting together enough townspeople to form a volleyball tournament this spring. Our Sisters are always dreaming up new ways of involving the locals in programs to help the community. Volunteers are welcome and are needed in these little towns, for they help train and encourage local citizens to continue the programs the volunteers began.

The people I met are friendly and hospitable, whether White, Afro-American, or Mexican. Okolona has more Black people, while Vardaman also has many people from Mexico, which is difficult for us who do not speak Spanish. For that reason especially, Spanish-speaking Terri is a godsend.

There are few Catholics, who travel many miles to attend liturgy. Calhoun City (with one Catholic) has no Mass, Okolona has Mass every other Sunday.

We went to a Spanish Mass at a neighboring town, a truly beautiful experience. We also attended a religious service at an all Black Mount Pisgah church. It started at 10:00 and it was 12:00 when we got home. Their singing was wonderful.

All in all, I received more than I had asked for in my time in Mississippi. ■



Sister Bernice Schuetz volunteers at the Vardaman Family Life Center of Catholic Charities, Inc. in Vardaman, Mississippi.

Prayer for Sustainability

by Sister Michelle Balek, OSF

Creator God,

You breathe a dynamic, vibrant life-giving Spirit into all that is.

You sustain us daily with that same Spirit:

Ever the same, ever changing,
Ever bringing new life.

Forgive us, we pray, the times we forget and act as if:

As if we are the center and source;
As if all depends on us alone;
As if we are entitled to greedily misuse
your creation.

Grant us the wisdom to see clearly
The interconnections of your creation.

Triune God – the three forming One:
Grant us your healthy balance in our lives:
Ecologically, ground us and root us in
you, our true home.

Socio-culturally, show us the unity born
of cherished diversity.

Economically, let the exchange among
us be Love.

Balance us in your loving hands.

Guide us in the ways of your life-giving
Spirit,

Ready to live and share abundantly
your grace.

AMEN.

The life and mission of Sr. Aimee Marie

by Sister Merici Oehrlein, OSF

On February 24, 1919, Amy Eberhardt and Carl Spahn were married at Sacred Heart Church in Dubuque. Their first child arrived in time to help them celebrate Christmas. Named Amy at Baptism after her mother, the child was later dedicated by her parents to the Christ Child. A sister Elaine and a brother Jerry followed soon after. Eleven years later, Bob completed the family.

Amy's father, an insurance broker, did most of his business in Chicago, and it was there that the family established their home. Amy attended school at St. Bartholomew's. On her first day of school, she found herself enthroned at the teacher's desk engrossed in the adventures of a little girl named Goldilocks, while the teacher was frantically trying to quell the many first graders who were bawling for their mommies. Amy's parents, especially her father, had instilled in her at a very early age a great love of reading, and even today she is an avid reader. Her father had a great respect for learning, and this was evident in his love for Notre Dame University, a love that he transferred to his children.

Although the Spahns lived in a city described by a poet as "stormy, husky, brawling," they escaped in vacation time to quieter places. There were fishing trips to Wisconsin, visits to New York City and Niagara Falls, to Colorado and the Grand Canyon.

Adventure stories of girls at boarding school enticed Amy to spend four years of high school at I.C. Academy in Dubuque, which her mother had attended many years before. After graduation Amy attended Rosary College in River Forest for one year. During that year she became a Secular Franciscan at St. Peter's in downtown Chicago. It was during that Reception Service that she knew in her heart that Mount St. Francis was to be her destination. The Franciscan pull was going to be stronger than nine years of Dominican influence. She knew that she really wouldn't miss that swimming pool which her Dominican violin teacher had promised. And so in 1938 she entered Mount St. Francis. At Reception in 1939 she again received her mother's name, but this time in French. She was now to be Sister Aimee Marie.

After Novitiate training, Sister began mission life. She was to teach singing in grade school at Dyersville, but by the end of the year, she had become a replacement for the business teacher.

Sister's first move was to Remsen, Iowa, and again as music teacher; but at Thanksgiving she was called



Sister Aimee Marie Spahn volunteers her time taking calls at the switchboard at Mount St. Francis.

on to replace the business teacher who had become seriously ill and was not able to return to her classes.

At North Washington, Sister again combined music and business. Here she found great vocal talent and was soon directing operettas for which the students themselves built the sets and made their own costumes. Sister Aimee Marie's good work is still enduring through the parish choir.

In 1963, Sister Aimee Marie returned to Dyersville to teach business subjects at Beckman High School. Holy Cross was her last mission. During these years she learned Braille. She must have delighted many sightless people who read the books she translated into Braille for the Iowa Association for the Blind.

After many years of high school teaching, Sister Aimee Marie retired to Mount St. Francis where she worked with **Sister Marlene Schueller** in the Print Shop. She now distributes the daily mail and works at the switchboard.

With Sister Adalard, her friend, Sister Aimee Marie had become involved in Prison Pal Ministry, ministering regularly by mail especially to those on Death Row. One young man, who was eventually executed, wrote to his Sister friend, "If I die first, I'll find the softest cloud in Heaven and wait for you there so we can at last really talk."

Since her parents have died, Sister spends several weeks each year with her sister Elaine, permitting this culinary expert to practice her art on her. Brothers Jerry and Bob provide entertainment by taking her to beautiful Wrigley Field to see her favorite Cubs play, or to Notre Dame to see the Irish beat Michigan. ■

A picture of conversion

Sister Maureen Leach was one of 8 photographers featured at a photo exhibit which opened at VIVA Galleria in San Antonio, Texas on Jan. 30, 2010 and will continue through March 20. Former Community member Nancy Olinger was also featured in the show with her ranch photos.

Each of Sister Maureen's entries had the mission statement listed, "... the Sisters of Saint Francis live in right relationship with all of creation." Featured was "Sister Water" photos that Maureen took on a retreat that was led by **Sister Margie Hosch** in addition to photos taken on her annual mission trip to Honduras.

Retreat pictures included an abandoned fishing boat which she titled, "En la arena he dejado mi barca, junto a tí buscaré otro mar." (On the seashore I have left my boat. Together with You, I will search for another sea) Another retreat picture featured a wicker rocking chair on the beach. It was titled, "I'll just sit here with you for awhile," named for one of her favorite community songs that **Sister Karla Kloft** often sings for Jubilee weekend morning prayer.

Honduran pictures included the river where **Sisters Brenda Whetstone, Nancy Meyerhofer** and Maureen have spent days of reflection. Also in the exhibit was a picture of an ecological park on the Caribbean Sea, as well as a national park just outside of Gracias, Lempira.

Sister Maureen stated, "Sharing the connection of spirituality and care for the earth through photography is helping me grow in our Chapter call to conversion." ■



Sister Maureen Leach proudly displays her photos of Sister Water at the VIVA Galleria in San Antonio, Texas.

A wonderful resource

by Sister Meg Gemar, OSF

One of our Franciscan commitments is to deepen our relationship with Mother Earth. So when I was asked by our leadership team if I would be willing to become a resource for our community and pursue further studies in the environmental field, I wholeheartedly agreed. I found a wonderful program at St. Mary-of-the-Woods in Indiana.



Sister Meg Gemar takes a school field trip to the landfill and water sewage treatment center.

What appealed to me was the fact that the program integrates ecology with geology, evolution, quantum physics, economics, sociology and the humanities, art and spirituality.

The course is set up so that we are on campus the first week of the semester for class information. Then we have the rest of the semester to work on seven assignments, all having specific due dates. Every day during class we begin and end with ritual. Our final project for the semester is an integrated art project. Part of our assignment is to spend time outside for at least 40 minutes a week.

At times I feel like I am reliving my childhood when I would play outdoors, not caring if I was dirty, and not afraid to use all my senses. I just take time to be with nature and I am filled with awe again. Being in nature and using that as reflection has been so peaceful and calming. I even go out during snow storms and rainy days, just trying to experience all aspects of nature. I have learned to appreciate nature in our homes, since everything actually comes from the earth.

This has been a very enlightening and refreshing experience and has given me a renewed sense of awe and wonder about the world we live in. ■

Sustaining our Franciscan Ministry

by Sister Cathy Katoski, OSF, CFRE, Director of Development

Sustainability is the focus of this issue of “Footprints.” Maybe it might seem a bit of a stretch, but when I was first told of the focus I thought of our “Franciscan Ministry Fund.”

In the mid-1980’s the Leadership Team of the Dubuque Franciscans established a special fund called “The Ministry Fund.” Although our ministries had very often been among those who were poor and needy, modern times required that our sisters now earn a salary for their work.

The Ministry Fund was established with a two-fold purpose:

- to pay a stipend and living expenses for sisters who were called to serve in poor parishes,
- and to assist programs and projects that enable volunteers to work, to be of service, and to promote social justice.

Over the past twenty-five years thousands of persons have known the love and presence of our God through the many sisters and projects that have been funded by this fund. In 2009 the ministry of eighteen sisters and fourteen additional projects was funded by the Ministry Fund.

As the number of sisters in active ministry declines in the coming decades, this Ministry Fund will “sustain” the commitment of the Sisters of St. Francis of Dubuque, Iowa to places and projects where the need is greatest. The Fund will sustain the continuation of our mission and ministry, even in our retirement years.

Ministry Fund grants can relate to one of three categories:

- Salary grants which provide a salary for a Dubuque Franciscan ministering among people who are economically poor,
- Collaborative Ministry grants which assist the congregations/ventures with other congregations/groups on behalf of economically poor people, or
- Direct Assistance grants which support another type of ministry or project of benefit to people who are economically poor.



- Those completing grant applications are asked to:
- reflect on how the grant directly affects the lives of people who are economically poor,
 - demonstrate ways that the grant will help change structures which oppress people who are marginalized, and
 - develop leadership and empowerment skills among those people who are served by the grant.

This Ministry Fund which was begun by means of a \$1 million dollar anonymous gift in the 1980’s is growing to a size which we hope will enable the Dubuque Franciscans to sustain their ministry for future generations. Donations from benefactors marked “Ministry Fund” on the donation envelope help us to sustain this fund and its ministries. ■

Donating Stock – an easy but unusual gift!

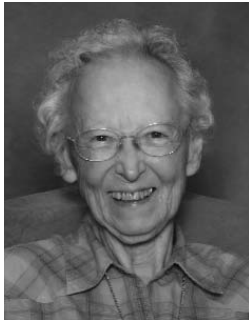
Cash gifts are easy! But a donation of stock to the Sisters of St. Francis is not a difficult task either. I’m actually often amazed at donations of \$500 or \$1,000 that are written by check and could have been made by use of a stock gift.

Why give stock? There is a great tax advantage for the donor. Even after the great decline in stocks in recent years, many have now again appreciated in value. Making a stock gift to a charity will enable you to avoid paying capital gains taxes on the gain on the original investment. On top of that savings, you will receive the tax deduction for the total amount of your charitable gift.

How easy is it? Give us a call so we know your gift is coming to one of our investment firms. We can assist you with the correct transfer options and information. Then contact your brokerage house or investment professional.

In Remembrance

Sister Vanora Pfeifer September 26, 1919 - February 9, 2010



Henrietta was born September 26, 1919, on a farm in Platte County, Nebraska. Frank and Marie Glaser Pfeifer were

the parents of ten children, five girls and five boys. Henrietta was the oldest girl. After completing her grade school education at St. Bernard Parochial School she remained at home for a year to help with the housework and cooking.

On September 8, 1935 Henrietta entered Mount St. Francis. One year later, on August 12, 1936, she was received with the name Sister Vanora. During her novitiate years and one year after first vows, she

received a high school education. She then began twenty-five years of teaching. Her first mission was to teach forty-five fourth graders at Sacred Heart School in Dubuque. This was quite a challenge and far different from her hope upon entering, which was to work in the garden and care for the farm animals! Other teaching assignments were Ossian, Rickardsville, Templeton, Sacred Heart in Riverside, Hospers and Roseville.

When Sr. Vanora requested to leave teaching she worked as a nurse aide at Holy Family Hall for two years and in 1967 became a licensed practical nurse. The next twenty years she was a nurse at Xavier Hospital in Dubuque, in Tulsa, Oklahoma and at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Norfolk, Nebraska. Returning to Mount St.

Francis in 1987 she helped with nursing for one year before retiring.

"Retirement" for Sister Vanora meant that now she could pursue her dream of gardening.

She started with seedlings, then tended the flower garden and before long she was working alongside the hired help, planting, tending, and harvesting produce. For nineteen summers she could be seen early in the morning dressed in a large straw hat and sweatband, driving the converted golf cart water-and-produce wagon into the fields. She moved to Holy Family Hall in 2006.

These last weeks Vanora was longing for the Lord to call her home. On Tuesday afternoon her wish was granted, and she peacefully surrendered her life back into God's hands.

Sister Angela Goedken November 30, 1936 - March 20, 2010



Audrey Anastacia was born November 30, 1936 in Petersburg, IA, the fourth of twelve children born to Alfred and

Loretta Koch Goedken. The Goedken family life was filled with love and seasoned with prayer: regular attendance at Mass, meal prayers, October rosary, parish missions, and Lenten services.

Schooling was with the Dubuque Franciscans at Sts. Peter and Paul School from 1st to 9th grade and the La Crosse Franciscans at St. Boniface in New Vienna for 10th and 11th grades. She loved learning and appreciated the good

teaching she received.

When she was in 7th grade Audrey realized that she wanted to become a Sister. (Six great-aunts had joined the Dubuque Franciscans and an aunt was a Sister of Mercy.) Then, early in August 1953, she accompanied her Rubly cousins to Dubuque, where they "signed up" to enter. Though her plan was just to "come and see," once at Mount St. Francis she knew religious life was right for her, and on August 25 she entered with her cousins.

On August 12, 1954, Audrey was received with the name Sr. Mary Angela, and after novitiate she began 52 years in education. She ministered as teacher and sometimes as principal in the congregation's schools in Minneapolis, MN; in Iowa at Dubuque (Holy Trinity), Waterloo (St. Mary's) and Alta

Vista; at Hazel Crest, IL and Crescent City, CA. She formed lasting friendships with Sisters and co-workers at each mission.

As she was contemplating a change from Crescent City, Angela was invited by a school board member in Kodiak, Alaska to teach there. It had been a dream of Sr. Angela's to work in Alaska, and she spent the next fourteen years at St. Mary's School on the island of Kodiak.

Sr. Angela returned to Mount St. Francis in 2008, where she accepted the position of Switchboard Supervisor. She also took on the ministry of rosary-making with Sr. Mary Benjamin, which seems symbolic of the many ways she encouraged others in their lives of faith and prayer. And as always she was gentle and affirming in her day-to-day relations with others.

In Remembrance

Sister Mary Elsbernd July 9, 1946 - April 24, 2010



A kaleidoscope of colors and events." In these words Mary described her life in her autobiography. It is clear to those who

knew her that one outstanding color was her identity as educator and theologian.

Born in Ossian, Iowa, Mary was the first of three daughters born to Leo and Helen Hemesath Elsbernd.

Mary was educated at DeSales grade and high school where she participated in many groups including student newspaper, Catholic Students Mission Crusade and Young Christian Students.

The congregation's identification with teaching played a part in her

decision to enter Mount St Francis on September 3, 1964.

Mary was received in 1965 with the name Sr. Anne Louise. She later returned to her baptismal name. During her novitiate Mary was introduced to theology as an academic discipline.

Following graduation from Briar Cliff College she taught high school French and religion at Aquin in Cascade and at Wahlert, Dubuque and theology at Briar Cliff College in Sioux City. She then studied at Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium for five years, completing an MA and PhD in religious studies and ecclesiastic degrees in theology.

Following her time at Louvain, Mary returned to Briar Cliff College as instructor in Scripture and Catholic social teaching. In 1992 she moved to Loyola University in Chicago, teaching at the Institute of Pastoral Studies and serving at

times as Director of the Institute and Graduate Studies Director. She was instrumental in developing Loyola's MA program in Social Justice, the first in the United States, and directed the program until her move to Mount St Francis in March of this year.

She authored the book *"A Theology of Peacemaking;"* co-authored two books, *"When Love Is Not Enough"* and *"Normativity of the Future,"* with Fr. Reimund Bieringer, her friend and colleague from Louvain. She co-authored a supplemental text for Catholic Social Studies. She founded INSPIRE: (Identify, Nurture and Sustain Pastoral Imagination with Resources for Excellence) focusing on pastoral leadership teams in selected Archdiocese of Chicago parishes. In its first five years, INSPIRE launched a process that identifies and serves effective pastoral leadership teams.

Sister Mary Lenz December 15, 1930 - April 25, 2010



Born December 15, 1930 in Carroll, Iowa, Mary was conscious of being unusually blessed in her parents, Philip and Hildegard

Wiederin Lenz. In her later years, she often spoke of their kindness and love for each other and for her, their only surviving child (a son died in infancy.)

Mary was educated by LaCrosse Franciscans in Carroll through grade and high school. When she was seven the family moved to Scranton, Iowa, and since there was no Catholic school there her parents sent her to board with the Sisters in Carroll. Later when her grandparents moved to Carroll she

stayed with them during the school year.

Following high school she studied for a year at Briar Cliff College where the warmth and acceptance of the Dubuque Franciscans influenced her decision to enter Mount St. Francis on August 25, 1949. She was received the following year with the name Sister Mary Baylon and later returned to her baptismal name.

Following novitiate Mary taught high school at St. Mary, Remsen, St. Joseph, Bode and St. Mary, Ashton. After completing a doctoral degree in English at Notre Dame University she served at Briar Cliff for 19 years, as teacher, Chair of the English department, and director of the Weekend College, an early program to serve the needs of non-traditional students. For two years she worked with elderly parishioners and neighbor-

hood revitalization at St. Cecilia's, Omaha, then worked in management development/quality of work life coordination at Marian Health Center in Sioux City.

In 1986 Sr. Mary returned to Dubuque when she was elected to serve on the Congregation's Leadership Team for six years, then served on an ecumenical pastoral ministry team in Chariton, Iowa. In 2000 she joined the congregation's Multicultural Neighborhood Project in Morton, Mississippi, committing herself to loving presence and prayer ministry for the people of the area.

Mary retired to Mount St. Francis in 2004. For as long as she was able she volunteered at The Lantern Center, assisting immigrants with English, and in the Coffee Shop at Stonehill Care Center.

Employees are honored for service

The Annual Employee Appreciation and Recognition dinner was held Monday, March 15 at Shalom Retreat Center. Special recognition was given to employees who have completed 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 years of service at Mount St. Francis Center. The employees enjoyed a delicious meal, great conversation and singing along with music played by the Leadership Team. ■



(L-R) Celebrating 5 years of service are Pat Sievers, Tiffany Weipert, Mary Kupferschmidt, Gwen Nilles, Margaret Coble, Sr. Diane Rapozo, BVM, and Sr. Mary Ann Helle. Not pictured are Patricia Brecht, Mary Gilligan, Tara Hefel, Deb Naderman, Lynn Pollock, Doreen Roe and Dan Schmitt.



(L-R) Celebrating 10 years of service are Wanda Dossey, Lloyd Schromen, Susan Jones, Bonnie Pfeiffer and Dixie McGovern. Not pictured are Dick Heim, Geraldine Weitz, Linda Moore and Tracy Tath.



(L-R) Martha Garcia, Sue Coohy, Patty Patterson and Bonnie Gourley celebrate 20 years of service at Mount St. Francis Center.



Sr. Mary Colleen Hoversten and Stephanie Viertel celebrate 25 years.



Congratulations to Sr. Liz Hilvers for 30 years of service.

Sr. Priscilla publishes novel

Sister Priscilla Stork has published a novel entitled "Our Lives Unfold." The novel takes place in a health clinic where trouble abounds because of one employee in the human resources department. Sister Priscilla's observations and experiences as a hospital and nursing home chaplain have converged with her imagination in this first time novel.



This novel can be purchased at River Lights Book Store on 1098 Main Street in Dubuque. ■

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WELLNESS CORNER

The healing power of beauty

by Sister Kay Forkenbrock, OSF

Outside the residence where I live, there is a tree ablaze with deep fuchsia-colored blossoms. The beauty of it continually draws me to gaze at it and it fills me with such wonder and awe. As we are surrounded by all the new growth coming to life, we find ourselves coming alive. I notice more energy, more enjoyment, greater excitement as we go about our tasks while the weather grows warmer and more inviting. We don't usually reflect on why this happens but there is a reason. Everything vibrates with energy. It is what connects us with all created reality. Stress, illness and injuries restrict energy flow and we become imbalanced as we feel the burdens surrounding us.

Gazing at the beautiful in life, whether it be nature, listening to music, contemplating works of art, or engaging in our own creative activity can renew and rebalance our energies. So let us surround ourselves with as much beauty as possible as we engage in our challenging mission of standing with the poor, practicing peace and non-violence and deepening our relationship with mother earth and sister water. ■



*A blossoming tree greets all who enter Mount St. Francis.
Photo by Sr. Phyllis Manternach.*

Calendar of Events

JUNE

5/28 - 6/6 – Franciscan Handmaids of Mary Chapter, Nancy Schreck and Cathy Katoski

9-11 – Franciscan Charism Team Orientation

14-16 – Franciscan Camp for Girls, Ginny Heldorfer

24 – Stonehill Franciscan Services Board Meeting

24-25 – Dreamers Gathering at MSF

26-27 – Jubilee Weekend

28-29 – Franciscan Charism Groups Work Time

29 – Meeting with Jackson, MS Bishop

30-July 3 – Governing Board Meetings

JULY

5-10 – Facilitating Retreat at Shalom, Nancy Schreck

15-16 – Briar Cliff University Board Meetings

21 – Stonehill Benevolent Foundation Board Meeting

22-25 – Gathering

28-31 – Franciscan Federation, Buffalo, NY

AUGUST

2-5 – Governing Board Meetings

7 – Renae Hohensee Profession of Vows

9 – LCWR National Board Meeting

10-13 – LCWR, Dallas, TX

14 – UISG-USA Meeting, Dallas, TX

25 – Talk at BCU, Nancy Schreck

26 – Stonehill Franciscan Services Board Meeting