

FRANCISCANS



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS
OLDENBURG, INDIANA
FALL 2020 Vol. 50 No. 3

Celebrate

INSIDE

3

Journey with Us ...

Steve & Nancy Rasmussen

4-6

Feeding the Hungry

Sisters Susan Marie Pleiss, Marge Wissman, Marlene Kochert, and Ann Marie Quinn share about their ministries.

7

Racism and the Sacredness of all Life

S. Noella Poinsette

8-9

Raising Rural Voices in Washington, D.C.

S. Robbie Pentecost

10-11

Oldenburg Academy's Changing Landscape

Diane Laake, OA President

12-13

So tell me about the Franciscan Associates

Jane Schaefer, Co-Director

14

Oldenburg Franciscan Center's Events

15

Resting in God

S. Norma Rocklage

16

Autumn Reflection

S. Bernice Roell

COVER PHOTO:

S. Marlene Kochert, left, assists at a food pantry in Tohatchi, NM



*"Into our lives Jesus comes as the Bread of Life
- to be eaten, consumed by us.*

*Then He comes as the hungry one, hoping to be fed
with the bread of our life, our hearts loving and our
hands serving.*

*In loving and serving, we prove that we have been
created in the likeness of God, for God is love, and
when we love, we are like God."*

St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Dear Friends,

How can one not celebrate Fall?

It was my mom’s favorite season of the year. She loved the cooler temperatures, the bright Fall foliage, bittersweet, and mums. She waited with anticipation for the annual excursion to an orchard to get apples, and she enjoyed watching the harvest of crops on the farm.

The stories in this Autumn issue of *Celebrate* illustrate several themes reflected in the Fall season: the theme of change; the harvesting of gifts; the remembering of seeds planted and now come to fruition; thanksgiving.

Nancy Rasmussen writes of the reality of change as she reflects in “Journey with Us” on ways in which her own life plans took on realities she would never have imagined. Hers is a story of surprise, openness and gratitude, as she recalls the influence of Sisters who were teachers and companions.

“Autumn is a time of physical harvest and spiritual garnering. It is a good time to celebrate the lives of all who have helped us along the way.”

~ Caitlin Matthews

In “Feeding the Hungry” **Sisters Susan Marie Pleiss, Marge Wissman, Marlene Kochert,** and **Ann Marie Quinn** share their “harvest stories” of providing food for others and the gift of being nourished by the interchange. In each case we hear their gratitude to be in that place of receiving what they are then able to offer to others.

S. Noella Poinsette, reflecting upon “Racism and the Sacredness of All Life,” situates this issue in both real life situations and a theological context. She reminds us of the need to study and enter into dialogue about racism as we discover it within ourselves and as a systemic evil.

Somewhat like Autumn leaves picked up by breezes, **S. Robbie Pentecost** shares numerous experiences of serendipity in her ministries in Appalachia. She has had many opportunities to let the Spirit lead, and the harvest is rich.

Oldenburg Academy is certainly in the midst of Fall change. As if having a new facility is not enough change, the pandemic called forth their creativity in using the Feldhaus as a dining room! Again, gratitude for all those who helped make this facility possible.

Jane Schaefer shares the story of the Oldenburg Franciscan Associates from their beginning in 1981, to some of the ways their membership and activities have grown. Seeds planted by relationships with Sisters or other Associates take root and flourish when people become Associates, and we are all grateful.

S. Norma Rocklage, remembered on p. 15, was a living example of sharing the abundance. Seeds of generosity were planted in her by her parents and yielded a hundredfold. Her life was like a cornucopia overflowing with gifts to nurture and support others. We remember her with abundant gratitude.

Blessings in this season of beauty and change,

S. Barbara Leonhard, OSF
Councilor



S. BARBARA LEONHARD, OSF
Councilor

Celebrate

Editor Sue Siefert
Circulation Jo Ann Butt
Circulation S. Dianne Kaimann, OSF
Cover Photo Beverly Wilson

A Publication of the Sisters of St. Francis
 Please change my address—attach label
 Please add the name listed below
 Please remove my name from the
CELEBRATE mailing list.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ST _____ ZIP _____

Send to: SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS
PO Box 100
Oldenburg, IN 47036

Phone: 812-934-2475

OldenburgFranciscans.org

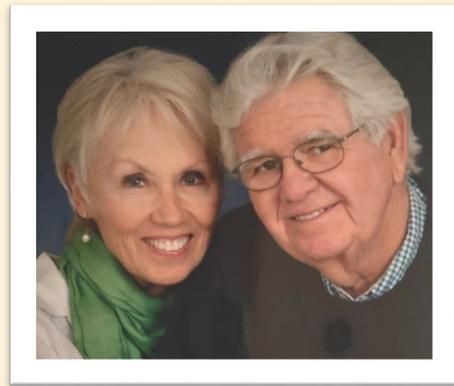
“Like” us on Facebook
Franciscan Sisters of Oldenburg

Editor’s Note:
Several photographs in this issue of *Celebrate* were taken pre-pandemic, thus the absence of personal protective equipment.

Journey with Us

STEVE & NANCY (WHITFIELD) RASMUSSEN

AS SHARED BY NANCY RASMUSSEN



I was born in 1947 and raised in Indianapolis, the second oldest of eight children. My parents were very involved in the activities in Holy Trinity parish where I was schooled, K-8, by the Oldenburg Franciscans. My parents modeled the value of giving back to our parish and our community, and to share whatever we had in whatever way we could. It was imperative that we drop our weekly envelopes in the collection basket, right along with theirs. The way my mother interacted with the nuns in the 50's and 60's, became an indelible impression on my heart.

Some of my fondest memories, and many of my lifelong friends, were made during those nine years at Holy Trinity and the Oldenburg Franciscans were an integral part of my many aspirations. Sisters Clarissa, Rosemary, Vera (Edna Martini), Dol-orine, Etheldreda, Audrey (Rachel West), Angela, Annette and Ruth Ann were some of my grade school teachers, each leaving a special mark on my heart.

It was during my elementary years, while watching my own parents become so endeared to the Sisters, that I developed a strong desire to actually become a Franciscan myself. With the encouragement of Sisters Angela and Annette, I entered the Aspirancy at Oldenburg from 1961 until 1963. Because music, band and choir were all important parts of my elementary years, they would remain so in high school as well. I spent many hours in the music department with S. Linus (S. Barbara Piller, choir and glee club) and S. Gloria Gallagher (piano and orchestra). And my assigned "obedience" was to dust and wash the marble stairway outside the music department, on hands and knees, every morning. Although I never doubted my calling personally, S. Carolyn and S. Patricia Ann must have seen differently and I was invited to return home and discern a bit longer. (*That's my diplomatic way of saying I was kicked out of the convent!*). Obviously God had other plans for me.

So I returned home and finished high school in Indianapolis, and then spent two years at Marian College before marrying in 1967 and starting a family of my own. I quickly came to realize that motherhood was God's plan for me all along.

In 1969 my 47-year-old mother died very unexpectedly when my youngest sibling was not yet in school and the physical and emotional burdens on my father became very heavy. Both of my parents were extremely faith-filled people and my dad had a very strong connection to our Blessed Mother. For that reason I felt like Dad would be fine and life would go on. Instead, just five years after mom died, so did he. But just as his faith had never faltered, neither did mine. Here's where S. Carolyn's decision to send me home just nine years earlier became quite providential.

When my dad died I was blessed to be a stay-at-home mom who, along with my very supportive husband, was able to keep my youngest four siblings together and blend them with our own six kiddos at the time, into a family of 10 children, ages 18-1. With the examples of my faithful parents, the foundations I had received through my Franciscan education, we carried on. I probably count those blended family years as my most treasured accomplishment in life, which only occurred through the grace of GOD!

In 1980 I applied to become a firefighter at a time when there were absolutely no women on the Indianapolis Fire Department. Odd as that might seem, the schedule of a firefighter (24 hours on duty and 48 hours off) is what actually attracted me as it blended quite nicely with my very large family. Aside from the fact that I always enjoyed physical activities and labor, I also loved the challenge of this very non-traditional job. Every duty day presented me with the opportunity to help complete strangers which gave me great satisfaction and was a blessing in and of itself. After 24 years on the IFD I retired in 2004 to become a stay-at-home Nonnie (25 grandchildren and nine great-grands, to date), proving once again that S. Carolyn was right.

Since retirement, my husband Steve and I have had more freedom to devote to volunteerism. For his generous financial support and his hundreds of hours of volunteer labor, Steve humbly accepted the Archdiocesan "Spirit of Service

Award" in 2015 from now Cardinal Tobin. At age 76, he still continues his daily engagement with **Hearts and Hands of Indiana**, a non-profit he helped to establish, that rehabs vacant and abandoned houses and then provides affordable home ownership to low-income families in the neighborhoods surrounding the old parish of Holy Trinity, on Indy's west side.

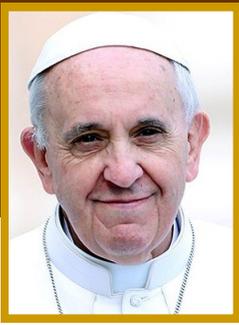
My connection with, and admiration for, the Sisters of Saint Francis has been lifelong. It began in 1947, and continues today. The Sisters seem always joyful, peaceful and very much connected to God. S. Gloria Gallagher, who taught me music both at Oldenburg and at Marian College, became especially fond of my husband Steve and vice versa. She would often email me and ask what "Saint" Stephen was up to. When we'd make our annual visit to the Christmas open house at Oldenburg, she would always save Steve a place in the dining room for cookies, juice and great conversation. God rest her soul!

Because COVID-19 prohibited a traditional funeral at the Motherhouse in June of this year, I drove to Oldenburg about a month ago to pray at the gravesite of S. Norma Rocklage, another pillar of the community who had inspired me during Latin classes at Marian College in 1965-67 and on many other occasions throughout her lifetime. Her spirituality and smile were contagious and, coincidentally, she too was a recipient of the Archdiocesan "Spirit of Service Award" in 2015 along with my husband Steve.

Over the years I've witnessed the ministries of the Sisters, primarily as educators, diversify considerably. One of my earliest memories of their ability to adapt and change occurred in 1959/60 while I was in S. Angela Betsch's 7th grade class. We were told that S. Brendan (Ruthann Boyle) was being sent to Papua New Guinea to join the missionaries there in Mendi. I remember feeling great sadness at the announcement and of being in tears the day she actually told us all good bye at Holy Trinity. She was my little brother's first grade teacher there and I was in awe of her dedication and bravery. I would later learn that she had worked previously with the Crow Indians in Montana and had actually volunteered to go to New Guinea which made me admire her, and the other Franciscan missionary Sisters, even more.

My husband and I are grateful to God that we are able to support our home parish of Saint Monica in Indianapolis along with a variety of religious groups, charities and social justice programs throughout the city, state and country. None, however, is dearer to our hearts than the Sisters of Saint Francis, Oldenburg. They literally gave me my foundation and with a very grateful heart we will continue to support their many ministries as often as we can.

Steve and I are in our mid-seventies and although at a much slower pace now, and through the goodness of GOD, we do continue to move. We feel that the proof of God's presence in the world is evidenced by all the positive things we are able to see accomplished. The Sisters of Saint Francis are the embodiment of positive and continued accomplishments and deserve all the support we are able to render. We thank them for a lifetime of memories and inspiration.



"You pray for the hungry. Then you feed"

By Sue Siefert, Director of Congregational Advancement

While the Oldenburg Franciscans have served as educators for over 165 years, often their ministries have taken them to serve the underserved where they feed the spiritual, educational and hunger needs of their families.

S. Susan Marie Pleiss serves as the Parish Life Director for the Catholic Church of the Good Shepherd in Campton, KY. She ministers to parishioners of all ages as she spreads the word of God through her actions, and in this Appalachian community, she helps to feed the hungry, and shares, "We have seen a number of new families coming to our food pantry since COVID-19 has resulted in lost jobs or at least reduced wages. One local mechanic noted that his hours have been greatly reduced as people are driving less and the shop's owner can service the families that do come in to have their cars maintained. On the other hand, there are senior families that we have not seen for several months since they are staying close to home and the senior center is delivering some food staples to them. For several months those on food stamps received some extra money on their EBT cards, but that seems to have ended as our client numbers are rising once again."

Taking a break from her ministry to answer my questions, S. Susan Marie reflected,

"Feeding the hungry is one of the corporal works of mercy and it is a profound blessing to be able to share freely what others gather together to donate to us. Find out who might be experiencing hunger in your own community and pray about how God might be calling you to offer your time, talent, or treasure to this very needed ministry of mercy."



Dedicated Food Pantry volunteers in Campton, KY



Anne Baran maintains records at the BAMA Food Pantry

Closer to home, I spoke with S. Marge Wissman regarding her involvement with the Batesville Area Ministerial Association's (BAMA) Food Pantry, and she explained, "Each church in the association is assigned a month to volunteer at the pantry. Anne Baran coordinates the pantry's offerings and instructs volunteers. Currently there are approximately 235 families and including all the members of each family, 812 individuals were served each month in 2019, and those numbers have been increasing in 2020." Curious about how the pantry operates, I asked her what a typical day is like, and the long-time volunteer revealed, "When people arrive at the pantry they line up, get a grocery cart (which are donated by

the stores in the area), sign in, and then start shopping. A volunteer assists at each station, but clients choose what they want from that station. We try to provide for some of their non-food related needs and offer baby diapers, vitamins, and a selection of books from which they can select."

I inquired if the pantry offered garden produce to clients, and S. Marge shared, "During the growing season the pantry joins the Consumer Supported Agriculture 'CSA' program at Michaela Farm so we can offer clients fresh produce."



S. Susan Marie Pleiss ministering in Campton, KY

When asked if the pandemic has resulted in an increase in requests for assistance, she explained,

"Throughout the years, I have watched people come in embarrassed to be there, those who are suspicious, and those who offer to pay us back when things get better for them. But in time I see them more relaxed and friendly when they return each month for food. By becoming familiar with them you learn more about them and about their families. During the pandemic we have been helping additional families and have implemented a drive-thru service. We provide prepared bags of commodities to each client, which has reduced our ability to allow them to select from the items that we have available.

I have gotten to know many of our clients – some have asked me to pray with them, some have cried when I help them, some have hugged, and I have seen some physically relax, and some apologize for asking for help. I also distribute financial assistance money for the Salvation Army. Many clients are unaware that when Salvation Army Bell Ringers are collecting during the Christmas season, the money collected goes to the county where it was collected and benefits us locally."

When asked if she sometimes finds this ministry difficult, the Franciscan Sister replied,

"One of the challenges is not to judge the clients. We have to remember that they come from different backgrounds, have different needs but we are all alike. We all need someone else to help us through this life. Sometimes I am surprised at how close I have come to some clients, how happy I am to see them and how I am concerned about them.

them. That's how prayer works." Pope Francis

I remember Jesus saying in the Scriptures, 'The poor you will always have with you.' I believe He was saying that we need to always be aware of the poor and be there for them.

There is a story I often recall about an office worker seeing a young girl sitting by the steps of his office building begging for money. He would say to God, 'Why don't you take care of her?' And God answered him, 'I did, I made you!'"



S. Marge Wissman at the BAMA Food Pantry in Batesville, IN

S. Marlene Kochert, featured on the cover, ministers at St. Mary Mission in Tohatchi, NM for the past 22 years where the pandemic continues to adversely impact the impoverished community. S. Sofia a Franciscan Sister from Assisi, Italy, and Father Dale Jamison, OFM, minister alongside S. Marlene as they follow the words that the late Fr. John Mittelstadt, OFM shared,

"Everyone who lives within our parish boundaries is a 'parishioner', one to include, to be concerned about, to care for as we can."

S. Marlene shared, "Our parish covers 3,000 square miles. We care for anyone who comes to our food pantry or thrift store, we do not ask for their paperwork or such. Usually they are people we know from the parish in some way, or they come because they heard of us from someone we know."



S. Sofia and Fr. Dale preparing food supplies for those in need in New Mexico.

When I asked about the impact of the pandemic within her ministry, the Franciscan shared, "In this time of pandemic, and in following healthy protocols, we are not going out to visit people in their homes, or to senior centers, etc. Thus our contacts with those in need are not as great as we would like, but we are here to be of service when people come. When safe to do so in the future, we will do more outreach to those out in the flats and up in the mountains, especially to the elderly, shut-ins, to families with children, to the unemployed and underemployed, to those without dependable transportation, and to others who come to our attention.

Many of the families we serve have encountered unemployment or under-employment. Some of our workers travel to surrounding states for employment and are away from their families for weeks at a time as there are so few employment opportunities in our area. While so many are in need, they continue to show gratitude for any assistance that we can offer. It's the gratitude in their eyes that gives me hope and encouragement."

S. Ann Marie Quinn serves as the Client Services Coordinator at St. Francis Seraph Ministries in Cincinnati, OH ... and her responsibilities are as varied as the needs of her clients. When I asked what her typical day is like, she reflected before responding.

"Each day is different. Pre-pandemic, I arrived before 6:30 a.m. Monday through Friday to open up by checking and preparing the St. Anthony Center to receive volunteers and up to 180 guests. If some of our guests spent the night at the front door, I would gently wake them up so that our volunteers could enter. If temperatures were below freezing or if it was raining, I would open the lobby once the security personnel arrived. Otherwise I would open the lobby at 7:00. I would clock in the volunteers as they arrive, usually between 6:45-7:00. New volunteers required paperwork, introductions to place, and people. I was the face at "the front of the house" and another staff member was in the kitchen, "the back of the house"; setting up for serving breakfast.

As guests arrived they were scanned via a wand by our security staff for metal weapons (I would receive such items and mark them with the person's name, to return when they were leaving). All other belongings were stored in the lockers or various locations. Often folks needed to borrow the phone, some needed help dialing, communicating with the person at the other end, or an advocate to write the information. Others may need bandages, lip balm, toiletries, clothing, a blanket or sleeping mat, a bag/backpack for their belongings, etc.

Basically I would pay attention, visit with, and discern individual needs. Guests would usually send people new to the area over to talk with me. I have a plethora of informational resources that I would offer based on their needs (various organizations for assistance, calendar and location of places that serve meals, referral for clothing from the FreeStore Food Bank, applications for Welcome Home Collaborative, etc.). Once the lobby began to fill I would open the dining room where clients could go through the serving line as often as needed. Breakfast included a choice of cereal, milk, fruit, bread items (English muffins, bagels, doughnuts, pastries, muffins, etc.) with condiments such as butter, cream cheese, and jelly, also water, coffee, and tea.



Continued on page 6

Feeding the hungry *continued ...*

As clients participated in the breakfast, I continued working with them to identify their needs. One week I called 911 so often it was as if I was on speed dial (miscarriage, over-dose, diabetic reaction/comatose, etc.). At times when people are off their medication for mental illness, when they are high or coming down from a high, we are diligent in paying attention for the safety of all, while recognizing that all need to be “nurtured and nourished”. Sometimes simply seeing a person and responding compassionately we can deescalate a situation. Other times security is asked to remove someone who is disruptive to the whole.

If commodities were available, guests leaving the building were offered a bag lunch consisting of a sandwich, snack, juice, and dessert.

I’m also trained as a chef instructor for our **Cooking for the Family** program. These five classes teach clients how to cook healthy, affordable meals for a family of four, for under \$10.00. People living in poverty often do not know how to access fresh produce, or what to do with it. Due to pandemic concerns, these classes are suspended at this time.”

When I inquired about how else the pandemic has impacted S. Ann Marie’s efforts, she went on to explain her current situation.

“From mid March until June 1, I worked from home. With the suspension of **Cooking for the Family** classes, I was asked to design an online cooking class for families with children ages 5-12. Originally we were working with St. Francis Seraph and St. Joseph schools for the pilot program, and then planning to make it available to the other CISE schools. Education has changed during this time and we wanted to meet the need. This curriculum is in the process of being filmed to go on our website for free to anyone interested. Cincinnati Children’s Hospital HealthWorks program may also use it with the families they work with.

During this time I was also on the Core Team for Strategic Planning related to the dining room, bag lunch program, and resources. This kept me busy and out of trouble. We continued to serve a “to go breakfast/lunch bag” and dinner at the front door after mid-March. Unfortunately with safety restrictions we are not able to offer the same level of contact and choice afforded in the dining room.

Since June 1st, I have come to work at the St. Anthony Center at least three days a week, primarily to serve breakfast and dinner if needed. I respond to the needs of our guests as I am able. Today for example one gentleman asked to speak with me about his concerns for a friend with medical issues. I gave my suggestions. Another regular came through the line holding up his pants. I asked him if he would like me to see if we had any belts. He was thrilled with the used belt I found!

We serve a few low income families and individuals. These folks are better able to work towards stabilization when they can spend less on food by eating in the dining room. Money saved can help pay other bills, be put aside for an education, a vehicle, a home, etc. The majority of our guests are homeless men and women. The shortage of affordable housing, issues of addiction, and mental illness are systemic problems not adequately addressed.”

In awe of all that I learned from my interview with S. Ann Marie, I asked what about some of the obstacles that she has encountered, and her reply was sobering.

“The obstacles are many: all the underlying issues people are dealing with, and the complexity surrounding issues of homeless. The increasing number of homeless, new faces daily. All the hoops that people need to jump through to get assistance, to move forward. The systems are not broken, they just were not designed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and needy.”

I went on to inquire about the young Franciscan’s accomplishments, and she shared:

“There are not many happy endings; we celebrate each success story and pray that it is for the long haul. Joseph came every morning for breakfast. He was living in a YMCA efficiency apartment, sober many years, exercising, going to a church, and working the third shift at a local business. His dream was to save and buy a used truck.



S. Ann Marie Quinn, right, smiles as she works with volunteers to meet the needs of her clients

Life was good!

A year later he was diagnosed with esophageal/throat cancer. He was strong in mind, body, and spirit, and determined to get through this.

Through my letter of support to his medical team and work supervisor, a connection was made to one of our partners, the Center for Respite Care. His chemo and radiation wracked his body; it was a blessing that he had 24/7 care through this. Totally depleted of energy and more, Joseph became depressed and made some unfortunate decisions. He gave up, disconnected with his support systems, and chose to discontinue treatment. Periodically he returned to drinking.

This network, including his family, did not give up on him. Cancer free now, Joseph found an apartment that he really likes, is sober, went back to work, received a raise, and is now working the first shift. He never ceases to express his gratitude.

Above his mask you can see Joseph’s smile in his eyes.”

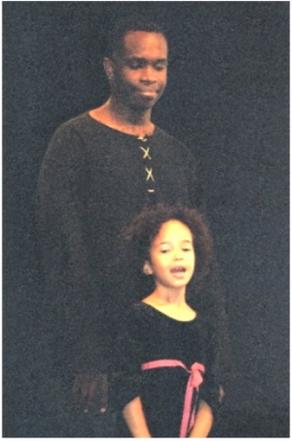
S. Ann Marie went on to share:

“We all need to be fed and have the capacity to feed; to really see another is to nurture and nourish them.”

Editor’s Note:

The quote from St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta on the cover of this issue also appears on the wall of the pantry in Campton, KY, compliments of our late S. Alice Retzner who displayed it to remind those who frequented the pantry that when we show love to one another, we are like God.

RACISM AND THE SACREDNESS OF ALL LIFE



By S. Noella Poinsette, OSF, JPIC Director

A few years ago T entered my life – a quiet young man of 17 with a magnetic smile and quick laughter.

At first he stood aloof, watching, probably wondering if I was to be one more white person to whom he had to prove his worthiness. On one of those days, a younger student was mouthing off at me. T stepped in, telling the younger one that he was out of line – “We don’t disrespect anyone that way”. After a few weeks,

T and I sometimes enjoyed a game of pool; he always won. On a later day T, Michael and I went for a pick up; they sat in the back, talking. I heard T speaking of shopping at the mall that weekend with a cop following him as though what he carried wasn’t his.

Hearing only that one story, my heart still aches for T and all the other T’s – intelligent, loving, yet often holding back, waiting for/ expecting the crushing denial of their goodness that is often dealt by people like me/white people. Why are we so blind to what God created with the words, “[She/he] is good”? Why are we so afraid of those we really don’t even know? T’s life matters – black lives matter – NOT the organization but T/*this person* – his life matters – and all those who are black, brown, red, yellow. And yes, we white people – but everybody already knows we matter – so there’s no need to say it – but like the Good News/the Gospel, we need to proclaim from the rooftops that black lives matter. This is a simple truth and NOT an endorsement of any organization.

And there’s Teodora (God bearer) who walked over 1000 miles so her child could be born and live without fear of being killed by the government – and Freddie who fled to here rather than be killed because as a soldier he’d disobeyed an order to throw a baby into the air and bayonet the baby – and Sarah whose parents brought her as a 7 year old to the U.S. and now she’s a nurse caring for COVID-19 patients; if DACA isn’t renewed by our government, she fears she’ll be deported and separated from younger siblings born here – and Jose 3 years old in a detention center, a cage, separated from his dad at the border – and Irene and John Many Clouds living in rural South Dakota without electricity, water, and jobs, yet working hard to care for their children as they endure the ongoing effects of stolen land, broken treaties and abuse by “settler” peoples.

Black, brown, yellow, red lives matter. Jesus was a brown Middle Easterner. What do our bishops tell us? ***“Racism is the root of many evils, including poverty. Racism is so deeply entrenched in our American ethos that it will take an extraordinary and super-human effort to dislodge it.***

Let us pay attention to the newest victims of racial, ethnic, and cultural bias, including the new pariah in our country, undocumented immigrants. We need to show the world that even though we can be so different, we can be one in spirit. Our goal must be to bring to reality that which we express in the Eucharist.



We break bread together and drink of the same cup, united around the same altar. What we do in liturgy should be a reflection of the unity in our lives.”

- Bishop Ricardo Ramirez, Las Cruces, NM

And St. John Paul II tells us, ***“We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in the image of God. Racism is a sin that constitutes a serious offence against God.”***

- Angelus Address, August 26, 2001

Martin Luther King told us, ***“There comes a time when silence is betrayal.”*** And so we, Sisters and Associates of St. Francis are conducting months of study and dialogue on the topic of personal and systemic racism. Like you, we try to live the Gospel but we’re human and American, so each of us is somewhere on the racist continuum. We’re becoming more aware and taking actions towards conversion. We never owned slaves but as mostly a white congregation we’ve been privileged. We have never been denied the place we wanted to live or the school we wanted to attend. We have never been suspected of shoplifting or stopped for driving where a police officer thought we didn’t belong. Our right to vote has never been denied. Bank loans have never been denied because of the color of our skin.

Our “black lives matter” banner has been stolen, but none of us were lynched for speaking out.

With Pope Francis we say,

“My friends, we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form, and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.”

Pope Francis at Pontifex, June 3,2020



Serendipity Moments in the mountains of Kentucky



By: S. Robbie Pentecost, OSF
Executive Director



Narrow pathways and clear directions have never been part of my life's journey. Early on I even questioned my many ministry changes. But God's calling has ways of changing those directions.

A question I was often asked during interviews was, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" My response was always the same and not what they were expecting for sure, "Who knows? I am not in charge." It had become increasingly obvious to me that God was opening doors and inviting me to respond in new and ever adventuresome ways.

In 2017, aware that my mother wasn't getting any younger, I decided that I needed a ministry where I didn't travel as much. An opportunity presented itself and I became the Executive Director of the New Opportunity School for Women (NOSW). Prior to that I served as President of the New Opportunity School for Women Board. For me, unlike most people, I tend to do things backwards.

But what a blessing! I am not sure what has prepared me for this amazing ministry with the New Opportunity School for Women, but if I really look at my path, all of it has equipped me with the necessary skills.

Perhaps my most poignant experience took place in St. Louis. It was a typical day for me as I prepared for my evening class at St. Louis University where I was working on my MBA. I headed to



Gathering of a group of women from Belarus that came to learn about the work of The New Opportunity School for Women. S. Robbie is the second person from the left.



S. Robbie, center, addresses supporters at a community event.

the St. Louis Bread Company to get a cup of coffee and study before class. As I approached the store, I was met by a woman asking for money. I then put on my social work hat, having served at St. Patrick's Center which works with the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless, and started asking a series of questions. Finally, the woman cut me off and stated, "All I wanted was a cup of coffee."

I was stopped in my tracks. After nearly 28 years I still recall this lesson. I did buy this woman a cup of coffee, but failed to ask her to sit down and drink it with me. Why not? I've asked myself that question again and again. I missed an opportunity to sit down and have a cup a coffee with Jesus! Paying attention to these powerful moments can provide a lifetime of lessons. Our peer-to-peer approach at the NOSW recognizes that we have much to learn from the women we serve. They know we value their contributions and accomplishments and that we are here to support them, encourage their progress and applaud their accomplishments.

About the same time as the opportunity at the New Opportunity School for Women presented itself, I was invited to apply for a Fellowship. Of course – another opportunity to engage with God's vision for our world. The Fellowship was with the Center for Women, Faith and Leadership which is a program of the Institute for Global Engagement. There was a stirring within me that affirmed this movement toward engaging with women from around the world and what an amazing experience that was. Eight women from different nations and cultures gathered for two years to study, grow and expand their leadership skills. This network of Fellows continues to be a source of support and opportunity.

Again, along the *Serendipity* line, I was gifted by two friends to a conference on **Spirituality and Sustainability** which would be held in Assisi, Italy. Wow – another opportunity to engage with people from around the world and a network of like-minded people. It was at this conference that I met Karenna Gore, former Vice-President Al Gore's daughter, who was the Director of the Center for Earth Ethics at Columbia Seminary in New York City.

and central Appalachia ...



Nuns on the Bus rally

A few days after returning from Assisi my dear friend and mentor Fr. John Rausch was invited by CNN to a town hall in New York City with Al Gore as the featured speaker. CNN was not aware that John had just met Vice President Al Gore's daughter. John was also invited to bring along another person and CNN would pay all expenses, so before I knew it, I was on the plane to New York City for an amazing experience.

Later that Spring Fr. John and I were invited to speak at an event hosted by the Center for Earth Ethics by Karenn.

Our third trip to New York City that year brought us to the United Nations.

As I look back on the past twenty-five years here in the mountains of Kentucky and central Appalachia, I have encountered so many "Serendipity" moments. It seems that doors continued to open with new opportunities that abound.

Several years ago, when the Nuns on the Bus, a project of NETWORK which is a Catholic lobby group founded by Catholic Sisters nearly 50 years ago was venturing through Kentucky I was invited to be a rider. Of course, I jumped at the chance. Another Sister from eastern Kentucky and I joined the bus from Louisville until it was on its way to West Virginia. I had been a member of NETWORK for nearly the entire time I had been a Sister. What an experience that was especially arriving in Lexington to a rally of 150+ folks, many whom I knew. There were many amazing connections each time I joined

the Nuns on the Bus, but I do think my favorite trip was the one when we were on our way to Washington, D.C. to see Pope Francis. Coming into the city and realizing what these next couple of days would mean, knowing that we were bringing so many stories and experiences from the people we had met along the way, brought overwhelming feelings among all of us blessed to be riding. We had been allowing people to share their stories of hope and recording them to give to Pope Francis.



Fr. John Rausch, S. Robbie, and Br. David Henley at the Chapel in El Salvador where St. Oscar Romero was murdered.



S. Robbie with a cohort of Fellows from the Center for Women, Faith and Leadership, which is a program of the Institute for Global Engagement at the State Department in Washington, D.C.

As luck would have it, once I arrived in Washington D.C. I learned that Senator Donnelly's office had a ticket for me to watch Pope Francis in the reserved seating – outside, but none-the-less, a wonderful view and more importantly a real seat. The day before when we welcomed Pope Francis, I was in the standing section from around 5:30 a.m. until noon.

When another opportunity presented itself to consider joining the Board of NETWORK I jumped at the chance. Serendipity for sure. This past year, along with my dear friend Fr. John Rausch, I hosted Sister Simone Campbell, NETWORK's Executive Director, and Sister Emily TeKolste, a staff person with NETWORK for a Rural Roundtable in the Appalachian region in late January. We were the last scheduled event of the 17 hosted across the country. Two weeks later, to the shock of so many of us, Fr. John Rausch passed away suddenly on February 9th.

As I read the invitation from NETWORK, a few days after John's passing, about a presentation on the Rural Roundtables that would be held at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. and moderated by Lawrence O'Donnell, I couldn't help but smile through the tears. Less than a week after John's funeral I was on my way to Washington, D.C. to participate as one of the four panelists, along with Sister Simone.

I wonder what is next on this serendipitous journey!

Oldenburg Academy's changing landscape



By: Diane Laake, OA President

Introducing our new HILLENBRAND FAMILY FELDHAUS

We are all learning a lot these days about patience, perseverance and faith. And while this sentiment applies to much in our day to day lives, the Hillenbrand Family Feldhaus is also testimony that an extraordinary vision can eventually still come to fruition!

Some folks may recall that shortly after the Academy welcomed young men to join us back in 2000, discussions began about how our facilities needed to expand to serve a growing number and diversity of students and their curricular and co-curricular needs. The first of many plans were drawn up – and though it took almost 20 years, we think it was worth waiting for.



One of the goals of this project was to raise the profile of Oldenburg – the village as well as the school. We believe this beautiful Feldhaus is already doing just that.

The Hillenbrand Family Feldhaus is the **first major building to be built by the Academy in over 50 years**. A capital campaign was launched in March of 2017 to raise funds. A ground-breaking ceremony was held in October of 2018 but site complications stalled excavation work until April of 2019. The building was 98% complete this past March when COVID-19 struck. The final touches were completed in early July and the grand opening was held on August 3, 2020.

With over 10,000 sq. ft. of air conditioned hard wood playing surface and a 900-person seating capacity, a huge entrance lobby/gathering space, a spacious mezzanine overlooking the court, men's and women's locker rooms, an ample concession stand and modern accessible restrooms, this facility will serve OA and the larger community for decades to come. The façade mirrors the exterior of the main academic building and auditorium **creating a harmonious and visually appealing addition to our picturesque campus**. The lobby is both beautiful and functional as it features two large graphic panels showcasing examples of Academy spirit through the decades, digital projection of the Ammann-Brinkmoeller Athletic Hall of Fame and upcoming events/sponsorships, and a live stream of the game. Above this wall is printed the opening stanza of the Alma Mater that begins: "Come all ye friends of our loved alma mater..."

There are so many people to acknowledge and thank. This facility is truly the embodiment of the hard work, dedication, and unfailing belief of many. **The Sisters** must be first on this list for without their courage and fortitude to found, maintain, and sponsor the Academy for over 168 years, none of this would ever be. Their gift of the land to build on and the deeding of the other school buildings and grounds were **true "leadership gifts"** that launched our campaign.

We were blessed with great architects, **Steed, Hammond and Paul**, builders, **Bruns-Gutzwiller**, and so many individual companies that provided their services, expertise, resources, and guidance.

Special thanks to: **New Point Stone/Wanstrath Family, Hirt & Elco, Chris Geis Electronics, Chad Miles/ETC, Stone Studio, Keith Moenter/Delta Faucet, Alumni Association, Freudenfest Committee, Friendship Bank and the Build Committee** – Angie Harmeyer '86, Roger Kirschner, Patrick Kolks '10, Diane Laake, Darryl Maslar, Brian McFee, Todd Reed, Ray Ronnebaum, Anne Suttman '97, and Mike Wilhelm -- who brought insight, expertise, tenacity and vision to bring this project from inception to reality.

We are blessed in this community to have an extraordinary spirit of service and generosity. The **Hillenbrand Family Foundations** have been the undisputed leaders and role models in supporting the dreams and aspirations of individuals, non-profits and the local community for decades. It's hard to imagine what Batesville/Oldenburg would be without them? They came forward early on with leadership gifts of support that gave us the confidence to move forward with this project.

We could not have done this without you!

There are so many additional individuals and entities that have supported us by their prayers, words of encouragement, and generous financial gifts.

Please know how grateful we are now and how grateful current and future generations of students and their families will be for your support.

When we begin a major endeavor, we should always be mindful that the original dreams and goals may shift “during flight”.

Who could have imagined that the Feldhaus would play a major role in OA’s capacity to be able to open school during a pandemic?

As we struggled with how to welcome, educate and feed our students in a safe and socially distant manner, we realized that the Feldhaus provided us ample space to accomplish these priorities.

Lunch is served out of the concession stand; the juniors and seniors are able to spread out in the bleachers and mezzanine to eat; the lobby serves as a wonderful meeting space and overflow classroom. What a blessing!

Currently we are permitted to have reduced capacity (max 250) home volleyball games. We are hopeful that continued vigilance in observing the CDC guidelines will result in a winter basketball season and the annual Dinner Gala which is scheduled to be held in the Feldhaus in February.



As our new school tagline this year announces,

OA has always been committed to “Go Beyond” the ordinary and the mediocre.

We set our sights above and beyond, striving for continued excellence. We look forward to all the ways the Feldhaus will empower and inspire us to continue this legacy and mission!

PHOTOS:

- Page 10—top left: The front entrance to the Hillenbrand Family Feldhaus
- Page 10—bottom left: Students inside the Feldhaus during their lunch period
- Page 11—top right: Front of the Feldhaus as viewed from Vine Street
- Page 11—bottom right: First Girls’ Volleyball match held in the Feldhaus on August 20, 2020

Congratulations to OA’s Car Raffle Winners:

- ◆ Top Prize - Car or \$23,500 Patricia Kennedy
- ◆ \$200 Prize Winners
 - Christina Dieselberg
 - Diane Harmeyer Kessens ‘75
 - Natalie Wanstrath
 - Pam Fullenkamp Gerdowsky ‘64
 - Laura Grote



So tell me about the Oldenburg Francis



Associates from left to right: Jan Nowicki (front), Diane Liptack, Becky Koors, Virginia Gilbert, Janet Sturwold and Jane Schaefer shown during a day of prayer for Associates who have made a permanent commitment.

By: Jane Schaefer, Associate Co-Director

Who are the Oldenburg Franciscan Associates?

The Oldenburg Franciscan Associates are men and women who have committed to following the Franciscan Charism of the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg. The relationship was established in 1981 in response to a directive from the Congregation's 1978 Chapter of Affairs, and from a number of women who wished to be affiliated with the Sisters in mission and prayer. Elsa Menning (deceased), Linda Fitzpatrick, Dot Lindsey and Judy Hillman were among the first lay women to become Associates.

What do the Associates do?

Associates join in the prayer of the Community, Mass, days of prayer, retreats, celebrating the life of a Sister after death by attending her funeral, offering spiritual direction, and holding the needs of all in prayer, to name a few things. With fewer Sisters ministering outside of the motherhouse, Associates help keep the mission of the Sisters alive by volunteering in community service and outreach programs such as serving at local food pantries, visiting the elderly, promoting peace and justice campaigns, and hosting clothes drives. Associates also help in different ministry roles such as visiting the infirmed Sisters, taking communion to the infirmed, fundraising, playing instruments at community gatherings, leading prayer services, retreats, etc.

How does one become an Associate?

If someone is interested in pursuing the Associate Relationship, the first step is to contact the Associate Office. One of the Associate Co-Directors, Carolyn Meyer or I will meet with you and talk with you about the Associate Relationship, answering any questions you may have. Prospective Associates are paired with a contact person, generally another Associate, who will lead you through further study of the Associate Relationship with the aid of a guidebook. After a year of prayer, study, and discernment, Prospective Associates are invited to a day of retreat where they finalize their decision to make a commitment. Once a year, new Associates are welcomed into the Relationship with a prayer service and signing ceremony.

How long does one's commitment last?

Associates renew their commitment on an annual basis through written communication. Any time after one's six-year anniversary of being an Associate, Associates can request permanent commitment.

How many Associates are there?

We currently have 226 Associates in 19 states. To date, twenty-four Associates have made a permanent commitment.

Why do people choose to become associated with a religious community?

First and foremost, people come to this relationship because they feel called to the Franciscan Charism. Some feel called to ministry, some feel called to a deeper life of prayer, some feel called to help promote peace and justice causes, some feel called because they want to give back to the Sisters who have had an influential role in their life. The list of reasons people come to this relationship varies from person to person, here are just a few:



Linda Fitzpatrick:
I am thrilled to be an Associate of the Sisters of St. Francis! Having been educated by the Sisters in grade school, I was fortunate to attend the Academy as part of the

Associate Linda Fitzpatrick Juniorate and go on to enter the Postulancy Class and receive the veil as a Novice!

But, homesickness took hold and I found myself back home! That was 1959. Having married and raised two wonderful children, I was elated to become one of the first Associates in 1981! Today, I enjoy the relationship, striving to live in the spirit of St. Francis to all I meet! What a blessing!



Associate Rosie Houser

Rosie Houser:
Growing up Catholic, our family was very involved with the Franciscan orders.

My great aunt was a Sister with the Oldenburg Franciscans and my uncle is a Franciscan Priest. My sister and I both graduated from ICA.

I went to St. Francis College in Fort Wayne, and after graduating, marrying, and having children, I knew I wanted to become deeper in my faith. My dad was a deacon and my mom is an Associate, so when she asked me if I had ever thought of becoming an Associate, I realized that this was what the Lord was calling me to.

Just being an Associate gives my faith a deeper meaning. Life may throw me curveballs, but I can handle them with the Lord's grace. It is a great blessing to be an Associate.



Associate Phil Deardorff with his former teacher, S. Sharon Blank

Phil Deardorff:
I feel honored to be an Associate. I was educated by the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg, and when the opportunity to become an Associate arose, I felt both honored and blessed.



Associates from left to right: Becky Koors, Carolyn Meyer, Linda Hilsinger participating in a butterfly release fundraiser.



ASSOCIATE MISSION STATEMENT:

Associates of the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg, are rooted in the Gospel and in Franciscan values, mindful of our call to be a presence of Jesus Christ, especially to those who are powerless, who are poor, who are oppressed.

You can learn more about the Associate Relationship by checking us out at www.OldenburgFranciscans.org/Associates or like us on Facebook at [Oldenburg Franciscan Assoc Indiana](#).



A Message to Our* Visitors:

In compliance with pandemic safety guidelines, at this time our Chapel and Motherhouse are not open to visitors in an effort to help protect the health of our residents.

In addition, the following events that the Sisters and Associates normally participate in have been cancelled:

- Batesville's AppleFest***
- Batesville's Holiday Bazaar***
- Oldenburg's Holidays Under the Spires***
- Sisters of Saint Francis' Christmas Convent Tours***

We will greatly miss these opportunities to meet with you and share in the fun of the AppleFest and all the magic of the Christmas events as we look forward to 2021 when hopefully we can gather again!

*Sincerely,
Sisters of St. Francis - Oldenburg*



Oldenburg Franciscan Center

Retreat ☺ Renew † Rejoice! ♥

upcoming programs...

WOMEN'S DAY WOMEN OF WISDOM



SATURDAY,
OCTOBER 3RD
9:00 AM - NOON

A DAY OF QUIET RENEWAL



10-30, 11-20, 12-11
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

JOY: A PERSPECTIVE ON MY LIFE WITH POPE FRANCIS



SAT. NOV. 14TH
9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

ADVENT RETREAT



SATURDAY
DECEMBER 12TH
9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

'Contemplative Prayer' and
'Days of Quiet Renewal'
are offered on campus.

All other programs are
being offered via Zoom.
Once we receive
your registration
a link to join the session
will be sent to you!

AUDUBON BIRD COUNT



Audubon
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

SATURDAY
DECEMBER 26TH
7:30 AM - 1:00 PM

Contemplative Prayer

WEDNESDAYS:

October 7
November 4
December 2

WITH
S. OLGA WITTEKIND, OSF

With God
All things are Possible

Coffee Talks

October 25:
Benedictine Spirituality
November 15:
Ignatian Spirituality
December 13:
*Native American
Spirituality*

To register for programs visit our website: www.oldenburgfranciscancenter.org,
call us at 812.933.6437, or email us at center@oldenburgosf.com

Resting in God



S. M. NORMA ROCKLAGE, OSF

"It is a moral imperative for us to share what we have with other people, to love each other not just in words but in giving what we have.

The service we do helps us to come close to God and experience God."

Such is the conviction that Sister Norma Rocklage expressed upon receiving one of her many awards; it is the belief that she **lived** throughout her 86 years of life. And it is the service which she has given that has enabled each of us to experience God.

Mary Ann Rocklage was born on July 18, 1933, the second oldest of eight children born to Henry and Catherine Rocklage. Having grown up amidst a close-knit family in St. Louis, it was her early "courage to venture" that brought her for her high school education to Immaculate Conception Academy in Oldenburg. She attests to being homesick and "quite shy" — a characteristic that she obviously outgrew in later years!

"I was raised by parents who taught us we needed to share what we have," S. Norma once reflected. "If you can't share materially, you share with service." A lesson she learned well!

Finding a kindred spirit among the Oldenburg Franciscans, Mary Ann joined the Community in 1951. She found the "courage to venture" to be the spirit that guides the Oldenburg Sisters, and she adopted that same spirit as, after teaching in elementary schools for eight years, she ventured on to Marian College (now University).

By this time Norma had earned a master's degree and doctorate in Latin and Greek. During a career that spanned over 40 years, she served in various capacities at Marian — Assistant Professor of Classical Language, Dean of Academic Affairs, Vice President for Mission Effectiveness and, most recently, Executive Director of Education/ Formation/Outreach. In between her time at the College, Norma ministered in formation with the Franciscan Friars, as director of the newly-professed Sisters of St. Francis, and as a member of the Congregation's leadership team.

It was in 1989 that Norma's "courage to venture" took her into a new field; she became one of only 27 persons nationwide to hold a position of Vice President for Mission Effectiveness and Planning in a higher education institution. With fewer priests and religious on campus, such a position emerged to ensure that the values of the Oldenburg Franciscans would continue to be integrated into the lives of Marian's college students.

Another initiative, one which was to be a 30-year endeavor, was to coordinate an Indiana Catholic Principals Institute. This was designed to help all those beginning this ministry in Catholic schools throughout the state to grow their schools' Catholic identity and develop faith formation for their students and teachers.

Part of Norma's most recent ministry included her work with the Marian Hispanic Advisory Board, Project Stepping Stone, and the support she gave to various Indiana Latino organizations; she was also active with the Center for Interfaith Cooperation. She was a champion for students of diverse backgrounds and often found scholarship funding to support their desire for education. In her "spare time," Norma participated in Pax Christi, volunteered at Holy Family Shelter, served on several high school Boards, offered spiritual guidance to the Secular Franciscans, provided spiritual direction for numerous individuals, led retreat programs, and gave countless presentations far and wide.

Recognitions including the Marian College Distinguished Alumna Award and its Franciscan Values Award, the Archdiocesan Spirit of Service Award, the Indiana Council for Latino Affairs Distinguished Service Award, and the Interfaith Ambassador of the Year Award are only some of the many honors received. In accepting these tributes, Norma always humbly quoted a favorite line from the Sisters' Constitution: "Where one is, there are we all."

Norma could be seen, day and night, all over the Marian University campus. There was seldom an event to which she did not at least put in an appearance. Athletic teams at every game scanned the bleachers for their loyal "Marian Knight." And the famous "Norma hat" became a good luck charm for every competition!

Marian President Dan Elsener, in reflecting on Norma's legacy at the College, spoke of her "generous, indomitable" spirit. Others would comment on her compassionate, listening heart. With her love for life itself, one could often hear Norma's infectious laughter as she heard or related a humorous story. The depth of her spirituality gave her the "courage to venture" through every difficulty.

We offer our sympathy to Norma's brothers Joe and Al, to her sisters S. Mary Roch, RSM, and Dee, as well as to her nieces and nephews; to her classmates and Community members; to all who call her "sister," "guide," or "friend." We thank those who have provided her with care and support as well.

When Norma reflected on her life's journey, she commented, "Each person who has touched my life has graced me with a unique expression of God's beauty." Today, Norma, we thank YOU, who has been for each of us "a unique expression of God's beauty!"

Norma would frequently repeat, "Let us begin today, for up till now, we have done very little...in the light of all that can yet be accomplished." We pray that you who have accomplished so much during your lifetime may find eternal joy in all that is yet to be!

Excerpts from the Memorial Letter written by S. Christa Franzer, OSF, for the General Council.



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS
PO Box 100
OLDENBURG, IN 47036-0100

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 770
CINCINNATI, OH

We hold you in Prayer

Bountiful God,

*Pour out your loving kindness
upon our donors;
Shine your blessed light
through their goodness;
Listen to the longing of their hearts
for the healing of our world;
Grant good health and safety
to all our loved ones;
May your justice and peace prevail
as we praise you,
thank you and continue to place our
trust in you
through Jesus our Lord.*

Amen



Written by S. Bernice Roell, OSF

