

# VOICES

## OF CHARITY

FALL 2019

A publication of the SISTERS OF CHARITY  
OF LEAVENWORTH



IN THIS ISSUE:

**SCL Associates**  
**Family ties,**  
**SCL connections**  
pages 3-7

*Beyond All Borders*  
**Farm Corps focus**  
**on ecology**  
pages 26-27



SISTERS OF CHARITY  
OF LEAVENWORTH

## Chapter 2016 Directional Statement

*“...we are called  
ever to renew and recreate  
our works and our witness  
uniting justice and charity in our lives  
as servants of the poor.”*

*SCL Constitution, Norm 6*

We, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, affirm our call to communion and mission as women of the Church. In the spirit of our heritage, we continue to seek the path of charity and justice in our day.

Impelled by our baptismal commitment, we claim as our own the prophetic mission of Jesus and our call to discipleship.

In collaboration with those who also embrace Gospel values, we affirm our evolving charism and re-envision our ministry and sponsored works to sustain our mission.

Mindful of the fragility of the earth and of the suffering of God's people, especially the exploited and marginalized, we commit ourselves to address these critical needs and their systemic causes.

### ON THE COVER

Meet the Petersons, pages 3-6, gathered for their annual vacation at Gregg's family cabin on Flathead Lake, Mont. Left to right, children seated: Emma, Aubrey, Laila, Evie; middle row: Ben Englehart, Quinn, Lindee Peterson Englehart; and back row: Geoff, Becky, Mandy, Gregg, Dustin with Tinsley on his shoulders and Ashley.





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# in this issue

Published November 2019



## From the Community Director

Sister Constance Phelps .....2



## SCL Associates

It's all in the family  
*Family ties, SCL connections* .....3

*Meet the Petersons* .....4

*SCL in the family* .....7

Life on the lake a bushel of blessings .....8

At home with nature .....9



## Heart of the Matter

Western Montana ministries  
*Planting seeds of faith* ..... 10

*Varied roles, vibrant ministry* ..... 11

*Ready to respond to emergencies* ..... 12

*Chaplain to employees a valued role* ..... 13

*Legacy of service in Helena, Mont.* ..... 14

*Sister persists in environmental advocacy* ..... 16



## Re-Markings

Mother House administrator transition ..... 17

SCLs put talents to work ..... 18

Pride in her dad's connection with President Truman ..... 20

Ministry spans years; includes many good people ..... 21

Experience deepens understanding of Vincentian spirituality ..... 22

Of Special Note ..... 23

*Highlighting special honors and 'in the news' items*



## Beyond All Borders

The Climate in Crisis – An Urgent Call to Prayer and Action ..... 25

Alpacas, gardens, respect for Earth  
*Farm Corps focus on ecology* ..... 26

*Confidence, career direction Farm Corps by-products* ..... 27

*Eco-Justice Center educates, models sustainability* ..... 28

Trafficking observance at the UN ..... 29

Grassroots collaboration produces results ..... 30

LCWR Region 13 leadership calls for recognition  
of migrant family separation as a pro-life issue ..... 31



## LeavenWords

Love a recurring theme in Sister Jane's life ..... 32



## Book Review

Challenge: embrace the call to be prophets ..... 34



## Vocations

SCLs help mentor seminarians ..... 36



## Blessings! ¡Bendiciones!

Lessons learned and shared about washing feet ..... 37



## *From the* Community Director



Sister Constance  
Phelps

I write this letter following our 161st anniversary celebration of the landing of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in Kansas. It is shortly before Thanksgiving and the beginning of Advent.

All these annual events remind me of journeys. The journey of our Sisters from Kentucky to Tennessee, then to Kansas, answering the call to serve God's people. Thanksgiving invites us to journey along the paths of gratitude as we recall the words of Shakespeare, "I can no other answer make, but, thanks, and thanks." Advent is a time of anticipation, a time to continue personal journeys within ourselves as we reflect on the meaning of Christmas, and God here and with us now.

Those about whom we read in this issue of *Voices* share their journeys as part of the Vincentian family. Whether Sisters, Associates or those associated with us or affiliated through various connections, all are living and sharing the Vincentian charism. They exemplify multiple ways in which the charism is alive. Through family relationships, ministry connections and service, using their skills, talents or hobbies, they collaborate with others who understand and answer Vincent's invitation, "*Called to bear the love of God ... this divine fire ... everywhere.*"

Following your reading of this issue, I invite you to reflect on your journeys.

God of our journeys,

You are ahead of us, smoothing our pathways.

You are beneath us, holding us securely.

You are behind us, embracing us in your care.

You have called us to bring your love, your fire everywhere.

Sister Constance Phelps  
SCL Community Director

## IT'S ALL IN THE FAMILY

# Family ties, SCL connections

With deep roots in their faith and in Montana,  
 the Peterson family has strong ties that bind them together.  
 They also have strong connections with the SCL Community.

Mandy and Gregg Peterson, SCL Associates in Butte, Mont., trace their family spirit to prior generations. The couple has sustained this spirit and strived to instill it in their three adult children – Dustin, Geoff and Lindee – who now have spouses and families of their own.

In a world of broken homes and fragmented lives, the Petersons make time to be together; they enjoy one another; and they value their faith, family, friends, generosity and fun. They also treasure their many connections with the SCL Community.



Proud grandparents with their young family members, front row, left to right, Emma, Evie, Laila, Tinsley; back row, Aubrey, Mandy, Quinn and Gregg.

### Across generations

Mandy dates her family's spirit to the home of her grandparents, Clarence "Doc" and Amanda Burns. "Faith was the focal point of their family life," she remembers. "They found daily prayer and praise for God as common as please and thank you."

As testimony to this, one of their sons became a diocesan priest and one daughter became a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth (SCL). Sister Madelon Burns (Sister Mary Clarence) entered the SCLs on Aug. 31, 1939, serving in different ministries until her death in 2004 (see article page 7). Father Ernest (Ernie) Burns was ordained on

May 19, 1951, for the Diocese of Helena, Montana; he died in 2006.

In his retirement, Mandy's father, Bob Burns, was after-school babysitter for Mandy and Gregg's children. He shared his faith daily as the children witnessed him saying his prayers and attending their school Masses. He became the most spiritually inspirational person for each of them.

"Their Grandpa Bob was the source of the beautiful spirit our children carry with them today," Mandy says. "We are very grateful for the influence he and his loving wife Phyllis, Gregg's parents, aunts

and uncles, teachers, family and friends had on our children during their formative years. All of them made a difference in helping us raise them."

Gregg likewise comes from a family that values faith and generosity. He grew up in Great Falls, Mont., where he recalls his dad reaching out to help others amidst the flooding that had damaged the Petersons' own home. His parents and grandparents were dedicated to their faith. Gregg's father and others built the Lutheran

continued on page 5



# Meet the Petersons

## Mandy and Gregg Peterson

Butte, Mont.

Mandy – retired school teacher;  
continuing as substitute in  
Butte Central Catholic School System

Gregg – retired purchasing agent  
for mining company

Married 40 years

## Dustin and Ashley Peterson

Dacono, Colo.

Dustin – lead application  
analyst for SCL Health,  
Broomfield, Colo.

Ashley – in-home day care  
provider

Married eight years

## Geoff and Becky Peterson

Blue Springs, Mo.

Geoff – dentist and dental  
director of federally qualified  
health center

Becky – operations manager,  
wealth management firm

Married 10 years

## Lindee and Ben Englehart

Denver, Colo.

Lindee – clinical nurse  
coordinator, PICU,  
children's hospital

Ben – regional vice president,  
financial services company

Married four years

Aubrey, 7

Emma, 5

Laila, 3

Tinsley, 2

Quinn, 9

Evie, 6





Ben and Lindee Englehart

## **Family ties, SCL connections** continued from page 3

church in Great Falls; the kids assisted as the clean-up crew. From an early age, Gregg saw faith and kindness modeled by his family.

With his Lutheran ties, Gregg calls himself a “practicing Catholic” who agreed to follow this faith after meeting Mandy. When they married in December 1979, Gregg and Mandy brought the spirit of each of their families to the union. They raised their children in the Catholic Church and akin to previous generations, the three Peterson youth attended elementary and secondary schools taught by the SCLs in Butte.

## **‘Sister’ influence**

There’s much more to the SCL connection.

As a high school graduate, Mandy received a scholarship to attend Saint Mary College, Leavenworth, a sponsored ministry of the SCLs. Without this scholarship, she doubts she would have found a way to afford her college education. After two years at Saint Mary, she completed her degree at Montana State University, Bozeman, where she met Gregg.

Mandy experienced an enriching and rewarding career as an elementary teacher for 34 years in both parochial and public schools in Livingston, Great Falls and Butte, Mont. During her career, she received recognition from students and Walmart as Teacher of the Year, and the Butte Education Foundation named her multiple times as a Teacher of Excellence, based on selection by former students.

As young adults, two of the three Peterson children and two daughters-in-law received their bachelor’s degrees from the University of Saint Mary (USM),



Dustin and Ashley Peterson holding Tinsley with other daughters (left to right) Aubrey, Laila and Emma.



Becky and Geoff Peterson with Quinn and Evie.





formerly Saint Mary College). Lindee, her brother Geoff and his wife Becky graduated in 2009. Ashley, wife of Dustin Peterson, graduated from USM in 2010. Lindee, Becky and Ashley were friends and teammates during their years at USM. Geoff and Becky dated throughout college. At their wedding, Dustin was best man, and Ashley, maid of honor. The family refers to this as their “first date.”

Lindee worked two years as a registered nurse at St. James Healthcare, Butte. Dustin began his career in healthcare informatics at St. Vincent Healthcare, Billings, Mont., where his aunt (Gregg’s sister, Penny Haven) was a career nurse. He then moved to SCL Health’s corporate IT office in Broomfield, Colo., where he is the lead application analyst. The health ministries were previously sponsored works of the SCL Community. Geoff lives in Blue Springs, Mo., which allows him to continue his connection with USM by volunteering as a motivational guest speaker, assuring students their education at the university will benefit them personally and professionally.

Sister Paula Marie Tweet invited Mandy to become an SCL Associate after the Peterson kids left the nest. Mandy made her Associate commitment in September 2006. Gregg followed in March 2009.

Mandy sums up, “I am most grateful for this ‘Sister’ influence continuing from my childhood through the lives of our children to today, as a way to carry on what started in the home of my grandparents generations ago.”

Of the SCL connection, Lindee adds, “If we didn’t know the Sisters, our family would not all be together as we are today.”

## What makes this family special?

Mandy Peterson insists that like most families, the Petersons strive to do their best. She explains, “We appreciate the blessings we have known, including family, friends, good health and enough talents to share with others in our professional and personal lives.”

What seems to make this family special is that they live, love and act like family, perhaps best expressed in their own words.

“They love me, and I love them,  
and we do a lot of things together.”

— Quinn Peterson, 10

“The family unit is important to everybody.”

— Ashley Peterson

“We like each other. We’re all friends.  
And our faith is a solid foundation.”

— Lindee Peterson Englehart

“They give us love and treat us like queens.”

— Evie Peterson, 6

“We try to laugh as much as possible.  
The love for each other and love of Christ help  
us get through life with smiles on our faces.”

— Ben Englehart

Or, as reflected by the actions of Laila Peterson, 3, who – once she reaches a comfort zone – hugs everyone, makes them feel very special and treats them like family.



The Peterson originals,  
left to right, Dustin,  
Mandy, Gregg,  
Lindee and Geoff.





Sister Madelon Burns, SCL

# SCL in the family

Mandy Peterson recounts a childhood memory of her Aunt Madelon – Sister Madelon Burns, SCL – coming home to visit in Butte.

It was a very hot summer, and Sister Madelon was in full habit. Mandy's recollection is that excitement was in the air. It was easy to see that the family loved Sister Madelon, and that everyone was glad she was home.

In turn, her SCL Community recognized Sister Madelon as a very welcoming person. She was an educator, counselor, administrator and leader. She was also a trailblazer.

Madelon Theresa Burns entered the SCLs on Aug. 31, 1939.

She made first vows as Sister Mary Clarence and later returned to her given name. From 1941 to 1973, she alternated ministries between teaching elementary and high school students and serving in leadership roles. She was dean of students and personnel director at Saint Mary College where she received her bachelor's degree in education and mathematics. She was assistant and then mistress of novices and SCL vocation director.

After earning a master's in guidance and counseling at Catholic University of America, Sister Madelon spent the next 21 years in this ministry. She established the guidance program at Butte Central High School where she counseled individuals, families and prospective college students. She developed a chemical awareness program and Alateen groups for Native Americans and others. In 1987, the Butte Chamber of Commerce recognized Sister Madelon for her exemplary work with students, parents and the community. From Butte, Sister went to Billings, Mont., where she was the employee assistance counselor at St. Vincent Hospital. Through the years, she facilitated support groups on death and dying and for children of single/divorced parents. In her final ministry, she was a receptionist at Mount Saint Vincent Home, Denver. Sister died in 2004.

Sister Madelon was the first woman religious appointed to the Montana Catholic Conference Board of Directors. She served as chairperson of this board and of the Catholic Social Services Board of Directors.

From her personal and professional experience, Sister Madelon understood the value of family life. In an unidentified journal article in her SCL archival file, she says, "I think there will always be a need for close bonds that can come only from a family. The first five years of a child's life are the most important ones. The identification with people who give them the most important things children can have, which are feeling worthwhile and feeling good about themselves, cannot be given in a permanent way by anybody other than parents who care and who love and to whom that child belongs in a personal way."



Sister Madelon

# Life on the lake a bushel of blessings

Life on Flathead Lake in northwestern Montana is good for JoEllen and Pat Estenson, SCL Associates. They enjoy visits with family, friends and former foreign exchange students. Natural beauty surrounds them with a peaceful setting for prayer, meditation and reading. They keep connected with the SCL Community through SCL acquaintances, phone calls and emails.

Pat retired in 2005 after holding managerial and administrative positions with the state personnel division and veterans' facilities. After 55 years in education, JoEllen retired in 2018. If she had to do her life over, she would choose the same profession. Dating to her elementary and high school days in Kansas City, Kan., she credits the SCL Community for instilling her with a passion for learning and teaching.

More recently retired, JoEllen is still establishing her schedule and daily rhythms. This includes trips to Alexandria, Va., to help with the three grandchildren, as well as visits to "the land of Oz." Kansas will always be home for her. Intentionally or not, Pat began his retirement

planning in the early 1990s when he started purchasing and planting fruit trees each year. He officially launched his orchard of cherry and peach trees in 2010.

Today, Pat cares for and nurtures 120 trees, among them those producing the popular Flathead cherries. Pat grows the more common Lambert variety, but he has branched out into the unique Attika cherry developed in the Czech Republic. In addition, he nurtures a crop of succulent peaches that are ready for market in mid-September.

He's in the orchard at 5:30 a.m. He does it all – the planting, fertilizing, pruning, picking and marketing. The harvest season for cherries is short – from the second week in July through the first week of August. Pat supplies a nearby grocery store and sells at area farmers' markets. JoEllen quips that he goes out to the orchard in the evenings and talks to the trees "in cherry." It's a lot of work, but Pat enjoys it. He also makes wine from cherries that don't go to market, cans peaches, and busies himself with woodworking and photography in the off-season.

The Estensons have deep respect for the SCL charism. For JoEllen, this encompasses the ministry of teaching and special concern for persons who are poor and disenfranchised. In her expansive professional career, she was a teacher, principal and consultant. She founded an alternative high school for youth facing challenges, and she mentored many teachers and principals.

Every year as administrator of the veterans' home, Pat gave a pep talk to staff. He reinforced the importance and sacredness of their work of providing care for people in need. He equated this to Jesus' Gospel message of serving God by helping others.

JoEllen says that she has been associated with the SCLs forever. They were her teachers from first-grade at St. Peter's Cathedral through Bishop Ward High School. She feels blessed and privileged to have had the guidance of these wonderful women. She and Pat formalized their SCL Associate commitments in 2001. Sister Jean Martin Dawson was their sponsor.



JoEllen Estenson



Pat Estenson



## At home with nature

◀ Joni Peterson

SCL Associate Joni Peterson grew up close to nature.

She comes from a ranching family that ran cattle and horses and put up hay.

Joni has remained close to Earth in the 15 years she has worked at Bitterroot Nursery, Hamilton, Mont. She loves everything about the job: the people with whom she works, the plants and the customers who are always happy when they visit the nursery.

At the nursery, customers can buy everything from bedding plants to herbs to trees. Bitterroot grows trees and shrubs from cuttings and many plants from seeds and cuttings. Joni enjoys having her hands in all aspects of the nursery's year-round operations.

And she gets to dig in the dirt! Sister Margaret Hogan, Joni's sponsor, considers her a "Mother Earth person" with a deep spirituality.

In college, Joni double majored in Latin and Middle Eastern ancient religions. While attending college, she also became familiar with Catholicism to which she

converted in 1977. She is a member of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Hamilton, where Sister Margaret ministers. Joni often plays the piano for Saturday evening Masses.

She has visited the SCL Mother House once and appreciates the Community's respect for Earth.

While her schedule prevents her from being actively involved as an Associate, Joni likes the sense of belonging. She uses the Associate prayer as a connecting link. She has been an SCL Associate since 1994.





# Heart of the Matter

Western Montana ministries

## Planting seeds of *faith*

As a pastoral minister and spiritual director, Sister Margaret Hogan values the spiritualities of both St. Vincent de Paul to whom the SCLs trace their roots and St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits.

As a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth for 64 years, what motivates and inspires Sister Margaret are the opening words of the Community's *Constitution*:

**"The beginning and end of our coming together**

**as Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth**

**is our Lord Jesus Christ ..."**

This focused direction and the people whom she serves are vitally important to Sister Margaret in her work as pastoral minister of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Hamilton, and St. Philip Benizi Mission, Darby, Mont. Sister arrived in Hamilton in 1983. She previously spent one year in parish ministry in Butte, Mont., and taught school from 1957 to 1982.

With approximately 600 families between the Hamilton and Darby congregations, Sister Margaret attends all three weekend Masses. This gives her the chance to meet everyone. Across 36 years in Hamilton, she has watched youth mature into adults with families of their own.

She visits parishioners in hospitals and nursing facilities and does



In the parish office at St. Francis of Assisi, Hamilton, Mont., seated, left to right, Terri Todd and Sister Margaret Hogan; standing, Katie McWilliam, Nancy Dezell and Lanor Kaney.

spiritual direction. She is a resource person for the youth ministry. In addition, Sister Margaret is a mentor and consultor for the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises training program in Missoula, Mont. She has also had the opportunity to be part of the deacon formation program for the Diocese of Helena.

Sister Margaret is proud of the parish Social Justice Commission that has annually sponsored back-to-school and clothing drives

for youth attending the De la Salle Blackfeet School in Browning, Mont. A number of parishioners volunteer at the community-operated food bank that has received financial support from the SCL Charity Budget.

Working with people, Sister Margaret's hope is that the seeds of faith she has helped plant and nurture will continue to grow and come to fruition. "I live in the now and do what I can," she says. "The real work is up to God."



# Varied roles, vibrant ministry

Much as she enjoys “doing” music in parish ministry, Sister Mary Jo Quinn loves the variety of her roles at Blessed Trinity Catholic Community, Missoula, and Spirit of Christ Mission, Lolo, Mont.

She’s in her 10th year with the two churches, serving as pastoral assistant and liturgy coordinator with responsibilities for music and outreach. She’s in her “second round” of collaborating with Father Ed Hislop, pastor, with whom Sister Mary Jo previously worked in Helena, Mont. The two have also been responsible for many aspects of diocesan-wide liturgy through their involvement with the Helena Diocesan Liturgical Commission for several years.

## Ministry priorities

Music and liturgy are the first priorities of Sister Mary Jo’s ministry. She directs the adult choir and instrumentalists at Blessed Trinity and Spirit of Christ. She engages and prepares parishioners to serve in liturgical roles as lectors, ministers of Holy Communion, servers, ushers, greeters, art and environment designers, and bread bakers. Sister Mary Jo also oversees the diocesan choir convened for special occasions, and she coordinates music for Masses in Missoula parishes for persons who are Spanish-speaking.

Complementing dynamic weekend Masses are year-round observances and events to celebrate the liturgical year, including evening prayer, a musical setting of the Rosary and occasional liturgical formation opportunities. “We believe in offering good programs to expand people’s understanding of the liturgy and our faith,” Sister Mary Jo explains.

In Lent 2019, with a grant from the Diocese of Helena, Blessed Trinity hosted Father Ricky Manalo, CSP, liturgical composer, author and educator, for presentations. Plans are underway to bring Father Michael Joncas, known for his composition “On Eagle’s Wings,” to Missoula in Lent 2020.

In 2018, the parish hosted the Our Lady of Guadalupe feast day Mass, including the traditional dramatization of the story of Our Lady’s appearance to Juan Diego. Evening prayer is a regular feature of the Advent season. The liturgies of the “Great Three Days of Easter” help parishioners understand the profound meaning of the Paschal Mystery relived annually during Holy Week.



Sister Mary Jo Quinn

## Outreach to broader community

Sister Mary Jo is the parish representative to the ecumenical Missoula Ministerial Association. She finds ecumenical work very exciting. The group sponsors a well-attended community prayer service the night before Thanksgiving. This past Lent, Blessed Trinity hosted a Jewish rabbi who spoke on “Discovering Passover: From Torah to Table,” and an Orthodox priest who discussed “The Spirituality of Icons.”

Likewise, Sister Mary Jo takes satisfaction in the projects facilitated through the Outreach Committee with which she works in the parish. Blessed Trinity was one of the founding churches of Family Promise of Missoula. The parish has collaborated from the beginning with a neighboring Methodist church in providing the customary “week-at-a-time” housing for families participating in the program.

This December will mark the seventh annual Blessed Trinity “No Room at the Inn: A Festival of Crèches,” displaying a large number of nativity scenes. Proceeds benefit Habitat for Humanity, Family Promise of Missoula and the Missoula Interfaith Collaborative.

Further intensifying the excitement at Blessed Trinity are plans to renovate the church and add a new gathering space. Sister Mary Jo believes this will better align the physical structure as welcoming, sacred space inviting people to worship, learn and serve together as a faith community.



# Ready to respond to emergencies

Sister Lin Sayatovic admits to being a “trauma junkie.”

“I love responding to emergencies, and I always have,” says the licensed advanced emergency medical technician (AEMT).

Sister Lin volunteers with the Georgetown Lake, Mont., Fire Department and with the rural community’s EMT team. She responds to most calls – fire and emergency. In addition, she is the EMT training officer and offers courses to help the volunteers meet licensure requirements.

She knows how to operate the firetrucks, pumpers and the quick response unit (QRU) vehicle. Sister Lin has the required equipment and

supplies in her small pickup truck to qualify as a first responder unit. Serving a para fire service district, Georgetown Lake’s team does not transport patients; its roles are to stabilize and prepare them for transport by an ambulance.

Sister Lin became an EMT in 1997 and worked weekends on ambulances in the Denver area until 2010. At the time, her full-time ministry was teaching and counseling at Annunciation School in the city.

Originally from Butte, Mont., Sister Lin enjoyed getaways through the years to her family’s cabin on Georgetown Lake. On her return to Montana in 2010, Sister Lin found a smaller rental cabin where she has

made her home at the lake. From that base, she travels to the nearby fire station or goes out on calls.

A lightning strike could spark a fire. A boat crashing into the shoreline could result in serious injuries. Someone at a nearby ski resort could require advanced life support.

Whatever the situation, Sister Lin is ready and eager to serve. And she’s had an important hand in helping other volunteer emergency responders keep their skills up-to-date.

Fred Bjorklund, fire chief says, “I don’t know how we would replace someone with Sister Lin’s skillset or who would commit as much time as she does.”



Sister Lin Sayatovic with Fred Bjorklund, fire chief.



# Chaplain to employees a valued role

What energizes Sister Mary Agnes Hogan in her role at St. James Healthcare, Butte, Mont., are the individuals with whom she works. Sister is a volunteer chaplain serving the associates (employees) of the hospital.

*“My role is to listen, talk with, thank and be present to them, sharing their joys and sorrows.”*

— Sister Mary Agnes Hogan

When Sister Mary Agnes visits hospital departments or the adjoining doctors' offices, she catches up with employees about their families, health problems or whatever topic they want to discuss or share. In the hectic environment of modern healthcare, St. James President Jay Doyle considers Sister Mary Agnes' role of listening and paying attention to the associates very important.

“Encouraging good morale,” Sister believes, “enhances service throughout St. James.”

Sister Mary Agnes is no stranger to St. James. Fresh out of completing her clinical pastoral education program, she served as a staff chaplain at the hospital (1982 to 1989). Following 10 years in parish ministry in Helena, Mont., she returned to St. James as director of mission services and spiritual care (2000 to 2011). Her next ministry was as chaplain with Highlands Hospice, Butte.

Since fall 2015, she's back at St. James three days a week. Sister visits many departments and floors of the hospital and Rocky Mountain Clinic where she greets and meets employees and doctors. If she's familiar with patients or their families, she also visits them.

It's clear from her encounters, that everyone – from physicians to a person who is homeless – appreciates



Sister Mary Agnes Hogan visits with Chunlan Handley in the coffee shop at St. James Healthcare.

that Sister takes and makes time for them. She recognizes the young woman who is homeless from the Knights of Columbus Hall where Sister Mary Agnes volunteers to serve meals.

In the medical oncology department, Marwan Massouh, MD, medical director, acknowledges that Sister Mary Agnes is very supportive of the cancer program and its team. “Sister Mary Agnes always has encouraging words,” Dr. Massouh says. “She provides spiritual support that is quite helpful and lifts the morale of the team in cancer care.”

In spite of dwindling numbers of SCLs in Montana, Sister Mary Agnes believes that the legacy of the Vincentian charism will continue. “We are moving into an unknown future,” she explains. “It will be new and different, but with God's blessing, guidance and ongoing interaction with all of us, the charism of service – especially to the poor and vulnerable – will continue. That's what ministry is about.”

REFLECTIONS BY SCLS, ASSOCIATES

# Legacy of service in Helena, Mont.



Sister Dolores  
Brinkel



Sister Marie Noel  
Bruch



Sister Lynn  
Casey



Sister Jean  
(Deedee) Casey



Sister Rita  
McGinnis

In October 1869, only 11 years after the founding of the Sisters of Charity in Leavenworth, the Community responded to the call to go even further north and west to Helena, Mont. In June 2019, Sister Lynn Casey, the last SCL living and ministering in Helena, returned to Leavenworth. Other Sisters preceded her departure in recent months and years.

Sisters continue to serve in different cities and towns in the Diocese of Helena. However, for the first time in 150 years, there are no SCLs living and ministering directly in the city.

In many ways, the Helena chapters of SCL history mirror the Sisters' responsiveness to needs as they have evolved over the years in different locations. Similarly, departure from the city reflects the continuing evolution based on current dynamics within the religious community. Most importantly, the legacy of SCL service in Helena lives on in the work of people influenced by the Vincentian charism.

## Evolution of ministries

At the urging of Father P.J. DeSmet, SJ, Mother Xavier Ross agreed to send Sisters to Helena; five SCLs and a laywoman volunteered for the new mission. Sister Dolores Brinkel, past archivist for the Helena Diocese, explains that in the midst of a Montana winter, this small group begged for contributions to build St. Vincent's Academy, which they opened in January 1870. By the summer, they were seeking funds to construct a hospital. St. John's opened in late 1870. Later came an orphanage, an infants' home and a day nursery. The Sisters staffed St. Mary's, St. Helena and St. Ann's (East Helena) grade schools and Cathedral High School. They joined the

faculty of Carroll College. They survived earthquakes and fires.

As new ministry opportunities arose, Sisters served in home health and social services, parishes, music ministry, religious education, diocesan leadership and legislative roles. For example, over 38 years of service in Helena, Sister Marie Noel Bruch worked in home health and adoption agencies where she helped pioneer open adoptions. She was a hospice chaplain and later a volunteer with the health department. Sister Rita McGinnis had multiple leadership responsibilities in diocesan offices based in Helena, including several years as director of chancery services.

## Reinterpreting response to needs

"Across the years, our Community has allowed us to be nimble enough to say 'yes' to something new, based on needs and circumstances," Sister Rita observes. Sister



Confirmation Day at St. Joseph's Orphan Home, Helena, March 19, 1896.





St. John's Hospital, Helena, circa 1901.



In the 1935 earthquake, the Sisters were able to preserve some of the altar furniture and items from the chapel.

Lynn describes this as responding to a reinterpretation of needs for modern times.

In addition, Vatican II invited increased lay involvement in ministries. Sisters collaborated with men and women in parishes, schools, hospitals and other settings. "These great-hearted leaders and staff began to reinterpret our ministry," Sister Lynn continues. "They brought their gifts to enhance and improve and serve yet in other new ways."

SCLs, like Sister Jean, helped facilitate this through religious education, adult formation and pastoral ministry in her home parish in East Helena and later in SCL hospitals in Montana. By their lives and good works, the Sisters modeled the charism of charity and service. In so doing, they were frontline mentors who encouraged laypersons to recognize their own gifts. The actions of their co-workers and recipients of their services continue to ripple across the Helena community.

Sister Lynn had been the spiritual director for The Women's Catholic Journey Experience (formerly known as Cursillo), a movement led by laywomen in response to the call for a new evangelization. A laywoman has succeeded her as spiritual director.

### Legacy of hope and charity

The departure from institutions and services previously operated and offered by SCLs leads Sister Rita to conclude, "There may be a void in terms of Sisters, but not in ministry."

Sister Dolores agrees, "We've consciously empowered lay people to assume ministry roles and continue the works of charity begun by the SCLs in Helena."

Still, there's emotion associated with leaving a city and its people. This transition was personal for Sisters Lynn

and Jean, sisters, who grew up in Helena and first met the SCLs in this city. Sister Lynn believes that Father Richard Francesco, pastor, and many people of St. Mary Catholic Community felt the impact of the Sisters' departure.

The three SCL Associates in Helena felt the first pang of loss a few years ago when Sister Noel returned to the Mother House. She had been their convener and their go-to SCL. At that time, Associates Marion Johnson, Bobby Lavinder and Linda McCray recognized the eventuality of all SCLs leaving Helena. While the Associates miss the hands-on support and the physical presence of the Sisters, they believe their legacy will live on for many years.

Bobby says, "The people who have known the Sisters will carry on their spirit." Linda adds, "We can continue to pass this spirit on by living it and sharing it."

Continuing on this hopeful note, Sister Jean affirms, "God has something in mind."



SCL Associates in the Helena area include (left to right) Bobby Lavinder, Linda McCray and Marion Johnson.

# Sister persists in environmental advocacy

Progress comes slowly, and victories seem intermittent. But when the stakes are high, it takes persistence and perseverance to make changes of lasting value.

Ask Sister Mary Jo McDonald who for the past 35 years has been working with other concerned citizens to clean up the waterways and land ravaged by the mining industry in Butte, Mont. Butte is the largest Superfund Site in the United States due to toxic metals from mining that leached into the water table and rivers.

**"Butte was a company town,"**

**Sister Mary Jo says, "and people felt owned by the mining company.**

**But that's not the case anymore."**

Sister Mary Jo serves on boards of both the Restore Our Creek Coalition and the Silver Bow Creek Coalition whose efforts coalesce around ensuring that the environmental cleanup occurs to the benefit of the people and community of Butte. Sister has been involved in a successful naming rights lawsuit against the state directed toward this goal. She's held out against aesthetic improvements along the creek until she receives assurance that these changes address problems related to the "tailings" (waste from mining). She's attended and facilitated many meetings to advocate, explain and involve more people in this environmental issue.

**"We owe this to the people of Butte and to future generations," she says.**

Environmental advocates want Silver Bow Creek to flow freely and cleanly through Butte once again. If this doesn't happen and if the contaminated water in the large Berkeley Pit isn't pumped and treated to be clean and safe, Butte's future may hang in balance with additional economic and social implications. In addition, there are lingering health concerns.

**"We want the children of Butte to return and raise their families and for Butte to experience growth," Sister Mary Jo says.**

\* \* \*

After 33 years as a pastoral minister of St. Ann's Parish, Sister Mary Jo retired in 2016. She devotes her energies to the Silver Bow Creek initiative and to assisting persons who are homeless and face food insecurity. She partnered with other volunteers to operate the Community Café that served the public from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Proceeds from those meals helped fund a hot evening meal for persons in need. Sister is hopeful this program will resume in the future. Sister Mary Jo also is on call one week a month in the St. James Healthcare pastoral care department.

**Sources:** Interview with Sister Mary Jo McDonald; review of "Let the Stream Run Through It," June 25, 2018, [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com)



Removing waste (tailings) left from mining is the focus of Sister Mary Jo McDonald's advocacy.





## Re-Markings

“When one door closes, another opens ...”

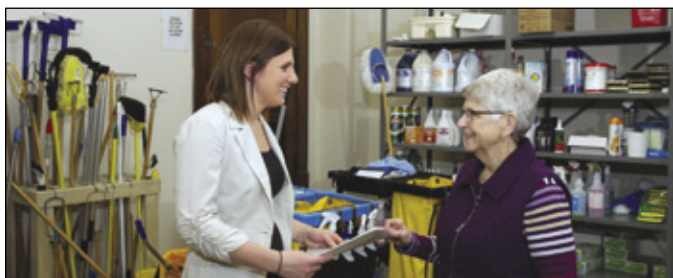
— Alexander Graham Bell

# Mother House administrator transition

Based on their recent ministry transitions, Sister Margaret Finch anticipates the door opening to her next life adventure, and Sister Rita McGinnis reaffirms her belief in Divine Providence.

Sister Margaret served as Mother House administrator for nine years. In early August, Sister Rita assumed this position. The role has evolved over the past several years, but both SCLs agree that working with a wonderful team of employees and getting to know the Mother House Sisters are key benefits of the position.

### Sister Margaret Finch



Sister Margaret Finch (right) meets with Kindra Reckers, housekeeping manager.

When Sister Margaret assumed the responsibilities of Mother House administrator in 2010, she “job-shared” with Sister Ann McGuire. Sister Margaret describes her role at that time as the “inside” Mother House administrator responsible for departments including maintenance, housekeeping, bell room, food service and security (shared with the University of Saint Mary). She also kept the Mother House Sisters up-to-date on facility matters that affected their lives. She was on-call 24/7.

Sister Ann was the “outside” administrator providing oversight for grounds, laundry, transportation and the cemetery. The two Sisters worked as a team until Sister Ann’s death in November 2015. Sister Margaret absorbed responsibilities over all of these departments for the next year and a half. Then a reorganization plan parceled out some of the oversight duties and removed on-call obligations.

While serving as Mother House administrator, Sister Margaret’s greatest satisfaction came from the teamwork she witnessed among the employees and various departments. She adds, “I also saw how much the employees care for the Sisters and how they strive to live out the SCL Employee Mission Statement.”

After helping orient Sister Rita, Sister Margaret took time to visit relatives and friends and do some traveling. Now she’s in a wait-and-see mode. She says, “I don’t know what my next ministry will be, but I know God will lead me to whatever it is.”

### Sister Rita McGinnis

Sister Rita’s transition from her former ministry to the Mother House administrator position attests to God’s hand at work in the grand scheme of things. A confluence of life and work issues brought her to Leavenworth.

Sister was serving as the director of chancery services with Bishop George Thomas in the Diocese of Helena, Mont. She had worked with him since 2005.

In early 2018, when Bishop Thomas received a transfer to the Diocese of Las Vegas, work in the Montana Church offices was somewhat suspended pending the appointment of a new bishop. Sister Rita discerned that the time was right for her own ministry transition.

Relocation to the SCL Mother House was an easy decision due to some health issues she was facing. The beginning of her search for a new ministry opportunity coincided with Sister Margaret Finch’s announcement of her retirement. Sister Rita considers this yet another providential moment. She became the new Mother House administrator in early August 2019.

From her experiences in Church office leadership and high school administration, Sister Rita is familiar and comfortable managing personnel, organizing projects, interacting with departments, and solving problems. Having served as an SCL Councilor (1998 to 2004), she knows many of the Sisters who live at the Mother House.

Whether she’s planning a feast day observance or dealing with fire alarms and elevators, Sister Rita has found everyone willing to help and to be part of the solution to make things work well. When someone asks her how the journey goes, she responds, “Everything I’ve ever done has prepared me for everything I’ve ever done.”

She’s also still learning and allowing ample room for Divine Providence to continue to intervene.



Sister Rita McGinnis is relying on St. Vincent de Paul to “have her back” in her new role as Mother House administrator.

# SCLs put talents to work

## Look out, greeting card industry

Because she still likes to send “real” cards – as distinguished from online greetings or messages – Sister Margaret Finch literally took things into her own hands.

For a number of years, she made cards from photographs that she had taken. Approximately five years ago, a friend introduced her to card making using cardstock, rubber and acrylic stamps, ribbon, layering, embossing powder, watercolors, cutting and shaping devices, and assorted decorations including bling (pearl-like dots and other shiny objects).

The result? Beautiful, one-of-a-kind cards, many of which are three-dimensional and all of which are likely well-received.

Sister Margaret says that she’s not artistic and couldn’t draw a circle if she had to, but she’s good at crafts. She started with simple card designs and ventured into more complex layering for special effects. She continues to learn and find creative ideas via Pinterest and YouTube videos. She has even attended a card making retreat.

Sister has well-organized workspace in the basement of the house she shares with Sister Kathleen Mary Connelly. This allows Sister Margaret to have the tools and supplies of her craft near at hand with ample room to design, cut, paste and assemble the cards. She adapts



Sister Margaret Finch

her card making to the seasons, and she tries to personalize the design and greeting when she can.

Sister Margaret prides herself in purchasing only on-sale supplies and using coupons at her favorite craft stores. She sends her creations as personal greetings and provides a few people with assorted cards for their use. She doesn’t sell her cards.

Sister Kathleen Mary teases that her housemate is addicted to card making. Sister Margaret says it’s a source of relaxation for her. Whether she spends two plus hours on a complex design or an hour on a simpler one, her satisfaction comes from the finished art and the joy or comfort she hopes the receiver experiences.





## ICU for plants offers TLC

The SCL Mother House offers independent living or skilled nursing options for Sisters as they require additional personal care. Add to the array of services now available: an ICU for plants ably operated by Sister Marie Noel Bruch.

Whether ailing plants require attention or healthy ones need tending while a Sister is away from the Mother House, Sister Noel is on call to nurture, repot, prune or water. The ICU is based in a multi-purpose room on the second floor of the Mother House. If sick plant symptoms baffle Sister Noel, she's resourceful in figuring things out and taking action.

She also cares for the plants in Ross Chapel and up and down the first floor hallway of the Mother House. Another part of her routine is watering plants of Sisters living in Ross Hall. Rounding out her greenhouse duties, she starts African violets and maintains a mini-garden in her room at the Mother House.

A longtime lover of nature, Sister Noel has always enjoyed plants. She has also incorporated nature themes into several of her craft projects. Over the years, she made little mice from bottlebrush thistle heads; birdhouses from recycled barn wood, fence slats and shingles; and mushrooms from polymer clay. Issues with her back and arthritis in her hands led to discontinuation of this detail work.

But as often happens for Sister Noel, things just fall into her hands. In this case, it's been plants requiring her tender love and care.

"So it goes with the serendipities of my life," Sister Noel concludes on a happy note.



Sister Marie Noel Bruch

## Creating art from found objects



Sister Sue Retherford

Early on as a teacher, Sister Sue Retherford realized that there are more ways than one for students to learn. This led to her adoption of some nontraditional approaches to teaching.

She posted math rules on the ceiling of the classroom for easy access by students. In the absence of an art teacher, Sister Sue pinch-hit and planned projects that required students to use different senses. Members of her music class visualized the "Grand Canyon Suite" and then painted it on large sheets of paper. The art lined the halls of the middle school.

In other creative exercises, students linked together plastic six-pack rings (from soft drinks) and wove crepe paper through them to create curtains for classroom windows. Another time when graffiti on restroom walls became a problem, Sister Sue enlisted now deceased Sister Jo Anne Sistrunk, an artist, to come to the rescue. The two SCLs hatched a plan to have the kids own the situation. The boys painted sports objects on the walls; the girls drew stuffed animals.

"They painted things they liked," Sister Sue recalls. "We were proud of the kids' work. We always had the restrooms on tours when people came into our building."

There's a method to Sister Sue's madness, and she has carried it over to her engagement with Sisters in Ross Hall where she lives. "I'm not an artist," she says, "but I believe I can get other people involved, and we work together to create art from found objects."

They make flowers from the inner cardboard rolls of toilet paper, wind chimes from recycled CD discs, Christmas trees from baby food bottles, and wreaths from plastic forks. Sister Sue repurposes egg cartons, greeting cards and pictures from calendars, and incorporates them into art and crafts.

She likes to make pretty things or think of projects and invite people to make them with her. This includes seasonal decorations for Ross Hall dining rooms, walls or the doors of Sisters' rooms.

"I enjoy getting other Sisters involved, and I think they enjoy the end results," Sister Sue adds.

# Pride in her dad's connection with President Truman

April 12, 2020 will mark the 75th anniversary of the beginning of Harry S. Truman's service as the 33rd president of the United States. In Kansas City, Kan., Sister Mary Jo Coyle recalls her family's connection to the late president and a friendship born of a wartime experience.

In 1917, 33-year-old Harry rejoined the National Guard to serve in World War I. A year later, he went to France and was the captain of Battery D, a field artillery unit. This battery was a Kansas City-organized unit and included many Irish and German Catholics. His leadership and bravery earned the loyalty of his troops, among them Joseph F. Coyle, Sister Mary Jo's father. Joe was a corporal and sustained injuries during the war from a gunshot wound to his neck.

Returning from military service, Harry opened a haberdashery in Kansas City, Mo., and a few years later began his life of public service. Following his discharge from the Army, Joe became a deputy in the office of the license collector for Kansas City, Kan. He later moved into the position of deputy and then city auditor. The Battery D ties remained strong across the years. One example was participation in an annual Veterans Day parade.

With the looming retirement of the Kansas City, Kan., postmaster, Joe met up with then President Truman at the Hotel Muehlebach in downtown Kansas City, Mo. As recorded in an article that appeared in the *Kansas City Star* at the time of Joe's death, the president had him in mind for the position:

"Are you interested in the job, Joe?" Truman asked.

"Yes, I would like to have it," Coyle said.

"Send me a letter about it," Truman said.

That was the extent of Coyle's campaigning – no endorsements from county or state chairmen, no recommendations from city leaders.



Sister Mary Jo Coyle

Joe retired his post as city auditor and served as postmaster from Sept. 1, 1950 until his death on May 14, 1958. A large framed photograph of President Truman with the following personal inscription hung on the wall of his office at the post office in Kansas City, Kan.:

"To my good friend Hon. Joseph F. Coyle with kindest regards."

White House • Harry S. Truman  
August 15, 1952

Sister Mary Jo's nephew has the signed photo in safekeeping. Sister Mary Jo has good memories and lasting pride in her father's 38 years of public service and his connection with Harry Truman.



President Harry S. Truman gave this signed print of his portrait to Joseph F. Coyle, father of Sister Mary Jo Coyle and postmaster in Kansas City, Kan.

At least two other SCLs have family links to Harry Truman. Sister Mary Jo Downey's father was also in Battery D during World War I and served under the future president. Sister Sheila Taylor's dad was the Jackson County, Mo., treasurer with an office in the courthouse in Independence, Mo. He enjoyed lunch frequently with the then former president. Harry Truman even once drove Sister Sheila as a young student to her piano lessons.





Mary and Jay Flaherty present Sister Maureen Craig with a framed rendering of a stained glass image of Jesus washing the feet of St. Peter. Mary is chair of the Saint John's Health Center Foundation.

## Ministry spans years; includes many good people

In 1987, Sister Maureen Craig went to Saint John's Health Center, Santa Monica, Calif., for what she thought would be a few months' project. This summer, 32 years later, she retired from a multi-faceted ministry at the hospital that she came to love and appreciate (now named Providence Saint John's and part of Providence Health & Services).

Ruminating with her characteristic wit, Sister Maureen recounts stories of her encounters with people of all faiths, walks of life and financial means. She speaks with fondness and respect as she remembers employees, physicians, long-time colleagues and friends, donors and celebrities. She had the joy of working with many people, and she recognized their gifts and responded to their needs.

These individuals were all part of her sphere of influence at Saint John's, and they came out in great numbers to honor Sister Maureen during several farewell celebrations prior to her early August return to the Mother House in Leavenworth. Among the most treasured gifts she received are two representations of Jesus washing the feet of St. Peter – one a statue, the other a framed rendering of stained glass.

Sister Maureen used this Biblical account in new employee orientation and farewell messages prior to her departure from Saint John's. She described Jesus' washing the feet of St. Peter as symbolic of the mission of Catholic healthcare: caring for those in need and in poor health. She added, "There also comes a time to be Peter – to stop and let others care for us."

[See the full text of her reflection, back inside cover.](#)

Sister Maureen's first assignment at Saint John's was to write its history. The hospital published *The Golden Promise* in 1992 for its 50th anniversary. Sister immersed herself in the daily life at Saint John's and assumed other roles working with employees and visiting patients.

"What I found incredible were the number of people it takes to staff a healthcare facility and the skills required," she recalls. "I learned very early that the hospital world is very unique and that people are called to this ministry."

In succeeding years, Sister Maureen was assistant to the president of the health center, worked in the archives and became part of the team of the Saint John's Health Center Foundation. She was chaplain to the foundation and one of its trustees. She also served as chaplain for the retired physicians group, the Irene Dunne Guild and the Native Sons of the Golden West. The latter is a group dedicated to improving the lives of children with cleft palates and facial anomalies, and their families. In addition, Sister Maureen continued to write poetry and give talks.

"I loved knowing so many good people, and I did what had to be done" she says. "You find your own world where God puts you."

# Experience deepens understanding of Vincentian spirituality

Their participation in the Vincentian Encounter this past August in France impressed Sisters Judith Jackson and Noreen Walter with the depth and breadth of the worldwide Vincentian family.

The two SCLs were the only U.S.-born among the 32 participants who came from Asia, Africa, Canada, Europe and South America. The richness of the exchange among participants and the chance to learn from one another – in spite of language barriers – were added benefits to immersion in the life and spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul and to the deepening of their understanding of his partnership with St. Louise de Marillac.

Whereas enrollment in last year's encounter had included only priests and women religious, laypersons were in the group this year. "Everyone came with a desire to extend the Vincentian charism," Sister Judith observes.

This was reassuring to Sister Noreen who saw it as a sign that the charism will continue. She felt the presence of Vincent throughout the classroom sessions and especially on the pilgrimages. "Everywhere we traveled, people seemed to know Vincent's story," she says.

Participants traced Vincent's path through the city and to towns where he ministered. They visited a shelter



Sisters Judith Jackson (left) and Noreen Walter with Father Tomaž Mavrič, CM, superior general of the Congregation of the Mission.



Sisters Ocknam Min and Judith Jackson at St. Denis at Gones, a church where St. Vincent served. Sister Min, a Vincentian Encounter participant, is a Seton Hill Charity from the Korean province; she serves in Ecuador.

for persons who are homeless, the headquarters of the Vincentian priests and the Daughters of Charity, and sacred places associated with Sts. Vincent, Louise de Marillac and Catherine Labouré. Sister Judith appreciated the opportunity to touch precious archival documents dating to the founding of the Congregation of the Mission, the order of priests established by Vincent. A stop at Taizé, where hundreds of young people had come for prayer and meditation, proved very inspiring.

Both Sisters gave reflections during Masses while on pilgrimages. Sister Judith spoke in Châtillon where Vincent invited lay leaders to organize for charitable works and established the Confraternity of Charity; Sister Noreen at Notre-Dame de Valfleury, a church now maintained by Vincentian priests and where many miracles are said to have occurred through the years.

As they take time to absorb their learnings from the month-long encounter, Sisters Judith and Noreen feel enriched by the experience and hope to share it with others as they proceed with their ministries. They know their message will be steeped in Vincent's call to serve persons who are poor by meeting their spiritual and material hungers.





# Re-Markings

OF SPECIAL NOTE

In this section, *Voices of Charity* highlights Sisters, Associates and friends who have earned special honors or been in the news.

## First Vincentian Charism Award presented

On Founders' Day, Nov. 11, **Richard Sack** received the inaugural Vincentian Charism Award presented by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCLs).

Last year, to mark the 160th anniversary of the founding of the SCLs and the beginning of the fifth century of the Vincentian charism, Sister Constance Phelps, Community Director, announced the establishment of this special award. Its purpose is to honor the works and witness begun by Mother Xavier Ross and the founding SCLs, rooted in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul.

Through many, varied involvements, Richard, Leavenworth, Kan., serves those who are poor and in need including prisoners, persons who are homeless, the elderly and youth. He volunteered as the general contractor for the interior construction of the new Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope facility. Richard is a member of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Leavenworth, where he serves in several roles.

Linda Martin, SCL Associate, nominated Richard for the award.

See information posted to the SCL website at [www.scls.org](http://www.scls.org) and watch for an article about Richard in the next edition of *Voices of Charity*.



Richard Sack

## Chuschi hosts meeting of CONFER

Hermanas de la Caridad (HCLs) in Chuschi, Peru, hosted hermanas from CONFER Huamanga Ayacucho for a meeting on Aug. 31. Hermanas represented the Dominican Missionary Sisters, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary and the HCLs. They walked in the town of Chuschi and prayed in the chapel of the HCL convent with focus on taking care of Mother Earth. **Hermanas Liduvina Dóminguez Córdova** and **Susana Córdova Castillo** hosted the group. CONFER operates nationally and regionally in Peru to connect religious. **Hermana Clorinda Timaná Martínez**, SCL Director of Latin American Missions, serves as vice president of CONFER Piura. **Hermana Lourdes Abad Pulache** is president of CONFER Chulucanos.



Hermana Susana Córdova Castillo is pictured top middle in red; Hermana Liduvina Dóminguez Córdova is front with the white blouse and black vest.

## Vincentian volunteers consecrated in Peru



Hermanas de la Caridad joined the entire group of Vincentian volunteers for a photo op. Front left (in maroon blouse) Hermana Clorinda Timaná Martínez; to the right, Hermana Laura Rumiche Morales; partially hidden behind her, Hermana Susana Córdova Castillo; and behind her, Hermana Esther Vilela Gutiérrez.

On Aug. 18 in Peru, 30 Vincentian volunteers were consecrated and integrated into the International Association of Charities (AIC). These volunteers have years of Vincentian formation provided first by **Sister Helen Therese Mack** and then by **Hermana Laura Rumiche Morales**. AIC is part of the wider Vincentian family; it is a worldwide network of 100,000 volunteers who work in their local communities to combat poverty.

Those consecrated in the ceremony may serve at St. Vincent de Paul Pastoral Center in Piura, in their parishes or with other projects. "We are filled with joy to share the charism and expand it throughout the world with charity and service," says Hermana Laura.

## Sister Ann marks 25th anniversary

### **Sister Ann Schumacher**

celebrated her 25th anniversary as an SCL with family and friends on July 27 during Mass and a luncheon at the Mother House.



Sister Ann processes into Annunciation Chapel with her mother Bernice Schumacher at her side and her nephew Father Stephen Schumacher, ordained this summer for the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Mo. Sister Charlotte White carries the lectionary.



Sister Ann renews her vows as an SCL.

### Follow the SCLs on

 **Facebook** [www.facebook.com/sistersofcharity](http://www.facebook.com/sistersofcharity)

 **YouTube** [www.youtube.com/sistersofcharityks](http://www.youtube.com/sistersofcharityks)

 **Twitter** [www.twitter.com/scleavenworth](http://www.twitter.com/scleavenworth)

 **Pinterest** [www.pinterest.com/scleavenworth](http://www.pinterest.com/scleavenworth)

 **Instagram** [www.instagram.com/scleavenworth](http://www.instagram.com/scleavenworth)

If we've overlooked an item of importance, please email ([thorvat@scls.org](mailto:thorvat@scls.org))  
or mail information to Communications, Cantwell Hall,  
4200 South 4th Street, Leavenworth, KS 66048-5054.





# Beyond All Borders

## POLICY STATEMENT

### The Climate in Crisis – An Urgent Call to Prayer and Action

**From the Care of Creation Interest Group of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth  
and the Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica of Atchison.**

All of God's creatures are threatened by a tragic shift in the climate of our planet. Catastrophic floods, droughts, fires, hurricanes and tornadoes come more frequently and with greater force than ever. The futures of our children and grandchildren are threatened by the harshness of a poisoned world. It is our moral imperative to respond to the crisis of climate change with prayer and action.

There still is hope that we can restore and preserve the grandeur of our common home, but we must act quickly. With all sincerity and humility, we the members of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth's Care of Creation Interest Group and the Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica of Atchison express our support for the following actions:

- ▶ That we avoid food and consumer goods produced by environmentally harmful practices and promote the replacement of fossil fuels with renewable energy and conservation.
- ▶ That faith communities include ecological justice as an important part of their peace and justice efforts on behalf of all of us, all future generations and the vulnerable poor who are most affected.
- ▶ That we recognize as false the mythic vision of an ideal world brought by industries that devastate the planet in the name of progress.
- ▶ That industries take every action possible to incorporate earth-friendly practices in the production and distribution of goods and services. We also call upon them to repair the damage they have done to the earth's air, lands and waters.
- ▶ That our local, state and national elected leaders recognize the scientific evidence of the human causes of climate change and act boldly in support of climate-friendly legislation.
- ▶ Likewise, since we all live in the same earthly neighborhood, justice demands that the United States collaborate with all other nations to protect earth's peoples and creatures.
- ▶ That we pray in this new ecological age for all God's people to awaken to the sacredness of nature and join with its creating spirit to heal the earth.

*The SCL Care of Creation Interest Group is one of five groups dedicated to addressing different critical needs and issues. Care of Creation involves Sisters and SCL Associates through three sub-committees: advocacy, education and events, and spirituality.*



The Eco-Justice Center is a ministry of the Racine Dominicans. Sister Réjane Cytacki, SCL, is executive director.

# Farm Corps focus on ecology

Each summer, two college interns and four high school students have opportunities for life-changing experiences compliments of the Eco-Justice Center, Racine, Wis.

As participants in the Racine Area Youth Farm Corps program, the young adults learn to plant and take produce to market, care for animals and eat healthily. They become aware of the environment, the growing season, pollination and composting. In the process, they receive important lessons in ecology.

For many of the high school students for whom this is a first job, they also acquire job skills. They become more outgoing and confident. They develop leadership traits.

Riley Niemiec, a high school sophomore, says Farm Corps exceeded her expectations. “It changed my view of the world and the way I want to live in it,” she adds. “Our food system is not as it should be. I’m proud to be part of the group that wants to change this and fix it.”

Other program participants discover new career options.

Clarissa Skaletski, college intern, is considering becoming an urban farm educator. Laura Buska, another crew leader, would like to work for an environmental non-profit organization.

Chad Saliscente was in Farm Corps as a high school sophomore. He enjoyed using produce to make

lunch weekly for his team. This sparked his interest in a food-related career. Chad is now an employee of a local restaurant and enrolled in a college culinary arts program.

Farms Corps marked its fourth summer in 2019. The program has received funding for three years from the SCL Systemic Change Budget.



Farm Corps team members – past and present – volunteer at the annual Farm to Table event. At this year’s event, left to right, front row, Dawn DeMuyt (program manager), Eh Lee Dar (foreground) with Laura Buska behind her, Riley Niemiec and Emily McIntosh; back row, Clarissa Skaletski, Bre Kizewic, Chad Saliscente, Devan Ingersoll, Simone Sorensen and Kaja Baran.





Dawn DeMuyt, manager of the Farm Corps program, explains that the hoop house helps extend the growing season.

### Purposeful, mindful approach

Dawn DeMuyt has managed the Farm Corps program since 2016. She explains that the college interns serve as crew leaders and often have an interest in environmental science or urban agriculture. The program operates weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. for nine to 11 weeks.

By far, caring for the animals is one of the favorite aspects of Farms Corps. What's not to like about a small herd of alpacas; a gander (male goose) named Rosemary; or goats that graze and laze on a rooftop lawn? There are also rabbits, chickens, ducks and cats.

The "hoop house," a passive solar greenhouse structure, allows the Eco-Justice Center team to extend the growing season. The outdoor gardens have flowers interspersed with the vegetables. Dawn calls this a "diverse garden" in that it both produces vegetables and supports pollination. The center observes a "no-till" practice – once the garden is plowed and tilled, no additional rototilling occurs. Students do weeding and composting

of food and animal waste to nurture the plants.

"Everything we do is purposeful and mindful of ecology," Dawn adds.

Once a week, the crew has a nutrition class offered by the Extension Program of the University of Wisconsin. "Food Wise" offers instructions in healthy cooking and eating. As produce is available, the student Farm Corps participants staff a spot at local farmers' markets.

The students also interact with the Ecology on the Farm Summer Camps offered by the Eco-Justice Center. Among duties, they assist with meal preparation for the Family Day event of the weeklong camps and staff a farmers' market table for parent and grandparent guests.

Alumni of the Farm Corps program volunteer at the Farm to Table Dinner, a signature event of the Eco-Justice Center. Guests enjoy a multi-course meal prepared by staff of local restaurants using produce grown on site by the crew. Event funds benefit the Farm Corps program.

## Confidence, career direction Farm Corps by-products

"I gained confidence through the program and learned gardening skills and about the non-profit world."

— Clarissa Skaletski  
College intern

"The program made me try to do more things; it pushed me into doing new things."

— Eh Lee Dar  
High school student

"The job as crew leader has narrowed my path to do what I love. I may go into the field of wildlife rehabilitation or habitat restoration."

— Simone Sorensen  
College intern



Clarissa Skaletski was a crew leader for this past season's Farm Corps program.



# Eco-Justice Center educates, models sustainability

A commitment to Earth and the vision of working for ecological justice led the Racine Dominican community to open the Eco-Justice Center as a sponsored ministry in 2004. The Dominicans acquired the property in Racine, Wis., from Dennis Kornwolf and began to develop year-round programming. Dominican sisters continue to live in a home on the property and remain involved with the center's programming.

Coincidentally, the stone foundation of the education center of the Eco-Justice Center dates to 1858, the year of the founding of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. Sister Réjane Cytacki, SCL, became

executive director of the Eco-Justice Center in July 2016.

The Eco-Justice Center offers a variety of events and classes. For example, participants of different ages can attend programs to learn to make rustic breads, celebrate the winter, do yoga with the alpacas, or craft birdhouses from dried gourds.

Core programs include:

► **Ecology on the Farm Summer Camps** –

These weeklong day camps invite 6- to 10-year-olds and 11- to 14-year-olds to experience several dimensions of the Eco-Justice Center. The youth meet the animals and assist with feedings; they do a craft with alpaca fiber. They

learn about gardening and prepare food with produce grown on site. Their agenda may include a hike to a nearby park for exposure to native plants, birds and trees. Scholarship assistance is available for these camps.

► **Racine Area Youth Farm Corps** –

This program provides high school students and college-aged interns hands-on opportunities to learn valuable skills while helping educate the community about organic farming, sustainability and equity in the food system. *(See more information in the accompanying article on pages 26 and 27.)*

► **Growing Healthy Field Trips** –

Over the course of a school year, 700 first-graders from the surrounding community visit the Eco-Justice Center for field trips (50 kids at a time). They spend approximately two hours rotating through different stations with the recurring theme of food and digestion. They see a puppet show about alpacas and goats, and what they eat. In the hoop house, they taste produce right off the vine or plant. At another station, they learn about chickens and their digestive system and about composting. The first-graders visit the labyrinth on the property, where they make a wish for healthy living.

The field trips are labor intensive with Eco-Justice Center volunteers supplementing staff. Sister Réjane, a former elementary school teacher, likes the approach her team



Sister Réjane Cytacki, executive director, confers with Sarah Ronnevik, program and communications coordinator for the Eco-Justice Center.



# Trafficking observance at the UN

takes toward educating young students – giving them hands-on experiences in condensed timeframes. Eco-Justice staff developed this program with the assistance of an environmental educator.

The staff members continue to tweak and enhance all programs and course offerings. Sister Réjane partners with a nine-member board of directors, three full-time and two part-time employees, and a host of volunteers to offer programs, operate the center and secure funding. Recently, the center has developed new mission, vision and value statements and will update its strategic plan this winter.

Sister Réjane appreciates the sense of place and the beauty of the Eco-Justice Center property and surroundings. She enjoys the diversity of her responsibilities. Having been in a traditional classroom, she loves bringing kids outdoors and watching the amount of learning that occurs when they are in a larger space and with the animals.

Next up for the Eco-Justice Center is development and implementation of a plan to return the land to its original growth by eliminating some invasive weeds. It's all about what's good for Earth and nature.



Sister Melissa Camardo pictured outside the UN.

On July 29, Sister Melissa Camardo participated in a panel presentation at the United Nations that marked the 10th anniversary of the Talitha Kum network and the World Day against Trafficking in Persons (July 30). A reception followed at the UN for the opening of the photography exhibit “Nuns Healing Hearts.”

Talitha Kum is an international network against trafficking in persons. It is a project of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) in collaboration with the Union of Superiors General (USG). Talitha Kum facilitates collaboration and the interchange of information between consecrated men and women in 70 countries. *(From UISG website.)*

In conjunction with its 10-year anniversary observance, Talitha Kum engaged an international photographer to create the exhibit. The exhibit was on display for the May 10 audience with Pope Francis at the conclusion of the UISG Plenary Assembly in Rome.

For the panel discussion, Sister Melissa represented sisters serving in the anti-trafficking ministry. She joined persons from Talitha Kum and UISG; the photographer; and a woman with whom Sister Melissa lived in the LifeWay safe house where she ministers in New York.



# Grassroots collaboration produces results

Connected with a local Presbyterian church and working on his master's degree in social work in Missoula, Mont., Casey Dunning sensed that people of faith wanted to be meaningfully engaged in their community. He also knew that individuals and families living on the margins faced many challenges. The missing link appeared to be a vehicle or entity to mobilize and energize grassroots collaboration to help people in need while effecting systemic change.

Founded in 2011, the Missoula Interfaith Collaborative (MIC) has evolved into this role as a model for facilitating and supporting collaboration. MIC brings members of faith communities together to lead the way in breaking down silos and bridging divides that exist. It also joins efforts with other community partners.

Casey is the founder and executive director of the collaborative that today engages 32 congregations. The organization and its programs have received funding from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the SCL Charity and Systemic Change Budgets and other sources. It also is an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation, "the nation's largest and longest-standing network of local faith and community-based organizations" (from the foundation's website).

## Benefits of working together

The collaboration is working as congregations have identified broad



Following the recent ground breaking ceremony for the new facility to serve victims of domestic violence and families that are homeless, left to right, Carol Kraft, Father Ed Hislop and Sister Mary Jo Quinn, all of the Blessed Trinity Catholic Community; and Casey Dunning, Missoula Interfaith Collaborative.

concerns and taken steps required to effect change. Casey says, "We have good momentum with the organization, and congregations are seeing what is possible when we work together."

On Aug. 21, MIC and the YWCA Missoula broke ground for a new \$8 million facility that will provide critical support and shelter to survivors of domestic violence and homeless families in the Montana community (from the *Missoulian*). With health equity a growing concern, MIC is collaborating with other partners to recruit and hire community organizers to understand this issue and then work toward change. SCL Systemic Change Budget funds helped support the MIC full-time organizer.

Under Casey's leadership, MIC has also been entrepreneurial in adopting social enterprise initiatives that address needs and contribute to its sustainability. As a nonprofit, MIC has developed businesses that have a social cause or purpose and that generate revenue that returns to the organization to help fulfill its mission.

Programs under the MIC umbrella currently include:

- ▶ **Missoula Works** – a wholly owned for-profit subsidiary of MIC that provides employment opportunities, both temporary and permanent, for the long-term unemployed in the Missoula community; proceeds benefit programs serving persons who are homeless.
- ▶ **Recycling Works** – a social enterprise benefit corporation dedicated to reusing and recycling Missoula's glass and organics through its curbside pick-up service; proceeds return to MIC programs.
- ▶ **Family Promise** – a network of 32 congregations and organizations that practice hospitality and work together to provide shelter, meals and support to Missoula families to help them rebuild their lives; received past funding from the SCL Charity Budget; Sister Mary Jo Quinn has served on the Family Promise board in the past.
- ▶ **Housing Advocacy Network** – a group of trained volunteer leaders who support individuals and families with finding housing and employment and accessing necessary services.
- ▶ **Welcome Back** – mentors and advocates who assist persons re-entering society from prison.

Casey discussed MIC's varied work as a model supporting systemic change at the July 2017 SCL Leaven Assembly. Coincidentally, he is the great-nephew of Sister Marie Carmel Dunning. In Missoula, he's a quiet mover and shaker and believer that working together works best for the community, especially for people in need.



# LCWR Region 13 leadership calls for recognition of migrant family separation as a pro-life issue

This fall on Sept. 25, leadership of religious communities within Region 13 of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), including the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, issued this statement.

We appeal to people who value the dignity of all human life to recognize that the separation of young migrant children from their parents is a significant pro-life issue in our country today.

At an age when they should be full of energy and vibrancy, these boys and girls are experiencing the trauma of separation from their parents. At a time when they are most vulnerable, migrant children are being robbed of their youth and their potential.

In a culture that acknowledges the importance of nurturing a child's development, our nation's immigration policies and practices are inflicting lifelong and possibly irreparable damage on the health of these youth. Having experienced fear and violence in their homelands, they are being re-traumatized in detention centers. Some are dying – 15 deaths of children so far this year at the U.S.-Mexico border.

We believe this is a very strong and compelling pro-life issue. Family separation and detention and the resulting trauma go against the very fabric of respect for human life.

In the words of Pope Francis, "All children ... have the right to be children." In the words of Jesus, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14).

We call upon mothers and fathers, grandparents, aunts and uncles to think of these children as their own and to advocate against separation of families. We ask people of faith to pray for these children and their loved ones, and for policy makers and elected officials. With Pope Francis, we implore the adoption of "every possible measure to guarantee child migrants' protection and security" and to avoid family separation.

*Leadership of the following congregations of women religious in LCWR Region 13 issued the above statement:*

- ▶ Adorers of the Blood of Christ, St. Louis, Missouri
- ▶ Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, Kansas
- ▶ Dominican Sisters of Peace, Columbus, Ohio
- ▶ Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Leadership Team, Leavenworth, Kansas
- ▶ Sisters of Loretto and Co-members of Loretto, Nerinx, Kentucky
- ▶ Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Denver, Colorado
- ▶ Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, Colorado Springs, Colorado
- ▶ Sisters of St. Francis of Savannah, Missouri
- ▶ The Sisters of Benet Hill Monastery, Colorado Springs, Colorado
- ▶ The Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kansas

*Region 13 of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) encompasses congregations serving Colorado, Kansas, western Missouri and Oklahoma.*





# Love a recurring theme in Sister Jane's life



Love is a word that weaves through the life story of Sister Jane Jackson.

She believes strongly in God's unconditional love for all people. She's known the love and support of her close-knit family and her circle of longtime friends. She loved teaching junior high students. In her youth, she loved playing sports; in her retirement, bridge, pinochle, movies, reading and word games give her joy. She loves Community life as an SCL.

Sister Jane credits her parents with her early faith formation. The Jacksons were members of St. Louis Parish, Kansas City, Mo. Aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents and godparents were among their neighbors, fellow parishioners and good friends.

Sister Georgeanne Desch and other SCLs at St. Louis School impressed Sister Jane with their happiness and zest for life. While in grade school, she began thinking about a religious vocation. She liked school and had great SCL teachers at St. Louis and at Bishop Hogan High School. During her senior year at Hogan, things

crystallized for Sister Jane: she felt called to join the SCL Community, and she planned to be a teacher.

Sister Jane entered the SCLs in 1960. Her novitiate classmates remain good friends and gather regularly for prayer, support and fun, and occasionally for shared vacations. In 1963, her younger sister joined the Community. Sister Jane counts Sister Judith and their older brother Roger, his wife Nadyne and family among the great blessings of her life.

### **Innovative teacher**

In her first SCL assignments, Sister Jane taught fourth- and fifth-graders. She knew she was in her element when she began teaching seventh- and eighth-grades. She explains that at this age youth have great ideas and are very insightful. She loved seeing them catch on to concepts they failed to grasp previously.

She had fun teaching. Sister Jane knew nothing about rocketry, but she learned about it and taught it with a student who shared a magazine article with her. With





Sister Jane donned a sari in the classroom during a program to introduce students to the culture of India.

her instruction and guidance, students mastered chess, filled and buried a bicentennial time capsule, and made scenery for plays. She applied techniques for teaching gifted and talented students in her regular classroom and experienced good outcomes. Sister Jane earned her bachelor's degree from Saint Mary College and her master's from the University of Dayton in Ohio. Both degrees are in education.

### Positive about change

As a young SCL in the post-Vatican II era, Sister Jane liked the changes in the Church; among them, the theology, English during Mass and street clothes instead of habits for women religious. She was in her 20s at the time and lived in convents with SCLs who shared

similar views. She acknowledges and respects that others struggled with the transitions.

In 1996, Sister Jane left the classroom to serve as Mother House coordinator. She enjoyed this ministry of assisting, working with and visiting Sisters who lived at the Mother House. She returned to education in 2000 as an administrator and teacher for Catholic schools in Garnett and Greeley, Kan. Then followed a brief job as a receptionist at the Church Offices of the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas.

After helping with the start-up year for the new Cristo Rey High School, Kansas City, Mo., Sister Jane became a member of the founding faculty. She served on the curriculum committee and taught reading and art. In her final role before retiring, she was a teacher's aide in the Foster Grandparent program at Resurrection School, Kansas City, Kan.

Retirement is far from dull for Sister Jane. She volunteers at the information desk at Providence Medical Center, Kansas City, Kan., and at the Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope. For several years, she has participated in an Alzheimer's research study at the University of Kansas Medical Center. She enjoys social gatherings and quiet time.

Family, friends and her SCL Community remain the greatest joys of her life. Sister Jane is deeply grateful for all the love she has experienced and shared, and for the many wonderful opportunities of being an SCL for 59 years.



Left to right, the Jacksons – Sister Judith, Roger and Sister Jane – and Sister Georgeanne Desch.



## Book Review

# Challenge: embrace the call to be prophets

Chittister, Sister Joan, OSB.

*The Time Is Now:  
A Call to Uncommon Courage.*  
Convergent: New York, 2019.



by Sister Mary Pat  
Lenahan  
SCL Candidate/  
Novitiate Director

The time is now! In the opening pages, Sister Joan Chittister, OSB, asks readers “Why read this book?” and “How do we really get out of the swamp we’re in?” She responds, “By confronting it with a vision, a commitment, courage.”

She dedicates this book to the reader and the prophet within each person. She begins by describing the two worlds in which we find ourselves. One is with the Statue of Liberty promising to welcome strangers to our shores and the other indicating that the welcome promised is an illusion, actually locking foreigners out. She also outlines some of the many disastrous forces threatening our world today.

Then the social advocate acknowledges that this book is really about the prophet within each reader and the choice facing the prophet who asks, “Will we take up what we know is our moral and spiritual responsibility: to make the world a better place for all, to bring the fullness of Creation for all” (p. 15) or not?

To further explain the role of the prophet, Sister Joan quotes Father Daniel Berrigan, SJ, an individual who fought for peace and believed that “the prophet is one who speaks the truth to a culture of lies” (p. 16). In deciding our role, the

author “offers the prophetic tradition as a guide as we move from the old ways of life to the eternal burning light of God, whom Scripture reminds us ‘is doing something new’ again” (p. 18).

### Characteristics of prophets

Prophets “live very much in the present for the sake of a future they know may never be their own” (p. 21). This choice demands great courage. The way of the prophet involves a “spirituality of awareness” that can lead to transformation in living out our daily faith in witness. Prophets, Sister Joan writes, “are more committed to the Word of God” and “to new questions than they are to old answers” (p. 21).

The author reminds the reader that responding in charity requires an uncommon generosity, but prophecy demands uncommon courage (p. 35). Prophets know that now is the time of salvation. The gift of prophecy with its rough edges and uncomfortable message brings the world closer to the reign of God. The author quotes the poet, Mary Oliver as she challenges prophets in these contemporary times in her “instructions for living a life: Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it” (p. 40-41).





This book reminds the reader that the prophet in each of us demands deep faith, clear vision, constant prayer and single-hearted focus to know that the time is now.

The prophet sees the world as God sees the world and believes that community is possible even as the fear of the unknown can frighten and stifle movement, at times. Sister Joan quotes the writer, William Faulkner, when he muses, “You cannot swim for new horizons until you have courage to lose sight of the shore” (p. 49). To further her point and speaking of audacity, she references a quote from John A. Shedd, “A ship in harbor is safe, but that’s not what ships are built for” (p. 55).

Prophets are authentic. Sister Joan refers to several prophets from Scripture, ordinary people who were called by God in prayer and prophecy to be agitators and to summon people back to what they should be doing to respond to the challenges of their times and to realize that “every moment is a moral moment, because every moment involves a decision” (p. 60). She continues, “If our souls are the souls of a prophet, wherever we are we stand up and speak a word of God in behalf of justice, peace, and the poor. Whatever the price we pay for doing it” (p. 61).

### **Courageous voice**

Prophets are holistic, self-giving and patient, and they call us to be the best of who we are and who we can be. The author quotes Harriet Tubman who says, “Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world” (p. 82). The prophet within recognizes that the dream must be realized through dialogue, listening, education, patience and process, but not by force. The prophet may be shunned, vilified and rejected, but the prophet’s voice cannot be silenced or ignored. Always asking the question, the prophet gives courageous voice to whether a particular action is right or not.

Throughout this text, Sister Joan recalls some of the prophets from Scripture with their messages that call God’s people back to being faithful to their promises. She cites contemporary prophets who responded to calls and challenges in their own times. She believes

that all are called to “proclaim truth” (p. 100). “Discipleship demands that we each take every Gospel seriously, that we use it to interrogate our own response and reaction to every issue, to every spiritual challenge. Then and only then can we school ourselves in the mind of Christ” (p. 100).

This book reminds the reader that the prophet in each of us demands deep faith, clear vision, constant prayer and single-hearted focus to know that the time is now. The need for community is great because without community, the prophet is left adrift, while speaking the Gospel with word and action. In this book, Sister Joan speaks clearly in her admonition that the time is now and this, our time, calls us to uncommon courage. This is the clarity with which she has been constant and courageous in her own writing and prophecy in the past and into the future – a future full of God’s promise, “Look, I am doing something new, now it emerges; can you not see it?” (Isaiah 43:19).

# SCLs help mentor seminarians

In addition to their core ministries at the House of Charity, New Orleans, Sisters Peg Johnson and Vicki Lichtenauer are mentoring seminarians enrolled in the pastoral ministry segment of their priesthood formation.

The SCLs had expressed their willingness to volunteer during a courtesy visit with Sister Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, OCarm, vicar for religious of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Sister Judith Zynda, OP, who is associated with the pastoral ministry program at Notre Dame Seminary, the archdiocesan seminary, invited Sisters Peg and Vicki to be mentors. Sister Vicki has participated since fall 2017; Sister Peg began in January 2018.

The seminarians take an experiential, pass/fail class in pastoral ministry. The course engages them in visits with persons who are elderly. The seminarians learn skills of listening and relationship-building.

The Sisters who are mentors attend the initial pastoral ministry class with the seminarians and receive a packet of materials. They meet with the seminarians assigned to them as a group and then one-on-one. They also accompany the students on their first visits to each senior adult's home. Over a semester, each seminarian makes five visits to two different senior adults.

At the conclusion of the semester, Sisters Peg and Vicki write evaluations and have another one-on-one with each of their respective seminarians. This semester, Sister Peg is mentoring three; Sister Vicki, two.

Sister Vicki has agreed to work with seminarians who may need additional help with study skills, time management or individual support. This may entail weekly meetings with one of the seminarians during a semester. Often, this is an international student who is new to the culture and doesn't have nearby family support. While Notre Dame

is the archdiocesan seminary, bishops of other dioceses in the United States and abroad send men to the New Orleans location for training.

Sister Peg has witnessed personal growth and enhanced comfort levels among the seminarians from start to finish of the two-semester program. The seminarians encounter challenges such as persons who won't let them get a word in edgewise or senior adults with health issues, addictions or questions about their faith. They also experience the deep spirituality of people they meet. When one of Sister Vicki's seminarians became a deacon last summer, a woman he had visited as part of the program accompanied Sister to the ordination ceremony.

"I am delighted and humbled that the archdiocese is proactively involving women religious in priestly formation," Sister Vicki says. "Working with our future colleagues is a very healthy experience."



Left to right, Sister Peg Johnson, Miss Johnnie and Henry, seminarian.



Looks like a selfie of Sister Vicki Lichtenauer, Clara and Luis (a seminarian and now a deacon).





## Blessings! ¡Bendiciones!

# Lessons learned and shared about washing feet

When she oriented new employees and at the time of her retirement (message below), Sister Maureen Craig often referenced Jesus washing St. Peter's feet as representative of the spirit of caregiving.

While she applied this imagery to the healthcare ministry at Providence Saint John's Health Center, Santa Monica, Calif., her words have universal application to the spirit of charity.

*"If I, therefore, the master and teacher,  
have washed your feet, you ought to wash  
one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow,  
so that as I have done for you, you should also do."*

— John 13:14-15

"In the gift shop at Saint John's there's a small statue of Jesus washing St. Peter's feet. Peter doesn't like it, but Jesus does it anyway. The washing of the feet sums up what we are about at Saint John's. We are called to be Jesus and to wash the feet of those in need and of those in poor health. Many times people don't like to be reminded they're in poor health, or to have their feet washed, but Jesus does it with love. And that's what we as caregivers are called to do: to be Jesus washing other people's feet.

"There are times in our lives when we've done that. But there also comes a time to be Peter – to stop and let others care for us. That's what you've been doing for me for so many years and through so much. It's not easy being Peter because we want to be Jesus. We want to be the people who are doing the running around. But the time comes for all of us when we have to stop and say, yes, please take care of me.

"I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the love you have given me when I wanted to run around being Jesus but needed to be cared for by all of you. And you know, this really is what healthcare is all about. It's what we, as a Catholic hospital, are about: caring for one another.

"We're taking God's role in our hands and saying, 'We're Saint John's, and we're going to love you and care for you.' That's what I wish for all of you today as we say goodbye after our long, long years – that we will remember that we are Jesus and taking on his role, and that sometimes we're going to be Peter and have to sit back. But we know which role we're doing. We're acting out the mission. I thank you."

— Sister Maureen Craig, SCL



At one of her farewell receptions, Sister Maureen Craig visits with Leland Foshag, MD, faculty at John Wayne Cancer Institute. On the table is the statue of Jesus washing the feet of St. Peter that Sister Maureen received as a gift on her retirement.

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