

VOICES

OF CHARITY

SPRING 2019

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OF LEAVENWORTH



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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

Sister Marie de Paul Combo (center) was the first SCL social justice coordinator followed by Sister Therese Bangert (right). John Shively now holds the position of coordinator of the newly named Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation.



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From the Community Director



Sister Constance
Phelps

As I write this column, we are in the midst of Lent as well as enjoying the first days of spring.

Recalling that the root word for Lent is “lente” or springtime, we are in nature’s season of new beginnings. From my perspective, this is a hopeful sign. For this is the season of reawakening, the season when hidden roots begin to stir from deep winter sleep and stretch toward the sun, eventually springing forth in new life. Nature is starting over. Lent says to start over again.

Those featured in this issue of *Voices* are individuals who exemplify hope. They are Sisters and laypersons, men and women who serve individuals, who give of themselves using their talents, skills and gifts. They are aware of the human condition and empty themselves of the trivial and superficial to respond to what is going on around them. They model their commitment to living in and serving a modern world in need. Those you meet in these pages share generously their thoughts, their faith and their stories. The articles capture some of their depth, courage and idealism as they start and start again.

During this springtime of hope, I pray for wisdom in the face of the unknown. I pray we are able see beyond the emptiness of life’s illusions to the pregnancy of possibility everywhere. It is amazing how easy it is to go through life and never notice what is going on around us, never wonder where God invites us to now, never pause to assess the present. I pray we have common sense in addressing the issues and needs of our day. I am confident if we use our creativity, together we can design patterns that will provide vision, witness and energy for transformation. May our hopes for what is to come be vivid and bold.

Lent says to start over again.

Sister Constance Phelps
SCL Community Director



Heart of the Matter



Introduction

As the guiding document of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCLs), the Community's Constitution emphasizes the call to "renew and recreate our works and our witness uniting justice and charity in our lives as servants of the poor."¹

Justice = addressing the root causes and underlying structures that lead to social problems and working to promote social change.

Charity = providing direct services to deal with the symptoms and effects of social injustice.²

A commitment to charity has characterized the SCL Community since its founding in 1858. The Sisters have cared for the sick and orphans, visited prisoners, educated people of all ages, provided social services – with special concern for those who are poor.

They have also worked for justice. The evolution of Catholic Social Teaching and the spirit and the documents of the Second Vatican Council further intensified this



The issues are burdensome and recurring, but there's still time for a light moment among (left to right) Sister Therese Bangert, Sister Marie de Paul Combo and John Shively.

commitment. Urgent social needs reached tipping points in the 1960s and 1970s and demanded responses. Encouraged to return to their foundational roots, the Sisters developed a growing recognition of the charism of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. This charism espouses acts of charity and work for social justice and systemic change.

Channeling this commitment to justice into a collective opportunity, in the mid-1980s at the recommendation of a task force, Community leadership established the SCL Social Justice Network to address peace and justice concerns. Part-time facilitators, including

current Community Director Sister Constance Phelps, coordinated the work of the network.

In 1987, leadership appointed Sister Marie de Paul Combo as the first SCL social justice coordinator. Sister Therese Bangert followed, holding the position from 2002 to 2018. In July 2018, the Sisters passed the baton to John Shively, current coordinator of the now named Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation.

Each coordinator has helped shape SCL involvement in social justice initiatives over the past 30 years in response to issues that have persisted and new ones that have developed.

¹ *Constitution of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth*, Nov. 11, 1983, Leavenworth, Kan.

² "Charity vs. Justice," Office for Social Justice, Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis.



Trailblazer: Sister Marie de Paul Combo

“People of faith have the responsibility to speak for those who can’t and to empower the voiceless to speak for themselves.”

— Sister Marie de Paul Combo

The prayerfulness of her mother and the social consciousness of her father influenced Sister Marie de Paul as she grew up in Butte, Mont. She learned early about the plight of the working class in the mining community and about Catholic Social Teaching. Sister Frances Therese Shea, her sociology teacher, made a lasting impression on the high school student. As a young woman, Sister Marie de Paul worked as a secretary during World War II.

She entered the SCL Community in 1948 and took the names of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and de Paul in honor of St. Vincent – both of whom figured strongly in the evolution of her theology and quest for justice. As an elementary school teacher and administrator in the 1960s, Sister Marie de Paul became involved with issues of school integration and fair housing. In the 1970s, she sent letters to SCL Community leaders expressing the need to increase awareness of the social teachings of the Church, the conditions of the times, and the depletion of natural resources worldwide. Central America became a focal point of her concern heightened by the violent deaths of Catholic activists and missionaries in El Salvador in 1980.

Sister Marie de Paul had been struck earlier by a statement from



Sister Marie de Paul helped set the course as she established the first SCL Social Justice Office.

“Justice in the World” issued by the World Synod of Catholic Bishops in 1971.

“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.”³

This message resonated with her, as she became the first full-time SCL social justice coordinator in 1987.

Some of the early work of the office and the SCL Social Justice Network focused on ensuring socially responsible investments and developing a corporate stance against the death penalty (1989). Providing timely information, action alerts and prayer services on issues were responsibilities of the position. An array of concerns called for responses: injustices in Peru, welfare reform, women’s issues, racism, environmental concerns and threats of nuclear weapons. Sister Marie de



In 2013, Sister Marie de Paul received recognition during a Charity Federation gathering in Leavenworth. She was the SCL liaison to the Federation’s NGO from 1997 to 2013. Clockwise from left, Sisters Jean Anne Panisko, Maureen Hall, Peg Johnson (partially hidden) and Marie de Paul.

³ “Justice in the World,” World Synod of Catholic Bishops, 1971 #6.



Staunch advocate: Sister Therese Bangert

“Perfect love casts out fear.”

— John 4:18



Whether at a desk, in a meeting or on the front line, Sister Marie de Paul's legacy is a lifetime of advocacy for peace and justice.

Paul shared background materials, encouraged action, and paved the way for the Sisters' active embrace of the call to be advocates.

She had the opportunity to exchange ideas with members of the Charity Federation and with persons in social justice positions in other religious communities. She served several years as the SCL liaison to the Charity Federation non-governmental organization (NGO) at the United Nations. She was a charter member of NETWORK and Bread for the World and very active with Peru Peace Network/USA.

“God calls us to this work,” Sister Marie de Paul believes. “People of faith have the responsibility to speak for those who can't and to empower the voiceless to speak for themselves.

“You can't not do some of these things,” she adds. “You can't let an injustice be or let it go, even though it continues. It's not our job to be successful. The Spirit demands that we be faithful to the Gospel.”

Sister Marie de Paul was social justice coordinator until 2001 and then served as assistant to Sister Therese Bangert from 2002 to 2018. She retained her role as SCL liaison to the Charity Federation from 1997 to 2013.

Sister Therese served on the first SCL Social Justice Executive Committee (formed in 1993), but she had no idea that this would eventually become her full-time ministry. Her first significant introduction to injustice and unfairness came in Topeka while working with youth placed at St. Vincent Home and with inmates at the Reception and Diagnostic Center. She perceived that broken systems victimized the people they were intended to serve.

During a year of clinical pastoral education, Sister Therese learned that when working for justice, it was important for her to distinguish between personal angers and the anger stirred in her because of injustice. She became familiar with Catholic Social Teaching through

the SCL Community's focus on these tenets.

As debate over reinstatement of the death penalty heated up in Kansas, Sister Therese became involved in lobbying against this legislation. She received on-the-job training on navigating the legislative system that proved valuable in her subsequent roles. When she wondered what she had gotten herself into, she recalled the Scriptural quote, “Perfect love casts out fear” (John 4:18). This rallying cry provided encouragement in succeeding years.

In the mid-1990s, Sister Therese advocated for welfare reform on behalf of the Kansas Catholic Conference. She accepted the SCL social justice coordinator position

Sister Therese Bangert (cont. on page 6)



Sister Therese's long history of advocacy against the death penalty finds a kindred spirit in Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ (right), author of *Dead Man Walking*.



In a panel presentation at the University of Saint Mary, four SCLs share their ministries and experiences working for justice and on behalf of those who are voiceless. Left to right, Sisters Therese, Sheila Karpan, Vickie Perkins and Cele Breen.

Sister Therese Bangert (cont. from page 5)

in 2002 on a part-time basis, continuing to share her time with the Kansas Catholic Conference. This arrangement continued until 2010, when Sister Therese devoted full time to the SCL social justice role.

Sister Therese followed Sister Marie de Paul's lead in the ministry of the Social Justice Office. She met with the SCL Social Justice Executive Committee twice annually. Speakers educated the group about issues, policy and advocacy concerns.

Issues in Kansas and a wide range of other justice concerns were priorities for Sister Therese. She asked Sisters across the country to stay attuned to the work of their states' Catholic Conferences and to contact their legislators on specific issues. The SCL Chapter Acts of 2010 and the Millennial Goals of the United Nations were helpful frameworks for guiding efforts of the office and the Social Justice Executive Committee. Sister Therese also turned to resources provided by the Leadership

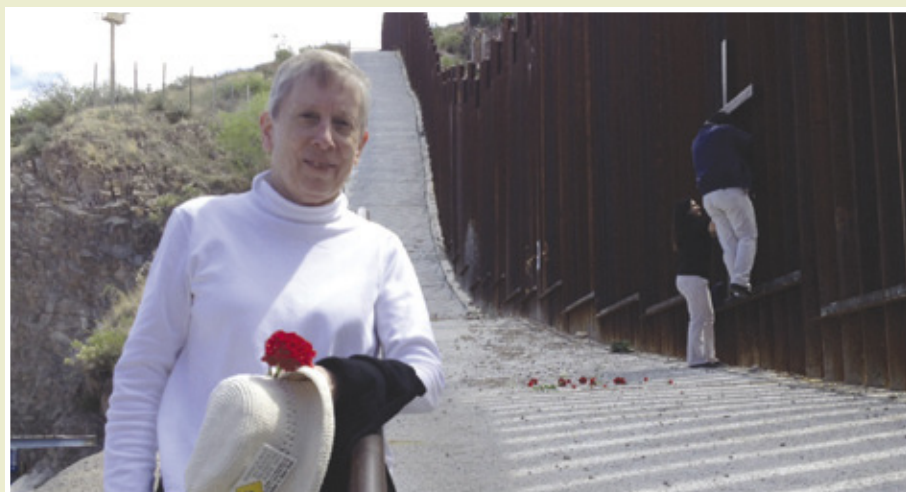
Conference of Women Religious and NETWORK. There was an abundance of issues to address:

- ▶ The immorality of nuclear weapons.
- ▶ Access to affordable healthcare.
- ▶ Increased gun violence.
- ▶ Ongoing wars.
- ▶ Acceleration of the debate on immigration.
- ▶ Continued poverty.
- ▶ Polarization in the country.
- ▶ Access to clean water.
- ▶ Care of creation.

Greater participation in the worldwide Vincentian family continued to raise awareness about systemic change and cultivate an expanded understanding of justice in the context of the Vincentian charism. Sister Therese fostered engagement of SCLs in advocacy with education, information and alerts. During her tenure as social justice coordinator, the SCL Community issued a statement in support of comprehensive immigration reform (summer 2011). SCL Associates became increasingly involved in the Social Justice Executive Committee and advocacy efforts.

Throughout her ministry, Sister Therese acknowledges that she stood on the strong shoulders of SCL predecessors who had opposed the death penalty years ago; who planted trees as part of their tradition of care for creation; who were beggars themselves in times of Community need. Pointing to the larger SCL Community, she says, "I felt a responsibility and an obligation knowing that I spoke for much more than myself."

In July 2018, Sister Therese received expressions of gratitude and recognition of her service during a meeting of SCLs. She remains involved with issues in Kansas and work with the state legislature.



The rights of immigrants to human rights is another prominent concern of Sister Therese's tenure as social justice coordinator. She is pictured at the border wall.



Policy pro: John Shively

“How can I live my faith in the world and not just do a job but live life in sync with the Gospels?”

— John Shively



SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF LEAVENWORTH

OFFICE OF JUSTICE, PEACE, AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



As John Shively assumed the coordinator's role in July 2018, he walked into an office with a new name – the SCL Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation. This transition occurred to encompass the evolving range of issues and to include the broader concept of creation (people, creatures, the environment) espoused by Pope Francis.

John completed his master's degree in international affairs at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis., in May 2018. The Kansas native has been a political observer from a young age and has always had the desire to help people. His new role allows him to pursue these paths while facilitating efforts of Sisters and Associates on behalf of justice, peace and integrity of creation.

There's a personal link for John as well. He grew up Catholic in a rural community affected by high rates of poverty and drug addiction. He asks, “How can I live my faith in the world and not just do a job but live life in sync with the Gospels?”

To orient himself to the coordinator's role, John researched historic files and met with individuals and groups of Sisters. He has also been meeting with four of the SCL Interest Groups that formed as an outgrowth



John brings strong listening skills, an engaging personality, and policy smarts to his role with the SCLs.

of the 2017 Leaven Assembly; these address issues including:

- ▶ The environment.
- ▶ Healthcare.
- ▶ Human trafficking.
- ▶ Immigration.

John sees tremendous buy-in by the Interest Group members who bring diverse experiences and strong commitment to the discussions. He likewise sees this among the Sisters who are responsive to action alerts to contact their legislators on specific issues. Similar to his predecessors in the coordinator's role, John wants to help people understand and work toward systemic change.

From his perspective, society has problems with this approach in that the status quo benefits many people, who don't want change because of this. Add to this the cultural mindset about the way society and markets work. “Our country has a strong tradition that values free markets with little regulation of

industry and no need for laws to protect workers,” he explains.

“In calling for ecological concern, Pope Francis is asking for changing attitudes and hearts regarding such issues as the environment and poverty,” John continues. “This will require conversion as a society and personal conversions on a number of issues.”

Burning concerns occupying John's time and attention include:

- ▶ Access to healthcare and Medicaid expansion with the perspective that healthcare is a human right.
- ▶ Immigration that has become a more polarizing and contentious issue.
- ▶ Care of the environment.
- ▶ Poverty, particularly in rural communities.

In addition to information, alerts and calls to action sent to Sisters and Associates, John has introduced a monthly newsletter to probe issues more in depth and to provide related resources. He has assumed the role of SCL liaison to the Charity Federation NGO at the United Nations, held first by Sister Marie de Paul then by Sister Eileen Haynes, SCL Councilor. Along with Sister Therese, he is monitoring proceedings of the Kansas Legislature. He also plans to reactivate a working committee and to use social media more proactively for advocacy.



Beyond All Borders

SCL Community subscribes to sustainable, renewable energy

The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCLs) Community was among early subscribers in a new wind energy initiative in the state of Kansas. Twenty-two organizations are currently enrolled in Renewables Direct, a program of Westar Energy, and will receive all or a portion of their electricity from the Soldier Creek Wind Energy Center to be built in Nemaha County.

Participating customers will be able to claim a portion of the energy generated by the wind farm as their own; retain all of the renewable attributes; and lock in a portion of their electricity prices for up to 20 years.

Keith Taylor, director of facilities, says that this helps the SCL Community meet its sustainability goals with Kansas' abundant, affordable renewable energy. He explains, "Starting in 2020, all of our electrical consumption will be both from our own solar panel generation on campus and from the Soldier Creek wind farm in Nemaha County. This is all 100 percent renewable, clean energy."

Additionally, Keith anticipates potential monetary savings from participation in this initiative. Westar announced the new program in July 2018. Construction of the wind farm north of Topeka, Kan., is scheduled to start in early-to-mid 2019 with operations slated to begin by the end of 2020. The project is expected to bring an estimated 250 construction jobs and 15 to 20 permanent green energy jobs to Nemaha County. Landowners will receive land-rights payments for the life of the wind farm.

Other organizations among the early subscribers include Benedictine College, Atchison; Kansas State University, Manhattan; University of Kansas, Lawrence; and Veterans Affairs Medical Centers in Leavenworth, Topeka and Wichita.

EARTH FEST 2019



Based on a great turnout and response in 2018, the SCL Care of Creation Committee is once again hosting **Earth Fest 2019** on **Sunday, April 28** from noon to 3 p.m. Activities will occur in the front circle drive area of the Mother House, 4200 South 4th Street, Leavenworth.

The free event will feature Earth-friendly activities and exhibits for people of all ages.

Wind turbines of the new Soldier Creek Wind Energy Center will resemble this one pictured at the Kingman center.

Photo compliments of NextEra Energy Resources

Center expands services, responds to diverse needs

Since joining the staff of Great Mines Health Center in January 2010, Sister Ann Schumacher has witnessed growth and expansion of services offered by this private, non-profit federally qualified community health center headquartered in Potosi, Mo. In her role as a family medicine physician, she values several recent developments and future plans that hold tremendous promise for further enhancement of care delivery.

In 2018, Great Mines partnered with the Kingston K-14 and Richwoods School Districts to establish comprehensive seasonal school-based clinics for students, parents, faculty and employees of the districts. These innovative clinics provide on-site oral healthcare, medical services and behavioral health services on the school campuses.

Offering these services at the schools makes access to care much more convenient for faculty, students and parents. It eliminates the need for parents to transport children to appointments, thereby reducing absenteeism. Great Mines has also started providing medical, dental and behavioral health services at two child and adolescent residential living facilities in Washington and St. Francois Counties.

In addition, the community health center has added the services of two licensed clinical social workers and has begun offering telepsychiatry services. Telepsychiatry allows patients to interact simultaneously verbally and visually with a psychiatrist contracted with the health center. "There is an extreme



Sister Ann Schumacher, MD, family physician (right), and Jill Bradshaw, radiologic technologist, are pleased with new equipment that helps expedite evaluation, diagnosis and treatment.



Great Mines Health Center CEO Gregory Roeback (left) congratulates Kingston School Superintendent Alex McCaul on the partnership developed to help address health concerns of students in the district.

shortage of behavioral health providers in the area," Sister Ann explains, "and we see our program as a great resource for the region."

The health center has also started providing outpatient opioid treatment services to help get patients off drugs. Great Mines is in the process of designing and building a new \$1.6 million outpatient mental health and substance abuse treatment facility adjacent to its current medical and dental office in Potosi.

Over the past year, Great Mines also added digital X-ray and bone density scanning services. The availability of radiology in-house provides patients with rapid access to the first step in musculoskeletal evaluations. Sister Ann says this allows physicians to formulate the next steps more quickly and start definitive treatment sooner. The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth made a donation to help with the purchase of the radiology equipment.

Great Mines is collaborating

with an obstetrician/gynecologist to provide services to expectant mothers and female patients of the health center. At the Potosi location in addition to physicians, providers include three family medicine nurse practitioners, a pediatric nurse practitioner and a women's health nurse practitioner. At the satellite site in Farmington, Mo., a family nurse practitioner and a pediatric nurse practitioner respond to patients' medical needs. Both sites have dentists and hygienists who offer dental services.

Looking ahead, Great Mines will be purchasing a mobile van. It will provide medical, dental and behavioral health services at different locations throughout the Washington and St. Francois region.

"These are exciting times for Great Mines," Sister Ann concludes, "and most importantly for the people we serve who otherwise would have to travel great distances to receive quality healthcare."



Formation for Life

The Spirit

AT WORK IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

While SCLs and an SCL Associate who serve as spiritual directors or provide spiritual companionship come from different backgrounds and training, they agree on several key points about this ministry. They have witnessed people – lay and religious, women and men, of different faiths and denominations, and diverse economic means and lifestyles – who have benefited immensely from this experience and who value this time devoted to reflecting on and strengthening their relationships with God.

What is spiritual direction?

Sister Mary Pat Johnson defines spiritual direction as companionship people on their spiritual journeys. “This involves helping people become more aware of God’s presence as they consider and understand how they are responding to God in their lives,” she explains.

Spiritual direction is not counseling, problem solving or teaching. Nor is it providing pastoral care or dispensing advice. As someone who worked 30 years in a problem-solving profession, Heidi Gainan, SCL Associate, says avoiding offering solutions while providing spiritual direction requires practice and patience. “If you try to solve problems, it’s not spiritual direction,” she has learned.

“Our role is to help each directee deepen his/her relationship with God and come to a greater awareness of the ways God is active in the person’s life,” says Sister Susan Chase.



During a spiritual direction session, Sister Susan Chase often closes with a prayer for a needed grace identified by the directee.

Several SCLs who do spiritual direction refer to it as a time of graced moments. “We provide a safe, caring place/space where persons can reflect on God’s movement in their lives and on God’s love of them,” says Sister Mary Pat Lenahan, who is completing her spiritual direction training.

Sister Ann Loendorf describes spiritual companionship as sacred space and sacred time of being intentionally present with the Holy One. She uses the imagery of light and believes that people have “God sparks” that never go out, unique energy that never leaves them – all signs of a relationship that is much larger than the person. This is the relationship spiritual companionship seeks to explore, understand and strengthen.

For Heidi Gainan, spiritual direction is listening to God with another person. Sister Kathleen Wood summarizes, “It is helping people discover how God is working in their lives and ways to trust their spirituality and be at peace with the good that life holds and offers.”

Why do people come for spiritual direction?

Sister Mary Pat Johnson finds that people have a hunger to know God and a hunger for meaning in their lives. A healthy, lively spiritual life cultivated by spiritual direction can help feed these hungers.

Some want help with their faith lives. They want to have a deeper experience of prayer. “Many come with a longing to get to know God better and ways to do this,” Sister Kathleen Wood believes.

Other people may feel disconnected from the Church or a church and are seeking to belong spiritually. Others may be discerning a life change and want to do this in a spiritual context with the added perspective of another person listening to them. Or, they could be grieving or feel stuck in their lives and in search of clarity.

Sister Margaret Hogan is a strong proponent of the value of discernment as part of spiritual direction as people grow in their understanding of ways to take Christ into the marketplace of their daily lives.

What happens during spiritual direction?

Generally, spiritual direction sessions are an hour in length and occur monthly. This may vary based on need, personalities and schedules.

The sessions are one-on-one: the director and the directee with the conscious recognition that God/Spirit is the third person in the interaction. “This time is a work of the Spirit,” Sister Mary Pat Lenahan affirms.

Sister Karen Guth provides a simple, prayerful environment in the office where she does spiritual direction. This includes carefully selected artwork representative of Jesus as a spiritual director and of life changes that can occur in the interaction of sharing and listening.

The first spiritual direction session is introductory as the directors strive to develop an understanding of ways the person has prayed or experienced God. The directors stress the importance of meeting people where they are. “God works so differently with people,” Sister Kathleen Wood elaborates, “that we can’t assume anyone fits a pattern or mold.”

Several of the spiritual directors begin the session with prayer – spoken or silent – to acknowledge God’s presence and openness to the Spirit. Heidi Gainan invites directees to let go of whatever else is going on in their heads. The direction is in the hands of the directee as the person shares his/her stories and heart. Sister Mary Pat Lenahan begins with the question, “What would you like to share?”

Sister Ann Loendorf often uses a question attributed to John Wesley, founder of Methodism, as a starting point. She asks, “How is it with your soul today?” She encourages people to go deep into their souls during this sacred time. She may also invite them to share where God is for them now in their lives and ways they are working on this relationship. “I’ll go wherever you go,” she tells them.

“The directee brings the content,” Sister Margaret Hogan says. “Together, we probe to find where God is in situations or happenings and what God’s saying through this. Sometimes, we need to be willing to sit with uncertainty for a while.”

Sister Kathleen Wood says it may take a while to draw some people out of themselves. Some are reticent and require leading or clarifying questions to prompt conversations, while others have a lot to say. Some seem to want to share their hearts, Sister Mary Pat Lenahan observes.

Spiritual direction involves listening to the stories and events that shape people’s lives. Spiritual directors ask directees how they are experiencing God in these different circumstances. Sister Mary Pat Johnson acknowledges that it’s sometimes hard for people to see God, especially during times that are difficult.

Sister Mary Pat says that the more people grow in their spiritual

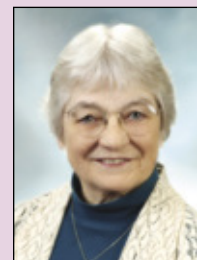
Spiritual directors



Sister Susan Chase



Heidi Gainan, SCLA



Sister Karen Guth



Sister Margaret Hogan



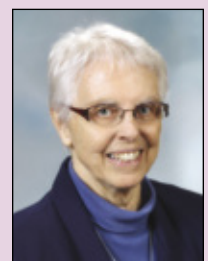
Sister Mary Pat Johnson



Sister Mary Pat Lenahan



Sister Ann Loendorf



Sister Kathleen Wood

journeys and trust the director, there will be lulls in the discussion. This pause for reflection is a good thing. “The real director is the Holy Spirit,” she says. “We’re the instruments.”

It’s important that the director “try not to get in God’s way,” as described by Sister Kathleen Wood, or over-direct. She may ask directees where/if God is in the experiences of their lives and what their prayer patterns are. She responds to what they have expressed and may ask questions to prompt further thoughts.

Sister Karen Guth encourages directees to pay attention to their experiences and to do an examen of thanksgiving at the end of the day. Toward the conclusion of a spiritual direction session, Sister Susan Chase may ask the directee what he/she wants to take from the sharing and then closes with prayer for a needed grace. Other directors put the closing prayer in the hands of the directee, saying, “Given what we shared today, what prayer do you want to offer?”

What are skills, gifts of spiritual directors?

Sister Mary Pat Lenahan describes spiritual direction as “an inside out ministry” – it’s important for the spiritual director to grow interiorly before helping others. Listening and being open are two essential and critical skills for the director.

Continuing this train of thought, Sister Karen Guth adopts words from the Rule of St. Benedict that discuss listening with “the ear of the heart” as she offers spiritual direction to get people out of their heads into their hearts. She explains, “I say to them, ‘I offer you another set of eyes to look at your experiences, another set of ears to hear what God may be saying to you.’”

The capacity to build relationships and cultivate trust are other important skills and gifts required of spiritual directors. “Part of the relationship-building is developing a level of trust that enables the directees to share from the depths of who they are,” Sister Karen continues.

Confidentiality is another critical factor in spiritual direction. Spiritual Directors International is a professional association that has a code of ethics that outlines other dimensions including maintenance of good boundaries and avoidance of providing spiritual direction for persons with whom the director has a close relationship.

On a regular basis, spiritual directors participate in peer supervision when they meet with other spiritual directors to discuss their experiences. The content of these sessions focuses on issues that may arise for the director when she is listening to the directee. The goal is to avoid the director’s being distracted by her own issues during a session.

More about spiritual direction

- ▶ Fees associated with spiritual direction (offered by persons featured in this article) range from no charge to \$50 per hour.
- ▶ For more information about spiritual direction, visit www.marillaccenter.org or call **913-680-2342** or **913-758-6552**.

What do people gain from spiritual direction?

The directees

Those who come for spiritual direction appreciate having someone listen to them. They feel affirmed. Sister Susan Chase says that over time she can see changes in a person’s faith life. The directee has a greater sense that God is with him/her and loves the individual along with a greater ability to see that God is present in everything. Adding to this, Sister Mary Pat Johnson says directees experience a deeper peace and gain a deeper sense of what God’s inviting them to be and to do.

“People feel good about the growth they experience in deepening their spiritual lives,” Sister Ann Loendorf concludes, “especially if they are on a journey of healing.”

Sister Karen Guth has had directees thank her for sharing her knowledge, experience, insights, humor and herself with them. “Because of you,” one person noted, “God and I are on speaking terms.”

The directors

The spiritual directors likewise share that they benefit from their roles. “I always leave a session feeling gifted with the directee’s sharing of where God is in the person’s life,” Sister Margaret Hogan says. “I feel blessed to have this opportunity.”

Part of the gift for Sister Susan Chase is being able to see how God works in people’s lives. “There’s something very precious about being trusted with people’s inner worlds,” she adds.

Sister Kathleen Wood calls spiritual direction a “very sacred experience” as she gets to walk with God as God draws people out of themselves. Spiritual directors note that they also experience a deepening of their own awareness of God. Sister Mary Pat Lenahan appreciates this chance to witness and celebrate God’s movement in her own life.

For Sister Karen Guth, spiritual direction sessions have a way of enhancing her prayer life and self-awareness. As a result, she believes that she can bring more to those she directs.

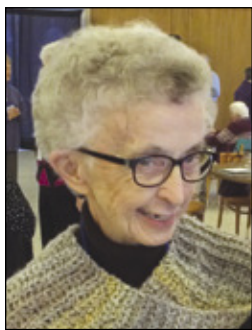
“I learn as much about myself and about God,” Sister Mary Pat Johnson notes. “It’s wondrous; it’s holy ground.”

Spiritual direction is also humbling and gratifying. “As someone shares his/her life journey, you get to know the person, and they grow to trust you,” Sister Ann Loendorf says.

“An amazing grace surrounds us,” Sister Kathleen Wood concludes.

Becoming a spiritual director – two different journeys

Recognition of their gifts by others helped pave the way for two Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth to become spiritual directors. Both were teachers for 30 years. Each pursued a different training program to achieve certification as a spiritual director.



Sister Margaret Hogan

Walking the campus at Regis University, Denver, during a retreat in the 1970s, Sister Margaret met the Jesuit provincial. He was on his way to Rome for a major meeting and discussion of the order becoming more involved in social justice. Sister Margaret responded by encouraging that the Jesuits also continue their

work in spiritual direction. The priest looked at her and said, “Why don’t you do that for others?”

At first, the SCL said, “No, not me.” But the suggestion remained with her. She discussed this with her SCL regional coordinator who recommended prayer and review of programs. Continuing to teach, Sister Margaret completed a master’s degree in spirituality through Creighton University, Omaha, in 1980, with emphasis on retreats and spiritual direction.

In 1982, Sister Margaret transitioned from teaching and counseling to parish ministry first in Butte, then in Hamilton, Mont., where she has served since 1983. She has offered spiritual direction on an individual basis and has been part of teams conducting retreats grounded in the spirituality of St. Ignatius, founder of the Jesuits. Ignatian spirituality leads a person to look inwardly and at his/her relationship with God with the goal of moving toward greater transformation. In spiritual direction, Sister Margaret helps the directee probe what God is saying in the moments and occurrences of that person’s life.

Sister Margaret is a mentor and consultant for the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises training program in Missoula, Mont. She has also had the rich opportunity of being involved in the five-year formation program for deacons and their wives in the Diocese of Helena. Sister Margaret gave sessions about spiritual direction and also offered spiritual direction for participants.

Through all of these encounters, she considers herself more of a receiver than a doer in this process that she values as a gift and graced experience.

Sister Karen Guth

In 1980, Sister Karen began working on a master’s in theology with an emphasis in spirituality at St. Michael College, Winooski, Vt. After six summers, between teaching middle school math and religion, she completed this degree. Looking back, she perceives this was God’s guidance in preparation for the next phase of her life’s journey.

While on a sabbatical from teaching, Sister Karen met with a spiritual director during a retreat. The person asked if Sister had ever considered being a spiritual director, adding, “You’d be good.” This led Sister Karen to reflect on times when people had come to her seeking spiritual direction. She believed that spiritual direction was a calling, and she prayed to discern whether this was a new calling for her.

Living in Denver and serving in full-time ministries, Sister Karen completed the formation program for spiritual directors, an offering of Vincentian Studies Institute, Chicago. On her return to Leavenworth, she became aware of The Keeler Women’s Center, a ministry of the Benedictine Sisters in Kansas City, Kan. Since January 2005, Sister Karen has offered spiritual direction at this center that serves women who have been marginalized. She also offers spiritual direction in an office at the SCL Mother House.

Doing spiritual direction became a priority for her when Sister Karen faced serious health concerns. “I realized that I want to be doing what God is calling me to do,” she says. Her directees have thanked her for holding them up when they were hanging on; for offering the solace, humor and human contact that were missing from their lives; for causing them to reflect, pray and connect with God – all goals of spiritual direction.





Book Review

Newer members find hope amidst changes in religious life

Mousseau, Sister Juliet, RSCJ, and Kohles, Sister Sarah, OSF (editors) (2018). *In Our Own Words: Religious Life in a Changing World*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press.



by Sister Mary Pat Lenahan
SCL Candidate/
Novitiate Director

“This book was born of an expressed need of newer religious for more contemporary work in religious life and the vows. The voices of thirteen authors pulse with new energy that both inspires and challenges readers.

They offer new interpretations to this constantly evolving life form in our Church and world today.”

This quote by Sister Ellen Dauwer, SC, appears on the back cover of this book and expresses its intent. In the introduction, the editors indicate that the contributors seek to share their particular identities, the meaning of their vows, and the expectations of their capabilities for leadership into the future. They articulate what it means for them to be women religious in today's rapidly changing world.

In their essays, the authors speak of their calls to religious life, the transitions into community life, the vows, the mission of Jesus, creating a culture of encounter, building bridges, extending compassion so needed in our world today, the challenges and opportunities of serving in the ministry of leadership, and looking to the future. Related to community living, one author speaks of navigating the negotiations required in shifting from an individualistic to a communal perception of reality in unity. She states that unity is a choice, so that discipleship is in relationship with others.

Religious vows and charism

With respect to the vows, another author writes that the vows unite us, allowing us to create a common,

shared story. This relationship affects the person's identity and choices. Quoting St. Irenaeus from the second century, the author reminds us that “The glory of God is the human person fully alive” and that our vows are lived in the context of our human lives. They are thus shaped by our cultural and historical context.

Obedience calls us to listen deeply to the voice of God through prayer and to others in a spirit of discernment. Poverty reminds us that all gifts are from God, and so we place our gifts at the service of others as we attempt to live simply and serve and advocate for those who are poor and most vulnerable. Celibate chastity calls us to be faithful to our commitments and provides the freedom to celebrate appropriate and precious relationships. Another author adds that the vows call us to be radical and rooted in the mission of Jesus, that celibacy is a mission to achieve true, human connections and mature relationships that are inclusive and that build bridges among people.

Another essayist speaks of the charism of religious life for local and global communities today. She quotes Sister Sandra Schneiders, IHM, who says that charism is a grace given not only for the sake of the community but also for the good of the entire Church. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, lived in a particular manner within a specific congregation or order as well as by the individual person. It is therefore a collaborative and communal gift and experience. The prospect of refounding is also highlighted. Working toward this calls for personal and communal conversion, so that



In their essays, the authors speak of their calls to religious life, the transitions into community life, the vows, the mission of Jesus, creating a culture of encounter, building bridges, extending compassion so needed in our world today, the challenges and opportunities of serving in the ministry of leadership, and looking to the future.

congregations can reclaim their inner and authentic voices, attending to and listening to their roots and their reality.

Culture of encounter

Within these essays, personal stories and reflections exemplify God's grace and presence alive and moving in the lives of the authors. Attention goes to cultural differences that exist and the need to grow in greater awareness and appreciation of diversity and intercultural dialogue and understanding.

Religious life, too, has its own culture that varies by congregation and demographics. However, connecting all is the culture of encounter within an intergenerational and intercultural reality. We are called to recognize the gift in each person and encounter as we also meet our true selves and our God. This personal encounter is an opportunity for transformation as we learn to be vulnerable, open to being taught, and willing to deeply encounter others as they truly are. Compassion continues to be a critical component of such openness.

Hesitancy for leadership

The essay on the call to leadership with its challenges and opportunities expresses why some newer members are hesitant to assume ministries of leadership in their congregations. The many transitions facing congregations are daunting due to experiencing loss of members, letting go of ministries and transitioning to lay leadership, and making decisions regarding properties, to name only a few.

Even though newer members may not have the longevity of emotional attachment to these apostolates, there is still the individual and corporate grief that accompanies loss. All of these decisions include emotional strain and implications. In this essay, the author asks whether some of the most important contributions of religious life have yet to unfold. This gives pause for reflection about the possibilities that may lie ahead. Each generation continues to be presented with particular challenges and opportunities that have yet to reveal themselves.

Trust in God

Scriptural and other references throughout the text ground the reflections of these essays in the Gospel and the call to religious life. Overall, reflections given by these newer members of congregations speak of an underlying sense of peace and joy with a strong reliance on faith in God's presence and loving mercy. Jesus remains the center of their lives through prayer within a community of loving support. Relying on and trusting in God, these women share their sacred spaces and hope in the future in God's calling them to service. They are open in sharing some of their struggles as they express their hope in the future.

Whatever the varied expectations of the reader, I would highly recommend this book. The text offers a glimpse into the future of religious life and the stories of faithful and courageous women, who today in this liminal space and time of uncertainty still say, "Yes, my Lord; I come to do your will."



SCL Associates



Consciously creating *community*

Taking her inspiration from Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner, SCL Associate Kitty Bronec considers growing older as part of her vocation. It's a time that holds choices, risks and graces.

Kitty and Len, her husband of 45 years and also an SCL Associate, have made conscious decisions about housing, lifestyle and building community in the independent living facility where they have resided since January 2014.



Adjusting to the changes that accompany aging, Jim Flynn prays for wisdom to see his situation from God's point of view. The SCL Associate also asks the Lord for guidance and courage. And he's carved out some ministries that keep him active and engaged.



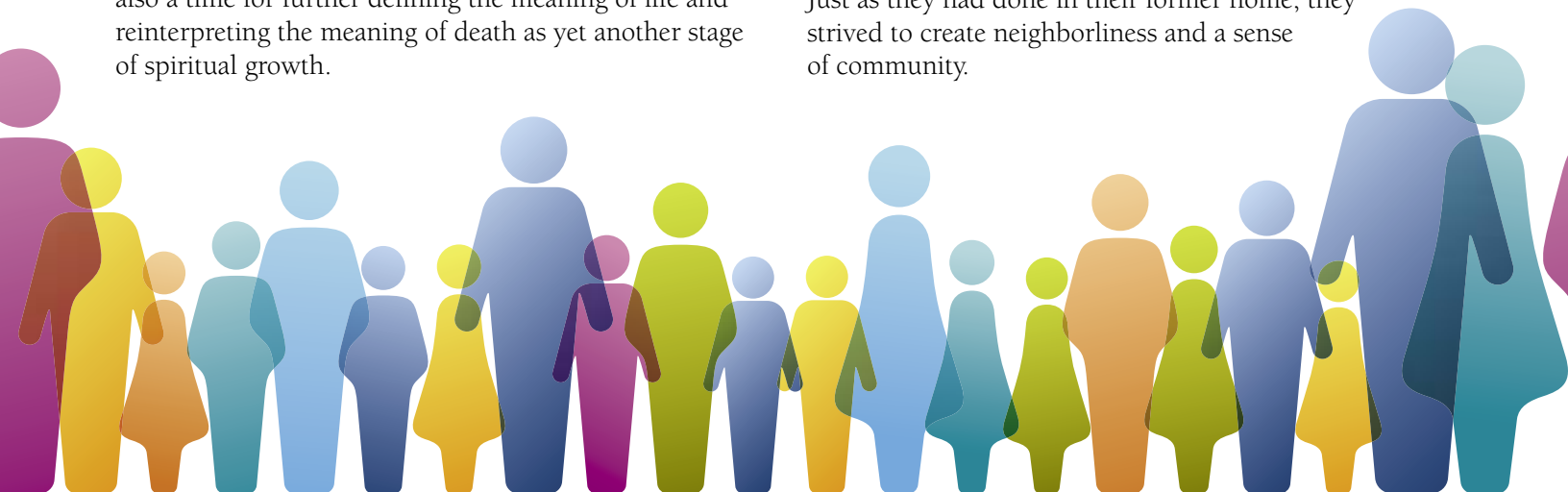
Jim remembers his brother telling him that getting old is a hard job. But he and the Bronecs demonstrate it's also a time for further defining the meaning of life and reinterpreting the meaning of death as yet another stage of spiritual growth.

Kitty and Len Bronec

The couple began to plan for a transition in spring 2013 as Kitty's eyesight continued to deteriorate. They wanted to stay ahead of decisions before health challenges made decisions for them. Kitty and Len studied living options and different financial arrangements.

Once they decided on McCrite Plaza at Briarcliff, Kansas City, Mo., Len says they experienced a certain amount of freedom and security. They had a great time with an estate sale and dispensing household items to family members. They sold their home of 16 years with its rambling yard and gardens.

When the Bronecs moved into McCrite Plaza, Kitty recalls it took her about five minutes to adjust. The living arrangements relieved her of housekeeping. The Bronecs were among the founding residents in the new facility, and they soon began to make new friends. Just as they had done in their former home, they strived to create neighborliness and a sense of community.



Gregarious by nature, the Bronecs didn't sit and wait for something to happen. They made concerted efforts to meet and talk with people. It didn't take long to realize that people are willing to open up to conversations on a spiritual level.

Kitty sees a part of the Paschal Mystery unfolding in her and Len's lives and among her neighbors. Akin to the apostles who let go of Jesus at the time of his Ascension, people who are aging face letting go of things that are good and dear to them – their ways of life, homes, cars, health. A certain fear often accompanies these experiences.

Len finds people open to being reflective about their situations. Given the opening, he couches the conversation in terms of choices a person can make as he/she ages: either choosing to reach out and grab the future, or to fight against diminishment. Placing this in a spiritual context can open doors to peace and hope.

The Bronecs continue to reach out to people. Kitty does this while she walks indoors a mile each day; Len in the exercise room and during the men's coffee; and both at meetings of the Residents' Council where Len is president, and Kitty is the star with her joke of the month. There are potlucks, Communion services,

monthly Masses and get-togethers the Bronecs host in their apartment.

"If the other residents see us as caring, reflective people," Len says, "maybe this will catch on."

"I view this as a ministry of building Christian community," Kitty says. "Our community is everybody."

Jim Flynn

Changing circumstances led Jim to make some major life decisions. He and his wife Elsa had lived in their home in Spokane, Wash., for 40 years. As health challenges developed, the Flynnns moved to a retirement community. Giving up their home was a difficult choice, and the couple realized they would eventually need to relocate to a setting that provided more support.

When Elsa died in August 2018, Jim faced that next transition assisted by his children. In October 2018, he moved to Emilie Court, an assisted living facility affiliated with the Sisters of Providence.

Jim says there are many activities at the facility that bring people together. Residents socialize over shared daily meals. There are ice cream socials, an exercise group and movies.



There are also spiritual opportunities. Jim counts daily Mass as the best thing about living at Emilie Court. In addition, there is a daily rosary group. Jim co-leads a Bible/prayer study group that he considers his way of helping people understand and love Christ through the Gospels.

He personally started a telephone ministry to the homebound – some who live at Emilie Court, others who don't leave their apartments very often. Jim makes regular calls to these individuals to keep social relationships alive. He also connects regularly by email and texts with his many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Every day, Jim prays the SCL Associate Prayer and the Perpetual Novena to the Blessed Virgin Mary. He values prayer as the strongest support for facing the challenges of aging. While he acknowledges that growing old is tough, Jim has also come to reinterpret the meaning of dying as another level of spiritual growth. He lives a life of gratitude for the good people and good experiences he has known. High on that list, Jim identifies Sister Mary Rachel Flynn (his sister) and the entire SCL Community.





Sister Ann Marita (right) enjoys a visit with Sister Mary Kenneth Messina.

Happy to help however she could and can

Throughout her life, one thing has providentially led to another for Sister Ann Marita Loosen.

As children, she and her two brothers enjoyed going to the airport in Kansas City, Mo., on Sundays with their parents. They watched planes take off and land, and people come and go. Sister's brother Jim became a pilot in the

Air Force; Dick owned his own company related to the aeronautics industry.

After a year in business school and a few other jobs, Sister Ann Marita took a position with Trans World Airlines (TWA). She loved secretarial work and quickly advanced to become secretary to the chairman of the executive committee

that was directing growth of the airline. At this time, TWA was involved with the government to expand air services overseas during World War II. The airline was transporting military leaders across the world and planning international services.

Sister's next promotion was to the position of chief clerk in personnel



at TWA. She never met Howard Hughes, but the famous entrepreneur was behind-the-scenes during this time. The times were exciting, Sister Ann Marita recalls.

During Saturday breakfasts with friends, the young woman listened with interest as those who were nurses discussed their jobs. Their dedication and their desire to care for the sick impressed her. She admired their willingness to further their education and skills, thereby contributing toward helping restore a war-torn world. Sister Ann Marita also had on-and-off thoughts about a vocation to religious life. At the same time, she enjoyed her career and life.

Eventually, she began to question, “Is this all there is?” The idea of a religious vocation resurfaced. The desire to do something constructive with her life led to a meeting with her pastor. Sister expressed that she was interested in a community that did nursing. The priest recommended the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. Within a few weeks of discussing this with Mother Mary Ancilla Spoor, Sister Ann Marita joined the SCLs. She entered nurses’ training and subsequently served and supervised in the Sisters’ hospitals.

Aware of Sister’s prior experience with TWA, SCL leadership

requested that she help establish personnel departments in several hospitals. Recognizing Sister Ann Marita’s talents, they also asked her to earn a master’s in hospital administration. From 1967 to 1995, Sister served in administrative roles in hospitals in California and Kansas. At Saint John’s Hospital, Santa Monica, she was an assistant administrator, ultimately responsible for adult and children’s behavioral health programs. She was president of St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center, Topeka, Kan.; Providence Medical Center, Kansas City, Kan., and Saint John Hospital, Leavenworth. She also had roles in the early years of the development of the SCL Health system.

Reflecting on these years, Sister Ann Marita says that she liked the administrative roles, particularly at St. Francis where she assisted with the start-up of Marian Clinic to serve the uninsured and engaged doctors and other health professionals in this ministry. She appreciated the health ministry as a way for people to help people.

Under Sister Ann Marita’s leadership, the hospitals enhanced facilities, upgraded computer systems and introduced productivity standards. What mattered most to her were the opportunity to

serve and the people with whom she served. She mentored several persons who became healthcare leaders in their own right. She enjoyed acknowledging the volunteers and letting them know how great they were. She had a reputation for empowering staff to do their jobs and for cultivating teamwork. Peers acknowledged her as an astute businessperson who was compassionate and concerned about people and issues.

“I was who I was,” she says of all those years and many interactions, of her service on boards of directors and of recognition for outstanding leadership. She was happy to help however she could if it meant being able to do something for people.

When she first retired from her role as hospital president, Sister Ann Marita worked with the health system as a legislative liaison and advocate. She then volunteered at the hospital where she had served as CEO. She also did volunteer service at the SCL Mother House.

Today, Sister Ann Marita lives in Ross Hall where she interacts with other SCLs and is committed to praying for the sick and dying and for the Church. Her philosophy remains, “You do the best you can – all with God’s help – and you look forward to the good that is yet to be.”



Ministries

Collaborative spirit accounts for long-term success of book discussion program

Since 2007, almost 600 high school juniors have participated in 22 book discussion sessions sponsored by the University of Saint Mary (USM) English program and facilitated by English majors. The program's a win-win for everyone involved.

Students from high schools in the surrounding region gain exposure to a college campus. The USM English majors try their hands at lesson preparation and teaching. The university gains exposure to prospective students. Faculty members take pride in the fruit of their labors as USM students plan the program and team-teach the high schoolers.

Sister Susan Rieke, professor emerita, was department chair when the program began. She credits Sister Rosemary Kolich, current English program director, with the book discussion program's success. "It was Sister Rosie's idea," Sister Susan says. "She secured funds from the academic dean's office, made all the necessary

contacts, and, especially in the beginning years, did all the coordination."

In succeeding years, English majors have become increasingly involved. The department offers the book discussion twice annually. A faculty member identifies a book – generally a novel – for discussion. Sister Rosie purchases a supply of the books, compliments of a USM Program Enhancement Award and other funding sources.

Preparation and discussion sessions

The USM students and faculty read the upcoming year's book in preparation. During the fall semester, they meet to develop discussion questions around key elements of the book such as symbols, themes and characters. Eight USM students pair up in four teams with each team exploring a different dimension in depth. Concurrently, Sister Rosie invites participation through her contacts at the high schools. One high school is selected to participate each semester. Four to six weeks

Masterminds of this year's University of Saint Mary book discussion include, left to right seated, Carissa Rowell, Kylie Visocsky, Elena Nine, Dr. Jill Hebert-Carlson; standing, Darcy Noe, Michael Wray and Sister Rosemary Kolich.



before the discussion session, Sister sends books to the high school so the students can read and prepare.

Elena Nine, USM junior, describes a typical morning of the actual book discussion. USM students and faculty meet and greet their guests over refreshments in the English department. Next, everyone gathers for an opening presentation. A representative from the university welcomes the students – usually the provost or the division chair of humanities and liberal arts.

From that point, groups of high school students rotate every 15 minutes to a different classroom to cover four discussion topics led by the USM English students. The entire group reconvenes for a final discussion and a brief presentation by a representative from the USM admissions department. Stopping for lunch on the return trip to their school caps off the morning for the high school students.

USM students invested in the process

Some of the USM students have been involved with as many as five book discussions during their years at USM. Michael Wray, junior, says he tries to connect the discussion to today's reality – news and events with which the high school students can identify. "We talk about ways the themes or story relate to them," Elena adds.

Evaluations completed by the high schoolers prove this is working. Carissa Rowell, USM junior, an aspiring college professor, says students find the discussion relatable to their lives. They make connections between literature and life.

Darcy Noe, senior, identifies the biggest challenges as dealing with silence and jump-starting the conversation in the classroom. Kylie Visocky, junior, admits that she has learned some techniques from her USM professors.

Program continues to expand

Sister Susan Rieke is impressed and proud that USM alumni who are English teachers are now bringing their students to the book discussion. In a new development, the USM team plans to take the program on the road in fall 2019. They will travel to Olathe South High School, Olathe, Kan., where Bailey Hightower (USM '18) has 130 students who will participate in the book discussion.

Sister Rosie attributes the success and growth of the program to many persons. She acknowledges the initial support of retired Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Bryan LeBeau and the continued support of current Provost Dr. Michelle Metzinger



through Program Enhancement Awards. Financial backing has also come from Tony and Sharon (SMC '65) Albers, San Diego, Calif.; McGilley Chairs former and current Sister Susan and Dr. William Krusemark; and Dr. Karenbeth Zacharias, chair of the Starr Center for Peace and Justice. Sister Rosie gives special recognition to the efforts and encouragement of Dr. Jill Hebert-Carlson and retired colleagues Dr. Joy Raser and Sister Susan.

And most of all, Sister Rosie values the ownership, leadership, enthusiasm and hard work of the USM English majors and students, who have coordinated the book discussion planning and sessions. She jokes that her most difficult task is determining which flavor juice to buy for the refreshments.

"I couldn't be more pleased with how this program has developed," Sister Rosie says. "And now, alums are engaging their students in the book discussion program. It's exciting to see the program continue to grow."

Vincentian charism resonates with USM alums

Nishimwe Goreth and Geoff Peterson come from totally different backgrounds, but both have large hearts of charity. The lives of the two alumni of the University of Saint Mary (USM) intersected in fall 2018 when they shared their stories during an event on the Leavenworth college campus in observance of the feast day of St. Vincent de Paul.

NISHIMWE GORETH



Nishimwe (right) remains close to Sister Diane Steele, USM president. Sister Diane was Nishimwe's faith chat partner throughout the alumna's college years.

Nishimwe and eight siblings were born and spent many years in a refugee camp in Tanzania after their parents fled Burundi in East Africa. The family came to the United States when she was 12. During her junior year in high school in Dallas, Nishimwe and four refugee camp friends brainstormed on Facebook about ways to benefit their homeland. Burundi has a history of civil war, genocide and political unrest. It is one of the poorest countries in the world, and fees in public schools are beyond the means of many people.

As a high school senior and with her friends, Nishimwe formed Burundian Youth of Tomorrow, a vehicle for collecting and dispersing funds. The group first sent money to an orphanage to assist with getting kids into schools. Next, they contacted a Catholic parish in one of the poorest provinces to identify five youth who could benefit from support for their education. One beneficiary completed her studies and is now a teacher in Burundi. Nishimwe has remained involved in this initiative with the

goal that it will eventually become a foundation.

As a USM student (2014 to 2018), Nishimwe organized a book drive on behalf of kids in Burundi and participated in other service projects. Through her association with campus ministry, she learned about St. Vincent de Paul and the Vincentian charism. She came to appreciate the spirit of charity as foundational to the missions of the university and the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. She also recognized that her works of charity align with St. Vincent's teaching.

Nishimwe felt at home at USM where people were welcoming and eager to help. She was the first of her siblings to attend and graduate from college. She currently works as a student actuary in a life insurance company and is taking required tests to advance professionally in this field.

Having experienced vulnerability in her own life, Nishimwe understands what it means to need help. As part of the Vincentian family, she also understands and exemplifies the importance of going the extra mile to assist others.

GEOFF PETERSON



In his remarks to USM students, Geoff encourages them to embrace service and charity as a way of life.

Photo compliments of University of Saint Mary Marketing and Communications

When Geoff attended USM from 2005 to 2009, he appreciated that his professors cared about him, his studies and activities, and his plans and dreams. His coursework focused on a double major in biology and theology; he played basketball on a scholarship; and he completed required service hours.

His “aha” moment came in a philosophy class during his junior year when Dr. Brian Hughes lectured on the meaning of charity – doing only for the other’s well-being. This resonated with Geoff to the extent that from that point forward, he adopted charity as his life goal.

Not long after, Geoff received

an invitation to participate in the Bethany Prison Ministry. Going into Lansing Correctional Facility each week and meeting with Catholic inmates to prepare for the weekend’s Mass had a profound effect on the college student.

“Service started to be personal to me,” he remembers. “It was what I was meant to do.”

And service is what Geoff went on to do. He completed his dentistry degree at Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, Ore. In 2013, he received a public health award for devotion to the field. In addition, Geoff was named volunteer of the year and received the International

College of Dentists leadership award.

His original plan was to work in a prison setting. Instead, Geoff became dental director of the Health Care Collaborative of Rural Missouri. He oversees dental operations of this federally qualified health center and sees patients out of its Waverly, Mo., location. This rural health network focuses on addressing needs of low-income, under- and uninsured residents with services available in dental offices and via mobile dental vans. As part of his job, Geoff does dentistry for juvenile offenders placed in the custody of the Missouri Department of Youth Services.

When he spoke to students at USM last year, Geoff urged that when they do service, it should be personal and that they need to believe with their hearts in what they are doing. “If you can commit yourself to being with people in pain or who are suffering,” he said, “you will want to serve going forward.”

Geoff admits that he didn’t know much about St. Vincent de Paul until he did research for his 2018 presentation at USM. He came to realize that other people had modeled the Vincentian spirit to him by acts of caring and helping, and that he could be Vincent to others through his commitment to charity.

(Geoff has a family history with the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. Sister Madelon Burns was his great aunt. Geoff’s mom Amanda is an alumna of the University of Saint Mary. Amanda and husband Gregg are both SCL Associates. Geoff’s wife Becky (Summers) is a USM alumna also as are his sister Lindee Peterson and sister-in-law Ashley Packham Peterson.)



Re-Markings

Religious icons restored to their former beauty

Recent restoration of art in the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Oratory at the Mother House of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth (SCLs) has significantly revived vibrant colors in the paintings. An added bonus was the uncovering of a previously unknown dedication signed by the original artist.

Peggy Van Witt, founder and chief conservator of Van Witt Fine Art Conservation, Overland Park, Kan., completed the restoration. Her work included the large icon/painting of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and the 14 Stations of the Cross, all dating to 1940.

Before conservation treatment, the paintings showed signs of extensive deterioration. The surfaces were flaking with “craquelure” (pronounced “crack loor” – a network

of fine cracks in the paint or the varnish of a painting); the gold leaf had significantly faded, some areas void of any remaining gilding; the gemstones were loose, detached or missing completely from the crowns; and the luster that once radiated from the icons had dulled. Peggy thoroughly examined the artworks and took their respective conditions into consideration to allow for proper cleaning, stabilization and restoration of all losses.

The conservator worked on the Stations of the Cross in the small chapel. She took the large icon to her studio for its major restoration. Throughout the restoration process, Peggy drew upon her vast experience and adhered to the *Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice* of the American Institute for Conservation

of Historic Works (AIC). She returned the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help to the chapel for installation under ultraviolet protective conservation glass.

Lino Lipinsky painted the art in 1940 when he designed the interior of the small chapel on the main floor of the then new SCL Mother House, dedicated on Nov. 11 that year. When the maintenance team removed the painting of the Madonna and Child from its custom frame, Peggy and Tonya Crawford, SCL archivist, discovered a tiny inscription along the bottom right side of the art. Presumably, Lino, who had fled Italy at the beginning of World War II, painted the words “Patris in memoriam” – “In memory of his father.” His father Sigmund, also an artist, had died of a stroke in Italy within hours of knowing that Lino had reached the United States.

About the conservator

A third-generation art conservator, Peggy has restored many other notable works including paintings of Thomas Hart Benton; installed and conserved artwork in the Crystal Bridges Museum of Art in Bentonville, Ark.; and stabilized the NASA flight manual that astronauts carried with them to the moon and back.

Working in the arts is second nature to Peggy who credits her mother, an arts and antiques dealer, and her grandmother, a trained conservator and artist, for instilling



Peggy Van Witt dons a large set of magnifier glasses for an early inspection of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help icon.



Returned to its original position, the icon is the focal point of the Our Lady of Perpetual Help Oratory (Chapel) at the SCL Mother House.

her love and appreciation of art. The two women laid the foundation upon which Peggy has built her own profession. Looking back on her upbringing she remarks, “Art was what we did.”

Born in the United States, Peggy grew up in Germany. Her mother took Peggy and her older brother, then infants, back to her homeland in Europe after their father died. As a young woman, Peggy had a successful career as a creative director of a large American advertising agency in Germany. During her time at the ad agency, Peggy traveled extensively, lived in nine countries and learned four languages.

She quickly realized the untapped



Tonya Crawford, SCL archivist (left), and Peggy admire the completed restoration of the large icon.

market for art conservation in the United States. Her brother, who had earlier returned to the U.S., gave Peggy her first commercial space in Westport, Conn., where she had her studio for six years. “I never looked back after this,” she says. As the business grew to accommodate the high demand for conservation, Peggy became a professional associate of the American Institute for Conservation in the United States. She moved to the Kansas City area in 2003. The Overland Park Van Witt Fine Art Conservation studio restored over 300 works of art in 2018. It continues to serve a growing market of museums, historical societies and collectors nationwide.

Encounters with Vincentian family transformative for young woman

Allison Duber is having the time of her life – all stemming from her recent involvement with different branches of the Vincentian family.

A chance encounter while volunteering in a church food pantry on her college campus introduced the senior sociology major to a former Colorado Vincentian Volunteer (CVV). At that time, Allison was searching for a service opportunity. She had earlier applied to the Peace Corps. However, the CVV program seemed a perfect fit that combined service, faith and a multi-cultural dimension.

Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, and an alumnus of Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Mich., Allison spent a year in Denver (August 2017 to August 2018) as a Colorado Vincentian Volunteer. She lived in community with six other women and three men who shared chores, meals and prayer. She volunteered at Mount Saint Vincent as a mental health worker and a paraprofessional.

Allison describes her year as a Vincentian Volunteer as transformative. She lived downtown in a large city; learned about the Vincentian charism; encountered persons who



At the border in Sunland Park, N.M., Allison talks through the fence with a little girl in Anapra, Mexico.

were homeless; and had life-changing experiences. She traveled to the House of Charity, New Orleans, for a discernment opportunity and went with other Colorado Vincentian Volunteers to the southern border for an immersion experience. During that time, Allison attended a Vincentian Family Gathering where she learned about AVE (After Volunteer Experience), hosted by the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati.

After fulfilling her CVV commitment, Allison transitioned to AVE based in southern New Mexico. From August to November 2018, she crossed the border to work with children with special needs. She also had access to spiritual direction and career/vocational counseling and lived in community. In New Mexico, Allison encountered the Sisters of Loretto who opened a shelter for migrants coming from

detention centers. Welcoming people into the dining room at the shelter, she witnessed their tremendous faith despite having lost everything.

Following this whirlwind 15 months of rich experiences, Allison returned to Denver where she landed a job at Mount Saint Vincent. She renewed her acquaintance with Sister Michael Delores Allegri and joined the SCL in her ministry of caring for foster children. Their household includes four children ages 6 months to 5 years old. Allison has also applied to graduate school to begin working on a master's in social work.

"It's been a wild ride," the 24-year-old says. She remains open to discernment about religious life, but Allison's focus is on identifying the line of work she wants to pursue. Living simply, identifying with persons who are poor, and doing God's work continue to resonate with her as she figures out the next steps and stops in her life journey.



Allison and friends at Clinica de Proyecto Santo Nino in Anapra, Mexico.



Sister Vicki Lichtenauer (front row, left) met Allison (back row, third from left) during a service project organized through the House of Charity, New Orleans.



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.



SISTERS OF CHARITY
OF LEAVENWORTH

Leavenworth Catholic Schools recognize SCLs

This year's "Ignite the green & white event" hosted by Leavenworth Catholic Schools recognized the **Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth; Carol Schmidt, SCL Associate**; and Sherri Schwinn for their contributions to Catholic education in Leavenworth. The event occurred on March 9, at J.W. Crancer's event space, Leavenworth. Proceeds will fund scholarships for students to attend Xavier Catholic School. Among other activities during the evening, Sister Diane Steele gave a tribute to Catholic education.



Carol Schmidt,
SCLA



Sherri Schwinn

The event acknowledged the SCL Community's long association with local Catholic education dating to shortly after the first Sisters arrived in Leavenworth in 1858. Carol was honored for her dedication to Xavier Catholic School that began with her first teaching job there in 1979. Today, she volunteers her talents for the school's music program. Sherri received recognition for her outstanding volunteer service to Xavier Catholic School. She has contributed her time as a room parent, to the PTO, to the IMAC booster club, and with various fundraisers throughout the years. Sherri also contributes her talents by photographing Xavier students and events.

Alumni honor Sister Kathleen

Alumni of the University of Saint Mary (USM) paid special tribute to **Sister Kathleen Wood** for her years of service as a professor in the college's theology department. Sister Kathleen was honored during the USM Kansas City area Fall Luncheon on Nov. 4 at Grand Street Café, Kansas City, Mo. The USM KC Alumni Council hosts the annual event. Sister Kathleen currently serves as a spiritual director on staff of Marillac Center, Leavenworth.



SCL named 'Woman of Distinction'

Sister Barbara Aldrich was among three honorees during the Nov. 8 Girl Scouts of Colorado Women of Distinction Western Slope Breakfast. Sister Barbara is vice president of mission integration, St. Mary's Medical Center, Grand Junction. Girl Scouts of Colorado honors top women leaders in the community with the Women of Distinction recognition for their achievements as business, community and civic leaders. Award presentations occurred during a special breakfast at the Two Rivers Convention Center. Other honorees were Jeni Brown, chief financial officer, J.G. Management Systems, Inc.; and LeAnn Zetmeir, philanthropist, community leader and president of St. Mary's Foundation.



Gratitude expressed for service

The Diocese of Helena celebrated **Sister Rita McGinnis** for her 19 years of service to the local Church during a special event on Nov. 15. Friends and colleagues gathered in the

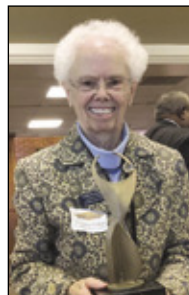


Brondel Center at the Cathedral to honor Sister's time in Montana and bid her farewell on her return to Kansas.

Several speakers from the Chancery office and the SCLs thanked Sister Rita for her leadership, hospitality and outstanding organization that inspired, motivated and helped many. At the close of the evening, all in attendance bowed their heads and outstretched their hands to bless Sister Rita (center in photo).

Two awards for Sister Vickie

On Nov. 13, **Sister Vickie Perkins** received the Athena Award from the Leavenworth-Lansing Area Chamber of Commerce Women's Division. Since 1986, the award has recognized outstanding contributions of women to the community. Sister Vickie is the founding executive director of the Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope. In May, Villa St. Francis, Olathe, Kan., will present her with The Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann Sanctity of Life Award.



Congratulations 2019 SCL Jubilarians

75 years

Sister Catherine Nichol

70 years

Sister Josephine Bustos
Sister Mary Julitta Doerhoff
Sister Lucille Harrington
Sister Mary Clarice Lousberg
Sister Peter Parry
Sister Frances Russell
Sister Mary Marcianna Trujillo
Sister Mary Geraldine Yelich
Sister Marie Benedict Young

60 years

Sister Barbara Aldrich
Sister Patricia Canty
Sister Donna Jean Henson
Sister Victoria Perkins
Sister Constance Phelps
Sister Therese Marie Steiner

25 years

Sister Ann Schumacher



Generosity acknowledged

Sister Marie Noel Bruch received a special gift on Jan. 3 in gratitude for her kindness and generosity. Sister had donated 10 handcrafted necklaces to raise funds for Denver area residents' trip to World Youth Day in Panama in January 2019. With the \$350 raised, the Denver archdiocese helped a family pay for its child's airfare to the event. Auxiliary Bishop Jorge Rodriguez blessed

a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe to give to Sister Noel as a token of appreciation. Sister Sheila Karpan brought the gift to Kansas.

Scholarship endowed in SCL's name

Sister Anita Sullivan received special recognition during the Distinguished Alumni Awards Ceremony at Butte Central High School, Butte, Mont., on Jan. 28. A student taught by Sister Anita in the 1970s established an endowed scholarship in Sister's name. The anonymous donor requested that scholarship preference go to students interested in math, which Sister Anita taught. The inscription on the plaque reads: "Butte Central Catholic School System appreciates your investment in the future of Catholic education." Sister Anita is an alumna of Girls Central in Butte.



Sister Anita (left) holds the award she received and shares the happy occasion with Gert Downey, SCL Associate.

Photo compliments of Janice Downey

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



Blessings! ¡Bendiciones!

The tales of two statues

Two statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary hold places of prominence in the history and tradition of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. One statue journeyed from Nashville as the pioneer SCLs arrived in Leavenworth in November 1858. The second commemorates an apparition of Mary following a tragic accident. Both statues have been restored in recent years.



Incomparable Virgin

The Sisters of Charity of Nashville had determined the need to leave the Tennessee diocese and seek a new home for the Sisters and their ministry. Before Mother Xavier Ross travelled to St. Louis to identify possibilities with bishops gathering there, the Nashville Sisters prayed a novena to the Queen of Heaven. They promised that if she would provide a home for them, they would pray this same novena forever in her honor.

In St. Louis, Bishop Miege invited the Sisters to come north to his diocese based in Leavenworth. When Mother Xavier returned to Nashville, she told the Sisters, “The Blessed Virgin has heard our prayer.” (*History of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas*, by Sister Mary Buckner)

Sister Mary Buckner writes that with the baggage and furniture that arrived in Leavenworth from Nashville in 1858, there was a small plaster image of the Blessed Virgin, “dear to the hearts of the Sisters, for before it their successful Novena had been made.” This statue is behind glass in the Ann Ross Chapel at the SCL Mother House.



Apparition amidst tragedy

On Friday, June 16, 1882, a tornado struck the tower of St. Mary's Academy, Leavenworth. Sister Mary Zita Sullivan was able to hurry 18 young girls to safety. They knelt around her in prayer as Sister realized that four of her charges were missing – victims of falling debris.

Relaying the recollections of one of the survivors, Sister Mary Buckner writes, “While kneeling there, one of the girls called out, ‘Look! Oh look there!’ and right in front of us was a round space cut in the wall and inside of that knelt the Virgin with face upturned and hands outstretched beseechingly toward Heaven. It was a wonderful vision, and one never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it.”

In rebuilding that portion of the academy, the Sisters erected a shrine to Our Lady on the spot where the apparition occurred. In May 1944, students dedicated the shrine “as a token of love and appreciation of her [the Blessed Virgin Mary’s] continued protection.” (*We Came North* by Sister Julia Gilmore) This statue is in the SCL archives awaiting placement.



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