

# VOICES OF CHARITY



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Xavier School perpetuates  
SCL charism, partnership  
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**RE-MARKINGS**  
Team honored to meet needs  
of Mother House and Ross Hall SCLs  
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SISTERS OF CHARITY  
OF LEAVENWORTH

## Chapter 2022 Directional Statement

NOW, WITH GOD'S GRACE, we are called in these days

“...to give freely of ourselves and our goods  
for the sake of the Kingdom...” (*SCL Constitution*, Norm 14)

In the spirit and charism of Vincent, Louise, Xavier, and our founding Sisters, we step into our future with a renewed sense of mission.

Through the lens of integral ecology, we will:

- tend to the care of marginalized people and the fragile earth;
- use spiritual and tangible resources to meet the critical needs of God's people and earth;
- broaden collaboration with local and global groups working to achieve systemic change;
- explore our relationship with sponsored works;
- clarify the structure of our governance model.

As Gospel-centered, ecclesial women rooted in Christ, we are called to love and serve in these times and in these places and to stand and pray with those who suffer, who grieve, who hope.

NOW, WITH GOD'S GRACE.

**ON THE COVER:**

Xavier Catholic School students Claire DeLiso (second-grade) and Gabe Wise (eighth-grade) with (left to right) Sister Elizabeth Skalicky; Sadie Schubert and Janet Meyer, teachers; and Sister Mary Jane Schmitz.

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Spring 2023

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## FROM THE **Community Director**

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Sister Eileen  
Haynes, SCL

In the last issue of *Voices of Charity* – Fall 2022 – each of us was invited to reflect upon the relationships that we have been blessed with: familial, personal, social or professional. We were reminded of the interconnectedness of these relationships as they guide and shape us throughout our lives.

I invite you now to consider how relationships not only influence but evolve. As you read each article in this Spring issue, allow yourself to see the underlying thread of the Vincentian charism as it responds to this era of change in which we find ourselves. What is the impact that God's Spirit continues to make within and among us, thereby effecting change within those we are called to serve?

The charism entrusted to St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac continues through God's own desires. We are now called forth by God: SCLs, Associates, employees, young adults, partners through our sponsored works and other ministries locally, nationally and globally. What is the paradigm shift that is occurring in our lives as Gospel-centered persons?

May we truly seek God's grace to allow the Vincentian charism to flourish and evolve to meet the critical needs of our sisters and brothers and Earth. Now, with God's grace.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sister Eileen Haynes, SCL".

Sister Eileen Haynes  
SCL Community Director



# Heart of the Matter



Xavier Catholic School students visit the grave of Mother Xavier Ross, SCL founder, in Mount Olivet Cemetery.

## Xavier Catholic School perpetuates charism in partnership with SCL Community

Sustaining a relationship across 165 years is a remarkable achievement. It takes a lot of love, deep commitment and a charism responsive to changing times.

Case in point and cause to celebrate: the ongoing partnership of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth with Xavier Catholic School that will be marking the 165th anniversary of Catholic education in Leavenworth starting this fall.

Sister Mary Jane Schmitz, the liaison between the SCL Mother House and Ross Hall and the school, says that in some respects Xavier seems to be even more Catholic than when the Sisters were the faculty and staff. “The lay leadership and teachers make such an effort to have a Christ-centered focus and observe Catholic traditions,” she explains.

The school’s mission is “to keep Christ as the center of our daily lives and to care for one another in a loving and safe learning environment.” The caring dimension extends to the broader surrounding community and in a special way to the SCLs. Whereas the Sisters founded the school and staffed it across many years of service, now the lay faculty, administration and board of trustees are

striving to keep the SCL charism alive and to be more of a presence to the Sisters.

### Prayer buddies, pen pals

Initiated by the school, the Prayer Buddy program is an outstanding example of this and a popular interaction between students and the SCLs. Each student has a designated SCL prayer buddy drawn from Sisters living at the Mother House and Ross Hall and those residing in the Lansing-Leavenworth area. Everyone agrees to pray daily for her/his respective prayer buddy. A pen pal program pre-dated the prayer initiative, and some SCLs and students continue to correspond with greeting cards and notes of encouragement.



This large banner depicts footsteps with names of SCLs matched up with those of their respective Xavier Catholic School prayer buddies. The banner hangs in the Ross Hall family room.

# Heart of the Matter

Janet Meyer, who has taught fourth-grade at Xavier since 1989, says, “The students love hearing from their prayer buddies.”

Sadie Schubert, a Xavier alumnus and now social studies and science teacher at the school, recalls the poignant story of one Sister’s dying wish to let her student prayer buddy know that the SCL would be interceding for the student from the “other side.”

## Remembering Mother Xavier, SCL founder

In spite of limitations due to the recent pandemic, Mother Xavier Ross Week has remained a popular observance that keeps alive the memory of the SCL founder and the spirit of the SCLs. During the pandemic, the students marched parade-style around the Mother House and Ross Hall, carrying signs and banners. Sisters stood at their windows or on outside balconies. Normally, students would have been inside the buildings, singing for the Sisters. Another regular feature of the week



When COVID prevented guests from entering the Mother House and Ross Hall, students paraded outdoors with signs that expressed gratitude to the Sisters.



During COVID isolation, Sisters had a bird’s-eye view from the window as the young students processed by on Mass day, attired in their faith family t-shirts.

that commemorates the SCL founder has been a presentation by Sister Elizabeth Skalicky dressed as Mother Xavier as she recounts the religious community’s founding in Leavenworth in 1858.

Sadie remembers performing songs and skits in Ross Hall as a young student at Xavier. She believes it’s important that the students have the opportunity to experience the Sisters and learn their stories. “Children are naturally focused on themselves. In trying to expand their worldview, the Sisters are a great resource,” she observes. “The Sisters have a spirit of selflessness; they look at the world beyond themselves. It’s meaningful for our students to understand this.”

During the 2022 Mother Xavier Ross Week, students honored their prayer buddies through a service project. The school identified needs of charities with which the SCLs are involved. Preschoolers through second-graders collected snacks for the Leavenworth Interfaith Community of Hope homeless shelter; third- through fifth-graders donated toiletry items for patients of Saint Vincent Clinic; and sixth- through eighth-graders provided food products for Catholic Charities. Students made all donations in honor of their SCL prayer buddies.

Sister Elizabeth attributes the vitality of the SCL charism at Xavier to the teachers, many of whom have long tenure with the school and some of whom taught there when SCLs were among faculty and staff. She gratefully acknowledges Sister Mary Jane’s role in helping keep the Sisters and students connected. Both SCLs have long and strong ties with Xavier. They resumed volunteering at the school once COVID-19 restrictions were relaxed.

## Faith and service important at Xavier

Throughout the academic year, Xavier elementary students are organized into “faith families” with representation from each grade. The faith families are named after saints and identified by different colors of



Sister Elizabeth Skalicky helps students visualize the arrival of the first SCLs in Leavenworth in her portrayal of Mother Xavier Ross, founder.





Xavier students observe the symbol of the burning bush during a Season of Creation prayer service in the pollinator garden on the Mother House grounds. Sister Mary Ann Theisen is pictured in the blue blouse. (Photos compliments of Xavier Catholic School)

t-shirts. Weather permitting, the kindergartners through eighth-graders walk in their respective faith families to weekly Mass in Annunciation Chapel on the nearby SCL Mother House campus.

Faith families also compete in the annual “Souper Bowl” begun by Sister Mary Jane. They collect cans of soup for the local Catholic Charities food pantry. Students meet in their faith families monthly for an activity, such as reading a favorite book, making banners or participating in a field day. Janelle Hartegan, principal, explains that the faith family arrangement allows for building community and cultivating leadership and mentorship.

With Catholic identity a leading strategic imperative of the Xavier Board of Trustees, Mike Cyr, chair, sees this occurring through relationships with the SCLs and their sponsored works. Sisters Nancy Bauman and Elizabeth Youngs serve on the Xavier Board. The school is strengthening ties with the University of Saint Mary with college students assisting with programs and projects, and doing their student teaching at the elementary school. Xavier students continue a “Pennies for Peru” competition to raise funds for SCL missions in Peru.

Mike considers Xavier students the school’s best ambassadors and the best evangelists for Catholic education. He gives equal praise to the teachers for instilling strong moral principles and practicing what they teach daily. Many of the teachers and staff have long tenure with Xavier, and several have children and even grandchildren who have attended or are currently in the school.

Traci Baker, administrative assistant for the past 15 years, credits the school for providing students with a strong faith foundation. Cindi Thiele, with Xavier for 27 years and serving as a technology specialist and

librarian, believes it’s important that the students connect the Sisters with the heritage and tradition of Catholic education in Leavenworth.

Since she began teaching at Xavier, Janet Meyer has identified the SCLs as strong women – praying and mentoring the young faculty members. She wants the students to have the continued experience of encountering these inspiring women of faith.

### Students of all ages engaged

At one time, Xavier Catholic School occupied four separate sites in Leavenworth. Since 2011, it’s been consolidated to two locations – the elementary school to the west of the Mother House campus and the preschool located in the former Sacred Heart Parish school building.

Shannon Holcomb, administrator of the preschool and extended care services, says that the younger students participate in different service and spiritual activities at age-appropriate levels. For these children, there’s a strong emphasis on faith formation with regular Bible study, catechesis, Mass attendance and observance of liturgical seasons.

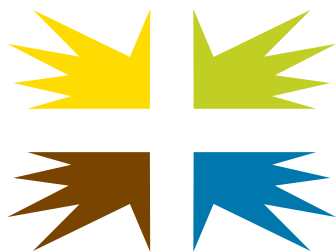
The generational connections provided by student interactions with the SCLs are also valuable. Shannon notes that 60% or more of students in the preschool come from military families who live at a distance from their families of origin. “It’s so important that our students know there is someone out there who cares for us and who is praying for us,” she says of the SCLs. “I believe our students have a true understanding of what this means.”

From her experience, Sister Mary Jane concludes, “I’m prejudiced, but I’m impressed with our school, our students and our teachers.” 🙏



Sister Mary Jane Schmitz helps students learn to lector at Mass.

## SCL Associates



Sisters of Charity  
of Leavenworth  
**ASSOCIATE**

# SCL Associates active across the U.S.

SCL Associates across the country continue to maintain vital connections and to seek new opportunities to share the charism.

A representative group of Associates gathered on Friday, March 24, at the Mother House to celebrate the feast of the Annunciation and the 35th anniversary of association with the SCL Community. This included a Mass with recommitment by Associates and renewal of vows by Sisters. Dinner followed. On Saturday, Associates came together for a morning of connection, conversation and collaboration. In the afternoon, they had the opportunity to explore local landmarks.

In the absence of a director of SCL Associates, members of the advisory board have assumed duties of the position until it is filled. SCL Associate Advisory Board members include Katie Kilbourne, chair; John Beeson, vice chair; Margaret Richards, secretary; and members, Laura Alexander, Debra Beeson, Deacon Tom Landry, Bobby Lavinder and Dana Yaussy. Sister Rosie Kolich is the SCL Council liaison to the group.

### Reports from the regions

Things are hopping with Associates in the Leavenworth-Lansing area under Laura's leadership. It's her nature to organize, plan and get together. With the assistance of Don Stubbings and other Associates in the area, she coordinated a sock social in a yoga studio in January and distribution of homemade cookies at a University of Saint Mary basketball game in February. The plan is that Associates will gather quarterly.

Laura also arranged an online pop-up opportunity to purchase apparel featuring the new SCLA logo (pictured above). Sales went well, and the event may be repeated.

Laura believes there should be action behind association with the SCL Community. For many people, this will be volunteer service of their own choosing or



All feet were on deck for the sock social get-together for Associates in Leavenworth.

with a group of other Associates and Sisters; for others, commitment to prayer may best suit their lifestyle and limitations. Dana, immediate past chair of the advisory board, says that since COVID, Associates have embraced goals through a Vincentian approach most commonly by plugging into and serving the communities where they live.

Associates from western Montana, Idaho and Washington have linked to form the Butte/Northwest Associate Community. Katie explains that virtual meetings have allowed the inclusion of the Sisters who were formerly in Butte, Mont., as well as Associates from the region. In 2022, the group read and discussed Pope Francis' *Let Us Dream*. In 2023, they are reading Richard





Joy abounded at the March 24 and 25 gathering of Sisters and SCL Associates at the Mother House in Leavenworth. Front row, left to right, Katie Kilbourne, Bobby Lavinder, Dana Yaussy and Laura Alexander; back row, left to right, Bridget Forsmark-Edelstein, John Alexander, Sister Rosie Kolich and Margaret Richards.

Rohr's *The Wisdom Pattern*. Katie, Bobby, Linda McCray and Sister Mary Jo McDonald form the planning committee.

In Billings, Mont., Deacon Tom reports that Associates continue their involvement with preparing and serving bi-monthly brunches and making sack lunches monthly at the St. Vincent de Paul Charity Office. During Lent 2023, Associates and Sisters in Billings focused on reading Pope Francis' "Laudato si'."



Preparing a meal for guests of the St. Vincent de Paul Charity Office, Billings, Mont., left to right, Sister Eileen Hurley and SCL Associates, Pat Roberts, Mary Landry, Elaine Wurscher and Rosalie Foster.

## Advisory board goals

Dana says over-arching goals of the advisory board are to expand outreach of association and to formalize the Come & See formation process/procedures to help ensure uniform experiences for those becoming Associates in the future. The group will also assist SCL leaders in the recruitment and hiring of a new director of Associates.

Katie adds that the board approved the update of the Associate Handbook and is working on the addition of a prayer component in the Come & See materials. Future goals are to explore opportunities to connect with the larger community including other Vincentian groups. Advisory board members also have discussed ways to invite others, especially youth and young adults, to become more engaged with the Associate community.

"Like most associate groups, we anticipate changes as vowed communities decrease in size," Dana concludes. "Our desire is that 'association' will continue to grow in the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul by sharing hospitality, welcoming the stranger, caring for the poor, being charitable and taking care of the world in which we live." 🐦

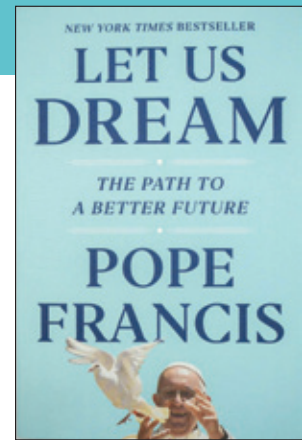


SCL Associates came equipped with cookies guaranteed to please students at a University of Saint Mary basketball game in Leavenworth. Pictured left to right, Don Stubbings, Katie Frandsen, Bob Schimoler, Kathy Huffman and Keith Hustings.

# Beyond All Borders

## SCLs reflect on *Let Us Dream*

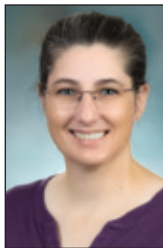
Last year during Advent, SCLs were invited to read *Let Us Dream* by Pope Francis as powerful prose for prayer and reflection and as a vital resource and lens as the Community looks toward its future. We invited a number of Sisters to share their reflections on different dimensions of the book.



### Avoiding the 'virus of indifference'

by Sister Réjane Cytacki

In *Let Us Dream*, Pope Francis speaks of the COVID pandemic as unveiling the “virus of indifference” that is rampant in our world today (p. 18). This “virus of indifference” entails keeping one’s hand clenched in a fist, being afraid of change and not wanting to let go of something we value: money, power or entitlements. These values blind us to the plight and needs of our brothers and sisters. We must open our hands in order to give from our surplus and in return be given a heart that is filled with love and empathy because we have begun to enter into a relationship with those who are marginalized.



Pope Francis draws on the Scripture story of Lazarus whose rich neighbor passed by him every day with indifference and no compassion. Who are our Lazaruses of today? I believe they are the people of the Global South who live far away from us, and yet we see images of them on our TV and computer screens as they struggle to meet their basic needs. They are the ones who suffer from our trash and plastic that wash up on their shores. How do we take responsibility for our mess and support their efforts to have a clean, healthy and safe environment in which to raise their children?

### Called to seek truth

by Sister Katherine Franchett

Pope Francis shares with us his own ways of thinking on issues that are in our midst. He calls us to discernment as a path that leads to openness to truth, an approach which allows for growth and deeper understanding.



Some groups in our Church and the world believe that the way to solve complex problems is to refer to absolute, clear-cut solutions. Instead, Pope Francis reminds us that we are called by the Spirit to seek the

truth and to know that true religion is not a freezer and doctrine is not static but grows and develops like a tree that remains the same, yet which gets bigger and bears even more fruit (p. 57).

Francis calls us to be able to hold two seemingly contradictory truths in our hands at the same time and not to exclude those who might disagree with us. We need to be patient and truly listen to others and wait for the Spirit to show us the way to proceed, no matter the issue – whether it be the Church, the environment or the future of our SCL Community.

### 'Going to the margins'

by Sister Bernadette Helfert

I found the book, *Let Us Dream*, challenging, yet practical in ways to respond to the issues of our day with hope. One example is “going to the margins” as a way of transformation, of changing the future.



When we think of “going to the margins,” often we picture the Southern border or serving the poor in our cities. Pope Francis writes, “When God wanted to regenerate creation, He chose to go to the margins – to places of sin and misery, of exclusion and suffering, of illness and suffering – because they were places full of possibility: ‘where sin increased, grace abounded all the more’ (Romans 5:20)” (pp. 11-12).

Recently in her class, “Francis, Repair My Church,” Sister Susan Wood indicated the periphery can exist anywhere. She gave examples such as geographical, existential, sin as alienation, illness and solitude – all possibilities of where transformation can occur and grace can be experienced.

Given who we are as SCLs at this moment of time, do we believe that when we participate in advocacy for the poor, address climate change, give a listening ear, or attend to the ill, we are “at the margins”? Both Francis and Susan would say we are!



## Emerging from pandemic

by Sister Mary Jo Quinn

*Let Us Dream* has been an inspiration to reflect on the effects of the pandemic and to agree with Pope Francis that “the categories and assumptions that we used before to navigate our world are no longer effective” (p. 54). “What we once considered normal will increasingly no longer be,” he continues.

In the pandemic, I have witnessed the toll that the coronavirus has taken on the poor, the marginalized, minorities and the vulnerable elderly. With all of us in lockdown, I saw George Floyd’s televised murder at the hands of the police and the resulting growth of the Black Lives Matter movement. The reality of our innate racism became more present for me.

Reflecting on the “COVIDs” of his life, Pope Francis says, “If you allow it to change you, you come out better. But if you dig in, you come out worse” (p. 44).

As we have emerged from the challenges of the pandemic, it has been clear that things are not the same. Reading *Let Us Dream* has been a reinforcement of that belief and an encouragement to keep searching for and embracing the hope of a new way.



## Being a people

by Sister Phyllis Stowell

As I consider Pope Francis’ invitation to rediscover ourselves as a people, my thoughts go to the COVID crisis and its effects. It unveiled for us many realities that allowed us to see our vulnerability, injustices, the consequences of poverty, and the fruits of our individualism.

Uvalde, Monterrey Park, the Elmo wildfire, our Southern border, Ukraine – all places we recognize because of the suffering and violence experienced there. Known to us also are the people who spoke with one voice of their values and courageously stood together regardless of the consequences. We became one with the grieving families in Uvalde; the Asian and Black Americans, innocent victims of violence; those who lost homes and neighborhoods due to natural disasters; immigrants enduring the loss of their homeland now bearing the bondage of bureaucracy at our borders; and the steadfast people of Ukraine. This is what being a people means.

Francis asks us to be catalysts to make necessary changes; to abandon indifference and complacency; to



risk our comfort and be a people who speak and act with moral authority. We must not be timid in our efforts nor miss this opportunity. What are we waiting for?

## Invitation to ‘cross the border’

by Sister Helen Therese Mack

I listened to *Let Us Dream* in Spanish before I read the book in English. I loved the language, and I felt a deep connection when I could hear so many truths phrased in a language common to Latin America.

I particularly liked the first part, “A Time to See.” This section invites us to see with the eyes of the marginalized, those without power but with a tremendous vision to see things as they are and with hope that they can be changed. As I reflected further, the section discussing “the people” flows to an even deeper call to conversion.

When any group – and we are not excluded from this particular category – has become accustomed to and invested in seeing the world through a lens that identifies with the values of a society that desires to see things continue in the same old direction to ensure the continuance of advantages and securities, we run the risk of going against the values of the Kingdom and of the people of God. This is the people who in an overwhelming majority live on the margins and live on the leftovers of a society which discards what is no longer for its benefit and as a part of the consequence of a consumer society.

This translates to an urgency that we leave the shores of safety and launch into the deep, crossing the border to stand with the people seeking a life with dignity, possibility and equity. This requires us to place ourselves in identification with those who suffer from the devastation of our common home and from the ever-present invitation to buy more, discard and replace at an even greater cost to our limited world resources and at the expense of low wages and poor working conditions for those who live in the cycle that continues.

The invitation to cross the border and join the rest of humanity is at the heart of an invitation to synodality. We must listen more than we speak, humbly be open to solutions beyond our viewpoint, and be willing to endorse that which may appear to be radical and foreign to our accustomed stance as we wait with others to embrace the very meaning of Kingdom. 🕊





# Service, advocacy and prayer support ministry to migrants

With U.S. immigration reform at a stalemate, two SCLs remain committed to volunteering to help meet the needs of refugees arriving in border communities.

Sisters Paula Rose Jauernig and Sheila Karpan have made multiple trips south in recent years, primarily to cities in Texas. Observing protocols and restrictions related to COVID, they have assisted with welcoming the migrants for their brief stays in houses or centers of hospitality operated by Annunciation House or local Catholic Charities. This has included greeting individuals and families on arrival; issuing clothing and personal care items; preparing and serving meals; and doing laundry. A registered nurse, Sister Paula Rose has also provided healthcare services.

Sister Sheila explains that the goal of these centers is to be a safe space providing for basic needs of the refugees and then guiding them to connect with their U.S. sponsors. This entails transporting people to the bus station or airport and helping them navigate the airport – from securing boarding passes to finding departure gates.



At La Frontera Catholic Charities Humanitarian Respite Center in Laredo, Texas, Sister Sheila Karpan (second from left) with co-workers in July 2022.



Sister Paula Rose Jauernig was at home in the kitchen making sandwiches for refugees at hospitality centers in Texas.

Sister Sheila values these opportunities for personal contact with the migrants.

On one trip to San Antonio, Sister Paula Rose and her friend and travel companion, Sister Wendy Cotter, a Sister of St. Joseph, were among volunteers caring for 2,000 young boys who crossed the border by themselves. The Sisters volunteered at the Catholic Charities center for a month until most of the children were placed with families, in foster care or in other facilities.

### Called to this ministry

Sister Sheila has come to view everyone she has met through the hospitality centers as refugees. “They are fleeing for their safety due to danger and corruption, and they can’t provide for their families in their homelands,” she says.

Both SCLs feel called to this ministry. For Sister Sheila, it’s a matter of being with people who are living at the margins. When she sees the refugees exit the bus on their arrival and appear uncertain about where

they are, this affirms for Sister Sheila that she's where she needs to be. She adds, "These people are running for their lives." Sister also knows that she is not alone – the SCL Community is with her in spirit. This becomes an extension of accompaniment.

Likewise, Sister Paula Rose points to the generosity and support of Mother House and Ross Hall Sisters whose donations have allowed her to purchase needed items for the migrants. "It is such a blessing to know the Sisters are right there along with me," she says. "They let me know they are unable to do this work, but that they want to allow me to do what I can."

"I have been going yearly since 2020 because I love helping the refugees find some peace, dignity and hope," Sister Paula Rose says. "They hardly ever talk about their travels, hardships and pain, but they are not afraid to express their trust and gratitude to God for what they have."

### Ways to be engaged

As for opportunities for others to become engaged in "welcoming the stranger," Sister Sheila explains that a component of migrant ministry is to address the systemic causes of migration. A first step is to be knowledgeable about the factors that contribute to migrants and refugees fleeing their home countries as well as the history of the U.S. involvement.

"Within this context, we can be politically committed to work for reform of our broken immigration system by addressing the urgency of our concerns with our congressional representatives," she encourages. "Advocacy is an important role when we may not be able physically to accompany people who are on the move. We can also be present to others in our prayer that all people be treated with respect and dignity and given opportunities to be able to provide for themselves and their loved ones in a safe and secure environment." 🕊



Images like these brighten the walls of the hospitality centers that receive refugees in border communities.



# Belize outreach experience ‘good for

Earlier this year, a global outreach opportunity engaged three Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in the manual labor of building a one-room house and the deep satisfaction of doing this in collaboration with the homeowner and her circle of friends, the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth (SCNs, Kentucky) and Hand in Hand Ministries.

“I had never done anything like this building project before,” says Sister Amy Willcott who traveled to Belize City, Belize, from Jan. 22 to 28 with Sister Vicki Lichtenauer and Hermana Laura Rumiche Morales. The three SCLs agree that while the experience was challenging to the muscles, it was good for their hearts.

Their efforts crystallized the day of the house blessing, when 10-year-old Davian rushed into his mother’s arms weeping at the idea that he would have his own room in the new house. Sister Amy explains that this was Davian’s joy-filled perception of a corner of the one-room structure and a window that the young child now claims.

### Inter-congregational connectivity

Located south of Mexico, Belize is a Caribbean country rich in culture and environmental beauty but poor in living conditions. Belize is one of the outreach sites of Hand in Hand Ministries, a nonprofit headquartered in Louisville, Ky. The SCNs partner with Hand in Hand for service projects. Additionally, the SCNs minister in both Punta Gorda and Belize City, and a Sister of Charity of Halifax (Nova Scotia) and an SCN share community together in Belize City. Further extending this web of interconnectedness, SCNs and SCLs have collaborated



Practice makes perfect for Sisters Vicki Lichtenauer and Amy Willcott.



All smiles for Kadeesha and her son Davian on the porch of their new house in Belize with Sister Vicki Lichtenauer, Hermana Laura Rumiche Morales and Sister Amy Willcott.

in the past on mission trips on Montana reservations and initiatives of the Charity Federation.

Hermana Laura believes that this connectivity is the future of inter-congregational religious life, represented by this one example of communities coming together to provide decent housing by building a house for a family in great need.

### Hands-on experience

The team of three SCLs, two SCNs, two SCN Associates and two friends of the SCN community built the house over a three-day period. This encompassed going to the lumberyard, unloading the truck, working without the benefit of power tools, digging and hauling – all under a hot sun and humid conditions. Kadeesha, the homeowner, and her circle of friends joined the volunteers and Hand to Hand workers on the project – framing, roofing, siding and painting a basic 16 x 20 foot structure. The house has access to electricity, but water availability is a future goal.

Sister Vicki says that she was humbled by the scarcity of fresh water in Belize. “I’ll never take a drop of water for granted going forward,” she adds. The team stopped at a kiosk each morning to get clean water and ice for the work site.





# the heart'

While the mission trip was challenging to body, mind and spirit, Sister Vicki describes it as fulfilling to meet the people and to learn about a new culture.

Hermana Laura experienced a language barrier because the volunteers were all English-speaking. She was happy to meet someone who spoke even a little Spanish. Despite this, she came away renewed in spirit from sharing with the Sisters and the Associates, moments of prayer, meals, work and recreation, and unique experiences with the family who benefited from the house. Hermana Laura believes, "The reality of the families and the situation in which they live expanded my vision and changed my life." 🐦



Hermana Laura Rumiche Morales adds a finishing touch with a hammer.

## Instability, protests affect Peruvian population

Decades of political instability in Peru and lack of representation in government by the rural population fueled the crisis that began in December 2022. The unrest is having repercussions across the entire South American country, including protests, some of which have been destructive and met with violence by authorities.



Hermana Esther Vilela Gutiérrez



Hermana Laura Rumiche Morales

Hermana Esther Vilela Gutiérrez, director of SCL Latin American Missions, explains, "The current protests are the product of countless decisions made by government leaders, who have led Peru directly to political and social chaos. Citizens are exercising their right to protest, pressing their disagreement with the Peruvian state, and taking to the streets in search of a prompt response and solution in the name of the common good. Right now, they are asking for the resignation of President Dina Boluarte, change of the constitution and new elections in 2023."

Reflective of the country's instability, Peru has had six presidents in the past five years and experienced centuries' old struggles between self-interest of leaders and the common good, between the rich and the poor, and the elite and the indigenous people. On Dec. 7, 2022, then President Pedro Castillo unconstitutionally announced the dissolution of the Peruvian Congress. In an environment of political polarization, this led to his impeachment and subsequent arrest, and the swearing in of Boluarte as the new president. Protests followed with 58 fatalities through early February. People have called for President Boluarte's resignation, a constituent assembly, early elections of new leaders, and Castillo's freedom or reinstatement to office.

Hermana Laura Rumiche Morales says that due to blockades generated by the protests, Peruvians have experienced challenges related to accessing food, healthcare services and employment. News reports identify that rights to assemble and free movement around the country have been restricted.

To resolve the unrest, Hermana Esther hopes that through dialogue and communication the political forces will put aside their selfishness and egocentrism, and realize that the whole nation depends on them in all aspects of life. She adds, "When the authorities demonstrate their sense of solidarity and sensitivity with the citizenry, a hope for national improvement and progress can be created."

She requests prayers of the SCL Community that the Peruvian people be drawn closer to God and that they accept gifts of calmness, tranquility and the certainty that everything will be solved in the most appropriate way. Likewise, that through prayer, the hearts of Peruvian leaders will be transformed to work for the well-being of every Peruvian home; and that Peruvian politics will manifest gestures of mutual care in actions that seek to build a better world. 🐦



## SCL Interest Groups mark a year of learning, outreach, service

Four SCL Interest Groups engage Sisters and Associates in addressing several of the action steps identified in the “Chapter 2022 Directional Statement” (see inside front cover).

The interest groups focus on Care of Creation, Human Trafficking, Immigration and Seeking Racial Justice. The groups’ reports for 2022 reflect extensive learning, commitment to action, and concern for the earth and for those who are marginalized.



### Care of Creation Interest Group

#### Through the lens of integral ecology, we will:

1. Tend to the care of marginalized people and the fragile earth.
2. Use spiritual and tangible resources to meet the critical needs of God’s people and earth.
3. Broaden collaboration with local and global groups working to achieve systemic change.

\* After certain activities below, a 1, 2 or 3 indicates which of the three integral ecology points above is/are illustrated.

#### Processes, events and/or projects accomplished in 2022

- The Eco-justice Subcommittee facilitated a letter-writing campaign to legislators by local school children through the Learning Club, Kansas City, Kan., and Xavier Catholic School, Leavenworth. (3)
- The ad hoc Earth Day Subcommittee provided online resources via the “Daily News” to include links related to climate issues. (1)
- The interest group connected with the Green Team Network of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Mo. (3)
- The Eco-justice Subcommittee worked on an additional

Systemic Change Fund application and dialogued with the Interfaith Community of Hope about installing solar panels on its building to offset electrical supply needs. We did not succeed in securing funds.

- The Garden Subcommittee maintained the Mother House Pollinator Garden (in its second year).
  - The SCL grounds crew expanded the mulched area around the water pump and added additional flowering plants.
  - An anonymous donor gifted a new bench overlooking the garden.
- An ad hoc committee organized two events during the Season of Creation observance. (2), (3)
  - On Sept. 1, the group offered a collaborative prayer service in Ross Chapel that was live-streamed.
  - Members used the symbol of the burning bush in different ways and locations.
  - On Sept. 8, the group hosted a well-attended prayer service in the pollinator garden.
  - Other related activities included:
    - On the Oct. 4 feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Xavier

Catholic School held a prayer parade outside the Mother House for all Sisters.

- An adapted Season of Creation prayer service was offered during the “Linger over Coffee” sessions hosted by Marillac Center.
- Throughout the observance, postcards about the importance of environmental issues were sent to federal elected officials.
- Interest group representatives attended a Sunday Green Mass at St. Francis Xavier Parish, Kansas City, Mo.

## Processes, events and/or projects still in progress

- We approached Father Mark Mertes about gathering a group of people interested in working on a “Laudato si’” action plan for the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas.
- In January 2023, the Eco-justice Subcommittee’s Systemic Change Funds were designated to attainable housing to install energy efficient-windows at an identified Leavenworth location. (2)

- We remain in contact with the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph Green Team Network. (3)
- The pollinator garden will have a water feature installed in spring 2023 to improve the water collection basin. (1)

### Care of Creation Interest Group members

Sister Nancy Bauman, SCL  
Sister Susan Chase, SCL  
Sister Réjane Cytacki, SCL, chair  
Sister Patricia Johannsen, SCL  
Sister Eileen Marie Johnson, SCL  
Steve Nicely, SCLA  
Anne Osdieck, SCLA  
Shirley Rockwell, SCLA  
Sister Mary Jane Schmitz, SCL  
Sister Elizabeth Skalicky, SCL  
Sister Gloria Solomon, SCL  
Sister Mary Ann Theisen, SCL  
Anna Totta, SCLA  
Sister Mary Geraldine Yelich, SCL



## Human Trafficking Interest Group

See the inside back cover for an article about recognition of SCL efforts against human trafficking.

### Processes, events and/or projects accomplished in 2022

- The interest group was approved for a \$35,000 grant from the SCL Systemic Change Fund to go to REHOPE (formerly known as Restoration House).
- A donation of \$1,500 from the SCL Charity Fund went to Truckers Against Trafficking (second year recipients).
- We provided “Daily News” information and a prayer for the feast of St. Josephine Bakhita (Feb. 8).
- Interest group members viewed webinars offered by several different organizations including the Laudato si’ Movement, Women Against Trafficking, and U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT).
- We had representation at the USCSAHT conference in St. Louis in October 2022. The SCL Community was a sponsor of the event.

### Processes, events and/or projects still in progress

- The SCL Community has volunteers (an SCL and an SCLA) at Haven of Hope, Denver homeless services.
- We discussed more collaboration with other interest groups and with the Laudato si’ Platform.
- Education continued on current laws and bills pertaining to sex buyers and prostituted women.
- We encouraged that calls or letters be sent to elected officials about current bills in the Senate.
- We discussed greater use of social media for communications.

### Human Trafficking Interest Group members

Sister Michael Delores Allegri, SCL, co-chair  
Sister Ann Barton, SCL  
Sister Melissa Camardo, SCL  
Sister Carol Depner, SCL  
Sister Vicki Lichtenauer, SCL, co-chair





## Immigration Interest Group

### Processes, events and/or projects accomplished in 2022

- The Immigration Interest Group met every two months by Zoom.
- In addition to action alerts, we distribute occasional articles, videos and webinars that contribute to members' knowledge and understanding of this issue which appears to only grow in complexity.
- Some members have identified a particular focus area to monitor, and they share information during the meetings.
- The interest group is updated and informed by members who volunteer at various sites along the Southern border. These SCLs have described the hospitality house accommodations, protocols and ministering by local and national volunteers. This past year, reports came from Laredo and El Paso, both in Texas. These firsthand experiences included the ever-shifting numbers of guests, their personal stories, countries of origin and factors that caused refugees to leave their homes. (See related article on p. 10.)
- During Advent, we made a special advocacy effort by publishing alerts each week before the Senate recessed. Through the SCL "Daily News," readers were encouraged to call, write or text their senators to act on the following bills awaiting passage: the Farm Workforce Modernization Act, H.R. 1603; DACA, American Dream and Promise Act, H.R. 6; Anti-Human Trafficking, H.R. 6552; and the Afghan Adjustment Act, S. 4787, H.R. 8685.

### Processes, events and/or projects still in progress

- We continue to emphasize the necessity of advocacy.

- Interest group members strive to be informed and to reach out to the larger SCL Community through the "Daily News." This covers a range of suggested options from communicating with politicians and writing letters to the editor to joining public demonstrations and praying.
- Updates by members continue in the following focus areas: policy; federal budget; DACA; border issues; ICE deportations/policies; climate migration; unaccompanied children; farm, meat and dairy workers; trafficking; racism; local issues; and Church issues.
- We are consciously aware of the immigration issue as relates to the other interest groups.

### Immigration Interest Group members

Sister Therese Bangert, SCL  
Joanne Bodner, SCLA  
Terri Butel, SCLA  
Sister Janet Cashman, SCL  
Sister Mary Rachel Flynn, SCL  
Sister Ruth Ann Hehn, SCL  
Sister Paula Rose Jauernig, SCL  
Sister Frances Juiliano, SCL  
Sister Sheila Karpan, SCL, chair  
Sister Mary Pat Lenahan, SCL  
Sister Helen Therese Mack, SCL  
Sister Marie Michael Mollis, SCL  
Sister Mary Patricia Murry, SCL  
Sister Jean Anne Panisko, SCL  
Jim Paquette, SCLA  
Patte Paquette, SCLA  
Sister Linda Roth, SCL  
LaTisha Starbuck, SCLA  
Sister Renée Washut, SCL  
Dana Yaussy, SCLA



## Seeking Racial Justice Interest Group

### Processes, events and/or projects accomplished in 2022

- Members of the interest group continued to deepen an understanding of our racism and the effect it has on individuals and the world.
- The interest group established a loan library of books on racial justice that is housed in Marillac Center.
- We annually review tactics under each of the goals of the interest group.
- During our October Community gathering, we facilitated the opportunity for SCLs who wished to discuss White privilege.
  - We provided a definition of White privilege.
  - Members of the interest group led a discussion in small groups on the following questions:
    - In what ways do you hold White privilege?
    - What negative experiences has your White privilege protected you from throughout your life?
    - What positive experiences has your White privilege granted you throughout your life that Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) generally do not have?
- The SCL Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Office provided a presentation on the history of racism. This is part of the series developed by several people to raise awareness of racism.
- A quote and question on racism went to all Sisters and Associates through the “Daily News” each Thursday.
- Some members of the interest group attended the Kansas City Vincentian Family Gathering in October.

- Sister Eileen Haynes, Community Director, asked the interest group to lead a committee to research the history of the land belonging to the SCLs, and to suggest ways we might honor the relationship with the Native Americans who owned the land and make restitution, if needed.

### Processes, events and/or projects still in progress

- The interest group will continue with or begin:
  - Discussion of *Me and White Supremacy* and other books or articles.
  - The work of honoring right relationships regarding the history of land presently belonging to the SCL Community.
  - Exploration of other ways we can provide opportunities to engage Sisters and Associates who are interested in the work on racism. 🐦

### Seeking Racial Justice Interest Group members

Sister Michael Delores Allegri, SCL  
Sister Mary Cele Breen, SCL  
Sister Catherine Bones, SCL, co-chair  
Sister Margaret Finch, SCL  
Sister Mary Rachel Flynn, SCL  
Sister Maureen Hall, SCL  
Ellen Hustings, SCLA  
Keith Hustings, SCLA  
Sister Judith Jackson, SCL  
Sister Mary Pat Lenahan, SCL  
Sister Jean Lind, SCL  
Sister Vickie Perkins, SCL, co-chair  
Bob Schimoler, SCLA  
Sister Mary Lex Smith, SCL

# Integral Ecology

## Sponsored works introduced to integral ecology

Representatives from ministries sponsored by the SCL Community participated in a meeting Feb. 8 to 10 with the SCL Community Council to build relationships and to discuss integral ecology as a lens for future planning and action. SCL sponsored works include Centro Pastoral San Vicente de Paul, Piura, Peru; Cristo Rey Kansas City High School, Kansas City, Mo.; and the University of Saint Mary, Leavenworth and Overland Park, Kan.

Board chairs, presidents/directors, mission directors and campus ministers were among those from the sponsored works in attendance. Among facilitators and presenters were John Shively and Rebecca Metz, SCL Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation; and consultants from Plante Moran, a management consulting firm with which the Community is partnering.

The meeting provided an introduction to integral ecology to help foster a shared understanding of this evolving concept.

## Integral ecology – what it is; why it matters

In his “Laudato si” encyclical (2015) and more recently in the book *Let Us Dream* (2020), Pope Francis emphasizes the urgency of accepting that “We have neglected and mistreated our ties with our Creator, with creation, and with our fellow creatures.”<sup>1</sup> The Holy Father’s perspective and approach are big, broad and inclusive. He is asking for a change of mind and heart, a more expansive way of seeing reality.

In the aftermath of the global pandemic and going forward, he invites people to “slow down, take stock and design a better way of living together on the earth.”<sup>2</sup> He does this by proposing that people – all of humankind – think, dialogue and act through the lens of integral ecology.

Pope Francis’ call to action is based on several premises:

- Everything is interconnected and interrelated.
- The environmental, economic, social, cultural and daily life challenges people face are different faces of the same crisis and may have a common solution.
- Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.<sup>3</sup>
- People need to be recalled to what matters and to regain their sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves.
- The common good of all supersedes that of any people or persons.
- There needs to be room at the table for everyone, especially those who live at the periphery or margins.

1 *Let Us Dream*, p. 14.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

3 “Laudato si,” #139.



With that brief overview, here's a deeper dive into integral ecology, what it is and why it's important.

## What is integral ecology?

Integral ecology is a way of thinking and acting. Seen and understood through the lens of integral ecology, all of creation makes up the web of life.<sup>4</sup> Everything and everyone are interconnected. To be “integrally ecological,” right relationships must exist with nature, with one another, within the family and between nations.<sup>5</sup>

In “Laudato si’,” Pope Francis writes, “Ecology studies the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they develop. ... It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected.”<sup>6</sup> He goes on to say that nature isn't just a setting in which people live; it's not something separate. It's a complex web of interrelated interactions.

With this worldview, the pope continues, “It is essential to seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural systems themselves and with social systems. We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.”<sup>7</sup>

To achieve an “integral and integrating vision,” analyses and problem-solving must take into account the interrelatedness of human, family, religious, work-related, environmental, social, cultural, institutional, political and other contexts. Focused on the common good, rather than on individualism, the organizing principle of an integral ecology is the sense of belonging to each other and the whole of humanity in a union of minds and hearts.<sup>8</sup>

## Why this is important

The inequalities and inequities made highly visible during the recent global pandemic coupled with cultural, ethical and ecological deterioration are the springboard for Pope Francis' urgent words in *Let Us Dream*. He writes, “This is a time for integrity, for exposing the selective morality of ideology, and for embracing the full implications of what it means to be children of God.”<sup>9</sup>

As perceived by the Holy Father, the need exists to regenerate the natural world by living more sustainably and more soberly while meeting the needs of those who have been harmed by or excluded from the economy until now.<sup>10</sup> This takes into consideration those who live at the margins and at the periphery; it also extends to generations to come.

Beyond being a lens through which to view complex yet highly interrelated issues, integral ecology is a call to create personal, institutional and societal paradigm shifts that emphasize the dignity of all creation and all people, a radical love that cannot be ignored, and most importantly an intentional and Spirit-led commitment to demonstrate to the world what that might look like. 🐦

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4 “What is Integral Ecology,” YouTube.

5 “Integral Ecology in Light of Christ's Mission,” YouTube.

6 “Laudato si’,” #138.

7 “Laudato si’,” #139.

8 *Let Us Dream*, p. 68.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 110.

## Feedback helps shape transition to lay leaders

Recognizing that time was approaching for lay leadership to assume responsibilities for key roles at the Mother House and Ross Hall, the 2016-2022 SCL Community Council invited input from Sisters living in both facilities.

“We asked the Sisters to share their hopes and expectations related to each of the three existing positions,” recalls **Sister Eileen Haynes**, current Community Director and previous First Councillor. “We also asked the Sisters to identify needs.”

This feedback helped shape what came to be called the Communal Life Team. This initially included the coordinator, assistant coordinator and pastoral care coordinator for the Mother House and Ross Hall. An assistant to the Communal Life Team position has been added more recently.

Sister Eileen says that while there was some anticipated initial pushback to laypersons filling these roles, this diminished over time as the Sisters began to know and trust the new employees. Sherry Wickenhauser became assistant coordinator in October 2017 and was named coordinator in November 2020. In January 2021, Kate Geer filled the assistant coordinator position, and Megan Trout, the coordinator of pastoral care role.

“We are blessed to have many dedicated and talented employees working with us.”

— Sister Eileen Haynes



## Team honored to help meet needs of SCLs at Mother House and Ross Hall

“You name it. We strive to do it!” This is the mantra and modus operandi of the Communal Life Team that serves SCLs living at the Mother House and Ross Hall.

In their respective roles and as a team, **Sherry Wickenhauser, Victoria Burton, Kate Geer and Megan Trout** do everything they can to help the Sisters continue to live their mission and ministry in new ways at the Mother House and Ross Hall. Their tasks range from shopping and planning prayer services to visiting with the SCLs and connecting with their families as needed. Team members model a ministry of presence to the Sisters.



Left to right, Megan Trout, Kate Geer and Sherry Wickenhauser.

Because the team works where the Sisters live, collaboration is key to Sherry and the team. This includes feedback from individual Sisters and from Mother House team leaders. Sherry’s role as coordinator of communal life is to establish an environment of hospitality, peace and spiritual practices as she promotes the well-being of the body, mind and spirit of each Sister.

### First laypersons in their roles

Sherry, Kate and Megan are the first laypersons in the positions they currently hold. While it took a while for some SCLs to accept this transition, their hesitancy eventually subsided. Sherry, who was assistant coordinator before her promotion to the lead role, helped pave the way for Kate and Megan who began their jobs a week apart in January 2021. Sherry believes that during the pandemic, many Sisters realized how much they appreciated having the Communal Life Team and grew to trust them as individuals and as a group.



The good times rolled during a recent celebration enjoyed by Sherry Wickenhauser (left) and Sister Nancy Svetlecic. Sister Nancy is the SCL Council liaison for the Communal Life Team.



Sister Mary O'Rourke enjoys a greeting card scene shared by Kate Geer (right).



Megan Trout (standing) and Sister Sheila Taylor plan liturgies and prayer services. Sister Sheila is director of music and liturgy for the Mother House and Ross Hall.

Sherry identifies part of her role as a “Sister advocate.” She’s devoted to enhancing the Sisters’ individual and holistic well-being. She demonstrates this through a ministry of presence and compassionate listening. She values and respects the Sisters’ many gifts and talents. Sherry treasures developing individual relationships and hearing their inspiring life stories and experiences. Overall, she ensures an environment that fosters hospitality and serves as a companion on life’s journey. Sister Nancy Svetlecic is her SCL Council liaison.

As assistant coordinator of communal life, Kate considers herself the “Sister concierge.” Whatever the Sisters need, she is there to shop and secure items. She’s a weekly regular at Walmart and a “frequent flier” to purchase new watch batteries. At a Sister’s request, she will pick up personal care items, mail packages, or shop for a gift or greeting card for an SCL’s family member or friend. With other members of the Communal Care Team, Kate helps coordinate activities for holidays, birthdays and feast days.

Attending to the pastoral care needs of the Sisters is Megan’s primary focus as coordinator of pastoral care. This encompasses visiting with the Mother House and Ross Hall residents; providing spiritual opportunities for and with them based on their input and needs; and being present to those who are dying. Megan helps coordinate ministry leaders for daily Mass and leaders of morning and evening prayer. She also coordinates funeral services.

Victoria Burton began her new role as assistant to the Communal Life Team on March 13. She is familiar with the SCL Community from having worked two years as the Ross Hall weekend receptionist. Victoria will provide assistance and support to the team.

### Honored and privileged to serve

Members of the Communal Life Team consider it an honor and a privilege to be part of the everyday lives of the Sisters, especially their prayer lives. Megan says, “We’re here because we care about the Sisters; we work to do the best that we can.”

They love hearing the Sisters’ stories. They cherish the hilarious moments, such as observing a Ross Hall SCL make the best of the loud fire alarm by exercising to the beat of the sound. They also experience a sense of loss when a Sister dies.

“It’s difficult saying goodbye to Sisters who are dying,” Kate explains. “Even though I may have known them only a little while, their lives have influenced me. I am so grateful to know the Sisters this side of heaven.”

Communal Life Team members want the Sisters to know that they have an impact on people’s lives, even if they are not in active ministry. Sherry says, “The Sisters continue to model the charism, and our team strives to embrace that example as we walk with the Sisters day to day and out into the world.”

Sherry and Megan are both SCL Associates and alumni of the University of Saint Mary. Along with Kate and Victoria, each team member values her job as a ministry. They feel called to their roles whether it involves tracking down a lost rosary, lending a listening ear or planning a birthday celebration.

The team agrees that being the first laywomen to join the Communal Life Team is a true blessing. They are grateful to work with the Sisters day in and day out in a way that allows them not simply just to come to work every day but to live a call and a ministry. ☺



# SCLs believe the charism lives on in Helena, Butte

### Montana ministries among first outside Kansas

Eleven years after they came to Kansas, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth responded to the call to serve in the far west Montana Territory. Five SCLs and a laywoman travelled by train and stagecoach and arrived in Helena in October 1869.

No accommodations awaited their arrival. They were heartbroken at separation from their Community in Leavenworth. But over a short span of time, the Sisters devoted themselves to teaching, and caring for the sick and for orphans in Helena.

By 1881, SCL leaders received another call requesting Sisters to open a hospital in Butte, Mont. While prospecting attracted miners and other workers, healthcare needs of the growing population drew additional SCLs west. They established St. James Hospital (today's St. James Healthcare).

In decades since, Sisters have served in a variety of ministries in Helena and Butte. "Our Community has been flexible in asking what are the new needs and how can we serve," observes **Sister Rita McGinnis**.

However, in recent years, changing demographics and declining numbers of new members have resulted in the withdrawal of SCLs from active ministries in the two Montana cities. For the Sisters, it was embracing a hard reality; the SCLs had enjoyed an unbroken presence in Helena, the capitol city, for 150 years.

Sisters who were among the last of the Community to serve in Helena and Butte are saddened by the reality of their departure. At the same time, they are hopeful that the SCL charism lives on in ministries in which they served and in SCL Associates and others with whom they collaborated.

**Sister Dolores Brinkel**, Montana-born and missioned to both Helena and Butte, reflects, "Institutions have closed, or they have changed. We created the environment and the culture, and prepared and inspired others to use their faith and knowledge to serve."



In 1884, a new building replaced the original frame structure of St. John's Hospital, serving the people of Helena.



The SCLs began their teaching ministry in Butte at St. Patrick's Parochial School. Both elementary and high school students were taught in the new building that opened in September 1889.

### Responding to changing needs in Helena

A native of nearby East Helena, **Sister Deedee Casey** recalls that her parents arranged rides for the SCLs who traveled from their convent in the former St. John's Hospital in Helena to St. Joseph's Orphan Home in her hometown. Sister Deedee and her 10 siblings were all born at St. John's. Their parish and Catholic school were central to their family life. As SCLs, she and her sister **Sister Lynn** (now deceased) mentored and prepared laypersons for ministry and leadership roles



Sister Dolores  
Brinkel



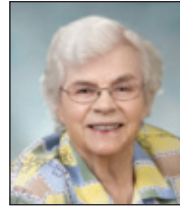
Sister Marie Noel  
Bruch



Sister Deedee  
Casey



Sister Lynn  
Casey



Sister Edna  
Hunthausen



Sister Rita  
McGinnis

in healthcare, schools, parishes and diocesan services.

When Vatican II opened doors to new opportunities for women religious to serve, **Sister Marie Noel Bruch** touched people's lives in Helena and beyond by responding to diverse needs. She served 38 years in different ministries based in the city. Sister Marie Noel cared for Cuban children refugees at the former St. Joseph's Home; did medical social work, personal care and hospice care; and pioneered open adoptions. She additionally sponsored Helena SCL Associates, instilling their understanding of the charism.

While serving in Helena twice in diocesan leadership roles, Sister Rita had a sense of carrying on the legacy of the SCL Community's continuous presence. "As we were leaving the area, it was heartbreaking that there would be no SCLs in the future at our first landing place in Montana," she says. However, Sister Rita believes that a number of people in Helena Church ministries would identify the inspiration of the Sisters in their own calls to serve.

Helena was the home base for Sister Dolores' work with the Montana Catholic Conference and the archives both at St. James Healthcare in Butte and for the Diocese of Helena. While she spent many years serving on Native American reservations, **Sister Edna Hunthausen's** final ministry in Helena was caring for her two brothers, Father Jack and Archbishop Raymond. She also served Our Lady of the Valley Parish as a pastoral care volunteer.

With the departure of the SCLs from Helena, Associates have continued to team up with their counterparts in Butte. In monthly meetings via Zoom, they discuss books with spiritual themes. They are innovative in planning

projects that benefit the community, and are likewise creative in finding ways to sustain their SCL ties.

### Butte home to many parishes and schools

SCLs who were the last to serve in Butte believe the charism lives on through the SCL Community's involvement in teaching, parish ministry, healthcare services, social activism and outreach to the poor and homeless.

**Sister Paula Marie Tweet** influenced many students as a Catholic school educator in Butte for 27 years. In her final role as coordinator of spiritual ministries, she creatively used dramatization to teach faith lessons. She and **Sister Joy Duff** teamed up to instruct adults in faith formation and offer programs on related topics. Sister Joy was also a chaplain at St. James.

**Sisters Patricia Canty** and Paula Marie are Butte natives as is **Sister Mary Jo McDonald** who grew up in nearby Anaconda. They believe that Butte and its population have a special spirit. Sister Patricia taught elementary students and did parish ministry while serving in Butte. Sister Mary Jo's ministries in the city spanned 36 years. She taught junior high, was in parish pastoral ministry for 33 years, and dedicated her time and effort to environmental issues around the unique problems related to the city's history of mining.

Sister Mary Jo says that across the years, Butte was known for being very Catholic with several parishes and schools, some of which served specific nationalities. The city was home to many immigrant families who valued their faith.

"I believe deep faith and the Catholicity of the people of Butte, family life and participation in the life of



Sister Patricia  
Canty



Sister Joy  
Duff



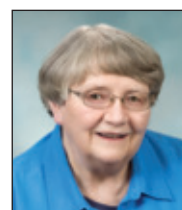
Sister Mary  
Agnes Hogan



Sister Mary Jo  
McDonald



Sister Marie  
Michael Mollis



Sister Paula  
Marie Tweet

## Re-Markings

parishes and schools all fostered interest in religious life and the priesthood,” offers **Sister Mary Agnes Hogan**.

Not from Butte, but from the “rival metropolis” of Anaconda, Sister Mary Agnes was a chaplain at St. James Healthcare in the 1980s. She next served 10 years at St. Mary Catholic Community in Helena and returned to St. James as director of spiritual care and mission leader. After St. James, she was part of a hospice team. Sister Mary Agnes followed her heart back to St. James, as volunteer chaplain to the staff.

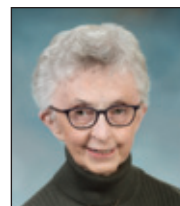
Among her roles as a volunteer at St. James, **Sister Marie Michael Mollis** gave a presentation during employee orientation. She shared an image of two men and asked participants to identify which was the beggar-Jesus and which was St. Vincent de Paul. Her goal was to help the employees see Jesus in all people and to treat them accordingly.

Through their presence and their ministries, SCLs serving in both Butte and Helena strived to instill this Gospel message and a commitment to service among those they encountered. Sister Mary Agnes has confidence

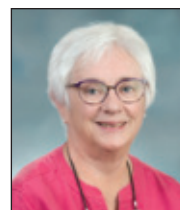
that this ministry will continue. She concludes, “What matters is that persons of faith continue to proclaim Gospel values, witnessing to them by lives of faith and commitment to social justice.”

### Two SCLs remain in Helena Diocese

**Sisters Margaret Hogan and Mary Jo Quinn**, both SCLs and both Butte natives, continue to minister in other locations within the Diocese of Helena. Sister Margaret is pastoral associate in Hamilton where she has served since 1983; Sister Mary Jo is pastoral assistant in Missoula. They agree that it is different not having SCLs relatively nearby in Helena and Butte and in the traditional ministries the Sisters previously served in those cities. “I still feel very connected to Helena and Butte,” Sister Mary Jo says. Sister Margaret considers herself graced to be part of the Helena Diocese. 🙏



Sister Margaret Hogan



Sister Mary Jo Quinn

## SCLs name new communications director

The SCL Community welcomes **Margaret Haik** to her new role as communications director. Margaret joined the staff at Cantwell Hall on Feb. 20.

She brings extensive experience to her position from having served as communications director for the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Liberty, Mo., and from teaching and working in Catholic parishes where she first met the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

Margaret was raised in Omaha and educated by the Sisters of Mercy. She says, “My faith is based on what I learned from the Sisters, recognizing God’s mercy through prayer and service with compassion. The Jesuits further fueled my interest in social justice when I attended Loyola University, New Orleans.”

She earned a bachelor’s degree in instrumental music education at Loyola and her master of arts in strategic communication through Washington State University, Pullman, Wash. Margaret also has a professional



Margaret Haik

certificate in graphic design from the Kansas City Art Institute. Her volunteer service includes providing pro bono communication consulting to nonprofit organizations; being the assistant convention volunteer director for the National Flute Association; and performing with and managing communications for the Kansas City Flute Choir.

Having come from a small office in Liberty and being a department of one, Margaret is looking forward to the opportunity to collaborate with many more people, especially Stephanie Nash, who has worked in the communications office for seven of the 17 years of her employment with the SCLs.

Margaret enjoys the planning aspects of communications. This involves research and learning about an organization, evaluating past efforts, and then applying a variety of communication media and tools, and testing the results. This meshes well with SCL leadership’s request that Margaret evaluate current efforts and develop an updated strategic communications plan aligned with the Chapter 2022 Directional Statement. 🙏





Sister Susan Wood

# Discerning, listening and learning key to synodal Church

Sisters and SCL Associates had the opportunity to learn more about synodality and the synodal Church in a presentation by **Sister Susan Wood, SCL, PhD**, on April 16 and 17 at the SCL Mother House. Sister Susan is a theologian with expertise in ecclesiology. She currently serves as a professor of systematic theology at Regis College, Toronto School of Theology at the University of Toronto.

In her presentation, Sister Susan said that synodality refers to more than an event in the life of the Church. It is a way of “being Church.” Arising from a baptismal ecclesiology, synodality emphasizes the communion, participation and mission of all the baptized in the mission of the Church. Dialogue and discernment are the tools of a culture of encounter intrinsic to synodality. Personal and ecclesial conversion are both the pre-condition and the outcome of a synodal way of being Church.

The following provides an overview of synodality as described by Pope Francis and in Vatican resources.

### What is synodality?

Pope Francis describes synodality as “the way of being the Church today according to the will of God, in a dynamic of discerning and listening together to the voice of the Holy Spirit” (PowerPoint “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”).

During his tenure, Pope Francis has previously convoked three synods on different topics or areas of focus:

- The family (2014 and 2015).
- Young people (2018).
- Amazonia (2019).

Most recently, the Holy Father called for a “synod on synodality.” This opportunity for listening and sharing opened on Oct. 9 and 10, 2021 in Rome. It rolled out in stages to the worldwide Church. In October 2023, the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will take place followed by an implementation phase that will involve diocesan churches.

In his book, *Let Us Dream*, Pope Francis explains that synodality requires the need for respectful listening, free

of ideology and predetermined agendas. The synodal spirit allows participants to meet each other with respect and trust; to believe in shared unity; and to receive the new thing that the Spirit wishes to reveal to those gathered (p. 93). Sometimes, the pope notes, the “new thing” means resolving disputed questions with a breakthrough – a meeting of minds that might result from changing our way of thinking, seeing things through new lenses. “Ours is a God of surprises, who is always ahead of us,” Pope Francis concludes (p. 93). Finally, he observes that synodality involves a patient process.

A basic question of the synodal process is “How does this ‘journeying together,’ which takes place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to her; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?” (PowerPoint “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”).

Critical to Pope Francis’ understanding of the synodal process is his concept of “the people.” In *Let Us Dream*, his call to action is to recover a sense of belonging. Being a people involves sharing a collective wisdom and memory. He says that people can lose awareness of their shared dignity by centering their lives on money, the economy and themselves at the expense of those living at the margins. He hopes to recall the people to what matters and to help them recover their memory and capacity for action and hope. “The people” is a living reality, he believes, that is the fruit of a shared integrating principle.

“If we can act as a single people,” he encourages, “life and society will change for the better” (p. 103).

“The purpose of the Synod ... is not to produce documents, but to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to be nourished, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands” (PowerPoint “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission”). 🐦



Gathered for a recent session, book club members include (left to right) Sisters Rosalie Curtin, Dolores Brinkel, Letitia Lenherr, Deedee Casey, Mary Arthel Cline, Anita Sullivan, Dolores Erman, Rosie Kolich and Ann Barton.

# Book club engages, enriches

Lovers of literature and words, a group of SCLs at the Mother House and Ross Hall has met faithfully, once a month, for more than 15 years for a book club session.

They gather in the Founders' Room on most every third Monday for the free-flowing discussion of their book of the month. The question "What did you think of the book?" gets the conversation rolling. Everyone has the chance to share her thoughts and feelings, what they liked or disliked about the selection. They talk about favorite characters and which ones they might like to have dinner with. Sometimes, participants discuss the cover design and graphics of a particular book.

"Our conversations are superb; they're the frosting on the cake of reading good books," reports **Sister Rosalie Curtin** who has coordinated the group since its inception.

"This is an amazing group with whom to break open each story," says **Sister Rosie Kolich**. "The Sisters bring a depth and breadth of knowledge, experience, wisdom and insight, adding such richness to the discussion. And I love when we have opposing points of view. We can really stretch one another and learn from one another."

**Sister Letitia Lenherr** describes the club as the coming together of a group of friends. She appreciates that each member sees things in the book in a different way. "I hear ideas that I may have missed and often return to reread the book," she adds.

The group mostly reads fiction, sometimes a classic and occasionally non-fiction books. Participants are partial to historical fiction. Frequently, they find a spiritual dimension in the books they read.

Members especially enjoyed the experience of having a "real author" join the group. Local fiction author and newly retired radio-TV sports announcer for the Royals, Steve Physioc discussed his two-book series, the Martellino works, with the book club. He shared his love of writing and the writing process, how ideas come to him, and how real and special the characters are to him.

As part of their monthly one-hour discussion, book club participants evaluate each session and also determine the next reading assignment. Everyone has a say in what the group reads. Some members bring names of books they are aware of or have learned about from suggestions by Internet book clubs. During the pandemic, the book club met via Zoom.

"All of our participants are wonderfully committed to the book club. They come prepared and share their thoughts," Sister Rosalie says. "Everyone is doing what they like doing." 🐦

### Reading recommendations

Among benefits of the book club at the Mother House, Sisters count the vast range of good books they have appreciated reading. A short list includes:

- *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White.
- *Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles.
- *The Light Between Oceans* by M.L. Stedman.
- *My Dear Hamilton: A Novel of Eliza Schuyler Hamilton* by Laura Kamoie and Stephanie Dray.
- *Nightingale* by Kristin Hannah.
- *This House of Sky* by Ivan Doig.

# 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. We are continuing to catch up with news items we missed due to the pandemic.

### Foster care ministry acknowledged

The past year held multiple milestones for **Sister Michael Delores Allegri**. In 2022, Sister marked her 60th year as an SCL; she celebrated her 80th birthday; and she received special recognition for fostering 100 children in her 23 years as a foster parent for Mount Saint Vincent, Denver.



Sister Michael Delores finds fostering fulfilling in that she helps children return to their birth families or creates a family through adoption. "Either way, you are helping children come into their own potential and strengthening a family and relationships," she says.

Her first foster experience was a baptism by fire. Sister Michael Delores agreed to foster five children with the assistance of another person who eventually left the role. Sister Michael Delores carried on and has fostered ever since. She's cared for newborns to 18-year-olds and has a special place in her heart for toddlers. She's learned to address the challenges associated with children who have been traumatized and has found ways to make them feel at home. She has also learned to manage fostering within the complex system of government regulations.

### SCL awarded for early efforts to enhance services in urban schools

At its 2022 gala last October, the Catholic Education Foundation honored **Sister Vickie Perkins** who was instrumental in earlier efforts to level the playing field in Catholic education for families in need in the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas.



Sister Vickie partnered with Blake Mulvany, former archdiocesan superintendent of schools, in the development of what was then called the Gardner Institute. Its goal was to establish equity between urban schools, primarily in Wyandotte County, and suburban schools. This involved securing grants that allowed urban and some rural schools to add school nurses, art teachers, staff development and early childhood education to benefit students.

"I became involved initially because we were serving those schools and families living on the margin," Sister Vickie recalls. "Our outcomes were really, really good."

The Gardner Institute evolved into the Catholic Education Foundation.

### Educator, 'handy-dandy' helper recognized

As she adjusts to life at the SCL Mother House and her volunteer service at the University of Saint Mary (USM), **Sister Judy Hayes** maintains ties with St. Patrick School, Kansas City, Mo., where she devoted 35 years to Catholic education. She sends birthday postcards for every child in the school; she's awaiting word on whether she'll be lettering the graduation diplomas.



Prior to retiring from the classroom, Sister Judy received the Bishop's Recognition Award for Service in January 2023 for her faithful dedication. She taught several years at St. Patrick, then she became what she calls a "handy-dandy" helper. Sister taught religion, was a substitute teacher, worked in the library, assisted

in the office, gave church tours to the young children, and sometimes sat and colored with students to calm them down.

The award came as a surprise to Sister Judy. She didn't think she was doing anything extraordinary – "just what Jesus wants us to do." She appreciated the opportunity to give students a vision of what it means to be a nun or woman religious and that choosing this way of life can make a person happy, if it's the right choice for the individual.

Working with a different age group at USM, Sister Judy provides study assistance. She's also mentoring an education major. Twice a week, Sister colors and converses with an SCL in the Memory Unit at Ross Hall. Rounding out her schedule, she enjoys calligraphy, knitting, board games, reading and participating in activities at the Mother House.



# Re-Markings • Of Special Note

## Board leadership honored

Three SCLs were among board members recognized in November during the first trustee forum of the new organization resulting from the merger of SCL Health with Intermountain Healthcare.

**Sister Maureen Hall** received one of only two Trustee of Excellence awards for her commitment to the healing ministry and her leadership throughout the process leading to the merger of SCL Health and Intermountain Healthcare. Throughout the negotiations, Sister Maureen served as the chair of Leaven Ministries, the sponsor of SCL Health. Other SCL members of Leaven Ministries include Sisters Barbara Aldrich and Melissa Camardo.

Sister Maureen led the sponsor merger discernment process, served on a project sub-committee, and met with archbishops in the SCL Health markets. The award recognized her service and commitment to SCL Health over the years, modeling good governance and fulfilling a trustee's fiduciary duties and responsibilities. Sister Maureen was chair of the legacy SCL Health Board Governance Committee and is currently a member of the SCL Health (Peaks Region) Board.

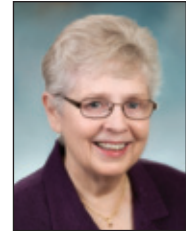
The Board of Directors for the Montana-Wyoming region received one of only two Board of Excellence Awards for its transition from individual hospital boards to a strong, regional board and the commitment and



Sister Maureen  
Hall



Sister Eileen  
Hurley



Sister Judith  
Jackson

excellence exhibited as a large region focused on high-quality patient care. **Sisters Eileen Hurley and Judith Jackson** serve on this Board.

The boards of directors of St. Vincent Healthcare (Billings), St. James Healthcare (Butte) and Holy Rosary Healthcare (Miles City) combined a few years ago to form what is now called the Montana-Wyoming Market Board. Mark Korth, region president for Intermountain Healthcare, said the board takes its fiduciary duties around quality very seriously and was a steadying force with the appointment of new executive leadership.

Sister Eileen considers it an honor to serve as an SCL presence on the board. She emphasizes that the three Montana hospitals have maintained their Catholicity and that discussion of mission, vision and values continues. From Sister Judith's perspective, regionalization has helped the board members become even more effective leaders.

### Follow the SCLs on

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

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

[www.scls.org](http://www.scls.org)

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

# Blessings! ¡Bendiciones!

## Award acknowledges efforts against human trafficking



Sister Melissa Camardo with The Bakhita Angel Award presented to the SCL Community by REHOPE. Hasna Sal, an anti-human trafficking artist, made this hand-sculpted glass angel.

The SCL Community is the inaugural recipient of The Bakhita Angel Award presented earlier this year at the annual Freedom Gala of REHOPE, a faith-based nonprofit providing housing, treatment and lifelong sustainment services for women and children victims of human trafficking.

Sisters Melissa Camardo and Ann Barton, both members of the SCL Human Trafficking Interest Group, accepted the award. Dr. Rodney Hammer, president and founder of REHOPE, said that the award was established in honor of and bestowed upon the SCLs who were early supporters of reaching out to and healing survivors of sex trafficking. The SCLs helped pioneer efforts to address trafficking-survivor needs through their support of Veronica's Voice. Dr. Hammer acknowledged the Community as continuing to serve as a catalyst of systemic change in the Kansas City region through holistic service to counter human trafficking.

The award is named after St. Josephine Bakhita who was a Sudanese slave in Africa in the 19th century. She was resold several times and taken to Italy where she was eventually declared free. Bakhita subsequently became a woman religious. She is patron saint of human trafficking survivors. 🕊

**For more information about REHOPE, visit [rehope.org](https://rehope.org).**



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