

# Our Journey

Spring 2023 • Vol. 42 No. 1



**FRANCISCAN SISTERS**  
OF LITTLE FALLS, MINNESOTA

# Our Journey

SPRING 2023 • VOL. 42 No. 1

*Our Journey* is published three times a year by the Community Relations Department of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, for donors, associates, friends, relatives and employees. This publication shares the journeys of our Franciscan community as we work in joyful service in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare.

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**Cover:** 2022 Border Encounter: Lori and Rod Johnson (seated); Sisters Pat Forster, Gloria Haider and Mary Dumonceaux (standing)

Photo by Amanda Lampert

## Our Mission:

We, Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, are a community of women religious whose members are called to live the Gospel joyfully and to reverence the earth and all of God's creation. In the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare, we embody a life of prayer, simple living and service to those in need.

We are committed to nonviolence as we recognize the need for healing in ourselves and in our world. We seek to build communities of peace and justice wherever we are called to serve.

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Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls,  
Minnesota



# 'Accumulated experience' inspires border ministry

*Sister Elise Saggau*

Sisters Mary Dumonceaux, Pat Forster and Gloria Haider live and work together in the Rio Grande Valley on the border between Texas and Mexico. From the beginning of their time in Texas (first in Weslaco, then in McAllen, and now in Mission), they have provided a service of hospitality and aiding persons in the process of crossing the border. It is a service that includes attention to new and longtime immigrants, to our missionary sisters in Mexico, and to other persons seeking a border experience. Sister Mary reports that this Franciscan hospitality aided her personally when she served at the mission in San Rafael, Mexico, from 2008-2020.

The three sisters have a common interest in each new immigrant group. They all assist at the Respite Center in McAllen and sometimes cross into Reynosa, Mexico, to help at the House of Immigrants where pregnant women and their families reside as they wait to cross into the States. The sisters participate in Mass and, most of all, are a listening presence to people who face uncertainty. Sister Pat also assists an organization called ARISE Adelante, working with citizenship documentation. Sister Gloria teaches English as a second language to various groups and individuals.

Deeply aware of the prevalence of families facing food insecurity, the sisters help sort, pack and distribute food in nearby Penitas and at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church where they are parishioners. They enjoy coming to know the neighbors who live near them, the "winter Texans" who reside there temporarily, and other religious sisters on the border such as the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Mercy Sisters.

The three also design and implement experiences for other U.S. visitors who want to appreciate the reality at the border. Recently they facilitated a border encounter experience for four persons from Minnesota.

The sisters believe that living at the border teaches them the fragility of place and possessions. It also helps them learn the art of daily adaptation, highlighting the limited control we have on life. It requires them to ask daily who decides the rules and who benefits from them. The sisters believe that the world-wide immigrant movement mirrors life in general on the planet as well as their own inner life in transformation.



Sisters Pat, Gloria and Mary



## Dear Friends,

Greetings as we travel through Lent 2023. I found myself wrestling with a Lenten resolution. As children we always gave up candy. The operative concept was giving up something. To a child this promise was challenging and motivating. Not that we had much candy around the house! My history with resolutions isn't great. Now over these decades, I have chosen a new approach. I found it in the Hebrew Scriptures, Proverbs 16:3:

*Encomienda tus obras a Dios y tus proyectos se realizaran.*

Commit everything you do to Our God, and your plans will succeed.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead shared this famous piece of wisdom, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." I invite you to consider some things to which we can commit ourselves:

Where there is truth, let us blot out falsehood.

Where there are homeless neighbors, may we learn to deeply share.

Where there are immigrants and refugees, may we join in advocating for jobs and citizenship.

Where we see violence against Mother Earth, may we choose to walk lightly.

May we dream that guns be made into musical instruments to create a world of harmony.

Thank you for the many ways you love and support us . . . your time, talents, financial gifts and most of all your prayers. With God's help, our plans will succeed.

Peace and all good,

*Sister Carol Schmit*

Sister Carol Schmit  
Community Minister

# Lent: called to the Gospel, called to penance

*Sister Elise Saggau*



In chapter one of the earliest Gospel account, we hear the first recorded words of Jesus: “Repent, and believe the good news” (Mark 1:15). What a way to start a religious movement! This does not seem, on its face, to be a very appealing message. And yet, the voice behind the message was magnetic. It was not long before Jesus had a following, and soon a large following. As Lent begins for the Christian community, these very words lead off the season. What are they calling us to? What does “repent” mean? What is the “good news”?

Saint Francis of Assisi discovered the answer to these questions. As a young man, he had a great “turning” in his life. He began to realize that his had been a soft and self-indulgent adolescence. His life experience appeared to him superficial and meaningless. He was going nowhere. So, he began to pray: Lord, what shall I do? And it occurred to him that he needed a turnaround. He began to confront his own moral poverty and to transform his behavior. He changed the way he used money, the way he related to other human beings, the way he prayed, the way he understood the meaning of his life. He turned to the poor, not only to help them but to share life with them—understanding that this is what Jesus had done.

Through his new experiences, he became aware that the Incarnation was all about God entering into the fundamental poverty and dependence of creatures. And that God did this out of sheer love.

Unfortunately, we often understand penance to mean “doing something hard, unpleasant, or burdensome.” The very word conjures up negative responses. Francis, however, taught his followers a very different way of thinking about penance. He realized that, properly understood, penance means “conversion of life.” It does not mean taking on hard, unpleasant burdens just because they are hard and unpleasant. Rather, by definition, conversion means transformation. Picture Francis of Assisi, very much against his grain, lovingly embracing a leper on the road to Assisi. In that moment, he understood that “penance” means to have one’s whole life turned upside down, one’s entire value system shaken up. From that day forward, Francis could not look upon the face of any other human being without discovering there a brother or a sister. No creature could henceforth be repulsive to him. Each was chosen and beloved of God. And he realized that anything that placed one human being over and against another was SIN. So “to do penance” meant to distance oneself from all that might divide the human community.

This teaching is not about cozy feelings. It is about understanding how humans and all creatures are related to one another. Francis realized that all are brothers and sisters and are to be treated as such. He believed that those who offend against this basic Christian principle need to “do penance”; that is, they need to **change radically** so they can see the whole of creation the way God sees it.

This is the challenge of Baptism; it is the challenge of Lent. When we repent, we change. It is not easy; but it is necessary if we are to put on Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:14). Francis understood this. We understand it, too. How, during this time of grace, can we change our way of looking at our world and be for others what Jesus Christ is for us?

*(Ideas for this reflection are from an unpublished talk by Michael Cusato, OFM, Colorado Springs, June 2007.)*

# A new kinship with all creation

*Sister Mary Hroschikoski with the Dream Project Team: Sisters Gert Brixius, Clara Stang and Associates John Lauer, Jeff Odendahl*

Franciscan Sisters and Associates have long been attentive to caring for creation. In 2008, *Our Journey* highlighted the prairie restoration undertaken at our former farmland, now retreat space named Umbria, south of Little Falls. More recently, Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si* calls us all to deepen our care efforts. Slowly we are growing past the earlier scriptural and Western cultural sense that we humans have dominion or stewardship over all God created and continues to create. Instead, in the words of Saint Francis, each part of God's creation is sister or brother. Today we are striving to deepen our understanding and living of Saint Francis's intuition that everything is connected, that we exist as kin.

So, during direction-setting meetings last October, our sisters affirmed a dream for the future of our Little Falls Motherhouse campus. Over the next 10 years, as sisters' need for space decreases, we hope to transform the campus into an environmental learning center on land restored to a more native habitat. It will be a space of beauty welcoming to wildlife and all human visitors, wholistic in its educational service, incorporating our existing Music Center and Health & Wellness Center, and valuing a spirituality of integral ecology, that everything is connected in relationships of kinship.

The journey to realize our dream will involve new partnerships and collaborations, an ongoing focus on land justice issues, priority for underserved communities, and help with funding from donors and grants. In addition to educational and recreational offerings, this center will provide new and varied job opportunities for the area. Ultimately, it will be part of our legacy.

To date, we have partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for restoring prairie grasses and forbs on the now invasive grassland areas of campus. The Morrison County Soil and Water Conservation District is offering us valuable technical support. This spring we will be extending our informational outreach in the Little Falls area, following initial contacts with area leaders that have been affirming, even enthusiastically so. National contacts with nature centers and environmental educators also share the helpful wisdom of their experiences.

We Franciscan Sisters, with our associates and staff, have begun another long journey together. As poet Antonio Machado says, "we make the road by walking." Today, it is by listening and responding to the cries of the earth and the cries of those made poor—all creatures great and small.





Pictured: Rosanne Fischer and Rod Johnson (standing); Sister Mary Dumonceaux, Lori Johnson, Sister Pat Forster, Jeanne Krush, Sister Gloria Haider (seated); Anna Taylor (kneeling). The 2022 Border Encounter group takes a boat ride up and down the Rio Grande River: “It was heartbreaking to view the deflated inner tubes littering the shores, left behind by desperate immigrants seeking safety, bringing to mind stories about people of all ages who have drowned in the river or died from thirst and exposure while crossing the desert.”

## Border Encounters resume after Covid pause

*Associate Lori Johnson*

The Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls have had a strong presence at the U.S.-Mexico border for many years, and a number of sisters and associates have been on border encounters, where Franciscan Sisters invite people interested in immigration issues to travel to the border for an in-person experience. After the Covid-induced “pause,” my husband, Rod, and I, along with Associate Anna Taylor and Jeannie Krush (associate applicant), all felt called to visit the southern border.

Associate Rosanne Fischer, coordinator of Integral Ecology and alumna of past border encounters, initiated planning. To prepare for the experience, Sister Mary Hroskoski and Rosanne shared podcasts, articles and books about the challenges facing immigrants (see references).

We set the date: November 3-10, 2022. Our base for the week was Sister Mary Hroskoski’s home in McAllen, Tex. A host of beautiful people made the experience come alive, showing us hospitality by driving, providing meals and

sharing fellowship. Among these were Sisters Pat Forster, Mary Dumonceaux and Gloria Haider, and their friends Meghan, Willie, Marsha and Veronica.

We experienced the beauty of the region. In McAllen we visited Quinta Mazatlán, a nature preserve, and went to an art crawl. In nearby Edinburg, we toured the Museum of South Texas History and the World Birding Center. We even attended a Mariachi Mass in Mission! We had many wonderful and eye-opening experiences during the week. Here are three highlights:

The first was our visit to the Catholic Charities Humanitarian Respite Center, founded by Sister Norma Pimentel. We toured the center and witnessed all the work done to restore human dignity with clean clothing, toiletries, a place to sleep and hot meals. After serving a meal to new immigrants, we were able to visit with several and hear their accounts first-hand.

We weren’t prepared for the story of a young woman from

*-Continued, Page 7*

Venezuela who, with her husband and daughter, traveled for more than a month to arrive at the U.S.-Mexico border. She said it was very dangerous for them to stay in Venezuela due to the political situation; thus they decided to make the long and difficult journey with the hopes of starting a new life in the United States. Four days prior to our meeting, her husband had been detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). As she wiped away tears, she said she was very afraid because she had not heard from him and had no idea of his whereabouts. She said her daughter often cries because she misses her father. We have thought so many times about this woman and her daughter, and often pray for them.

The second was our visit to an immigrant-run organization called ARISE Adelante. ARISE has been providing resources and educational programs to strengthen community engagement and civic participation for over 35 years. We listened as two staff shared their personal border journey; then we visited a woman whose daughter is a DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) recipient. The mother shed tears as she spoke about living in the United States without her own legal status. Despite contributing to the local economy by working and paying taxes, she faces constant fear of deportation living in a region with heavy Border Patrol presence.



*"In many areas the infamous wall dominated the skyline, even from miles away"*

The third powerful experience was visiting La Casa del Migrante in Reynosa, Mexico, run by four Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. Its primary objective is to assist vulnerable pregnant women and their children who are eligible to be released into the United States. We had a chance to play with the kids, who were eager to show us their drawing abilities. One even took Rod by the hand and brought him to meet his mother. In spite of the hardship they were undoubtedly enduring, we saw an abundance of smiles, play and laughter. They showed amazing resilience as they continued to thrive and carry on amidst so much uncertainty.

A literal looming presence in all these encounters was the infamous U.S.-Mexico border wall. Hearing about it on the news for years did not prepare us for the visceral response of seeing it in person. In many areas it dominated the skyline, even from miles away, and up close it was easy to visualize the disappointment of those who had trekked for months only to face this final hurdle of unwelcome.

The Southern Border Communities Coalition reflects our feelings about the border wall:

*"Walls betray our values. Border walls have little or no impact on whether somebody flees their home country to seek humanitarian protection for their children or families at the border. The southern border should be a place of encounter, opportunity and hope – not confrontation, hate, and out-of-control militarization."*

We would like to thank the Franciscan Sisters living in McAllen and Mission and Rosanne Fischer for all they did to make the border encounter an amazing experience.

#### References:

- "Inside Gang Territory In Honduras: Either They Kill Us or We Kill Them by Azam Ahmed, nytimes.com
- "The Migration Problem is a Coffee Problem" by Kevin Sieff, washingtonpost.com
- "Checkpoints Isolate Many Immigrants in the Texas Rio Grande Valley," nytimes.com
- Q & A with Ramona Casas, Mercy Associate, community animator with ARISE in Milpas, TX by Soli Salgado, globalsistersreport.org
- "Campaign aims to educate migrants on dangers of crossing border" by Peter Tran, globalsistersreport.org

# And I think to myself . . .

*Sister Cordy Korkowski, Director of Donor Relations*

There is no greater joy for me than sitting down and reviewing the names in our spring issue of *Our Journey*. Each name carries a story and a memory for the Franciscan Sisters. Recently, a development director asked me, “What is the most important aspect of your work?” I said without hesitation: “relationships!” As I begin my 10th year as director of Donor Relations, I have made many new friends in my work, written hundreds of notes and letters, enjoyed personal and phone visits, social media contacts, attended funerals and special events. The lyrics from *What a Wonderful World* come to mind, “I see trees of green, red roses too, I see them bloom for me and you and I think to myself . . . what a wonderful world.”

Thank you, donors, for creating a wonderful world for the Franciscan Sisters with your generous support and enduring friendships. Thank you for helping us address the needs of others in our world for whom life is filled with struggles. Thank you for supporting St. Francis Music Center, St. Francis Health and Wellness, mission work in Mexico, outreach efforts in areas local and beyond, retirement and health care needs of our sisters, care of creation endeavors and more.

Highlights of 2022 include faithful donations in addition to appeals and fundraisers that are a part of each year.

**Dancing with Our Stars fundraiser: \$100,000+**

**Christmas Appeal: \$135,859**

**Give to the Max online fundraiser: \$82,817**

**Memorial Appeal: \$40,411**

**Parking Lot project: \$101,000+**

In this issue, we highlight in gratitude the family of Lisa Landwehr Phipps, whose parents, Jill\* and Jerry Landwehr, and children Jody, Michael and Lisa, were members of Assumption Parish in Morris. St. Mary’s School in Morris was a favorite teaching spot for many Franciscan Sisters. Enjoy this article of impact from Lisa and her husband, Clayton, who now reside in Brusett, Mont., on a beautiful horse ranch. Thank you, Lisa and Clayton, for your generosity to the Franciscan Sisters. We are most grateful to you for sharing your personal and life-changing journey.

And thank you to each and every donor listed here, those who remain anonymous and those who remember us in prayer . . . “And I think to myself, what a wonderful world.”

\*Jill passed away in January 28, 2023. We pray for her and her family. May she rest in peace.







Clayton and Lisa Phipps  
on their ranch in Montana.

## I feel blessed . . . to return the favor

*Lisa Landwehr Phipps*

Why do the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, matter so much to me? It's because Sister Christelle Watercott was my 2nd grade teacher at St. Mary's School in Morris. I was a shy and insecure 7-year-old, and Sister Christelle was just the type of teacher I needed. She filled the classroom with her cheerfulness, kindness, and love. We soon developed a strong and lasting camaraderie.

As I moved on to the upper grades, I continued to admire Sister Christelle for her amazing ability to spread the joy of Christ. Years later, I chose her for my confirmation sponsor. We kept in touch even after I graduated from college and moved to Montana to teach school.

That's where I met my husband, Clayton. He was not Catholic then, but after going to church with me, asking lots of questions, and meeting with Sister Christelle on our trips to Minnesota, he was ready to be baptized into the Catholic Church; he said he would not have made that decision if it hadn't been for Sister Christelle.

Clayton and I have been married for 28 years. We have three children, Julie, Danny and Luke. Julie's middle name is Christelle. Like me, Julie shares a special bond with Sister Christelle. It is so fun for me to see how the two of them keep in touch.

Sister Christelle truly sparkles with the goodness of God. She has been a wonderful help and a reassuring presence in so many phases of my life. Clayton and I feel blessed to be able to support the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls and return the favor.

## *Holy Week Services*

*All services will be livestreamed on YouTube.*

*Palm Sunday*  
April 2 at 9:30 a.m.

*Holy Thursday*  
April 6 at 7 p.m.

*Good Friday*  
April 7 at 2 p.m.

*Holy Saturday*  
April 8 at 8 p.m.

*Easter Sunday*  
April 9 at 9:30 a.m.



Thank you, Sister Marguerite, for your loving attention to our donors and all things related to development.

*We like the work that the Franciscan Sisters are doing. We became acquainted with Sister Cordy Korkowski at St. Stephen's Church in Anoka. This relationship has continued and is important to us. We follow Our Journey to keep us up to date. We both are committed to supporting the Franciscan Sisters and their ministries.*

—Bruce and Karen Furlong,  
Andover, Minn.

*The Franciscan Sisters were my teachers at St. Mary's in Morris from grades 1-8. During my active years of ministry in various parishes, I worked with many of the sisters. I love their joyful and positive spirit. Supporting the Franciscan Sisters is important to me.*

—Father Jerry Dalseth,  
Sauk Rapids, Minn.

## A fond farewell

*Elizabeth Rydeen, Director of Community Relations*

After 12 years, Sister Marguerite Ostendorf is stepping down from her position as Development secretary. Sister Marguerite's signature has appeared on thousands and thousands of thank you letters over the years and hundreds of birthday, anniversary and sympathy cards. In her quiet, gentle way, she maintained our database, scouring local newspapers and the internet for obituaries or news about our donors. She took your calls about address changes, prayer requests and so much more.

Sister Marguerite, thank you for your years of service to the Development Office and to all our wonderful donors. Someway or another, you've touched every person listed in this annual report and those listed in past years. Your attention to detail and record keeping has been an asset, and your dedication to Community Relations has been exemplary. Thank you, and best wishes as you retire!

# ANNUAL REPORT 2022

**This issue of *Our Journey* recognizes individuals, businesses and organizations that have made cash, planned and in-kind gifts and donations to the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, during the calendar year, January 1 – December 31, 2022.**

**Every effort has been made to recognize donors according to their wishes, including those who wish to remain anonymous. If names have been listed incorrectly, omitted or appear against the donor's wishes, we apologize and encourage you to bring the matter to our attention by contacting Elizabeth Rydeen (320) 632-0624 or [erydeen@fslf.org](mailto:erydeen@fslf.org) so that the error can be corrected. Thank you.**

# THANK YOU

*We extend our sincere thanks to our many donors who wish to remain anonymous.*

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Tom and Brigid with their fitness instructor Lauren. “Parkinson’s is a progressive disease, and the boxing class helps me maintain my strength and balance,” Tom remarked.

## Retirement allows more time for Health and Wellness

*Elizabeth Rydeen*

Dr. Bob Stoy moved his young family to Little Falls in 1949 to join a medical practice with Drs. Doug Johnson and Roman Fait. Penicillin was the new wonder drug, house calls were common and Mrs. Stoy helped manage patient inquiries from their home phone. Dr. Stoy always thought of the Franciscan Sisters as capable, hardworking women.

A generation later, Tom Stoy became a doctor, following in his father’s footsteps. He met his future wife, Brigid Fitzgerald, while he was a resident at Hennepin County Medical Center and she was clerking for a judge at Hennepin County Government Center. They married in 1984 and moved to Little Falls in July 1985. Tom started working at the clinic right away. They raised three sons; two are married and their youngest, Gil, is a priest and member of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

Tom knows the Franciscan community well. He was born at St. Gabriel’s Hospital, then owned by the sisters. He remembers midnight Mass in the sisters’ chapel and the cookies and fellowship afterward. He took piano lessons from the sisters and was such a good student that he played the same recital piece three years in a row.

Tom went to high school at St. John’s Prep in Collegeville but was familiar with students at St. Francis High School. He wouldn’t admit to dating any “Frannies” but remembers a dance or two. He recalls a few international students whom his parents invited to dinner at the Stoy home.

Over the years, Brigid and Tom have been active members of St. Francis Health and Wellness, enjoying racquetball, yoga, spin and other classes. Now retired, they are frequent visitors. Both benefit from classes taught by Lauren Brady. Tom’s a regular participant at the Boxing Out Parkinson’s class, and Brigid loves personal training in the pool.

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*We respect the commitment, integrity and faith lives of these women who live the teachings of Saints Francis and Clare and the Gospel.*

*The Sisters of St. Francis of Dubuque, Iowa, and the Franciscan Sisters from Little Falls have been role models and companions for us throughout our lives. Donating to the sisters is one way in which we express our gratitude and faith.*

*—Denis and Karen Dolan, Little Falls, Minn.*

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# From students to employees to volunteers

Elizabeth Rydeen



Carol Wielinski and Phyllis Dobis grew up on a farm near Elmdale. There were five children in the Hanfler family, and two of the three girls attended St. Francis High School in Little Falls. Carol and Phyllis, both shy and “not too social,” were happy at St. Francis and appreciated the all-girl environment.

After graduation, Carol and Phyllis continued their relationship with the sisters. Carol worked at St. Gabriel’s Hospital as a pharmacy technician for 35 years. She retired in 2014. Phyllis was a medical ward secretary. She remembers Sisters Therese Furnstahl and Corrine Millner, who were nurses, and Sister Ardis Cloutier from the lab. “Really, I’ve known the sisters my whole life,” Phyllis said. After seven years at St. Gabe’s, she took a position in the Finance Department at St. Francis Convent and stayed for over 30 years, retiring in 2015.

Sometimes together, sometimes assigned separate jobs, Phyllis and Carol serve coffee at funerals and other events, help with mailings and the blood drive, assist in St. Clare Library and Archives and help wherever they are needed. “When I walk in the door, I feel welcome, appreciated and just happy to be here,” said Carol.

Phyllis and Carol love volunteering for the sisters. As the convent gradually re-opened when Covid settled down, they were often stationed at the entrances to take temperatures and make sure people were wearing masks, tasks that were not always too popular. Thank you, Phyllis and Carol!

## St. Elizabeth of Hungary Society

*Anyone who names the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, as beneficiary of a will or other estate gift automatically becomes a member of the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Society. Saint Elizabeth, our patron saint of planned giving, was a royal woman who embraced the Franciscan values and dedicated her life to the poor. We extend our sincere thanks to the people named below as well as the members who prefer to remain anonymous.*

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*I like to donate to the sisters. I have several relatives in the Franciscan Community. The main reason I give to the sisters is I know the money will be used wisely. This is important to us. We trust the women with my money.*  
 —John and Cathy, Roseville, Minn.

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Roger & Rosella Loxtercamp  
Michael LuConic  
Dan & Joyce Lucy  
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Don & Lois Manske  
Irene Manuel  
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Alcuin & Catherine Marthaler  
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La Vonne Metcalf  
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Stephen & Mary Michel  
Joanne Michels  
Gordon & Carol Midas  
Ed & Mary Beth Mielech  
Dean & Michele Miller  
Helen Miller  
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*I have dear friends among the Franciscan Sisters. I appreciate the wonderful work of the sisters, past and present. I became acquainted with Sisters Carol Schmit and Aggie Soenneker when I spent time at Clare's Well and developed lasting friendships.*  
—Renee L., Annandale, Minn.

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Roseanne Lurie  
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 Vernon & Burnette Poxleitner  
 Rose Preimesberger

# FINANCIAL REPORT 2022

*Fiscal Year Oct. 2021–Sept. 2022*

## Source of Funds

Donations/Grants . . . . .	\$732,064.17
Memorials . . . . .	\$127,479.00
Gift Planning . . . . .	\$176,802.85
Sales/Special Events . . . . .	\$196,336.54
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,232,681.56</b>

## Designation of Funds

Franciscan Ministries . . . . .	\$898,757.75
Franciscan Missions . . . . .	\$19,181.10
Retirement Needs . . . . .	\$314,741.71
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>\$1,232,681.56</b>



Sisters Carol Schmit and Elise Saggau, Rhonda Fochs, Ixayana Nelson, Sister Ange Mayers, Candace Adams



## It was a wonderful celebration!

*Candace Adams, Associate Minister*

On Sunday, January 22, sisters and associates gathered together to celebrate Associate Commitment and Recommitment Day. This was the first Associate Recommitment Day since Covid. It was a wonderful celebration!

Rhonda Fochs and Ixayana Nelson made their initial commitment to the Associate Relationship. Rhonda and Ixayana were joined by family members. They also were accompanied by their sister companions: Sisters Elise Saggau and Ange Mayers. In addition, Rhonda has developed a strong relationship to Sister Loretta Denfeld through the compassionate connectors ministry.

There was a large gathering of associates who celebrated special anniversaries. The years of associate relationships represented by those in attendance totaled 596 years! That is a lot of togetherness. And through the togetherness of sisters and associates they are able to reflect God's love and light to the world.

The congregation began receiving Franciscan Associates formally in 1987 under the direction of Sister Agnes Soenneker. Membership reached its high point in 2018 when there were 301 persons on the associate roll. In 1997, Sister Mary Zirbes observed that "religious communities are a stable anchor for the associates in this fast-paced world, giving support for spirituality and keeping the face of 'God before the world.'"

Associate Ministers over the years: Sister Pat Imdieke, Sister Clara Stang, Judy Virnig, Geri Dietz, Sister Mary Zirbes and Candace Adams



*"I donate to the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls to honor the legacy of my great aunt, Sister Mary Eve Goering, to thank the Franciscans for the wonderful education that my mother received at St. Francis High School, to show my appreciation for the ministry of the Franciscans at Crosier Seminary and the Onamia Hospital, to express my profound gratitude for the ministry partnership that I enjoyed with Sisters Sylvia Schik and Helen Ann Brake, and to support the ministry and lives of an amazing community of dedicated religious."*

—Fr. Michael A. Van Sloun, Wayzata, Minn.  
Photo by Dave Hrbacek, The Catholic Spirit

# Interdependence—weaving a tapestry for life

Jamie Deering, Franciscan Programs Ministry

On January 14, while walking with Sister Michelle L’Allier in the bright sunshine along a snowy street, I hit an icy patch and fell back, landing with a loud thud as my head bounced twice off the pavement. After a trip to the emergency department (ED) and a CT scan, a brain bleed was discovered. A second trip to the ED three days later revealed infections in both ears. It was a potent brain scramble that drew me into reflection and revival. I’m recovering well, working less to find words and still pondering our interdependence.

Crises tend to pull back the veil of complacency to peer at our fragility. Life is not guaranteed. The invitation is to live in it with engaged presence, right now. An invitation to break through the mundane, acknowledge that nothing is profane, and be set free in awareness that what happens to any of us, happens to all of us.

Supporting the journey of ongoing conversion inside our interconnectedness (Triune God in All) is perhaps the primary call of Franciscan Programs Ministry. My hope is that each event will inspire deep listening and a response to the invitation to wholeness—a contemplative and richly Franciscan understanding of what it means to live wildly outwardly from inward conversion. In Protestant language, it’s being reformed and always reforming. Richard Rohr talks about God *presencing* God. All of these thoughts, an attempt to speak into being who we are and our call to show up attuned with all created reality.

In my three months as director of Programs Ministry, I have experienced warmth, welcome, and the kinship of people and rhythms of the Franciscan Sisters’ wide-reaching community. The ministry is whole-heartedly supported, and I feel personally supported. It is a great privilege to support ongoing transformation, contemplative prayer and care of all in simple living. It is a privilege to let these core values guide and direct every gathering. I pray that my commitment to living these values and the ministry team’s commitment to the work invigorates the spiritual growth of each participant in every event. Grounded in an understanding of our absolute mutuality, we partner in presence to see what God unfolds next.

My responsibilities are two-fold: events at the Motherhouse in Little Falls and at Welcoming House in St. Cloud that invite our deepened understanding of living the Gospel. This year, we have two retreats that bookend the election of Leadership. January’s retreat guided us to think expansively about God creating a universe that is always creating itself in which we participate. We reflected on our life ministries and what they’ve held so far. August’s retreat invites us to notice Jesus in unexpected places. This follows Leadership election where we step into a new unknown and as January’s retreat director Marya Grathwohl said, “Live what has not been lived before.”

At Welcoming House, we are discerning God’s will for what’s next. We have a beautiful new logo that expresses our emergence in hosting groups and events that enliven spiritual experience across beliefs. Complete with images of trees, houses and people, the image itself invites the observer into reflection. Sundays in March, from 3:30-4:30 p.m., we have a contemplative prayer series that supports our Lenten walk. Look for more groups and events to come.

It is an exciting time to be guiding Programs Ministry with you! Please continue prayers for steady discernment of what God is nudging forward for the transformation of each of us—and therefore in the world—through our work together.



# This is how we grow a library . . . a seed library.

Associate Elise Carey, St Clare Library

Of course, a garden is built one plant at a time, and each plant, one seed at a time. Seeds and fertile soil make up the foundation of our garden, of our families and neighborhoods being fed. Seeds tell the stories of generations before us, stories of distant lands and new beginnings. Well, at least heirloom seeds do.

These are the seeds that comprise the St. Clare Seed Library. Many of our seeds hold the stories of immigrant families who came from Germany or Norway. Some of our seeds have stories from centuries ago found in archeological digs that miraculously germinated. Still some hold humble stories of being purchased from an heirloom seed company and were generously donated only a few years ago.

No matter the story, these seeds are valuable! Just as a seed will lie dormant during the winter months, so has the St. Clare Seed Library during the pandemic. Just as a seed waits for warming temperatures and spring rains to grow, so

the St. Clare Seed Library waits for the opportunity to grow. You see, over these years of the pandemic, there has been little to no access to the seeds we've had and therefore, few to no donations. The older a seed gets, the rate of germination lessens, so we are left with seeds that may or may not meet success in the planting. So, we're looking for folks who would like to donate heirloom seeds (non-GMO seeds that can be planted, seeds saved, planted once again, for generations to come). Vegetable seeds are welcome as are flower seeds.

*"Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day. Teach a man to garden and the whole neighborhood has tomatoes."*

—Unknown

Checking out seeds at the St. Clare Seed Library is free to anyone who would like to plant a garden. The idea is you "check out" seeds, plant them, and when they grow you keep the seeds from the fruit and "return" some seeds to the seed library to replenish our current stock. This is how we grow a library . . . a seed library.

Who knows, you might be in a neighborhood where everyone will have tomatoes.

Dennis & Kathi Primus  
Rita Primus  
Marlene Prokott  
Les & Mary Lou Proper  
Colleen & Ernie Provasek  
Marge Pryately  
James Przybilla  
Gary & Ann Pull  
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Florence & Tom Scheierl  
Ann Schellinger  
Karen Schellinger  
Betty Schenk

# THANK YOU!

Kenneth Scherber  
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Kurt & Pam Scherping  
Kenny & Pam Schik  
Dick & Lenora Schillewaert  
Pam Schilling  
Mark & Brenda Schirmers  
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Jerry Steidl  
Delrose Stein

*My aunt, Sister Luella Mareck, was a Franciscan Sister for more than 70 years. Her journey remains an inspiration to me years after her passing. A favorite memory: Sister escorting my Jewish husband through the cemetery where many relatives rest. He was incredibly touched. Donating is a small thank you to the sisters' commitment to "a profound reverence for all created things."*

—Mary Alice Binder, Kennewick, Wash.

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## Good Friday Silent Walk for Peace

April 7, 2023 - 9:30 a.m.

*If the event cannot take place outdoors due to inclement weather, a prayer service will be offered in Sacred Heart Chapel.*

# Surma family makes music together

*Sister Elise Saggau*

All four members of the Surma family are string students at St. Francis Music Center. Dad Adam is learning the violin, together with son, Reid (9). Mom Rose and son Anton (12) are both learning the cello. This adventure began three years ago when Anton began cello lessons. Rose, trying to encourage him, became so fascinated that she decided to take up the cello herself. Her husband followed suit with the violin just about the time Covid began shutting things down. Rose recalls this shut-down as a “terrible, horrible time,” but realizes that it had a positive up-side, forcing the family to spend a great deal more time together. By taking instrument lessons, at first by Zoom, they encouraged one another and grew together.

String instructor Amanda Jansen took on the family for lessons. Eventually, she provided a block of time for them to come together. As one had a private lesson, the others practiced together. Rose felt especially challenged because she did not read notes. Gradually, however, she grew in this skill, comparing it to learning a new language that is translated through instruments. The four made good progress and began communicating enthusiasm to their extended family. Adam’s sister took up the harmonica and her two children the trumpet and trombone respectively. His mother applied herself to the keyboard and his brother and sister-in-law chose the violin. This past Christmas, they had a fairly decent family music group. They find it a lot of fun to make music together. It is paying dividends in a great sense of accomplishment and has enhanced their family life in a surprising way.

For this to happen, it was essential that these budding musicians have a vital music education. St. Francis Music Center was just the place. In addition to receiving individual and group instruction, becoming members of the Sonata Orchestra (beginners) was key to development. At first, Rose was the only adult member. This was difficult, but she was constantly encouraged by the great respect shown her by the instructors Amanda Jansen and Melissa von Itter and staff, especially Robyn Gray. Rose recalls with amusement the day a 10-year-old member of the orchestra complimented her on her progress. He naively reminded her how awful she had played at the beginning!

Rose recognizes how much community is basic to music. She is grateful to the Music Center for gathering many different peoples of a great variety of ages and backgrounds and brings them together around music. She now promotes music education among other adults. She realizes that children are more fearless in learning new things and tolerant about making mistakes, and that adult learners struggle with this. She happily reports that another mother and son have now joined the music education program.

The Surma family has made significant changes in their home life. They ended up turning their dining room into a (rather messy) music room. It is perfect for their present needs. (Who needs a dining room anyway?) They are now enthusiastic proponents of family music education and ideal witnesses to the value of St. Francis Music Center in the Little Falls community.



In October of 2022, all three orchestras from St. Francis Music Center had the opportunity to play with the Heartland Symphony Orchestra at Little Falls Community High School. It was particularly exciting for the Surmas as it was the first time they appeared on stage together. Pictured are Adam, Reid, Sean and Rose Surma.

*I like donating to the Franciscan Sisters. They are kind and gentle women, doing the right thing for our world, addressing current issues in the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi and fostering peace. —Anonymous, Cushing, Minn.*

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Mardi Gras 2023 was a celebration of the great work Catholic Charities does in Central Minnesota. We even met Bishop Patrick Neary and learned he is very fond of Franciscans! "Our community looks forward to sharing ministry with him and inviting him to Little Falls. We pledge our support, collaboration and prayers. Welcome to the St. Cloud Diocese!" Sister Carol Schmit. Pictured: Sisters Mary Pat Burger, Carol Schmit, Bishop Patrick Neary, Liz Rydeen, Sisters Bernice Rieland, Cordy Korkowski.