

Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

WINTER 2023

www.annunciationmonastery.org



Welcome New Oblates of Annunciation Monastery

On Oct. 15, a beautiful autumn day, six new Oblates of Annunciation Monastery were received during Eucharistic Liturgy. Oblates are Christian women and men who associate with a monastery and live according to the Rule of St. Benedict as their state in life permits. Those who wish to become oblates make monastic promises to learn from the wisdom of St. Benedict, and apply it to their daily lives. Oblates practice both stability and growth, meaning they are committed to a particular monastery, while striving to listen to God's promptings and grow in compassion and gratitude in relation to others.

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MESSAGE FROM THE

Prioress

In the Catholic Church, November is the month we remember our deceased loved ones. It is a wonderful tradition that helps us recall cherished memories of family and friends and give thanks for the time we had with them. This year, this practice touches my heart in a deeper way. My maternal grandmother, Verna Thoreson, passed away August 9 at the age of 96. As the oldest granddaughter, I had a close relationship with Grandma. Grandma and Grandpa lived on a farm near Kathryn, N.D., until my early teens when they moved to Valley City, just a few blocks from the high school. Their house became our “home away from home” for my siblings and me. Over my adult years, a visit to Grandma’s house was included every time I went home to visit my parents.

You often hear vocation ministers say that vocations begin at home, in the family. My parents certainly played a role in providing me with a loving, nurturing environment where a call to religious life could be cultivated. I believe both of my grandmothers played significant roles in opening my heart to answer God’s call to this community. We attended the same Sunday Mass at St. Catherine’s as Grandma and Grandpa Kunze. My siblings and I would often go up front and sit with them. Grandma Thoreson didn’t talk much about her faith life, but she was always an example of Benedictine hospitality (even if she didn’t know anything about Saint Benedict).



Welcoming each person who entered her life as Christ was demonstrated through her care and concern for every visitor to her house. You hardly passed over the threshold before she was offering you a cup of coffee and some baked good. Sitting down at the kitchen table was a must, where the candy dish was always full. Grandma Thoreson listened to you, always interested in what was happening in

your life. Both of my grandmothers had their challenges in life and relied on God for the support and help they needed to come through those times. They loved their families and did whatever was necessary to help a relative, whether immediate or extended.

I had three grandparents present for my first profession in 1996. When I was installed as prioress in 2016, Grandma Thoreson wanted to make something for this event. She worked with my mom to make a quilted wall hanging

of the Our Father. It hangs in my office near my desk. It is a constant reminder of the Father's love and my grandmother's love. I am grateful for the relationship I had with both of my grandmothers. I know they continue to watch over me and guide me. I hope you will take time this month to remember your deceased loved ones and thank them for their impact on your life.

Sister Nicole Kunze

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“Becoming an oblate can support one’s openness to the sacred in everyday life,” explained oblate Diane Krupinsky. “Whether one is a single person, a spouse, a parent, a worker in any profession, we have the opportunity to seek God and be mindful of how we approach daily tasks and relationships. I truly value the gift of getting to know other oblates as we grow in our faith journey.”

The Oblates of Annunciation Monastery are supported in their faith journey through their relationships with the sisters and other oblates, through an annual curriculum of readings, videos, and presentations at monthly gatherings to nurture their understanding of Benedictine spirituality. Individuals who are interested in the oblate program are always welcome at oblate meetings.



Sister Nicole Kunze, prioress (far left) and Sister Rosemary DeGracia, oblate director (far right) welcome new oblates (lt. to rt.: Michael Taylor, Cindy Weigum, Audrey Ternes, Ramona Martinez, Loann Hardy, and Brenda Zastoupil.

An Advent Day of Reflection will be held at Annunciation Monastery on Dec. 3, 2023, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. All are welcome! For more information, contact Oblate Director, Sister Rosemary DeGracia at 701-255-1520, or refer to www.annunciationmonastery.org “Get Involved/Become an Oblate”



Oblates of Annunciation Monastery

A FALL RETREAT FOR OBLATES



With the arrival of autumn, the Oblates of Annunciation Monastery gathered for a fall retreat to reflect on how they live out their Benedictine call. On Sept. 10 presenter and oblate, Jeffrey Johnson, led a retreat based on the readings for the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. In his reflection, Johnson explained how “Benedictine hospitality shines in unseen moments of one listening to another, and a new light can be shed in these moments that can heal and open a wider vision of God’s presence in every time, place, and circumstance.”

Jeffrey Johnson, oblate of Annunciation Monastery, presented a fall retreat for oblates.



STEPPING STONE MINISTRIES

Sister Idelle Badt's heart has always been with helping others. While earning her master's degree in social work, she had opportunities to help some of society's most vulnerable—the homeless population.

Sister Idelle completed her field placement for her master's degree at Ministry on the Margins (MOTM), a nonprofit founded by Sister Kathleen Atkinson of Annunciation Monastery. It is here that she became very aware of the need for post-discharge medical care for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Badt witnessed the revolving door effect when people with frostbitten hands or toes would come to MOTM to escape the cold. "Homeless individuals are often discharged from medical facilities and end up being readmitted because they don't have the ability, or a clean environment, to do sterile dressing changes or wound care. Or, in the case of a diabetic, they aren't able to or appropriately store medication, like insulin, which needs to be refrigerated," explained Sister Idelle. "Similarly, consider the person who has surgery and doesn't have a home to be discharged to. They can't have a successful recovery without nourishing meals and a safe place to heal. Imagine living on the streets and not having a place to prep for a procedure such as a colonoscopy. These are real issues we don't always think about."

A Long-Standing Tradition of Meeting Needs

As Sister Idelle pondered those issues, she felt the call of the Benedictine sisters who came before her. Throughout the ages, Benedictines have responded to the needs of the times. And God always provided. This was a need and she had to trust God would provide again.



Sister Idelle Badt, President of Stepping Stone Ministries, and Martha Reichert, Program Director, stand by the entrance to the ministry.



"This ministry goes beyond being a medical respite. We want to connect people with services to help set them up for recovery and resources to be successful when they leave Stepping Stone Ministries." Sister Idelle Badt

The St. Alexius Convent, located just southeast of CHI St. Alexius Health on Broadway Avenue, had been home to several of the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery. Last spring, those sisters moved back home to the motherhouse, Annunciation Monastery. “I kept thinking about that space and how it is ideal for a medical respite facility in terms of location and the capacity to house multiple people.”

Sister Idelle presented this idea to Sister Nicole Kunze, prioress of Annunciation Monastery, and the monastic council. The sisters were in support of Sister Idelle starting a medical respite facility and agreed that the former convent would be ideal.

She reached out to Martha Reichert, a social worker who had been her field placement preceptor for graduate school. Interestingly, Reichert had been exploring options for her own ministry journey. She felt God was calling her to do something new that would have a deep social impact. As she pondered the medical respite idea, she kept thinking, “In the end, what matters is how we care for each other. The streets are not a place for healing.”

With a shared passion for the idea, Sister Idelle and Martha collaborated with others to explore ideas on how to start such a facility. They learned about a Homeless Health Initiative through CHI/ CommonSpirit that utilized the expertise of the National Institute for Medical Respite Care. Their idea fit the requirements of a grant for projects addressing the complex needs of the homeless population.

Reichert marveled, “We applied for the grant and got it! After that, God kept surprising us with yes-es.” They approached Sister Nancy Miller, market director of Mission Integration at CHI St. Alexius Health, about their idea. Miller then brought the idea to the hospital’s board of directors, hoping they would consider renting the former convent to use as a medical respite facility for the hospital to discharge homeless individuals to for ongoing medical care. It was another “yes.”

“This ministry goes beyond being a medical respite,” explained Sister Idelle. “We want to connect people with services to help set them up for recovery and resources to be successful when they leave Stepping Stone Ministries.” She shared that all referrals will come directly from hospital or acute care settings. In similar settings, the average stay is around 45 days.

Reichert said they can do a lot for people in 45 days. The plan is to offer guests three meals a day, provide them with a private room and bathroom for recovery, offer rides to and from appointments,



*“In the end, what matters is how we care for each other.
The streets are not a place for healing.” Martha Reichert*

and coordinate community resources for ongoing success. This might involve connecting them with a primary care provider, finding more permanent housing, and teaching basic life skills like applying for jobs and handling finances.



“There is so much stigma about homelessness. To have the privilege to change someone’s life for the better will be a beautiful learning experience. They are people of God and our call is to walk with them.” Dr. Elizabeth Seifert

A Multidisciplinary Approach for Success

Dr. Elizabeth Seifert, assistant professor of Occupational Therapy at the University of Mary, also felt a tug as she recalled an email from Dr. Mary Dockter, dean of Saint Gianna School of Health Sciences. It mentioned this upcoming ministry in medical respite care. “That email was a God whisper calling me to help,” she said.

Seifert acted on that whisper from God and contacted Badt and Reichert. Their collective wheels were in motion. She described the “goosebump moments,” and the happy tears they shared as they discussed how they could involve University of Mary students to provide therapies. Opportunities would be available for students in the fields of occupational and physical therapy, social work, and in technology. Seifert discussed how, “We preach moral courage to do what God calls us to do, rather than just thinking about it. Sister Idelle put God’s call into action with this ministry, and we can weave the Benedictine values into the way we serve others.” She added, “There is so much stigma about homelessness. To have the privilege to change someone’s life for the better will be a beautiful learning experience. They are people of God and our call is to walk with them.”

Badt is thankful for the support and enthusiasm for this ministry. “We hope to fill a gap in our health care system by providing a hands-on opportunity for students to evaluate and work with homeless individuals after discharge to help them succeed and heal, if they want that assistance.” She added that she hopes to offer an opportunity for students in health careers to live rent-free at the facility, and in return, work shifts to prepare meals, eat with the guests, and provide some health-related services. In a recent presentation on caring for others, Sister Idelle reminded social work students, “Always remember, someday we, or one of our loved ones, could be in the same position they are in.”

Sister Idelle hopes to open the doors to Stepping Stone Ministries the summer of 2024. She said, “There are a lot of plans underway and we are continually surprised to see how the community is supporting this endeavor.” For more information, contact Sister Idelle Badt at 701-426-7737 or: www.steppingstoneministries.com

MINISTRY ON THE MARGINS

is Awarded Bush Prize: North Dakota



The Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery joyfully congratulate Sister Kathleen Atkinson, founder of Ministry on the Margins, and all of her team members and volunteers, for being awarded the Bush Prize: North Dakota.

The following excerpts are from Strengthen ND and the Bush Foundation:

Ministry on the Margins is committed to supporting those who fall through the cracks during times of transition through inclusive hospitality and a space of welcoming, direct service and case management, and resourceful community-based partnerships. • Ministry on the Margins was selected for its track record of innovation with small and large interventions, service pipeline development, and behavioral health adaptations. • Small innovations include: health/wellness partnerships, providing vision services, haircuts, manicures/pedicures/foot care, and acupuncture. • Large innovations include: working with municipal, county, and law enforcement leaders to establish the Coffee House. The Coffee House is open from 10:00 pm to 6:00 am as a space where homeless individuals can stay overnight. • Ministry on the Margin's work is driven and influenced by the needs of homeless individuals, the law enforcement community, elected leadership, service providers (including public health), and the faith community.

Celebrating 10 Years

On October 25, 2023, Ministry on the Margins celebrated its 10th anniversary. Thank you to all who meet the critical needs of people who may otherwise fall through the cracks in society. Through your loving service, hospitality, mentoring, prayers, and outreach, you make a tremendous impact.

Gratitude and blessings to all who are a part of this amazing ministry. Thank you for “walking the walk,” each day!

*Ministry on the Margins is a sponsored ministry of the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery.

Sister Kathleen Atkinson leads tours for visitors and Sisters of Annunciation Monastery.



Thank you to all who shared their harvest with our sisters!



Sisters Barbara Weber, Agatha Muggli, Idelle Badt, Agnes Reinert shuck corn to freeze for the winter.



Sisters Renee and Rosanne Zastoupil

We appreciate you so much!



Michelle Ross, Sister Ruth Margaret Karabensh, and Tracy Ross enjoy spending time with each other.

Nursing Care Contributes to Wellness of Body, Mind, and Spirit

Michelle Ross, licensed practical nurse, has been working as a full-time health coordinator for the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery since May. She joined Colleen McGraw, licensed practical nurse, who has provided nursing care and coordinated special events for the sisters for the past 17 years. In addition, Kim Spallinger, registered nurse, and Tracy Ross, certified nurse assistant, work with the sisters through the PACE program.

“As a healthcare team, we try to integrate the personalized physical care of the sisters with a holistic and inclusive environment with social activities,” explained Michelle Ross. Through scheduled activities like chair exercise, walking, balloon volleyball, crafts, and games like Yahtzee, the nursing staff strives to improve strength, balance, and cognition.



Monastery nurses coordinated a fun afternoon at Papa's Pumpkin Patch. Standing: Michelle Ross, Sister Janet Zander, Sister Susan Lardy, Sister Anne Therése Huyen, and Kim Spallinger; Seated: Sister Grace Dahmus and Sister Margaret Nelson.

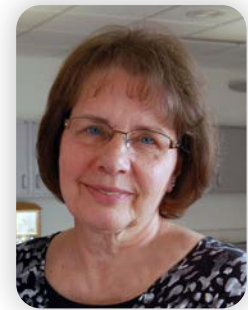
The healthcare team members shared these comments about why they enjoy working with the sisters:

Michelle Ross: “The best thing is the warmth of the sisters and the welcoming atmosphere. The biggest surprise to me is their sense of humor and learning about their history. It is fascinating to hear their stories and see how their contributions have made an impact in this region.”

Tracy Ross: “I was surprised at the home-like atmosphere of the monastery. When I thought of a monastery, I thought of quiet and people who don't interact with one another. I was taken by the family atmosphere and how it is so full of life and love.”

Kim Spallinger: “I expected it to be a simple life. And it is, to a degree. But I didn't expect their lives to be as full as they are. The sisters are so full of joy. They pray together and they serve one another in love. They are a good example of how we should live.”

Colleen McGraw: “I enjoy visiting with the sisters and getting to know them. I enjoy finding out more about them and the things they like. I provide nursing care and help them with tasks like organizing, and ear cleaning, and foot care. The sisters are a blessing to me, and I hope I am to them as well.”



Colleen McGraw

Elevator Update:

Thank you to all of our generous friends for donations to update the two monastery elevators! The updates should begin in early 2024. With your donations, we currently have \$30,840 of the \$120,000 needed to complete this project. We are deeply grateful for your support!

Thank you!

COMMISSIONING OF REED REYMAN

as President of CHI St. Alexius Health

It was our great joy to help prayerfully welcome Mr. Reed Reyman, Ed.S., President of CHI St. Alexius Health, in a sacred Commissioning Ceremony on September 29 at CHI St. Alexius Health.

“Thank you, Reed, for following God’s call in your life to be a light and servant leader at CHI St. Alexius Health. The prayers of the sisters are with you each day, and with all who serve, and are cared for at this holy place of healing. Thank you to all who made this such a meaningful ceremony.” ~ Sister Nicole Kunze.



Reed Reyman stands in the atrium featuring the arch and the mission to “Let all be received as Christ.”

Andrew Santos, division senior vice president of Mission Integration, and Sister Nicole Kunze, prioress of Annunciation Monastery commission Reed Reyman as president of CHI St. Alexis Health on Sept. 29, 2023.



Sandra and Reed Reyman and Sister Nancy Miller, market director of Mission Integration at CHI St. Alexis Health.



Reed Reyman, far right, was joined by his wife, sister, and parents.



It was an honor to visit with North Dakota Senator, Kevin Cramer, who was in attendance and shared his support of CHI St. Alexis Health. Cramer is pictured with Sister Rosanne Zastoupil.



Ann Brendel, administrative assistant to Reyman, and Sister Nancy Miller serve cake after the commissioning. The cake featured a picture of CHI St. Alexis Health and "Let all be received as Christ."



Happenings!

RB72 Retreat For Girls

In August our vocation team, Sisters Marena Hoogland, JoAnn Krebsbach, and Idelle Badt, hosted a weekend retreat for girls entering eighth grade. The “RB 72” retreat was based on the Rule of St. Benedict and the value of respect.

The young women joined the sisters for prayer, meals, discussion on the Rule of St. Benedict, and crafts. They had a great time painting the flower pots and touching up a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the surrounding prayer space.



“Being able to go on the RB72 retreat was a great privilege because of the kindness and hospitality of the sisters. It was an additional privilege to be able to see how the sisters do many normal activities for the glory of God, who is clearly the most important person in their lives. The disposition of all the sisters is one of joy and a willingness to serve, making them outstanding role models, even more so because their role model is Jesus. The love that the sisters have for God and their neighbors is evident, most especially in how they are not afraid to serve our community, inspire and guide the youth, and do many things that go unseen. In the end, the retreat was fulfilling, fun, and beautiful, just as daily life is for the sisters.”

Evelyn K.

Students and Sisters Bless Each Other

Three incredibly gifted University of Mary students came to live with the sisters for the fall semester of school. The living situation is a first for the sisters and for the students as well. The three young women, Emily Dorn, Olivia Fredock, and Sarah Graham, were extended an invitation to live at the monastery and engage in community with the sisters. This arrangement is mutually beneficial for the students and the sisters. The students have a comfortable place to stay and study, while participating in the life of the sisters.



Emily Dorn, Olivia Fredock, and Sarah Graham

The sisters and the students had gotten to know each other while interacting at the University of Mary, so it seemed like a good fit. The students admitted to being somewhat wary as they contemplated the idea. They had questions like, “Will we have to be quiet? Can we laugh and have fun? Will we burden the sisters with our presence at the monastery?”

After moving into the monastery, those questions disappeared and they were surprised about how quickly they felt at home. The students have their own rooms and a recreation room, complete with refrigerator, couches, and a space to study, play games, and just hang out. They also help with charges around the monastery, such as cooking, and cleaning.

Emily and Olivia are completing their degrees in elementary education and plan to return to their home towns in Wisconsin to teach. Emily expressed her appreciation for the experience of living with the sisters. “We were welcomed with such warmth and hospitality,” she said. “I found myself really surprised at how much this community feels like family.” She smiled, recalling the time she was running late and missed supper with the sisters. “It was so sweet because the sisters saved a big bowl of beef stew and several grilled cheese sandwiches for me so I wouldn’t be hungry. One of them even repaired my coat for me. It feels so much like living at home. It has been a great experience!”

“I quickly felt at home at the monastery,” said Olivia. “The sisters integrated us into their daily life by inviting us to share in their activities. The sisters have welcomed us so warmly. The other day we made Chex mix with the sisters for game night. They also taught us how to make and can salsa. We laugh and have fun as we work together, like you do with your family.”

Sarah expressed how living in a monastery has helped her better understand the value of community and how to be joyful in service to others. “It was a pleasant surprise to see how the sisters enjoy life. There is so much joy here, and everybody cares about you,” she explained. Sarah will continue to live at the monastery through the spring before returning to her home town of Strawberry, California.

The sisters thoroughly enjoy having the students at the monastery. “They add so much to our community and it is truly a gift to have them with us,” said Sister Rosanne Zastoupil. Her sentiments have been echoed by the sisters numerous times during these past months.

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The sisters held an ice cream social at the monastery for University of Mary students, faculty, and staff, during Welcome Week! This has become an annual event to welcome students and get to know them.

