



# Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

SUMMER 2022

www.annunciationmonastery.org



## Sisters Of Annunciation Monastery Mark 75th Anniversary as an Independent Monastic Community

With roots going back to before statehood, the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery are celebrating 75 years as an independent monastic community devoted to prayer, community and service to the people of western and central North Dakota.

Seventy-five years ago, the long-awaited news for the sisters to be granted permission from Rome to become independent from their motherhouse in Minnesota came on March 24, 1947. A telephone call from Bishop Vincent Ryan announced that Rome had granted the request. Since the call was received on the eve of the Feast of the Annunciation, the new independent community would be called Benedictine Sisters of the Annunciation. Mother Decora Kaliher was named the first prioress.



*Mother Decora Kaliher, first prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of the Annunciation*



MESSAGE FROM THE

# Prioress

**C**elebrating the 75th anniversary of the founding of our monastic community this year has provided me with many opportunities to reflect on our founding sisters and their courage and vision to follow God's call to the prairies of North Dakota in 1947. These women are the pioneers who set out to serve the educational and healthcare needs of the people of western North Dakota. Over the years, they were followed by many other women who continued these good works along with finding other needs to answer. Today, our sisters faithfully live a life of prayer, community and service while answering God's call in this time and place.

In all we do, we Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery take Saint Benedict and the Virgin Mary as our guides on this journey. Both of these blessed people assist us in leading a life centered on God and responding to the many ways He calls us throughout our lives.

We don't have too many facts about the life of Saint Benedict, but there is much we can glean from the Rule he left us. It all starts with the very first word of the Rule—"Listen." During every moment of our lives, we have so many noises coming at us. When that noise blocks out our ability to hear God's voice in our lives, it is a problem. Benedict invites us to take the time to listen—to God, to my sisters, to our friends and

neighbors. We need to find noise-free times in our day where we can pause and let the voice of God enter into our hearts.

In the Annunciation, Mary's example in her fiat, her yes to the Lord, shows us how to be open and available to whatever we may be called to do or be. The angel Gabriel reassured her in her moment of doubt, saying "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."

The 140 sisters who volunteered to become the founders of Annunciation Monastery did not know what was going to happen, but each sister said "Yes" to God and worried about the details later. These sister volunteers waited nearly three years for the decree to be approved. The sisters trusted, much like Mary, that God would fulfill his promise and bring this good work to fruition. Each woman who followed after our founders has also said "Yes" to God and wherever God has called her to use her gifts in service to others.

Thank you, our friends and family, for your faithful support of our community. Enjoy this issue of Tidings as we give thanks to God for the many blessings he has provided our community over the past 75 years.

*Sister Nicole Kunze*

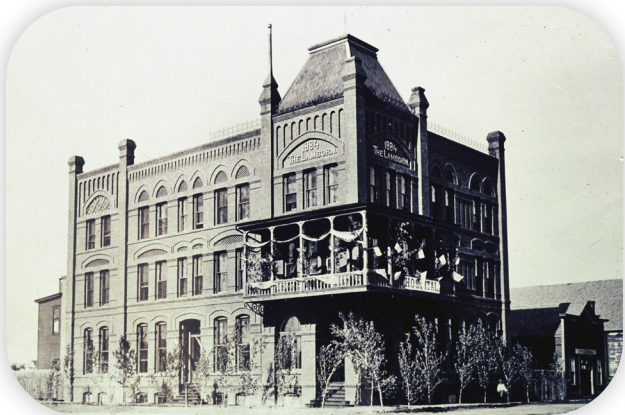
# A Little History Prior To 1947

Benedictine sisters have been serving in Dakota Territory since 1878, when they were summoned to start the territory's first parochial school. This endeavor was met with trust that God would assist them in beginning a ministry of teaching which ultimately led to Catholic schools throughout central and western North Dakota over the next decades.



*In 1878, four sisters opened St. Mary's Academy and Boarding School which laid the framework for today's Catholic schools across the diocese.*

Nuns were unheard of in Dakota Territory until the Benedictine Sisters from St. Benedict's Convent in St. Joseph, Minn. trekked across the prairie bringing with them religion, culture, education and healthcare.



*The old Lamborn Hotel served as the first hospital between Seattle and St. Paul—St. Alexis Hospital.*



*These seven Benedictine sisters were the first to serve at St. Alexis Hospital.*

In response to the needs for healthcare in 1885, and at the request of Abbot Alexius Edelbrock, seven Benedictine sisters started the first hospital between Seattle and St. Paul—St. Alexis Hospital, which was first located in the old Lamborn Hotel on Main street. The sisters were the first Benedictine women in the U.S. to serve in health care. Stories from the past about sisters who carried fully anesthetized patients up and down stairs for surgery and recovery are still told. As sisters perceived the needs, they opened other hospitals and care centers while continuing to teach, both in schools and in Catholic parishes in the Bismarck Diocese. At St. Alexis Hospital, sisters started programs in anesthesia, physical therapy, radiology and pharmacy. Sister Boniface Timmins was the first administrator at St. Alexis Hospital, now CHI St. Alexis Health.

During her first month as administrator, the 18-bed hospital took in \$20. There wasn't any heating system or running water in Bismarck. Coal stoves were used in each room, and water for laundry was hauled from the Missouri River for \$.25 per barrel. Sr. Boniface raised \$1,000 for a heating system installed the following year. Under her direction, the first aseptic system in surgery was also implemented.



*Sr. Boniface Timmins*

Sister Boniface had great business ability and knew how to obtain the cooperation of the businessmen and politicians, as well as of the patients. She bought the first telephones in Bismarck, and presented them to the doctors, using all her business savvy to persuade them to install the telephones in their homes and offices and have them connected with the main line. Famous patients during her 42-year tenure as administrator were Theodore Roosevelt and the son of Sitting Bull.



In 1944, Bishop Ryan envisioned Benedictine sisters beginning a new independent community in Bismarck. In his persistence, he spent four years urging the prioress at St. Benedict's, the papal delegate and others in authority, to respond to his plea. When the prioress in St. Joseph, Minn. asked for sisters to volunteer, a group of 140 came to begin their community at the location of 304 Avenue A West (also known as the C.B. Little House). The home was owned by the Bismarck Diocese and offered a temporary residence for the sisters. Now, the house serves as the bishop's office known as the chancery.



“Though this was considered a mansion for a family of five (family of Mr. C.B. Little), it was really inadequate for the needs of 140 women. That meant simply that the sisters would live close to their schools or hospital, or whatever was their place of work. However, 39 sisters did take up residence there. How was it possible? When I tell you what had been a three-car garage was turned into sleeping quarters for 17 nuns, plus a music conservatory, you'll know it was indeed possible. In the dining room we sat so close together that I was never quite sure whose napkin I was using.” (the late Sr. Helen Kilzer)



*In 1944, a group of sisters moved from the motherhouse in St. Joseph, Minn. to begin their community at their temporary location of 304 Avenue A West (also known as the C.B. Little House) in Bismarck. Now, the house serves as the bishop's office known as the chancery.*

For many of the 140 sisters who volunteered to begin the new foundation in Bismarck in 1944, the decision to branch off from St. Benedict's Convent in Minnesota was not easy. Despite their love for their home convent, many thought of the possibilities there could be on the prairie that needed sisters. The courageous volunteers came and wondered what would happen if papal approval never materialized. After three long years, the approval arrived, and the sisters officially planted roots and their ministries flourished.

# An Independent Community



*The sisters enjoy a picnic on the prairie in the 1950s.*

**M**inistries in education and healthcare expanded greatly in the '50s and '60s. With the same faith, courage and trust in God as they had for starting each ministry, the sisters enlisted renowned Hungarian architect, Marcel Breuer, to design their new home. The site was initially planned to be near the Green River, approximately 12 miles east of Dickinson. Plans changed when Charles "Chick" and Eunice Swenson made an offer that was too generous to ignore. They gifted the sisters with 40 acres of land south of Bismarck. In 1959, the sisters moved to their new priory, founded Mary College, and opened Priory High School for girls.



*Formal presentation of the deed of Gift Hill by Charles "Chick" Swenson to Mother Edane Volk. To Mother Edane's left are Alex Asbridge and Walter Small, who also sold land to the sisters.*



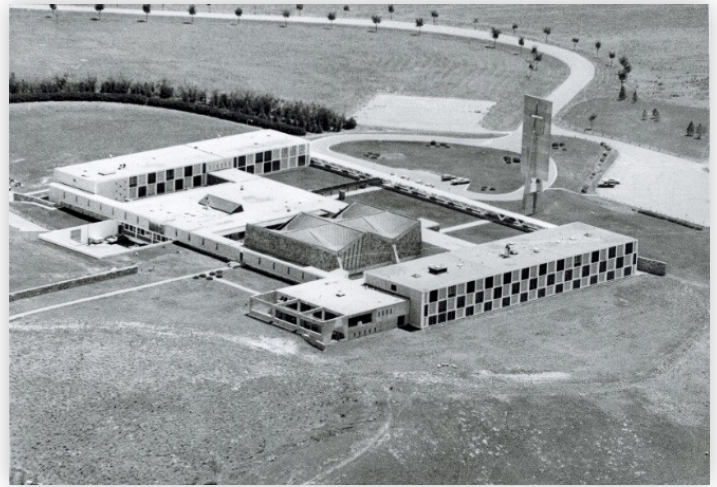
*The sisters on what was known as "Gift Hill," the 40 acres of land south of Bismarck overlooking the Missouri River gifted to the sisters, and what is now the site of the University of Mary and Annunciation Monastery.*



*Architects Marcel Breuer and Hamilton Smith detail the plans for the sisters' new home with Mother Edane Volk and sisters on the building committee.*

Mary College, now known as the University of Mary, was and still is Bismarck's only four-year institution of higher education. The sisters made this decisive move to start the college in response to the need to prepare their new members to work in health care and education. They also wanted to expand the St. Alexius School of Nursing into a four-year program. In 1959, Mary College opened with 17 full-time students, no campus and few financial resources. At that time, the college offered undergraduate degrees in nursing and education. Mary College became the University of Mary in 1986. It now offers nearly 60 bachelor's, 15 master's, and five doctoral programs

— in business administration, education, nursing practice, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. With more than 3,800 students, Mary has locations in North Dakota, Montana, Arizona, and Rome, Italy, as well as vibrant online offerings.



*Phase I and II of the construction of the Priory*

At the time the monastery was celebrating its 50th anniversary, Sr. Nancy Miller reflected on the past and future of the community by saying, “We have accomplished much and made a difference to the people of the surrounding area. The past reinforces that this is the place for us. We are committed to the people of western North Dakota. We will always be here.”

That steadfast commitment of the community vocalized by Sr. Nancy, who served as prioress from 2008-16, has never wavered. The sisters are now celebrating their 75th anniversary under the leadership of current prioress, Sr. Nicole Kunze.

Sr. Nicole Kunze, notes, “We are carrying forth the ideals set forth by St. Benedict 1,500 years ago— offering hospitality to those in need, providing a place of prayer and respite, providing a place where community can be built and showing others how to build community.”



*As the University of Mary's growth surpassed its space, the sisters moved out of their living space on campus and built a new monastery just south of the bell banner. Marcel Breuer's design elements were incorporated into the sisters' new home which they moved into in 2000. Prior to that, in 1998, the sisters changed the name Annunciation Priory to Annunciation Monastery.*

# Connected To The Community

The Benedictine Sisters' strong connection to the people in the communities they serve is extended to laypersons through their oblate program. This program gives people of varying Christian backgrounds an opportunity to live according to the Rule of St. Benedict, as their own state of life permits. Through meetings, study, prayer and sharing with the sisters and other oblates, their lives are enriched by their deepening relationship with Christ.



Father Anthony Baker, monastery chaplain, and Sisters Nicole Kunze and Rosemary DeGracia welcome new oblates.



Sister Nicole Kunze, along with several other sisters, spent time in the local Catholic schools. Here, she was reading to students at Saint Anne School.



Sister Marena Hoogland is helping students with their Advent art project.

Sisters are actively engaged in the arts and service programs throughout the community.



Sisters Nancy Gunderson, Melissa Cote, Father Anthony Baker, Sisters Gerard Wald, Rosemary DeGracia, Idelle Badt, Janet Zander and JoAnn Krebsbach are among the many sisters who volunteer their time in the community. The sisters sponsor and serve a free community meal at The Banquet.



Sister Gemma Peters assists Sister Nancy Gunderson with her art quilt. Sister Nancy is active in the arts and is shown teaching an art quilt class at the Heritage Center. Her art has been featured at local galleries and traveling galleries depicting social justice issues.

As a University of Mary student, Sisterarena Hoogland shared her love of music by being in band. Now a Mary graduate, she will follow her dream to become a math teacher. She is pictured with Sister Maria (Sister Quỳnh Nhu) a Vietnamese sister from the Sisters Adorers of the Holy Cross in Portland, OR, who stayed at Annunciation Monastery while attending the University of Mary. Both sisters graduated in Spring 2022.





As always, guests are welcomed to Annunciation Monastery for retreats, prayer and spiritual direction. Retreats for women considering religious life are held throughout the year at the monastery. As God still calls women to this way of life, the sisters are here to help in their discernment. In addition to daily Mass, the sisters gather three times a day to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours (the prayer of the church) and spend time in private prayer and lectio (reflection on Scripture).

To commemorate 75 years as an independent monastic community, the sisters featured historical displays throughout the year at the monastery and at their three sponsored ministries—the University of Mary, CHI St. Alexius Health and Ministry on the Margins.

Since founding the university and the hospital, the role of the sisters has changed over the years. Sisters serve as members of the university’s Mission Integration Committee and they maintain strong bonds with the university serving in various capacities. Sisters are on the university’s board of trustees, are a regular presence at campus events and participate in Benedictine Awareness Week and vocation-related events. Sisters are regularly guest speakers in the classroom and at campus ministry activities. At CHI St. Alexius Health, Sr. Nancy Miller serves as vice president of Mission Integration and attends department meetings regularly to ensure the hospital and staff adhere to the mission and values that embody St. Benedict’s Rule to receive all as Christ. She says, “Part of my responsibility is to emphasize the mission and values at every level of the organization. That means formation in spirituality, it means putting into action our values, and it is to be there for our associates as they encounter the day-to-day challenges of healthcare.”



*Sisters participated in a Christmas project to purchase and wrap gifts and fill backpacks for families in need.*



*The sisters offer a prayer of blessing for the faculty, staff, and students of the University of Mary at the end of a Benedictine awareness convocation.*



*Monsignor James Shea, president of the University of Mary, presented a bouquet of flowers to Sister Nicole Kunze and the sisters in celebration of Annunciation Monastery’s 75th Anniversary.*

Sisters also bring Holy Communion to patients, work in the hospital archives, and participate in special events at the hospital throughout the year.

Sister Melissa Cote serves at CHI St. Alexius Health as a pharmacist, a position she has held since 2011. She enjoys the medication side of patient care.

As Sr. Melissa approached her 40th birthday, she made a life-changing decision to improve her health. She became a member of the GYS running club in Bismarck and has been running ever since—regularly running races and marathons. She says running improved not only her physical shape, but her mental shape and self-esteem. With more energy and self-confidence, Sister Melissa shares the benefits of a faith-filled, active lifestyle with others. She became a youth mentor in BIO Girls (Beautiful Inside & Out), a program for girls in grades two to six that promotes mental health, self-esteem, healthy lifestyle, and faith through exercise and positive friendships. The mission of BIO Girls is “to improve the self-esteem in adolescent girls through empowerment of self and service to others.” Christian non-denominational devotions are a key piece of the program. A non-competitive physical activity component teaches the girls how to obtain better health through running and cross-training. “I am a firm believer in this program. It teaches important life skills like not comparing yourself to others, how to build self confidence and have a positive body image, and love yourself, just as God made you,” says Sr. Melissa.



*Sr. Nancy Miller serves as director of Mission Integration at CHI St. Alexius Health. She is pictured with Katherine Hedstrom, executive assistant, in administration.*



*Sisters Nancy Miller and JoAnn Krebsbach offer blessings to staff during Benedictine Awareness events at CHI St. Alexius Health.*



*Sr. Melissa with participants in BIO Girls.*

*Sister Melissa Cote serves as a pharmacist at CHI St. Alexius Health.*

*Sr. Melissa follows in the footsteps of the late Sr. Emmanuel Feist who served at St. Alexius Hospital for 33 years, with 12 of them as director of pharmacy at St. Alexius.*



## A New Sponsored Ministry Emerges: Ministry on the Margins

Ministry on the Margins, founded by Sr. Kathleen Atkinson in 2013, serves the needs of those who fall through the cracks in society and live on the margins. This ministry offers a food pantry, overnight coffee house, health screenings, employment assistance, and provides spiritual care and daily living items to those who come for help. Staff and volunteers help people who are leaving the prison system with re-entry into society and match them with resources to promote stability and successful transition. Sister Kathleen says, “Serving over 1,000 people per week, Ministry on the Margins is literally saving lives and helping those in need get their lives together.”



*Sr. Kathleen Atkinson*

“Through our sponsored institutions, through the thousands of alumni who have graduated from the University of Mary, through the patients who have been served at CHI St. Alexius Health, to all the men and women who walk through Ministry on the Margins looking for food or a listening ear, we touch more people than we could ever know. The impact is exponential,” explains Sister Nicole Kunze.

And, as has always been with Benedictines, prayer is the central focus of monastic life. The Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery pray together three times a day and spend time in private prayer and reflection on the scriptures. The sisters sing the Psalms and offer prayers for the people who ask for them, as well as for current events.



*Ministry on the Margins, founded by Sr. Kathleen Atkinson (left) in 2013, serves the spiritual and temporal needs of those who fall through the cracks in society and live on the margins.*



*Food pantry recipients select food and items for daily living.*



The Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery look forward to the next 75 years of faithfulness to prayer, community and service, in the way of St. Benedict, in which all are received as Christ. The thread that holds these women together and firmly binds them to the people of western and central North Dakota is prayer. By connecting and remaining ever-present in prayer, the monastic women are a unified and powerful force for good in our region and the world.

—Article by Jill Ackerman, Dir. of Mission Advancement for Annunciation Monastery, and Sonia Mullaly, editor of the *Dakota Catholic Action*, Bismarck Diocese

*Of Ukrainian heritage, Sr. Stephanie Dolyniuk offered a prayer service for the people of Ukraine, using Sr. Nancy Gunderson's art quilt, "Our Lady of Ukraine," as a piece for contemplation. The sisters regularly pray for the needs of the world.*

## 11th Annual Sponsorship Formation Event



*Father Daniel Horan, OFM, presented at the 11th Annual Sponsorship Formation event.*

*The annual Sponsorship Formation event brings leaders from each sponsored ministry together for a day of learning and sharing about carrying the mission of Jesus into the future.*



# Spring SNAPSHOTS *Vespers and Social!*

from 75th anniversary events



# Bell Banner of Annunciation Monastery

For over 125 years in Bismarck, N.D., the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery have gathered in prayer every morning, noon and evening, to give praise to God and to pray for the people of this region and of the world.

The bell banner, a symbol of strength, stability, vision and faithful presence, stands sturdy in the prairie soil; deeply rooted as are the sisters of the Annunciation.

The bell banner, an architectural masterpiece, was designed by world-renowned architect Marcel Breuer.

The three bells; Hillary, Joseph and Mary, faithfully call the Benedictine sisters to prayer each day. The tolling of the bells reminds us of God's presence in our world and invites all who hear to echo God's message of infinite love and peace.

The open cross at the top of the bell banner was designed to represent the risen Christ and let the North Dakota winds sail through. As if God is openly smiling, a cross shadow is cast on the first monastery twice a year during the winter solstice.



*Sisters stand by the scaffolding during the building of the one-hundred-foot bell banner—the landmark and symbol of the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery.*

## Name Change From Priory To Monastery

The sisters' sponsored ministries: St. Alexius Medical Center/Garrison Memorial Hospital, and the University of Mary, experienced tremendous growth over the decades. The name Annunciation Priory was changed to Annunciation Monastery in 1998 after conversations and study about the meaning and tradition of monasticism. In 2000, the sisters moved from the former priory location—now known as the Benedictine Center for Servant Leadership—to their new monastery just south of the landmark bell banner.



*During the winter solstice, a cross shadow shines upon Our Lady of the Annunciation Chapel, located in the Benedictine Center for Servant Leadership.*

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## *In Loving Memory*



**Sister Madonna Wagendorf, OSB**

**Born: June 7, 1927**

**Professed: July 11, 1947**

**Died: December 13, 2021**

Sister Madonna, a Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery celebrated her 74th anniversary of monastic profession this year.

Sister Madonna received her degree in nursing from the St. Alexius School of Nursing in Bismarck. She also became a nurse anesthetist, serving at St. Alexius, Riverdale, Garrison and Richardton hospitals. She was a healthcare pioneer who became a mainstay at Garrison where her roles included nursing director, nurse anesthetist, administrator for 21 years, spiritual caregiver, and keeper of medical records. Sister Madonna brought her expertise to many regional healthcare boards and to the University of Mary Board of Trustees. Her experience in nursing and leadership was invaluable at Annunciation Monastery where she also directed the sisters' health center.

Fond of nature and wildlife, classical music and reading, Sister Madonna found her time outdoors with God nourishing. She loved gardening, birdwatching, and fishing, and did so with a prayerful and grateful spirit. She cherished time with her family and her religious community



**Sister Terence Glum, OSB**

**Born: August 21, 1921**

**Professed: July 1, 1948**

**Died: January 13, 2022**

Sister Terence, a Benedictine Sister for 73 years, loved serving others. A graduate of the St. Alexius School of Nursing and a lieutenant in the Navy Nurse Corps, Sister Terence was among the first class of novices at the newly established Annunciation Monastery. Serving initially as an anesthetist at St. Alexius and Garrison Hospitals, Sister Terence then began her nearly 30 years of service at Mary College/University of Mary mainly in the science department. She was grateful for the opportunity to educate students in healthcare.

Sister Terence's love of nature found happy outlet in tending flower beds. Her desire to serve at the monastery included assisting staff, at the information desk, and knitting a multitude of items for the needy.

We rejoice, knowing that Sister Terence has received her heart's desire to go home to God.

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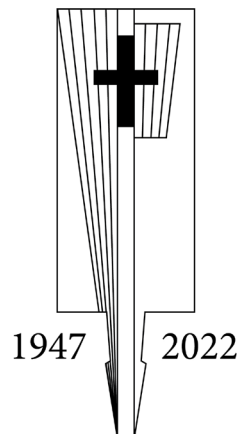
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If you are interested in making a donation in support of our ministries, please use the enclosed envelope. Thank you. Please remember us when making or revising your will. Our legal name is: Benedictine Sisters of the Annunciation, B.M.V. For more information, contact Jill Ackerman, director of mission advancement, (701) 355-8907 or: [jill@annunciationmonastery.org](mailto:jill@annunciationmonastery.org)

## Benedictine Sisters of the Annunciation



***Celebrating 75 Years***  
*Called...to prayer, community, service*

**The Benedictine Sisters of  
Annunciation Monastery sponsor:**

- \*University of Mary*
- \*CHI St. Alexius Health*
- \*Ministry on the Margins*

*Thank you!*

**FOR YOUR SUPPORT.  
PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE!**