



# Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

SUMMER 2020

www.annunciationmonastery.org

## *Sister Nicole Kunze Re-Elected as Prioress*

An exciting announcement occurred at the beginning of the outbreak of the new coronavirus in North Dakota. The good news was somewhat overshadowed by the uncertainty of what the days, weeks, and months ahead might bring. However, even the pandemic could not extinguish the joy and prayers of our sisters upon the re-election of Sister Nicole Kunze, as prioress of Annunciation Monastery on March 14, 2020.



*Sister Nicole Kunze (center) with her leadership team: Sister Rosanne Zastoupil, subprioress/treasurer, and Sister Janet Zander, secretary.*

Directly following election, Sister Nicole was formally re-installed as prioress in the presence of the Benedictine community and Sister Kerry O'Reilly, president of the Federation of St. Benedict.

In the days leading up to election, the sisters spent sacred time together, and in private prayer, to discern about the future directions set forth by the monastic community and who might be the sister to provide leadership into the future.

"I am honored to be re-elected as prioress of Annunciation Monastery," remarked Sister Nicole. "The past four years have been an exciting and challenging learning process. I am grateful for the trust and faith my monastic community has placed in me for another term, which is now six years."

As prioress, Sister Nicole serves as the spiritual and administrative leader of the religious community. Sister Nicole guides the sisters in their long-range planning and in their day-to-day life. She also provides leadership in the sisters' sponsored institutions: CHI St. Alexius Health, the University of Mary and CHI St. Alexius Health-Garrison. Sister Nicole serves as president of the Board of Trustees at the University of Mary. She serves as a councilor on the Federation of St. Benedict Council.

*Story continues on page 3*



MESSAGE FROM THE

# Prioress

**W**e are living in unprecedented times. The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the way we live. As Benedictines, we pray, live, and serve together in community. These are the fundamental pieces of our monastic life. Hospitality to one another and welcoming all as Christ are critical to the way we live out our call.

One of our anchors during this time has been our common prayer. Even though we have increased the physical distance between us, we still gather in our chapel morning, midday and evening to praise God and give thanks for the gifts we have received. We are grateful that we were able to celebrate Mass with our chaplain, Father Anthony, during this time when so many of the faithful were unable to gather. What a joyous occasion it will be when we can all come together again! Our current reality reinforces the concept that Church is not a building, but Church is the people. It is alive in each one of us. With this reality, we were able to celebrate Holy Week and Easter in a particularly meaningful way this year.

Lent seemed especially sacrificial this year. *We learned to both embrace **and** endure the suffering of Christ in a poignant way.* We hunger for human closeness—for the physicality of our human nature, to hug a friend, to shake hands at the sign of peace, to sit beside another.

Another key aspect of our life is dining together. Our sisters generally sit five at a round table, providing closeness and the ability to share

with one another more easily. At table, we learn about each other and keep up with our sisters' ministries, interests, daily life, health and family members. We talk about the news and books or reflections we have read. Mealtimes are a special time of day for our community, as I'm sure it is for you and your families. Now we sit three to a table and spread out across our large dining room. We are keenly aware of the separation between us. This is not our way. However, we hold on to the hope that before long, we can get back to our normal way of life—whatever our new normal may be.

Ideally, we will cherish even more the relationships we have with others. There is no doubt we will experience common prayer with new zeal and an even greater appreciation that we could have only learned through this experience. And it is not over. We realize we will have to remain diligent with our social distancing and handwashing, and we must maintain an overall awareness of how to protect others and ourselves as we share common spaces.

Please know of our ongoing prayers for you, our dear friends and benefactors. We pray for your health and the health of those you love, and that you feel God's presence in your lives. We pray for those who have suffered economic burden from job loss or furlough and for those struggling with depression, loneliness, and isolation, that they find comfort in God's peace. And we pray for those who are hungry and homeless, who have no home in which to safely shelter, as well as for those impacted by addiction and those

who live in households where there is physical and emotional abuse. And we pray for health care and essential workers who are on the front lines every day, serving others. May God protect and bless them with the courage it must take to go to work each day. May God console and heal those who are afflicted with the coronavirus and all diseases.

We thank you for your friendship and prayers for our sisters during this time. We are grateful for you. We look forward to being with you again.

*Sister Nicole Kunze*

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*Sister Nicole Kunze Re-Elected as Prioress story continued from page 1*

“Our sisters came to Dakota Territory to meet the needs of the people and we will continue to serve out of that courageous spirit into the future. We continue to invite women to be open to God’s call to become sisters. As monastic women, we strive to deepen our spirituality and enrich the lives of others through prayer and service,” said Sister Nicole.



*Photo by Deacon Joe Krupinsky*

*Annual community picture (January 2020). (Not pictured: Sister Kathleen Atkinson, Sister Nancy Miller). Front row, seated lt. to rt.: Sisters Grace Dahmus, Madonna Wagendorf, Terence Glum, Stephanie Dolyniuk, Elizabeth Novy, Gemma Peters, Margaret Nelson. Second row, lt. to rt.: Sisters Susan Lardy, Patricia Schap, Joseph Dukart, Lawrence Fischer, Agnes Reinert, Ruth Margaret Karabensch, Rita Miller, Madelyn Louttit, Denise Ressler. Third row, lt. to rt.: Sisters Mary Ruth Kayute, Rosanne Zastoupil, Barbara Weber, Claire Schmitt, Andre Hushka, Hildegard Urlacher, Eleanor Stockert, Nancy Gunderson. Fourth row, lt. to rt.: Sisters Agatha Muggli, Idelle Badt, Rosemary DeGracia, Nicole Kunze, Renee Zastoupil, Thomas Welder, Janet Zander. Fifth row, lt. to rt.: Sisters Krista Ferrell, Mariah Dietz, Hannah Vanorny, Marena Hoogland, Melissa Cote, Gerard Wald, JoAnn Krebsbach.*

# The Holy Land and Our Road to Emmaus in These Times



*Monsignor James Shea led the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He and Sisters Janet Zander and Nicole Kunze stand at the shore of the Dead Sea and Masada. (Photo credits: Rebecca Raber)*

By Sister Janet Zander, OSB

**A**s we came to Easter's account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, as disciples of Christ centuries later, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were reminded that we never walk alone—in the gifts given, and in the pandemic's uncertainties of life, of health, activities, institutions, and finances. Our Franciscan guide in the Holy Land told us that no one knows where Emmaus actually is: "Maybe that's part of God's providence because now we can make every journey we undertake a walk down the road to Emmaus." Going to Emmaus is always a journey in which Jesus walks with us.

Our prioress, Sister Nicole Kunze, and I were privileged to join Monsignor James Shea, president of the University of Mary, his Council members and spouses, and friends of the University on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. As 2019 became 2020, we were reaffirmed that we walk with others as generation to generation, and culture to culture, responding to the love of God in the saving power of Jesus in the scriptures and lives shared and passed on. Though not including Emmaus, there we were, from our place

in North Dakota in the 21st century, to the places and stories where Jesus walked the earth in the first.

As Christians, we did not walk alone. Nor did those who commended their prayer intentions to us. Nor the honorees in the jubilation of a Jewish *bar mitzvah* parade which passed us, each couple among us who renewed their wedding vows at Cana, in our own renewal of baptismal promises at the Jordan, or with the prayers and prayers at the Western Wall. We walked with generations before, as we made our way and prayed the stations along the Via Dolorosa at 5:30 a.m., when we visited Shepherd's Field and sang songs of angels and a new birth, and viewed windows of various countries in the Basilica of the Annunciation. There reproductions of a campus Annunciation icon were blessed and presented to us as Muslim Friday prayers came over the air.



*The pilgrims aboard a boat on the Sea of Galilee.*

We heard of generations of Jews and Christians, Roman and Byzantine empires, Muslims and Crusaders, Franciscans and Benedictines, and of the different sections of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre “held” by various groups.

Atop Masada, we learned of those “quarantined” centuries ago. In the Yad Vashem (National Memorial of Israel to the Holocaust), we pondered the horror and the “absence” of God. We took part in the Church’s custom to pray the *Te Deum* on December 31 and the *Veni Creator* on January 1. We learned of the recent discovery of the synagogue of Magdala and its new “boat” church’s tribute to biblical women and all women in its atrium.

Refreshingly, a call to walk together as community came in Monsignor James Shea’s homily on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, site of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. He spoke of the “voice of sin” saying, “You’re on your own,” while the voice of grace says, “Come together, come to Me, and I’ll multiply.”

Now walking the Emmaus road of COVID-19, of hopes thwarted and of the uncertainties of the journey’s destination, may a song from the musical *Carousel* sing hearts to reassurance as we “walk on through the wind...the rain...with hope in your heart” into a new spring and summer. For in God’s abiding love and faithfulness, we “never walk alone.” With eyes opened and hearts burning within us, may the road to Emmaus take us all to newer awareness of God’s presence in amazing discoveries of faith’s reality that Jesus walks with us.

# RECEIVING ALL AS CHRIST IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

Q&A with Sister Mariah Dietz, Vice President of Mission Integration, CHI St. Alexius Health

**Q: From your unique vantage point, what kind of planning was needed to take place to prepare for incoming patients with the new coronavirus?**

**A:** I am so impressed with the response and planning that has taken place on not only a day-to-day basis, but literally a minute-by-minute assessment and plan to accommodate the unfolding saga. Careful decisions were made to limit the number of patients we could safely accommodate in the hospital. This meant postponing elective surgeries to make space for patients with COVID-19. Specific units were designated and sealed off for safely testing and treating patients who had the coronavirus and prevent the virus from spreading to others.



**Q: With restrictions on elective surgeries and fewer patients in the hospital, how did this affect those who work at CHI St. Alexius Health?**

**A:** We knew that we didn't want to furlough our associates. We designed a program in which associates had the choice to take time off or work in our flex pool, which gave them the opportunity to work wherever they were needed. For example, one of our nurses was not needed in her specific area so she came in each day and took temperatures of the staff and others who entered the hospital. She asked questions about their health and circumstances before they were allowed to enter the hospital. Other staff members wore scrubs, masks, gloves, and worked diligently to clean and sanitize the hospital—counters, doors, furniture, railings, elevators, and elevator buttons. This is ongoing and it's the right thing to do. We know that viruses can live hours, and days, on surfaces.

**Q: The mission is integral to the way healthcare is delivered at CHI St. Alexius Health. How do you see mission in action during these challenging times?**

**A:** Our people are so good. They are brave and they are ready to care for people in need. It has been edifying seeing how everyone steps up and demonstrates the values we hold dear, like compassion, inclusion, excellence, integrity, collaboration. These values guide the work we do—they turn our jobs into a ministry. Patients with COVID-19 are very sick and so with each recovery we celebrated. We were absolutely elated when our first two patients were successfully treated with plasma donated by patients who have recovered from COVID-19. When those patients were discharged, our staff lined up along the hallways and applauded. We celebrated their recovery with joy, love, and prayer. Moments like this remind us why we serve in health care, why we serve in a Catholic hospital and why we care for God's people. These are the moments I doubt any of us will ever forget.

**Q: How do you address the mental and spiritual health of the staff and the public?**

**A:** Although we strive each day to meet the mental and spiritual needs of our patients, families and associates, the unique challenges we face with COVID-19 demand that we pay special attention to emotional and spiritual health. Hospital leadership spent more time on each unit listening to and encouraging patients and associates. We have a "Hero" cart that we take to areas throughout the hospital to thank and encourage those on the front lines of patient care. The cart is full of snacks and beverages and is sometimes accompanied by Max, the therapy dog. His presence is very therapeutic. It is often the simple "Thank You"



*(Left): CHI St. Alexius staff and therapy dog, Max, brought the HERO cart around the hospital to thank health care providers for their service. (Right): Treats were even brought to the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery to thank them for their prayers. Sisters from left to right are: Sisters Denise Ressler, Nicole Kunze, Mariah Dietz and Thomas Welder.*

that brightens the day of our physicians and staff. We want them to know how much we appreciate and support them.

In addition to regular services, we offer mental health services on Zoom. Archway Mental Health provides services to those who are stressed and afraid. There are a lot of people who need help and encouragement at this challenging time. We are grateful for the technology which enables us to care for them in a safe manner.

**Q:** How has this experience changed you, personally?

**A:** I am so impressed with the planning and implementation of protocol to care for those who come to us for health care. Each day our leadership reviewed and implemented plans designed to care for our patients and associates. It seemed like every day there was a potential crisis. There are always complex situations in healthcare that need our attention, but this is something I had never seen or been prepared for. It was indeed stress-producing for everyone. I try to get enough rest, spend time in prayer and in nature, and talk with others about what I am feeling. I would encourage everyone to do that for their well-being.

I believe prayer and gratitude are critical to well-being. The Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery pray each day for those impacted by coronavirus. We are grateful that the number of patients with COVID-19 in our hospital was not higher. Things are starting to quiet down and people are having elective surgeries again. Staff will leave the flex pool and go back to their regular jobs. We know this pandemic is not over, but we are better prepared for what the future might bring.

I realize more than ever how grateful I am that we belong to the CommonSpirit Health System. They assist us with procedures, finances, equipment, methodologies, and support so we can meet our mission of caring for people in a Christ-like manner. I am grateful for the Benedictine Sisters who founded this incredible institution to “receive all as Christ” and I am so proud to be a part of this amazing group of associates.

# God Bless Our Jubilarians

Sister Lawrence Fischer and Sister Elizabeth Novy

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## *Sister Lawrence Fischer - 60 Years*

Sister Lawrence Fischer celebrates her 60th anniversary of monastic profession with the monastic community on July 11, 2020. Her faith-filled upbringing began on her family farm near Rhame, N.D. She is the second of fourteen children born to Leonard and Clara (Domagala) Fischer. She recalls church, the family rosary, and suppertime as being the focal points of their family life.



Sister Lawrence first met Benedictine Sisters at vacation Bible school. She was fond of the sisters who taught there. After graduating from Rhame Public High School in 1955, she furthered her education at St. Benedict's College in St. Joseph, Minn., at the encouragement of a priest who recognized her gifts in math and business. In addition to her studies, she regularly joined the Sisters of St. Benedict's for Mass and Vespers.

A turning point in her life occurred when she attended a novice reception for her friend who was joining the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Priory (now Annunciation Monastery). Another friend asked if she would be a postulant in next year's class. Sister Lawrence recalls saying, "Well, yes!" without a moment's hesitation.

Sister Lawrence kept her word. She became a postulant in 1958, a novice in June of 1959, made temporary vows July 11, 1960, and perpetual monastic profession on July 11, 1963. Mother Edane Volk, who was prioress at the time, asked Sister Lawrence to try teaching. She attended Mary College and received her BA in theology/philosophy and a double minor in business education and math. During this time Sister Lawrence did her practice teaching. She taught math at Cathedral School, St. Mary's Grade School, St. Mary's Central High, and Priory High School in Bismarck.

She later worked at Mary College where her eye for detail and mind for business was a perfect fit for the ministry of accounting and bookkeeping. Sister Lawrence helped with the annual audit and with bookkeeping. She started the University of Mary's financial aid office, was business manager, and ran the bookstore.

In 1970, Sister Lawrence was asked to serve in the business office at Garrison Hospital in Garrison, ND. She returned to Bismarck in 1971 and worked at Annunciation Priory as bookkeeper and assisted with human resources and maintenance. She returned to school at Creighton University, Omaha, NE, in 1977 and earned her MBA. She then returned to Annunciation Monastery where she was appointed treasurer for the monastic community, a position she held from 1978-2013. Sister Lawrence also served on the Board of Directors at St. Alexius Medical Center for 27 years.

To this day, Sister Lawrence says "Yes" to duties as requested, including managing investments and travel for the Sisters of Annunciation Monastery. As she considers the blessings of her 60 years as a Benedictine Sister, she shares, "Over the past 60 years, I have gained more peace because of my trust in God. As I get older, I am learning to accept my infirmities and see them as a drawing closer to God. Sharing in the cross brings its own blessings. I have a deep appreciation for my monastic community. We meet each day with faith, hope and love, as we seek God together."



## *Sister Elizabeth Novy - 80 Years*

Sister Elizabeth Novy, 103, has the remarkable distinction of being the last remaining founder of Annunciation Monastery and celebrates her 80th anniversary of monastic profession. She grew up on the family farm near Wing, N.D., with her eight siblings. Her parents were adamant that their children received a good education.



At five years old, Sister Elizabeth tagged along with her older siblings to a one-room schoolhouse. She wanted to be a teacher for as long as she remembers. Her mother read her stories about Jesus and the saints. Sister Elizabeth says she wanted to be just like the saints and she fell “in love with Jesus.”

Her interest in religious life began in high school while attending St. Mary’s High School in Bismarck. In those days it was a boarding school. Sister Elizabeth graduated from St. Mary’s in 1933. A longing in her heart connected her childhood love for Jesus and the saints to her interest in the sisters from St. Benedict’s in St. Joseph, Minn. She talked with her mother about wanting to become a sister and a teacher. She obtained her teaching certificate from Dickinson State College.

Her first teaching assignment was at her childhood one-room schoolhouse. While teaching, she boarded with a family and shared a room with their daughter who was her same age. During her three years of teaching there, she corresponded with a sister from St. Mary’s High School. She hesitated to tell her father about her desire to go to St. Benedict’s Monastery in St. Joseph, Minn., to become a sister. She was surprised and relieved when he answered, “I think that’s the best thing in the world you could do!”

So, she traveled alone by bus to St. Benedict’s and began her journey to becoming a sister. She says, “I was so excited, I didn’t even cry when I left.” Sister Elizabeth immediately felt at home. She followed the stages of formation, becoming a postulant, then a novice, and made her first vows on July 11, 1940.

At the time Bishop Vincent Ryan was bishop of the Bismarck Diocese. He had an idea to start a new foundation in Bismarck. He interviewed sisters at St. Benedict’s Monastery to see if some of them would like to transfer to Bismarck to start the monastery. When Sister Elizabeth was interviewed, she decided she would like to come back home to North Dakota and help start the new monastery.

Sister Elizabeth made her final vows on July 11, 1944, at the same time the sisters came to Bismarck and moved into their motherhouse at the C.B. Little house. They were approved to be an independent monastery by the Vatican in March 1947.

Her ministry of teaching is remarkable and spans 62 years. She taught in Dickinson, Mott, and for several decades in Catholic Schools in Bismarck, primarily at Cathedral School. She taught summer “vacation school” at parishes in rural North Dakota, often staying with families of the parish.

Sister Elizabeth says the secret to her long life is prayer and movement. She has never been one to sit. She keeps her mind sharp by playing Scrabble and visiting with others. She says she rarely watches TV “unless something important is on, like the Pope!”

Sister Elizabeth currently resides at a Bismarck care center.

## MINISTRY ON THE MARGINS:

# *A Letter from a Friend*

Dear Friends:

This is a sacred text: “I’m hanging in there but pretty overwhelmed.” My friend Kathleen Atkinson wrote these words in response to my check-in the other day. There is no peeling back the layers with Kathleen. Her authenticity always rushes from the inside out so that she meets others immediately with the force and freshness of true presence.



A Benedictine sister whose monastery sits atop a bluff overlooking the Missouri River on the outskirts of Bismarck, N.D., Kathleen finds her work in the city. She leads a ministry that provides food, clothing and friendship to people in transition, including individuals re-entering the community after incarceration.

In this time of pandemic, Kathleen and her volunteers are now organizing emergency housing because the prisons and jails reduced their populations through early release while the city’s shelter also lowered its numbers to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Her organization, which is called Ministry on the Margins, “decided that homelessness is not an option at this time,” she wrote, “and made the commitment to provide housing for all who are in need.” So every night Kathleen coordinates lodging at a motel for 20-23 people.

What is the purpose of a religious community? Pope Francis says the church is to be a “field hospital,” healing the wounded as it steps outside itself. The Catholic priest and philosopher Tomas Halik explores this metaphor in his recent essay “Christianity in a Time of Sickness.” I was struck by the metaphor, first of all, because I was not satisfied a while back when I heard a retired pastor describe his former congregation as a hospital for the wounded, specifically those wounded by the church. That shared identity seems like a start for a community but not the end.

Yet many congregations stay here, stuck in sacred buildings, locked in self-justifying narratives about their needs and the world's threat to their identity. So it has been since the time of the prophet Jeremiah, who mocked the religious community for its pseudo-religious, self-serving mantra: "This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord."



*Sister Kathleen Atkinson in her Ministry on the Margins mobile.*

But "field hospital" is something else. It is a temporary structure for a transitional purpose. It meets others where they are so they can become well. It is situated beyond the sacred building, even outside the religious community. Indeed, it rushes from the inside out, for it seeks genuine healing, which we know is true when the wounded become "wounded healers," as Henri Nouwen put it.

This is a sacred text: "The church should not remain in splendid isolation from the world but should break free of its boundaries and give help where people are physically, mentally, socially and spiritually afflicted," writes Tomas Halik. The metaphor ushers him beyond the confines of a self-preserving theology to a "self-sacrificing love." The metaphor opens the door to a provocative possibility, which he calls "a bolder search for God in all things."

Friends, the pandemic has pulled us from our sacred buildings as no prophet ever could. We are outside now. So what is our purpose?

Our work is to heal. Our work is to place our sacred buildings and other assets in the service of the recovery of our towns and cities. Our own healing depends on us moving farther out, toward our neighbors. The common good depends on us meeting others with the force and freshness of true presence.

With hope and gratitude,

Daniel

*\*Used with permission from Daniel Pryfogle, [sympara.org](http://sympara.org)*

# Sisters Are:

Our cook, Rhonda, with Sister Barbara Weber, who helps in the monastery kitchen. →



Our cook, Renee, says Sisters Joseph Dukart, Madonna Wagendorf and Gerard Wald are caring. They are all nurses! ↓



Jane Greer, a monastery oblate and volunteer, joins Sister Rosanne Zastoupil in offering Benedictine hospitality. ↑



Becky, from the monastery business office stands with Sister Marena Hoogland, who is a student at the University of Mary. ←

# SNAPSHOTS



Our sisters were honored to host "The Banquet," at Trinity Lutheran Church in February. Sisters, University of Mary SPURS students, and volunteers from the community served warm, nourishing meals to approximately 400 people.

Sisters Gerard Wald, Melissa Cote, and Agatha Muggli, set up for "The Banquet."





# *In Loving Memory* OF SISTER THOMAS WELDER, OSB

Sister Thomas Welder, 80, a member of the Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery, and president of the University of Mary for 31 years, passed into eternal life June 22, 2020, at the monastery, following a recent diagnosis of kidney cancer.

Sister Thomas (baptismal name Diane Marie) was born in Linton, N.D. on April 27, 1940, to Mary Ann (Kuhn) and Sebastian Welder. She was the oldest of three children. When she was two, the family moved to Bismarck.

A graduate of St. Mary's High School, she joined Annunciation Monastery after a year of college in Minnesota. Attracted by the community and prayer life of the sisters, she felt God's call to become one of them. As a novice, she was given the name Sister Thomas. She made her monastic profession on July 11, 1961. Sister Thomas cherished Benedictine monastic life which she lived faithfully for 59 years.

She graduated from the College of St. Scholastica, Duluth with a bachelor's degree in music and earned a master's degree in music from Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill.

A dedicated servant leader, she gave her life to the University of Mary for 57 years. She led from her heart and touched the lives of many. She was president from 1978 to 2009. Under her remarkable leadership, the school attained university status in 1986; tripled in size from 925 students to 3,000; added the university's first doctorate, grew on-site and online adult learning programs to 16 locations across the state, region and nation, and moved to NCAA Division II athletics.

Sister Thomas faithfully attended student recitals and concerts, cheered at athletic events and participated in many university gatherings. She called students by name and her genuine caring attitude left a deep

impression on them. She enjoyed getting to know friends of the university whose financial assistance made growth possible. After her retirement as president, she was named President Emerita and served in the university's Mission Advancement Office.

One of the most widely known and highly respected women in North Dakota, Sister Thomas loved visiting with people of all ages and walks of life. She would focus her entire attention toward listening to the person right in front of her. Her enthusiastic spirit, sense of humor, and gentle nature made others comfortable in her presence. It was a joy to be with Sister Thomas.

Sister Thomas modeled the Benedictine values, such as hospitality, respect, prayer and service, with ease and grace. Benedictine values were dear to her heart. She committed herself to instilling these values throughout the monastery's sponsored institutions, the communities of CHI St. Alexius Health and the University of Mary.

She served on many state and national boards including CHI St. Alexius Health and MDU Resources Group, Inc. She received numerous honors during her lifetime including North Dakota's highest honor, the Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award.

Music was one of her passions. She directed the Sisters' Choir for 50 years and gave credit to the choir for the beautiful liturgical music.

Sister Thomas was grateful for many blessings in her life. She was particularly thankful to two kidney donors who gave her the gift of life through two kidney transplants. She often prayed for and stayed connected to these special people.

A beloved woman of faith, wisdom, and humility, Sister Thomas gave all of herself to so many for so long. She will be deeply missed.

# Pray.

## JUST PRAY.

By Sister Idelle Badt

A recent dinner with a couple of retired priests I admire gave me an opportunity to talk about how I feel like the world is imploding around me and I'm scared for what's to come if we can't learn to love and respect people regardless of our differences. During our conversation, I shared that the news and social media made me feel anxious, mad, and more than anything, just really sad, and I didn't know what to do. Father's response was pray, just pray. "Just pray" ran through my head all night and I didn't sleep much. Prayer is powerful, non-violent, inclusive, and anyone can do it, regardless of your circumstances. To me, it's the Great Unifier. Three times a day, my Sisters pray the Psalms. The Psalms of Lament speak to my soul at this time. It really is the Living Word.



*Fair weather set the stage for an enjoyable evening of peace and prayer.*



*Sisters Idelle Badt and Nancy Miller welcomed guests as they arrived.*

Part of my monastic community's mission statement is, "...we strive with others to respond to the challenges of the times and to further the mission of Jesus by prayer, lectio, and service. We have many challenges at this time. We have a beautiful view at Annunciation Monastery, and plenty of space to make our prayer communal while enjoying the outdoors. I asked our prioress, Sister Nicole Kunze, if she would allow us to host an outdoor public prayer service to focus on the challenges of this time—COVID-19, racism, healthcare, education, and she agreed. Generally, I think if people have meaningful conversations with one another, we discover that we have more in common than we realize.

I got together with another sister and a couple of pastors from Bismarck and we started planning. The theme of our prayer service was, "Seasons of Uncertainty & Inequality," because it signifies what we are all experiencing in some way. Because of the pandemic, we knew it had to be outside and should be livestreamed for those who couldn't be here in person. So, on June 17, people gathered, socially distanced, and prayed, on our front lawn. Leaders from the civic community shared prayers and reflections from their unique perspectives.

The Rule of St. Benedict, which we sisters follow says, "All should be called upon for counsel because the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger." I took that to heart and invited a nine-year-old to talk about the things that are important to her. She had to narrow down her list to eight issues and delighted the crowd with her wise insights.



*Sisters Rosanne Zastoupil, Madonna Wagendorf, Joseph Dukart and Nancy Gunderson enjoyed the shade by the trees.*



## A MESSAGE FROM MAKENNA

*Used with permission*

"Hello, my name is Makenna and I'm 9 years old. I'm going to be talking about children's fears during this time, and my hopes for our world in the future.

I believe that if people stopped carrying negative thoughts, our world would be a better place. It seems like we forget

sometimes that every single one of us is God's daughter or son. It hurts my heart to know that there is still racism and hate in the world, and I hope that will change in the future. I feel sad when I think about people who are homeless, refugees who aren't loved and accepted in the communities they move into, babies that die because of abortion or children who are abused. Even though COVID-19 is scary, it is even scarier to think about a world where we don't do something about these things.

With all of the scary things in the world it's easy to feel overwhelmed, like there's nothing we can do. But we all have a voice and can find things to do to make a difference, and everyone must do something. No one could love someone as much as Jesus loves us, but in the Bible Jesus told us to love one another as he loves us. Maybe this is a place to start.

I dream of a world where people know that they are loved, and all people are treated with the respect and kindness they deserve. If everybody worked hard to love other people the way Jesus loved us, think of what a difference it would make. But it takes all of us to make a difference. It doesn't have to be something big at first, you can start small. Even small acts of kindness make the world a better place.

Please join me in doing your part to make the world a better place, and it WILL happen!"



*Sister Ivo Schoch shared a message on grief.*



*Monsignor James Shea and Father Jerome Kautzman shared a light moment at the service.*



*Sisters Hannah Vanorny and Marena Hoogland offered instrumental prelude music.*

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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)



*Thank you!*

## for Keeping a Leak-Proof Roof Over Our Heads!

We are truly grateful to all who contributed, and continue to contribute, to our appeal to replace the monastery roof. We thank God for the generous friends and family who have donated \$73,000.00 to go toward this project. Our goal to complete the project is \$313,724.00.