

PATHWAYS



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Dear Friends of the Monastery,

As hints of summer appear, the beauty I see and the bright hope that arises in my heart stand in deep contrast to events of the year behind us. It feels cliché to say that this has been an exceptionally challenging and unusual year for all of us. Looking back, I acknowledge the stress of the pandemic, the pain of loss and the events that tested our spirits. There were times of deep sadness, but also deeper moments of great courage, patience, and faith. What did we learn about ourselves and what can we carry forward as we move into summer?



Resilience/Adaptability. We learned we are stronger, more resourceful, and resilient than we imagined. We adapted to the rapid changes in policies and procedures... masking, hand hygiene, and social distancing. We learned ways to connect virtually for meetings, liturgy, shopping, and healthcare. At the Monastery we found we lingered longer to learn about each other as we sat at table conversing one on one.

Simplicity. With time to take stock of the stuff we have accumulated, we learned that we could downsize. We recognized that we were ready to divest now, rather than carrying everything with us to our transitional housing. Although memories and emotions are tied to our things, we learned that letting go is good for our souls.

Appreciating the gift of time. For many of us, working from home and not traveling meant we could appreciate a somewhat slower daily pace. And even for those of us who worked harder (because you could always do one more Zoom meeting), Covid helped us to realize how precious time is, to take stock of what matters most, to reset priorities, and to be grateful for this treasured gift.

Appreciating the small things. When Covid kept us inside, we found joy in sharing the views and sounds from our windows... the stars and full moon, snowflakes falling and rain on the roof, birds at the feeders, the sound of an owl. We were diligent in working on puzzles (at least one per week), eager to share news from home, photos of a new baby, and stories from family and friends.

Compassion. Our hearts were expanded hearing the stories from those who suffered loss of work, the death of loved ones, and the loneliness of isolation. We cared deeply and shared the tears of others, as our private and community prayer time was a touch point for remembering and carrying the cares of others to our God, in communion with those we loved.

Appreciating relationships. Of all the things we missed during the pandemic, the greatest was being present with our families, friends, and guests. We learned that relationships are essential to uplifting our spirits, stimulating our creativity, and warming our hearts. Your cards and calls let us know you are eagerly awaiting the time when we can greet each other... sing and worship together... and the feeling is mutual. In this issue we honor our volunteers, who have been with us for 10, 15, 20, and 30 years. We are grateful for our relationships with you and for your service. We look forward to opening the door to say welcome to all of you once again.

If these ramblings have touched upon what you have learned during our time apart, I encourage you to share a grateful thought with those you love. Let this precious gift of summer be a time to "let God delight" ... "with unexpected happenings" and to be "renewed in love."

Blessed Summer,

Sister Beverly

Sister Beverly Raway, OSB



SPLASH!!!

by Sister Jayne Erickson jayneerickson@gmail.com

Aahhh. Summer is finally here. Something about summer makes me feel like a “kid” again. I want to paddle my canoe, or more recently, my paddleboard. Of course, there’s also the option of the paddle boat. Or put me on a pontoon with good friends – but be sure the motor is running well. Last fall, I found myself in the water, pushing the pontoon back to shore. **SPLASH!** Not to worry – my friends had a nice ride, and I got a bit of exercise while feeling like a hero. (Perhaps I need to work on my humility?)

Well, since then, I have moved on to a new step in my journey toward becoming a Benedictine Sister. Although they call me Sister Jayne, I have not yet taken any vows and am in my Canonical Year of the Novitiate. I’m living in the cloister, taking classes, doing various ministries, and...downsizing! Since I came to the Monastery as a volunteer in 2017, it seems I’ve been downsizing. The Rule of Benedict talks about living in a “cell” and I’m well on my way. Oh, and did I mention that being a novice also means I am not to leave the Monastery grounds for a year and a day? No summer vacation this year.

Sorry for the diversion. I find that summer is also a time for “rambling” on and on and on.

Speaking of rambling, I do love to ramble in the woods. I was out for a walk recently in the Valley of Silence (on the Monastery grounds). From a distance, I saw a bright white “mushroom” so I ventured off the trail to explore. I was thrilled to have spotted my very first “Spherion” mushroom! On my way back home, I spied another treasure. There, perched on a branch in broad daylight, was a rare “bird” undisturbed by my approach. I don’t know it’s proper name, so I’ll just call it a “Floppy Gray Crew.” (I knew no one would believe my good fortune, so I snapped photos just to prove my story.)



So...is there a point here? Joy awaits us! Let’s nurture our inner child. Laugh! Sing! Blow bubbles! Skip rocks! Let God delight us with unexpected happenings. Watch the clouds! Take off our shoes and socks! Dance! Jump out of the boat! **SPLASH!** Run to Jesus! Rejoice! Be renewed by His immeasurable **love!**

Sister Charity Nkwera

by Theresa Butler, Development Office Administrative Assistant

A light to all whom she meets, Sister Charity Nkwera brings her strong faith, intelligence, and serving heart to the Monastery and The College of Saint Scholastica (CSS) communities. Sister Charity is a member of St. Gertrude Monastery, our Twinning Community in Imiliwaha, Njombe Region, Tanzania. She has been living at the Monastery since July of 2020 when she came to further her education at CSS.

Sister Charity grew up in Tanzania, the oldest of four children, to parents in an interfaith marriage; her father, who is now deceased, was Catholic and her mother is Lutheran. Ever since her childhood, she has felt called to serve Jesus. In her family home there was a picture of Jesus on the cross. One day, when she was three years old, she looked at the picture and saw the arm of Jesus move. This was one of many signs she received that Jesus was calling her to serve in religious life.

Sister Charity's father valued his family going to Mass each week and getting there early. He said to Sister Charity and her siblings, "God is not looking at our money, he is looking at our hearts." This family ritual gave her faith in God and involvement in the Church.

At age 15, she went to the city to live with her uncle and attended seamstress school for two years. During that time, she applied to become a member of St. Gertrude Monastery. There were many religious communities that she saw while living in the city, but her heart called her to return to Imiliwaha. When she was ready to become a Sister, she told her mother, "I will not get married. I want to serve God." When she wrote her father saying that she had been accepted into the Community, he gave her his blessing and said their family would come visit her.



Sister Charity prays with special twenty-decade prayer beads. On the first three beads she prays, "Thank you, Jesus, for how you have helped me in my past, present, and future." "You suffered in Gethsemane and on the cross for me." "You give yourself as food for my soul in the appearance of bread and wine in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist."

On each blue bead she prays, "Thank you, Jesus" and on each red bead, "O, thank you, Jesus."

She prays this five times daily, thanking Jesus one thousand times each day.



Because she came to Duluth last August at the height of the pandemic, Sister Charity did not have an opportunity to see Lake Superior up close until the ice melted this spring.

In June 2002, she attended a seminar at St. Gertrude Monastery and in October of that year was accepted in the Community. She started her formation in 2002 and was a Candidate for two years, Postulant for two years, and Novice for two years. During her formation years, she and her class of fourteen furthered their education at a diocesan high school for four years. She made her first profession in 2010 and final vows in 2015.

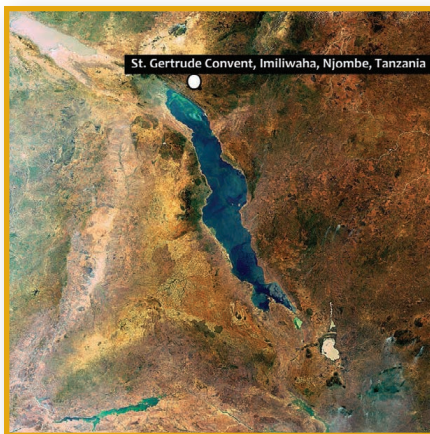
The Superior of her Community chose Sister Charity to come to the United States to study so that she could return and minister in their country. She and one other Sister in her class came in 2015 to begin their studies at Assumption College for Sisters in New Jersey. Sister Charity earned an associate degree in Liberal Arts and in 2018 transferred to Holy Family College in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. When the college closed due to the financial strain of the pandemic, Sister Charity transferred to CSS. She had already intended to attend CSS for her master's, so she just came a little earlier than planned.

Sister Charity is working towards a bachelor's degree in Psychology and then a master's degree in Psychology. She says, "All classes are good because they help us understand our behavior." When Sister Charity is not taking classes and studying, she serves in ministries around the Monastery. Last summer she helped Sister Dorene King in the Magnificat Garden. She also serves as a lector/reader for prayers when her school schedule allows. She is thankful for the way that the Duluth Benedictine Sisters have welcomed her and feels at home. This is the first Benedictine Community with whom she has lived since coming to the United States, and she is thankful to be living in Benedictine spirituality.

Sister Charity has been with us in a unique time during the Coronavirus pandemic. Before we were vaccinated, she remained in touch with Sisters in Benet Hall, visiting with them from a distance in the courtyard, sending and receiving cards and phone calls, and making snow angels in the central courtyard for them to see from their rooms. She said that the Sisters have responded to her with warmth and friendship.

Jesus is her inspiration for religious life. She received a rosary as a gift and when she prays it, she gives thanks to Jesus – past, present, and future. Sister Charity wears a habit, following the custom of her religious community.

There are 430 professed Sisters at St. Gertrude Monastery. The Sisters there wear habits in a variety of colors, changing them throughout the day depending on prayer time or event.



A call and desire to help people has permeated Sister Charity's life. When asked what her plans are when she returns home, she responded simply, "To help people." She said that she will be given a mission by her Community and her knowledge of psychology will be used in a variety of settings such as schools or healthcare organizations.

We are blessed by her presence in our Community and look forward to journeying with Sister Charity and our Twinning Community.

St. Gertrude Convent is near Lake Malawi, one of the many 'Great Lakes of Africa' in the Great Rift Valley. Photo courtesy of European Space Agency.



Left: The Nkwera family at the wedding of her brother, Thadei Nkwera and his wife Veronica Kipingu.

Right: The Sisters at St. Gertrude Monastery, Imiliwaha, Tanzania. Sister Charity has not been with them since 2015, but social media and Zoom helps her keep in touch with them and with her family.

What God Has Planted

by Sister Lisa Maurer slisa@duluthosb.org

Isn't it something? Scientists cannot really explain how life began on our planet. Most agree that life began more than three billion years ago, but just how it began is an elusive unknown. One scientific theory is based on a spark of electricity. Another gives credit to aliens. As people of faith, we know that God is the creator and author of life. But how the first living organisms exactly appeared is still a mystery.

Maybe the same can be said about vocations. They are a mystery. No one can really explain how one begins. Surely every Sister, Brother, or Priest has been asked, "How did your vocation start?" I have been asked that question myself. I do not look to scientific theories of extraterrestrials or big bangs for an explanation. Rather, I often answer with stories about an upbringing in a Catholic family and attending Catholic school. I talk about the witness and example of holy religious like my fourth-grade teacher and the administrator of the nursing home where I worked in high school. But as far as pinpointing where it actually came from, I do not know what to say other than it is what God has planted.

Deep inside every person is a desire to do something important, to be something to someone, and to make a difference. The vocations that God plants within us fulfill that desire. Here are some ways to tend to what God has planted.



Trust that you were created for a purpose. It is not your imagination to think that God has planted something special within you. It is true! It is real! God loved you into being, has had a plan for your life, and wants to reveal it to you. We need to believe like St. John Henry Newman who wrote, "God has created me to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another."

Accept God's love. Saint Pope John Paul II said that every vocation is an extraordinary gift of God's love. A vocation is not some command or mandate to be robotically followed. It is an invitation to love! Really it is! Tending to what God has planted is to open up to God's love and in turn be willing to share that love with others.

Listen and pray. Since a vocation is not our will but something planted by God, we must attune ourselves to God's Voice so that we can hear His call. Prayer is how we primarily listen to God's Voice. Oftentimes we know we should pray, but don't know how. Don't worry! Just do it! The Lord longs to be with you in prayer and will help you.

Cooperate with God. Even once we know of God's love and desire for our happiness, it is not uncommon to feel unable or unwilling to give ourselves completely to Him. Even when we start to see the fruit of what God has planted, we are afraid to move forward. We cannot let that stop us! We must be ready and willing to work with God in trust and confidence.

If you or someone you know believes they are being called to life as a Benedictine (Sister, Oblate, Live-in Associate, or Volunteer) call Sister Lisa at 218-723-7011, email vocations@duluthosb.org, or visit www.duluthbenedictines.org/vocations.

Volunteer Recognition 2020-2021

Because of COVID restrictions, the Monastery was not able to celebrate and recognize their volunteers with the annual Volunteer Appreciation event in 2020 or 2021, so we are highlighting some of these devoted volunteers and their milestones. We are grateful for their dedication, generosity, and friendship.



Linda Senta - 10 Years

Linda volunteers one day a week in the Gift shop, sings at Mass in Schola (the monastic choir), and works at the Christmas bazaar. She says, “I have so missed my time at the Monastery, but it has caused me to reflect on my many blessings, especially the opportunity to know the Sisters. What is most meaningful to me is visiting with the Sisters, sharing in the warmth they bring, and hearing about their dedicated and interesting lives.”

Jean Captain - 10 Years

Jean has served as a driver for Sisters going to doctor appointments. She recalls with amusement: “When I first started driving, the car was a Ford Taurus and there were five of us in it. I said to one of the Sisters, ‘It’s hard for a kid who went to catechism to tell a Sister wearing a habit what to do, but please buckle your seatbelt.’ The Sister responded, ‘I’m so crammed in here I couldn’t move if I had to.’” Sharon appreciates the opportunity to volunteer with the Sisters.



Therese Campbell - 15 Years

Therese says, “I enjoy working at the Monastery Christmas sale and seeing the delight on the faces of people as they find wonderful treasures. Singing at Mass with the Contemporary Music Group raises my spirits. Being able to sing makes worship exceptional.”

Volunteer Recognition Continued



Marianne Connelly and Mary Bridget Lawson - 15 Years

Marianne and Mary Bridget say, “We’ve enjoyed everything from reading to a blind sister, baking cookies and making cards for the sale, to singing in Schola and playing in the Contemporary Music Group. The ministry closest to our hearts is playing Irish music for Mass or when requested by Sisters for their funerals.”

Mary Tanner - 15 Years

Mary says, “I have been a volunteer for fifteen years at the Monastery. I started out working at the information desk, then assumed the role of co-coordinator of the volunteers with Kathy Noble. I have spent a lot of time with the Sisters on Benet Hall, served as eucharistic minister, and helped to carry out the Christmas Bazaar. It has been such a pleasure to share time with the Sisters, listen to their stories about their very active careers, and participate with them in their varied activities.”



Jude Collins - 20 Years

Jude has spent 20 years as a Monastery volunteer. She has participated in Schola, served as eucharistic minister, taken Sisters to appointments, spent time on Benet Hall, and worked on various projects, including at McCabe. Jude has enjoyed all of these activities and interacting with the Sisters. She said many of them have felt like grandmothers and she has enjoyed sharing history with them for decades.

Volunteer Recognition Continued



Sue Anderson - 20 Years

Sue, a College of St. Scholastica alumna of the Class of 1968, says, "Before joining the Schola, I was the resident trumpet player at many of the major feasts and celebrations. Because of my love of singing, I was invited to become an official member of the group, and over time have come to know and love more members of the Community. I would say that over the years, in my ups and downs, I have experienced welcoming and caring from the entire family. Being a part of them has been the best part of this chapter in my life. I'm really looking forward to the time when I can resume singing and praying again to the Lord with the hearts and voices of my second family."

Becky Urbanski and Scott Junkert - 30 Years

Becky and Scott have served as music ministers for many Monastery liturgies. They say, "We don't really think of what we do at the Monastery as volunteering in the traditional sense. It is more like a second home to us, with people we love and care about, and from whom we have learned so much about life and faith. We are blessed with musical gifts that we can share and that is what we want to do. We truly feel we are simply part of the community."



Our lay volunteers become part of our life. They drive or companion Sisters to outside appointments. They welcome guests and callers at the Information Desk, add joy to our elders' lives on Benet Hall, bring their musical talents to our liturgies, serve as cashiers at Monastery Books and Gifts, work beside us to keep our gardens groomed and productive, and help organize and put on the annual Christmas Bazaar.



If you would like to share your time with the Sisters as a volunteer, please call Volunteer Coordinators Kathy Noble at (218) 343-3589 or Mary Tanner at (218) 831-7086, or email at volunteer@duluthosb.org.

Greetings from the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment!

by Dawn Carrillo, Director

When I look back on the previous year, I am filled with a sense of wonder. In the midst of a world-wide pandemic, divisive political elections, brutal climate catastrophes, and horrendous racial events that have reverberated around the world, we at the Center have slowly and surely created new and meaningful programming that has addressed the needs of people as we navigate our life in this world. There has been a huge effort “behind the scenes,” but we have persevered, finding ourselves positioned in a strong and responsive place for the years ahead.

March 13, 2020, when the doors to the Monastery had to close to everyone except essential workers, the Center (a ministry of the Sisters of St. Scholastica) had to quickly look at our (then) current programming and determine what we could possibly do. Most of our Spring 2020 programming had to be cancelled, of course, as it was created for in-person events. When it began to dawn on us that the pandemic was not going to be over in a month or two, we did the only thing open for us to do: we moved to the online world!

By Summer of 2020, we held the following as online programs and services:

- **Omega Reflection Group** (held twice a month with reflection on the writings of theologian Ilia Delio)
- **Center for Spirituality and Enrichment blog** (monthly on various topics)
- **Spiritual Direction ministry** (open to anyone who would like to have a companion walk with them on their spiritual journey)



And then we planned and adapted for the Fall and Winter of 2020/2021, adding in:

- **Benedictine Conversations:** monthly, informal conversations with a guest interviewee each time.
- **“Listen with the Ear of Your Heart” series:** monthly sessions created and facilitated by the Feminist Theologies Committee of St. Scholastica Monastery, with racial justice and environmental justice being the themes for the 2020-2021 series.
- **Soul Collage circles:** held monthly, with introductory sessions as requested.
- **Centering Prayer groups:** ongoing prayer groups that have now successfully moved online.
- **Visio Divina prayer sessions:** monthly.
- **Lenten Retreats:** two offered this past Lent.
- **Stations of the Cross:** during Lent.
- **Celebrating with the Saints session – Bach and Benedict:** (offered this past March, with future dates and saints coming soon)
- **Sacred Listening Circle:** ongoing group that is now fully online.
- **Forest Therapy Walk retreat:** coming May 22, 2021
- **Outreach programming:** programming we create and facilitate for outside groups, organizations, parishes, and dioceses.

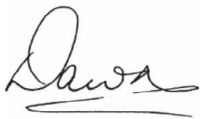
Our **Benedictine Conversations** offerings have been a particular joy this past year. We have had wonderful, insightful guests who have inspired us in the ways they live out our Benedictine values in everyday life. Our final Benedictine Conversation for 2020-2021 will be on May 25, and we will resume this monthly series in September.

We at the Center have learned many things through the experience of this past year (besides the technological expertise we have had to take on!). We have learned... that it is truly possible to create a prayerful, meditative space in the context of an online platform...that everyone is eminently patient when we have technological disturbances...that people have had a critical need for connection through the overwhelming events of the last year...and that our forced use of Zoom has blessed us abundantly, by enabling people from all over the globe to become part of our Benedictine community and participate in our events. Curiously, our participant numbers in our events and offerings this past year have been larger than we would ever have imagined! As we move forward into the future, we deeply acknowledge these learnings and are so very grateful for them. We treasure each of you who have participated in and supported us on this journey, allowing us to get to know one another in sometimes strange and new ways.

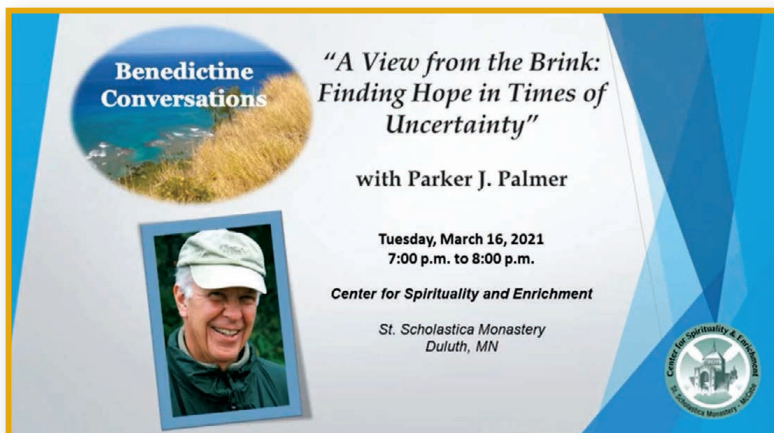
As I write this article, the Sisters of St. Scholastica are embarking on a new adventure—that of renovating their cloistered home, named Stanbrook West. They have the beautiful Center for Spirituality and Enrichment guest rooms in Stanbrook Hall to use while their renovation is happening (in Stanbrook West), so during this time we will not be able to welcome overnight outside guests at the Center. Due to this situation, and to the ongoing uncertainty of the direction of the pandemic, we are continuing to plan for Zoom events. We hope to be onsite eventually, offering “hybrid” programming to keep up our connections with all those who do not live in the Duluth area or who are homebound in any way. Once the pandemic recedes to the point that we can safely open, overnight guest accommodations will also be available at McCabe Renewal Center, our second Center location.

Please visit our website at retreatduluth.org or email dcarrillo@duluthosb.org for information on the Center and to find out about ongoing and upcoming events and offerings that we have! We would love to hear from you.

In the peace of Christ,



Dawn Carrillo, Director of the Center for Spirituality and Enrichment



*Past Benedictine Conversations are available for viewing from the Center's website.
Go to <https://retreatduluth.org/benedictine-conversations-archive/>*

A Chaplain Looks Back Over a Pandemic Year

by Sister Susan Fortier, OSB sf977587@aol.com

Sister Sue ministers as a chaplain on the Oncology Unit at St. Mary's Medical Center in Duluth.

To say this has been a painful and devastating year of loss and uncertainty is putting it mildly. The pandemic, that brought an abrupt end to life as we knew it, has been an overwhelming tragedy for everybody in our world and, most certainly, for those of us in health care. Almost every aspect of our lives has been affected with unimaginable change and loss, and with restrictions placed upon us.

I learned to live in the moment because the moment was all I had. I knew it could change at any time and usually did. Like our coworkers, we as chaplains had to learn how to adapt, change, and become flexible as procedures and policies were forever changing. Keeping up with daily emails became a challenge in itself, as did the use of technology. Like all employees, we chaplains no longer had the comfort of gathering in person for meetings; instead, we met virtually each day, to support one another and to discuss the best way we could care for our patients, families, and staff.

Our ministry definitely changed. Our halls and family waiting rooms, once bustling with visitors, became empty as visitor restrictions were put into place. The hospital felt more like a quiet retreat center than a busy hospital. Previous to the pandemic, a big part of my day was spent ministering to families. As the year progressed, I communicated with them by phone. Technology helped patients and families stay connected, to bridge the separation and isolation they felt.

My daily wardrobe changed as I wore a mask and goggles throughout each day. Gloves and full-body protection were required as I entered isolation rooms. Such clothing, along with physical distancing, felt like foreign barriers as I ministered to patients. I was grateful for each evening at home, where I could process and reflect upon what I had experienced throughout the day and renew my strength to meet the next.

I witnessed the anxiety, fear, loneliness, uncertainty, grief, and loss people were experiencing as I ministered to them on the Oncology and Medical Units. My nose and mouth were covered with a mask, but my ears were not. They took in the pain of humanity. What my eyes saw and ears heard during this pandemic will be, forever, imprinted on my heart. When patients were experiencing medical changes, potential loss, or a new diagnosis that could change their lives, emotions ran high. Being separated from their support systems of family and friends made their days even more difficult. It was heartbreaking for patients to be alone and heartbreaking for family and friends who could not be with them. As a chaplain, it was heartbreaking for me to witness the pain I saw each day.

In a year of being separated from those we love, we long for human connection. I remember one woman telling me, "Being in the hospital has been the best part of my year." Surprised at this, I asked her how this could be.



Sister Sue's work attire before the pandemic and during the pandemic.

She said, “I get to see people like you and all those who come into my room each day. I’ve been reflecting on my life and have been telling stories and you listen. At home I am totally alone. It’s been so lonely.” Perhaps the greatest gift I could offer another during this year was this gift of listening. I was surprised at how many people thanked me for simply listening to them.

Listening and human touch can be comforting and healing, but Covid robbed us of the opportunity of embracing those we love. I heard over and over again, “I can hardly wait to hug my children and my grandchildren.” Being Irish, hugging is in my very nature. It was difficult not to be able to extend a hand or a hug to another who was suffering. I recall an elderly woman who extended her hand when I introduced myself and said, “Sit down and stay with me. Talk with me! I’m lonely.” My heart was moved and at that moment caution was not important. I took her hand and held it as she wept.

I have been with many people who died during the pandemic. It is usually a sacred time when family and friends gather around their loved one, to say ‘Goodbye, thank you and I love you,’ a time of sharing tears, memories, laughter, and hugs. The pandemic robbed many of this treasured time together, for even at the time of death, visitors were limited. I, too, have suffered the loss of several friends during the past year and feel the grief of having never had the opportunity to be present with them, to say goodbye, to thank them, or to attend their funerals. Likewise, I experience the grief of missing coworkers who left unnoticed or who retired without any goodbyes or celebration. The aftermath of the pandemic will surely leave a mark on all of us as we reenter life feeling the absence of those we have loved and lost.

Devastating as this year has been, it was inspiring to see coworkers respond to the needs and demands placed upon them. I think we all found strength in one another. As I ministered to staff, they ministered to me. We were all in this, together, feeling vulnerable, fearful, and uncertain about what Covid would bring our way. Some of our staff moved in and out of quarantine as they were exposed to Covid or contracted it themselves. We were fatigued and under extreme stress as we navigated the rapid pace of change within us and around us. Hospital floors were reconfigured to make room for the care of Covid patients. Our Oncology staff and patients moved from St. Mary’s Hospital to Miller Dwan Medical Center. It was another change, another adjustment to a new environment with all that such a move entailed.

Through it all I witnessed the resiliency of the human spirit and the loving care of community through incredible acts of kindness, generosity, and compassion from our nurses, physicians, social workers, those who worked in food service and environmental service, therapists, pharmacists, and the entire staff. It was a gift to work with all of them and I was inspired with the daily dedication and commitment I saw in them.

Yes, it has been an emotionally exhausting year of devastating loss but also a year of grace. My priorities have shifted in realizing, more deeply, that life is not a marathon to be completed but a limited gift of time, to be lived well and to be spent on others. I have become more conscious of slowing down and stepping out of the “rat race” by becoming more present to the moment and mindful of the way I choose and want to live. I am ever more grateful for the simple joys of life and the treasured relationships that are mine.

Through the generosity and kindness that I experienced from so many, I know that what we do or don’t do for others does make a difference. The pandemic has taught me that I, with the rest of humanity, am fragile and vulnerable, yet strong and resilient. Hopefully, I and all of us will not forget the lessons learned in a year that has had the potential of transforming our lives, our country, and our world.



Empty hospital hallways during the pandemic.

Oblates Grow During the Pandemic

By Sister Pauline Micke, OSB pauline.m@duluthosb.org

Over the last months, the Oblates have been faithful and creative as they seek new ways to daily live their vocation as part of the Oblate Community in the midst of the pandemic.

Six new people have inquired about becoming an Oblate. We developed an Inquirer's Packet to send to them and then, if they wished to proceed, we set up sessions via telephone. Four new people have said yes! We are waiting until we can have rituals for the Inquirers and we have three Oblates ready for Final Oblation.



Sister Pauline Micke leads a virtual Oblate meeting.

One of the biggest signs of growth was that two Oblates gave reflections in Advent and two in Lent. These were read at Evening Prayer to the Monastic Community and were well received.

Having a retreat has been a challenge, but once again the Oblates have been creative. We spread the retreat over three months, using Zoom. The first session in February was "Preparing for the Journey," the second in March was "From Death to Life: Conversion on the Journey," and the April session was "Humility," a video and discussion by Sr. Joan Chittister.

For Lent, the Oblates observed the traditional practice of Bona Opera, taken from the Rule of Benedict, Chapters 49 and 4 on Lent and on Good Works. Notes on their intended works were placed in a basket at the altar in our Chapel each weekend at Saturday Evening Prayer. In addition, Oblates have been active in caring for family members and neighbors, phoning and sending cards to check that all are doing well.

We thank God for the blessings we have all received. Our hearts are filled with gratitude as we continue to invest and grow the Oblate Community here at St. Scholastica Monastery.

Please Pray for Our Deceased Family and Friends

Diane F. Sadler	1/18/2021	Clarence E. LaLiberte	3/27/2021
Donald A. Johnson	1/29/2021	Sally Rogers	3/21/2021
Katherine (Kay) Tervo	1/31/2021	Keith St. John	3/31/2021
Elizabeth Askelson	2/8/2021	(uncle of Sister Joan Marie Stelman)	
Elimelick Mlingula	2/11/2021	Dolores Jean Pogorelec	4/1/2021
(Grandfather of Sister Charity Nkwera)		William H. Moser	4/8/2021
Nancy Davidson	2/22/2021	Milan Steve Karich	4/16/2021
(Sister of +Sisters Mary Rae and Barbara Higgins)		Elaine Paquette	4/16/2021
Agnes Raway	2/24/2021	(Sister of Sister Pauline Micke and niece of +Sister Marilyn Micke)	
(Mother of Sister Beverly Raway)		Lois Mehle	4/26/2021
Larry Lee Lurch	2/25/2021	Bernice V. Evens	5/2/2021
Robert Raymond DeRoche	3/4/2021	(Sister of Sister Mary Josephine Torborg)	
Jean Hinzmann	3/5/2021	Correction from Lent Pathways	
Rev. Kevin Gordon	3/11/2021	Robert C. Gerlach	1/23/2021

Highlights

Enrichment Program for Sisters on Benet Hall

After the pandemic began and the announcement was made that the Sisters who live in Stanbrook West could no longer visit the Sisters on Benet Hall (care for elderly Sisters within the Monastery), the Sisters asked themselves, “What can we do? How do we keep community with the Benet Hall Sisters?”

Sister Jayne Erickson, with the help from Associate Chris Ketelsen and others, designed a daily program in which the Sisters could connect virtually with the Sisters on Benet Hall. It happened virtually in the chapel, using the sound system which connected to the Sisters television channel.

The program began in March 2020 and concluded in March 2021 after the Sisters were vaccinated and were again allowed in-person visits on Benet Hall. Throughout the year the program included a mix of music (piano, guitar, and sing-alongs), prayers, stories, puppetry, jokes, and praying the rosary. The Sisters were thankful for this creative way of staying connected when in-person visits were not safe.



Chris Ketelsen (left) and Sister Jayne Erickson with Buddy the Puppet

Sister Lisa Maurer blesses student athletes

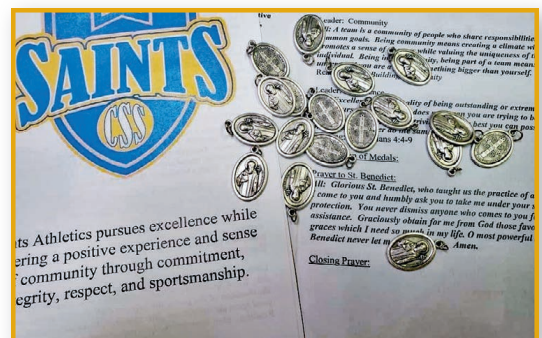
Sports teams at The College of St. Scholastica have had an unusual year due to Covid. One thing that remained was the traditional preseason prayer services. Sister Lisa Maurer adapted the prayer service format and held them at the College instead of the Sisters’ chapel. She was still able to pray with the student athletes and their coaches and give each a blessed Medal of St. Benedict.

“One of the great things about athletics at CSS is that we always recognize that there is more to sports than winning and losing,” said Sister Lisa. “And this year I am proud to say that leaning on our Benedictine values has been the go-to response in all that has been happening.”

When asked what the prayer time with Sister Lisa means to her and her team, the head coach of CSS Softball, Rilee Dawson, said, “Sister Lisa’s team prayer has been a reminder that even though there have been challenges through the past year we have our faith and a strong community guiding us through the unknowns. This team has faced more than their fair share of hurdles and the blessing restores in us our responsibility to our values, ourselves, our team, and this community.”



Basketball coach Andrew Schmitz presents each team member with a Benedictine medal.

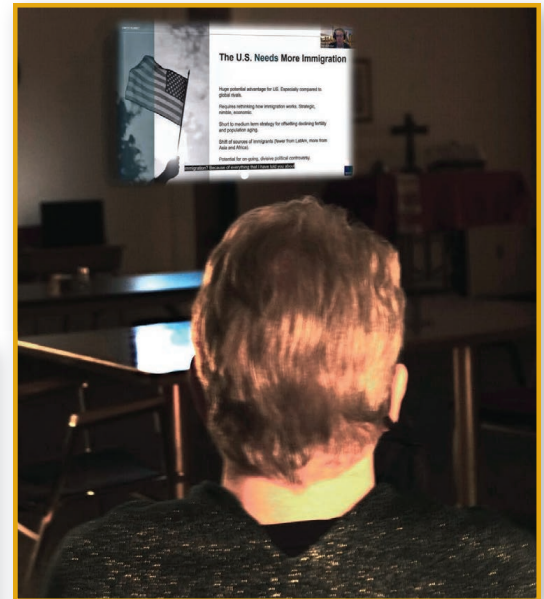


We are tired of Zooming, too!

...but it has kept us connected to our ministries, families, and the larger Benedictine community. Sisters attend board and committee meetings, participate in monastic Chapter, conduct business, attend classes, take part in funerals, and visit family – all through the blessing of virtual technology. It isn't the same as being present, but better than isolation; plus, it has brought us new opportunities for enrichment.



Sisters and students of the Friends Across Campus meet virtually.



Sister Mary Susan Dewitt watches the College's Alworth Center for Peace and Justice presentation with Darrell Bricker, who discussed, from a sociological view, the benefits of immigration.

The Community is vaccinated

The Sisters 'bare arms' to stop the spread of Covid. Nurses from Essentia-Duluth came to vaccinate the Sisters and employees, first those on Benet Hall, then, a month later, the rest of the Community. Here, Sister Therese Carson receives her second vaccination.



Feasts of St. Scholastica and St. Benedict

St. Scholastica was the sister of St. Benedict and founded a community of women religious. It is believed that she helped her brother soften some of the strictures in his Rule, helping create a humane, rational, and Gospel-based guide for monastics, one that has lasted for over 15 centuries.

Each year we honor the life of St. Scholastica on February 10, and of St. Benedict on March 21. Even during Lent, they are days of celebration with a special Mass and meal. This year, Sister Joan Marie Stelman prepared origami-folded napkins: a monk in robe and cowl for St. Benedict and a dove for St. Scholastica.



Mardi Gras

We expected little at this pandemic year's Mardi Gras celebration, but the administration at Benedictine (formerly called the Benedictine Health System) came through with pizza, drinks, and decorations. Thanks to our friends at Benedictine for a last chance to celebrate before Lent.

Below: Sisters Pauline Micke, Jeanne Ann Weber, and Dorene King, with the staff of Benedictine serving.



Lent as a time of Grace

*“During this time of Lent, each one is to receive a book from the library and is to read the whole of it straight through.”
(Rule of Benedict, Chapter 48: The Daily Manual Labor)*

Each year the Prioress assigns each Sister a book to read during Lent, a different one for each. In this day of mass printing, we often are given the same book. This year it was *Grace: On the Journey to God* by Fr. Michael Casey, a monk of Tarrawarra Abbey in Australia. With each chapter we journeyed deeply into a grace from God. Chapter one presented the grace of discontinuity, the disruption of our settled routines and mindsets that stretches us mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, making us more resilient, more reliant on the strength of God.

On each Wednesday evening, we discussed two chapters.

From the first chapter, we learned that grace often comes disguised as a problem, even a disaster. From this perspective we see that, even in the disruption and deep grief of the pandemic, God is blessing us with grace to care for each other more deeply as co-travelers on the journey. In darkness, what is important shines out brightly.

At our reconciliation service, we were called to forgive those who have hurt us through betrayal, indifference, or doubt. Then we asked forgiveness for our own failings: lukewarmness in our relationships, self-pity, self-centeredness, despair, distrust; our refusal to ask forgiveness, our failure to give others emotional support, our neglect of the self-care needed to be able to minister to each other.

All these are failures to live communally as St. Benedict directs us in his Rule, to live out the charism (gift) of Benedictine life with our whole mind, heart, and spirit.



Lent, continued

Each Lent, Sister Theresa Spinler puts together liturgical displays in the Chapel and Gathering Space, using cloth, pottery, stones, plants, and driftwood. As the light moves throughout the day, the colors and shadows change. The symbolic elements remind us of the Gospel narrative: Jesus's miraculous transformation of water into wine at the wedding in Cana; his baptism, temptation in the desert, and ministry of repentance; his transfiguration that reveals to us his divinity; the cleansing of the temple; and his entry into Jerusalem on a donkey, his arrest, trial, and crucifixion. Each year it tells the ancient story a little differently.



From above, clockwise: displays in the Gathering Space and Chapel; a traditional Mexican retablo displayed for Palm Sunday; Sisters gather for Morning Prayer on Ash Wednesday.

Easter Joy

A recurring theme in our readings this Easter has been that Christians are good at keeping Lent and reliving the passion and death of Jesus, but we aren't as good at Easter rejoicing. Perhaps it challenges us to go too far out of our comfort zone, to know fully in the deepest levels of our unconscious that Jesus is really God, and then to act from that knowledge. If we did this, our lives and this world would be transformed!

In a homily during the Octave of Easter in 2014, Pope Francis said, "We need to overcome the fear of joy; we need to think of the many times that we are not joyful because we are afraid. ... The disciples, who were burned by the drama of the cross, said: no, let's stop here! He is in heaven, that's excellent, he is risen, but may he not come back again because we can't handle it!"

May we truly believe in the Risen Christ, present with me as I write these words, present with you as you read them, present to us all until the world ends.



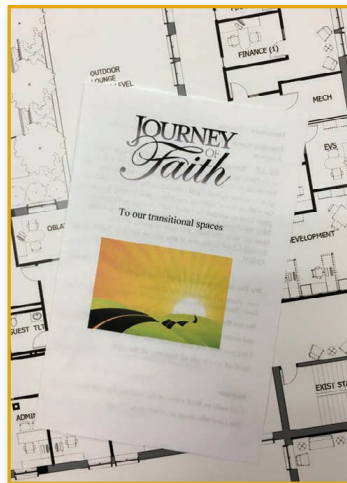
Blessing of Stanbrook transitional living space

On March 23, Sister Beverly Raway publicly shared our plans to move temporarily into Stanbrook, our former high school. This allows us to begin renovation of Stanbrook West so that it will accommodate our offices and living spaces. Stanbrook will then be available for an expanded Center for Spirituality and Enrichment and for use by our ministry partners.

On April 7, we held a special Evening Prayer ritual to bless our exodus journey. We asked God to walk before us, “in all our travelling, in our journeying to prayer and our ministries, within our old and new spaces, in our leisure time together, in difficult situations and conflict, as we stumble on the way, as we place our trust in You, when the vision and destination become blurred, when adaptation becomes burdensome.”

Then, accompanied by the Sisters, Sister Beverly blessed our transitional living spaces with holy water.

Blessing Rite and our renovation plans; Sister Beverly blesses a bedroom on Stanbrook Fifth Floor; Sister Beverly blesses Sister Johnetta Maher and her room on Benet Hall.



College classroom dedicated to the Braun Sisters

In honor of Sister Grace Marie Braun's 70th year Diamond Jubilee celebration, Bruce and Kaye Lee Stender have lovingly honored Sister Grace Marie and memorialized the Braun Sisters by naming classroom T-3121 at The College of St. Scholastica's Stender School of Business and Technology, "Braun Sisters."

For several years, the Braun Sisters played an important role in The College of St. Scholastica's community and the Stender family's life. Sister Grace Marie Braun served as Prioress of the Monastery and previously taught in the home economics department. +Sister Mary Carol worked as assistant to Bruce Stender while he served as President of the College. +Sister Joan was acting president before Dr. Stender was elected President and served as Academic Vice President. As a gift to the Stender School of Business and Technology, the Stender family is honored to name this classroom after the three Braun Sisters. *This excerpt taken directly from Bruce and Kaye Lee Stender's dedication letter.*

Thank you, Sisters Grace Marie, Mary Carol, and Joan, for your lifetime commitment to the Rule of St. Benedict and the ideals of St. Scholastica.



Above:
Sisters Joan, Mary Carol,
and Grace Marie

At right:
Memorial plaque by
classroom door



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*Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel with rudbeckia
Photo by Sister Lisa Maurer*

**“So...is there a point here? Joy awaits us!
Let’s nurture our inner child.**

Laugh! Sing! Blow bubbles! Skip rocks!

**Let God delight us with unexpected
happenings. Watch the clouds!**

Take off our shoes and socks! Dance!

Jump out of the boat! SPLASH!

Run to Jesus! Rejoice!

Be renewed by His immeasurable love!”

~ Sister Jayne Erickson

If you prefer an electronic copy of Pathways,
please email us at monastery@duluthosb.org.