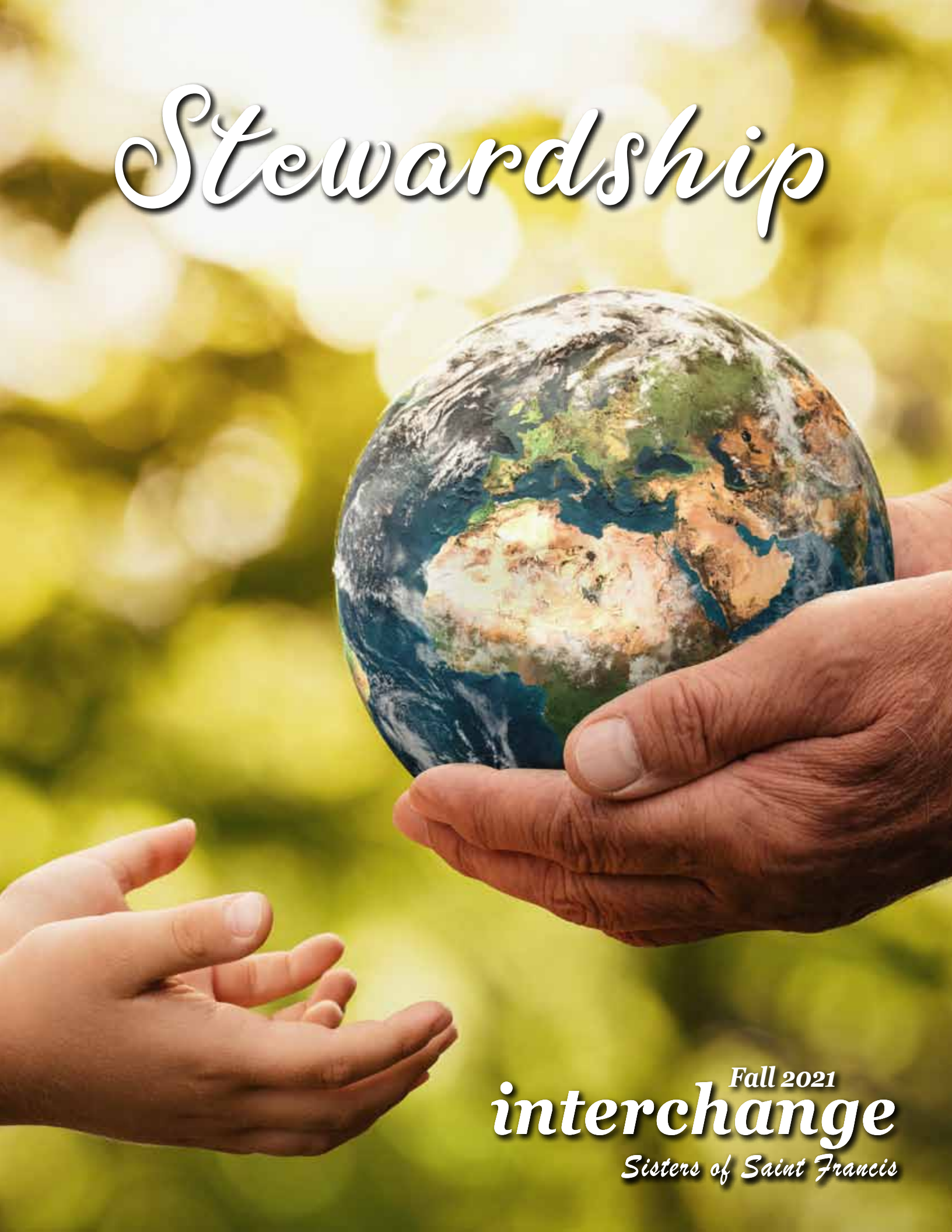
Stewardship



Fall 2021

interchange

Sisters of Saint Francis

Focus: Stewardship

interchange

a publication of the
Sisters of Saint Francis
Volume 26 Issue 3

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interchange is published quarterly. Issues are sent via email in Winter and Summer to accompany our magazines published in Fall and Spring. To receive our email editions, please complete the form on the back of this magazine, or send an email request to: info@rochesterfranciscan.org

There is no subscription fee. However, donations to help cover the cost of printing and postage are accepted and appreciated.

"Stewardship is an ethic that embodies the responsible planning and management of resources. The concepts of stewardship can be applied to the environment and nature, economics, health, property, information, theology, cultural resources, etc." (Source: Wikipedia)

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Letter from the President

Sister Ramona Miller

Dear Friends and Family,

"Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!
And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day." Gen. 1:31

When we enjoy the beauty of creation, we identify with the Creator seeing all that is very good. Throughout the centuries since the beginning of time, God's goodness has inspired human progress to care for creation and to utilize natural resources for the welfare of each other, and for creative expressions: inspiring architecture, good shelter for homes and factories, improved food provisions, and the list goes on and on. The word that defines care for all of creation is stewardship.

One definition of stewardship is an ethic that embodies the responsible planning and management of resources. The concepts of stewardship can be applied to all aspects of our life. Rochester Franciscans carry out stewardship through the lens of our mission statement: "…to be a compassionate presence for peace in our world, striving for justice and reverence for all creation." This issue of *Interchange* provides windows into various aspects of stewardship with which Rochester Franciscans are involved, including the environment and nature, economics, health, and advocacy for values in accord with our spiritual legacy. For instance:

- Sister Carolina's experiences while visiting the Amazon truly reveals the Franciscan approach to an issue. We respond to issues from the heart developing relationships that bridge compassion for those involved along with advocacy for a just solution to conflict.

- Sister Joan Brown chairs our Congregational Finance Committee which consciously makes decisions of financial resources to improve the global climate. Her leadership awakens in many the connectedness with impact investing and systemic change for improving life for all living in our Common Home. Franciscan spirituality informs all that we think, say and do.

- The gardeners at Assisi Heights demonstrate a dedication in the small ways of tending the soil to express stewardship which in turn blesses all who enjoy the fruits of their labors.

- An important aspect of stewardship is caring for the continuance of our values, our legacy. This was demonstrated in the transition from Saint Marys Hospital Sponsorship Board to Mayo Clinic Values Council.

- Core to our disposition of being a compassionate presence is our faith; we believe and act upon the understanding that we have received from God a gift of sharing God's life to serve one another and to be stewards of God's creation.

May we see all that exists as good from God and may we care for creation accordingly.

Sister Ramona Miller

Sister Ramona Miller, OSF
Congregational Minister

The Spirituality of Stewardship

by Kathy Woytych, Cojourner

Kathy Woytych

Pondering the spirituality of stewardship, I reflected on the insight and life of St. Francis, the community of trees, and the realities confronting us. We are all one. How we treat the earth and how we treat one another is entangled. As Ilia Delio says, we are "holons within holons." [1]

Francis of Assisi had a deep connection to people, place and the earth. Totally immersing himself in God, he awakened to an incredible relationship of reverence and acknowledgement of all creation. Compassion flowed from his heart to all he encountered. Once when the brothers had given up on a particularly cantankerous leper, Francis went to the leper and asked what he could do for him. The man responded angrily, "What could you possibly do that the other brothers have not already done?" Quietly, Francis responded, "I will do whatever you wish. What would you like me to do?" "Please wash me." And, as Francis washed him, one by one the leprous sores were healed. The man was healed both internally and externally. Nearly blind and at the end of his life, Francis composed the beautiful *Canticle of the Creatures*, in which he names all as sister or brother: sun, moon, larks, water, even death. And at his death, the people of Assisi witnessed the larks of the forest gathering to mourn his passing. In naming all as brother or sister, Francis summed up a life of compassion for the people and creatures he encountered and the earth he roamed. His intuition of the connectedness of all is borne out in research by the tree biologist, Suzanne Simard today.

Trees are an elegant metaphor for own lives. They are a community needing and supporting one another in a complex relationship of give and take. Suzanne Simard notes in *Finding the Mother Tree, Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest:* [2]

> "…Unlike what happened in the summer, when birch sent more carbon to fir, Douglas fir in spring and fall sent more carbon to birch. This trading system between the two species, shifting with the seasons, suggested that the trees were in a sophisticated exchange pattern, possibly reaching a balance over the course of a year. Birch was benefiting from fir, just as fir was benefitting from birch. Quid pro quo…By being in place together in a network of fungi and bacteria, birch and fir shared resources, even as they outgrew each other and cast shade. Through this reciprocal alchemy, they remained healthy and productive."

We are the body of the earth. What happens to the trees and the soil and the waters matters as much as what happens to our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Hearing the cry of the poor includes hearing the cry of the earth and its many creatures. We are all one in this marvelous kin-dom. Francis intuited the deep relatedness of all and today's science confirms what Francis knew in his heart. A spirituality of stewardship calls us to use our human resources on behalf of the earth and its many inhabitants. How we hear and respond to that call is the challenge for each of us.

[1] Definition: A **holon** is something that is simultaneously a whole **in** and of itself, as well as a part of a larger whole. (Wikipedia)

[2] Suzanne Simard, *Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Penquin Random House, LLC, 2021), 175-76.

Environment and Nature: Harvesting the Bounty and Discovering the Mysteries of God

by Sister Alice Thraen

We are stewards of God's Creation, appointed to care for the earth and act in ways to promote, protect and preserve the environment. Our commitment to Reverence for all Creation is shown by the ways we care for the earth, especially in our garden.

We have garden records that go back to 1992 when Sisters Joy Barth, Nadine Ellis, Mary Frederick, Josanne Mulvihill, Rita Patzner, Alice Thraen and Mary Pat Smith were members of the crew.

Stewardship is the responsible management of something entrusted to one's care – the records show the wonders performed by our garden crews over the past few years.

Here is a record of contributed vegetables and honey representing the past 6 years:

Year	Pounds	If sold, $ value	Honey (used in-house)
2015	3566	$8,305	$1,770
2016	3223	$4,969	$607
2017	3625	$6,696	$842
2018	2582	$5,120	$1,400
2019	1031	$1,578	$1,470
2020		COVID / No garden	
TOTALS	14,027	$26,668	$6,089

Do you realize that the 14,027 pounds of produce from the garden amounts to 7 tons of food we have enjoyed from our garden over the years with the help of many Sisters, volunteers, and grounds crew? That is amazing… and we are still bringing in the produce!

We attempt to impact the environment in positive ways: by collecting rain water; fertilizing with manure; recycling cut grasses; composting; putting leaves on garden beds; collecting seeds; and freezing produce that cannot be used directly from the garden. We continue to seek advice from the experts.

There are so many mysteries to discover in nature.

What a joy it is for me to get up in the morning ready to head to the garden! It is there I learned how to discover the difference between the male blossom and the female blossom of a squash plant. (Did you know there was a difference?!)

Did you also know that honeybees communicate their floral findings to the others when returning to the hive from an area with many flowers producing much nectar? She performs a dance on the comb. Her movements and the frequency of her vibrations indicate the direction and distance of the flowers from the hive. By observing this dance the others know where to find this wonderful source of food – both bee and plant benefit… let's dance in celebration!

Environment and Nature: Harvesting the Bounty and

Expressing joy, this sunflower is thriving!

Sisters Alice, Martha and Claren with sunflowers.

Once again, the honey crop for 2021 averages well over 100 pounds per hive. This has been the average in 15 of the 20 years that records have been kept. Because of the Pandemic, the Assisi Heights Gift Shop has been closed, but we still have honey in supply. If you, or someone you know, wishes to purchase honey, please call 507-282-7441 and ask for Sister Alice. We will figure out how to get it to you!

Paradeisos is the Greek word for garden and is translated "paradise" – a place of great happiness. Each gardener is blessed with special gifts to enhance the allotted space.

Here are reflections from our gardening Sisters:

Sister Avis Schons: *It is always a mystery – to plant a very small seed in the soil that is full of the nutrients that God has provided and watch it grow to maturity is awesome.*

Sister Claren Sellner: *Working with soil, seeds, rain and sun can be a strenuous life in the garden at Assisi. Our kitchen workers use the produce and the fruits brought in and serve them graciously. I am most grateful and welcome volunteers. There can be only gratitude for and moments of peace in the garden.*

Sister Pat Keefe: *I planted basil in a raised bed. It grew well and I contributed many bunches to the kitchen until Japanese Beetles took a liking to it. Working with others has increased my knowledge of ways to deal with pests, weeds and how to harvest herbs.*

Sister Carmen Sonnek: *All of Creation is God's gift of life – to provide, sustain, nourish and enjoy. I value the surprise of the fruit of the labors involved and being able to share, preserve and relish the fruits.*

Sister Martha Mathew: *For me, gardening is simply hard work but [with] a commitment to see the planting, weeding, hoeing and harvesting through to completion. It is great to work in the outdoors which has many physical, psychological and spiritual benefits - if one doesn't overdo it! Being in nature, listening to the birds, watching the*

Discovering the Mysteries of God ... *continued*

Sisters Alice surveys the garden.

Reaping the rewards.

butterflies, enjoying the many flowers and bringing in the harvest is a delight for me and for the Sisters who enjoy some of the fruits of the garden.

Sister Marlys Jax: *Caring for the earth is in my blood, I grew up with natural and organic food. It is hard to be both. What have I learned is patience, perseverance and peace. This year I tried Rat-tails (radishes that grow above ground) and Sun Gold Tomatoes. Both added vitamins to our diets! Kipling said, "... gardens are not made by singing 'Oh How Beautiful' and sitting in the shade!"*

Sister Alice Thraen: *For me, gardening is creating an environment in which people can contribute their skills, learn from each other and develop new skills and fresh ideas. It creates discussions on many topics: the connections between growing food and good diets, sustainability and pollination. Gardening invites me to get outside, take charge of my own need for exercise, healthy food and beautiful surroundings. Weight, health and sleep all benefit.*

The garden of daily living is lived out by each gardener as she plants the seeds to bring new life:

- Plant three rows of peas: peas of mind, peas of heart, peas of soul.
- Plant hills of squash: squash gossip, squash grumbling, squash selfishness.
- Plant rows of lettuce: lettuce us be kind, patient, faithful and love one another.
- And we must have thyme: thyme for each other, thyme for family, thyme for friends and thyme for God.

- Author Unknown

"We come together to take charge of this home which has been entrusted to us."

- Pope Francis

Environment and Nature: **It's All About Timing!**

Image courtesy of Pixabay.com

"It all started at twenty-four minutes to seven!" That's when the clock stopped! A Rochester laundress was returning a wash basket of laundry to a Rochester doctor's home when Brother Wind took her and street debris for ride! Invisibly powerful, Brother Wind exhibited an angry mood. With its superlative temperament, this cyclone in 1883 was described as fierce, devastating and deadly.

Today, 138 years later, Mother Earth is seeking our attention. Brother Fire is untamed, undomesticated, and unbridled. He never stops to ask directions. He goes where he wills. He makes his own path by moving unpredictably with Brother Wind. Sister Water is on a warpath, too. Her policy is to seize and surrender to her authority. In her wake, water simply swallows everything in its path, sucking life out of where once may have stood a strong edifice. In other locations, Mother Earth is silently shriveling waterless, parched, and barren.

Earth air, fire and water are just four of our planet's elements crying to be heard. The signals are impossible to overlook. Global temperatures are rocketing higher and the destructive impacts are accelerating. We are presented with profound risks and a few opportunities. We humans have the potential to determine the future course of the climate. Question: What is ours to do?

From the edge of the road… We have added solar panels, put in permeable parking lots, reduced mowing, planted prairies, reduced the use of plastic bottles in the building, and this year, attacked the noxious weeds; namely garlic mustard, wild parsnip, thistles, honeysuckle and buckthorn. Eradication is the name of the game. Meanwhile, we are cultivating an organic garden with milkweed to support the moving "stained glass windows" – the Monarch butterflies. We share floral blossoms with our four-footed forest companions.

The outer courtyard has enjoyed the shade of elder trees. Branches suffer arthritic aches and breaks in sync with the human senior residents. Swaying winds increased limb cracks thus causing instability. At this writing, these giants are enjoying eternal rest. The next generation will soon be taking up their positions, though they are merely infants.

To the west of the building, Brother Conifer suffers with Pine Needle Rust, a communicable disease that is fatal. Similar to the spread of human viruses, Pine Needle Rust takes up residence in its neighbors' branches. Removal is the only way to gain control. Honeysuckle, which has served as the understory, undergrowth is listed as a non-native noxious species in need of removal. This information was an unknown factor 60 years ago when it was planted. Despite its negative impact, it has diverted Brother Wind's worst winter snowdrifts and cold breezes from taking over the parking lot. With climate changes, our endurance will be tested in these years of new and different choices for a windbreak species.

Now, for the bigger picture!

Climate issues are not easy. Unlike the foreseeable resolution to the COVID-19 pandemic, we do not have a vaccine to protect against climate risks. Droughts have brought food insecurity and pushed migration. Land is warming. We are experiencing increasing number of heat waves, longer warm seasons, shorter cold seasons, changes in wetness and dryness, wind, snow and ice. We have seen drought, and heavy flooding, more hurricanes and earthquakes. Broader and deeper structural changes are needed to bring climate change to its knees. How much louder does the environmental community have to scream?

Scientists know CO-2 is the main driver. We are addicted to the culprit: fossil fuels. Manufacturing and transportation are big users. It is interesting that the extractive industries have taken advantage of the COVID-19 crisis and increased production, obstructing climate justice. The emission of greenhouse gasses due to human activities are responsible. Stabilizing the climate will require strong, rapid, and sustained reduction of greenhouse gases. We hear the cry of the earth, the cry of the poor. We need ecological economics, ecological education, ecological spirituality, and community engagement.

A variety of organizations are working on: 1) the science; 2) impacts, adaptions and vulnerability; and 3) mitigation. However, we are the everyday players who need to take responsibility for our actions individually and best interests in the good of the whole. We are responsible for the whole earth. We only have one planet. There are no new or spare parts available to purchase!

The clock has restarted! **Time** is of extreme importance. We need Sabbath **time** to claim our mystical vocation of gratitude and awe and humbly recognize our own moral obligation. Now is the **time** to do something. It is not optional! This is a whole world community project. As stewards, we need to place a higher value on cooperation and working for the common good.

Major players in the U.S. are the financial regulators who need to bolster the economy to incorporate the varied aspects of future climate shocks. Their burden has been managing the global pandemic. Now they (and we) need to seize the opportunity for sweeping economic transformation that can stabilize our climate, while reducing long-standing social and economic inequities. Let's join the world to engage global peers with **time**, talent and treasure to develop a planetary playbook. Governmental agencies, transportation companies, financial firms, manufacturing, agriculture, oil and gas industries, as well as religious and spiritual organizations, to name just a few, have a moral and ethical imperative to work toward a systemic solution. We need to be **active** advocates in federal and state public policy supporting a net-zero carbon economic future. Our only choice is to act boldly. Deeds without a Creed is not sufficient, but neither is a Creed without deeds enough! The critical **time** to act was yesterday, but we can start today.

Economics: Our Common Home and Divestment

"The awakening of ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world. For only when we can hear the languages of other beings will we be capable of understanding the generosity of the earth and learn to give our own gifts in return." Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants.*

Each of us probably has an experience, when we were very young in life, of feeling awe, wonder, and love at being part of and one with this amazing Earth and cosmos. For me, it happened when I was about five years old, standing alone within an immense starry sky in Kansas. I felt myself and yet I experienced belonging within and as part of a larger sacred reality.

This awe, wonder, and love at being part of the world is what needs to motivate us to address the climate crisis at this moment. Our engagement, I believe is not adequately described by the term stewardship. In one sense, stewardship places the human in charge of, rather than being one with, a reciprocal relationship with Earth and cosmos. For a number of years, I have struggled with how to describe the work we must be about now in light of human-caused climate change. My prayer and reflections continue to bring me to

loving, which requires listening and reciprocity. The poet, Mary Oliver, describes it best, "My work is loving the world."

I believe, as a Franciscan community, it is this deeper and clearer spiritual sense of the world that moved us to divest from fossil fuels, through a lengthy process, over the last eight years. The climate herself is shouting to us through heat waves, droughts, fires, hurricanes and floods. We are not living in loving relationship on Our Common Home or our OIKOS. Extreme dependence or addiction to fossil fuels, from energy to transportation to seas of plastic, now make humans the most influential aspect of Our Common Home.

The words ecology and economy come from the same Greek word for household, "oikos." Our homes and households, including our Earth household, is about honoring relationships in order to be a welcoming home now and for future generations. Increasingly, we realize that our home is filled with broken relationships, injustice and degradation. The ecological and economic crises that we experience, especially in the last several years with COVID-19 and climate change expressed in the two warmest years on record, point to the inter-relatedness to economy and ecology.

Our Franciscan values and sense of kinship led us to discern and divest from fossil fuels for a number of reasons. Climate change is the gravest threat to life and adversely affects those who have contributed least, the economically poor, young, old and most vulnerable. Fossil fuel companies have known for decades that they were largely responsible for human climate change and they have covered up this fact and taken little responsibility. While continued efforts at conversation with CEO's is still important, stronger tools are needed. Divestment is one of those tools.

According to a 2019 report from the World Economic Forum, failure of economies to mitigate and adapt to climate change is of the utmost importance. There are many opportunities today for faith-based and other organizations and individuals to engage in climate action to fulfill mission through action and in finances. The divestment can be for a portion of the portfolio or across the entire portfolio. Increasingly, organizations and individuals find that divestment is not a financial risk. Indeed, the climate change path we are on is a life risk.

Before the UN Climate Meeting of Parties in Paris in 2015, before a global agreement was reached, Pope Francis stated that current policies, economics and lifestyles put humanity on a "suicide path." The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change contained the sobering message that we are still on this suicide path. I feel this poignantly each time I visit the Permian Basin in Southeast New Mexico, which is saturated with oil and gas wells, pipes, and transfer stations. The air cries, children wheeze and adults have cancer and headaches. Those outside the region call it the "Climate Bomb."

If we understand that we are part of a sacred and loving relationship, then addressing systemic change is an expression of "My work is loving the world." Divesting in fossil fuels meant finding ways to invest in renewable energy, climate change adaptation and mitigation and companies engaged in the UN Development Goals.

If we believe, as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin did, that "The physical structure of the universe is love." Then our work of loving the world must filter into every aspect of our living, including financial and economic.

Sister Joan Brown serves as Executive Director of New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She is shown kneeling in the front row, on the left, in the photo on page 8.

In Memoriam

Sister Marcan Freking (October 9, 1924 – June 23, 2021)

Bernadine Frances Freking entered the Sisters of St. Francis in 1942, and received the name of Sister Mary Marcan. In 1957, she completed her studies for a bachelor's degree in elementary education at the College of Saint Teresa, Winona, Minnesota. She selected education as her career path because she loved reading and learning. Even in grade and high school, she had a tender heart for the slow classmate and was always available to help those who struggled to learn. In 1945, Sister Marcan began her elementary teaching ministry at parochial schools in Austin, Winona, Glencoe, Albert Lea, and Sleepy Eye, Minnesota. She was the principal at St. Margaret Mary School, Golden Valley, and St. Gabriel School, Fulda, Minnesota. In 1962, she completed a Master of Science Degree in Elementary Education Administration at Winona State University. Further studies included a sabbatical in 1994-1995 at the School of Theology, St. Meinrad, Indiana. She was a compassionate educator for 26 years.

In 1971, Sister Marcan began a new pastoral ministry and served in that field for 36 years. She served in impoverished areas in Vanceburg and Grayson, Kentucky, with the Glenmary Home Missioners, Cincinnati, Ohio, for 12 years. Her Franciscan heart was open to serve another Appalachian area at Holy Trinity Church in Morgantown, Kentucky for the next 11 years. Sister Marcan's pastoral work then continued in Minnesota, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Missouri. She touched the lives of many people and retired to Assisi Heights in 2007.

Sister Eleanor Granger (April 16, 1938 – August 17, 2021)

Eleanor Ann Granger entered the Sisters of St. Francis in 1956, and received the name of Sister Mary Bennett. She excelled in academics. She completed her studies for a bachelor's degree in Education at the College of St. Teresa, Winona, Minnesota, in 1962, and an master's degree in educational administration at Mankato State University, Mankato, Minnesota, in 1970. Further studies included achieving a Specialist in Elementary School Administration from the College of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota; an Honorary Ph.D. in Leadership at St. Mary's University, Winona, Minnesota, in 1994; and a certification in Franciscan Studies at Washington Theological Union, Washington, D.C., in 1995.

In 1962-1968, Sister Eleanor began teaching at parochial schools in Glencoe and Fulda, Minnesota, as well as Chicago, Illinois. From 1968-1982, she was the principal of St. Gabriel School in Fulda and St. Mary's School in Winona, Minnesota. From 1975-1977, she was also the director of the Office of Pastoral Planning in Winona.

Sister Eleanor was an exemplary, gregarious leader who served on many boards and rose from within religious, civic, and community organizations to regional and national prominence. She received the Teresa of Avila Award from the College of St. Teresa in 1988. She was elected to 12 years of leadership within her Franciscan Congregation in Rochester, as Councilor, 1982-1988, and served as President, 1988-1994. Sister Eleanor moved to Washington, D.C., for 12 years and became the Executive Director of the Franciscan Federation, 1995-2001, and Associate Director of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), 2001-2007. She returned to Rochester, in 2007, and became the Director of Development for the Sisters of St. Francis until 2013. She was awarded a special tribute at the Annual Federation Conference in 2018 for her diligent service as the Franciscan Federation flourished across the nation under her guidance. She retired to Assisi Heights in 2018.

Sister Eleanor's faith was very real and evidenced by a lifetime of service that was given freely, generously, and fully, not only to multiple positions of leadership both on the local and national levels, but also to those individuals from all walks of life who needed a kind word, a listening ear, or an affirmation of their life's journey.

Sister Virgana Kacmarcik (January 26, 1924 – May 4, 2021)

Angeline Victoria Kacmarcik entered the Sisters of St. Francis in 1941, and received the name of Sister Mary Virgana. In 1959, she completed her studies for a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Art at the University of Denver, Denver, Colorado. In 1964, she completed a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Art at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana. Further studies in 1968-69 included art history at the University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois.

In 1944, Sister Virgana began her elementary art teaching career at Catholic Schools in Ohio, Illinois, South Dakota, and Minnesota. In 1965, she began teaching art education at the College of Saint Teresa, Winona, Minnesota where she remained as an assistant professor for 13 years.

From 1978-1988, Sister Virgana returned to North Saint Paul, Minnesota, to care for her aging parents. She stated, "I took care of my aging parents, for all their love and care in my life, a loving privilege and payback time." She worked as a sales assistant for 21 years at the Sears & Roebuck Store in Maplewood and, while residing in the northeast metro area, she gave pastoral care to many elderly residents in nursing homes. Sister Virgana retired in 2006 and returned to Assisi Heights to work in Art Restoration for nine years. Sister Virgana was a talented artist who used her creative skills to foster the love of art among many people across generations.

Sister Kay Rundquist (March 14, 1939 – June 29, 2021)

Kathryn Falton Rundquist entered the Sisters of St. Francis in 1959, and received the name of Sister Mary Pius. In 1971, she received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Music Education at the College of Saint Teresa, Winona, Minnesota. In 1990, she completed a Master of Ministry Degree in Pastoral Ministry at Seattle University, Seattle, Washington. Further studies included training and certification in holistic studies, sports massage, neuromuscular therapy, Reiki, and she became a Master of Integrated Energy Therapy.

In 1961, Sister Kay began her elementary music teaching ministry at parochial schools in Austin, Tracy, Fulda, Easton, Rochester, and Winona, Minnesota. In 1971, she continued to use her talent as a gifted musician in parochial schools and parish ministry through singing, choral directing, teaching and playing the organ, piano, guitar, and string bass.

She worked in Watertown, South Dakota, Colorado Springs, Colorado, and Austin, Mankato, and Anoka, Minnesota. Sister Kay was also a piano guild judge for the National Guild of Piano Teachers and served on the New Ulm Diocese Liturgy Committee. She was a passionate teacher and musician for 25 years.

In 1986, Sister Kay began a new journey of self-discovery that became her pastoral ministry in holistic healing for the next 29 years. Trained and gifted, she contracted with the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota. Kay's practice boomed as people came from diverse areas to receive her healing touch and her work within various energy modalities. Through Sister Kay's training, she developed a deep understanding of the human body, mind, and spirit. She transformed the lives of many people as a massage therapist and holistic body therapist. Sister Kay was a member of the Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals and gave spiritual direction and holistic healing at the Spiritual Center in Little Falls, Minnesota, and numerous locations in the state. When she retired to Assisi Heights in 2015, Kay led many into centering prayer, silence, and contemplative presence.

In Memoriam

Sister Ellen Whelan, Ph.D. (August 21, 1930 – September 9, 2021)

Sister Ellen Whelan entered the Sisters of St. Francis in 1961 and received the name of Sister Mary Pascal. She was a motivated, lifelong learner excelling in academics. She completed a bachelor's degree in history at the College of St. Teresa, Winona, Minnesota, in 1965. She completed her studies for both master's and doctorate degrees in modern european history at Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, in 1968 and 1972. Further studies included: Summer Institute for Women in College Administration at Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, in 1977; Certificate in Hospital Administration at the School of Public Health, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, in 1983; Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at St. Joseph Hospital, Chicago, Illinois, in 1987; and Summer Institute of Religious Studies at Oxford University, England, in 1995.

From 1964-1966, Sister Ellen was a junior high teacher at Sacred Heart School in Waseca, Minnesota. While studying at Syracuse University, she was also a part-time instructor—thus, beginning a long ministry in higher education. From 1971-1979, she was an assistant professor of history and then became the Director of Women's Lifelong Learning Program at the College of St. Teresa. From 1980-1986, Sister Ellen was the Coordinator of the Addictions Unit at Mayo Clinic and Sponsorship Administrator at St. Marys Hospital in Rochester, Minnesota. She also served as a chaplain at St. Joseph Hospital in Chicago, Illinois, in 1987-1991. Throughout the 1990s, Sister Ellen was a dedicated leader within the Congregation at Assisi Heights and at St. Marys Hospital, where she became the Sponsorship Board Chair and Executive Director. In 1992, Sister Ellen served on a committee to establish the Rochester Community & Technical College's LIFE Program (Learning Is ForEver).

From 1998-2018, Sister Ellen began her ministry as an author of historical books and her publications include: *The Sisters' Story*, *The Sisters' Story Part Two*, and co-authored *The Little Book of Mayo Clinic Values*. She also provided advisory consultation to Ken Burns for the PBS documentary, "The Mayo Clinic: Faith, Hope, and Science," in 2018, and to other Heritage films for Mayo Clinic. A quote from Sister Ellen culminates two decades of her diligent research, "I pay tribute to those Saint Marys Sisters whose lives of dedication continue to inspire."

Like many Franciscan Sisters before her, Sister Ellen was an inspirational leader who served on many boards within religious, academic, and civic organizations at local, state, and national levels. She was the recipient of the Rochester Foundation Fellowship for advance study; a member of the Rochester Charter Commission; recipient of the MN Association of Continuing Adult Education Individual Award for Creative Leadership, "Woman of the Year," from the Rochester Business and Professional Women; and Who's Who of American Women. She resided at Assisi Heights for the last ten years of her life.

"All-powerful, most holy, Almighty and supreme God, Holy and just Father, Lord King of heaven and earth, we thank You for Yourself, for through your holy will and through Your only Son with the Holy Spirit, You have created everything spiritual and corporal and, after making us in Your own image and likeness, You placed us in paradise."

-Saint Francis of Assisi, The Earlier Rule

Cojourner Covenant Ceremony

Make us Instruments of Your Love

Jayne Arvold

Roxane Chlachula

Arlys Leitzen

John Leitzen

Renée Lippay

Sharon Ormsby

Lisa Ann Sotebeer

A Cojourner Covenant Ceremony was held in Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel, at Assisi Heights, on October 3, 2021. The seven individuals, shown above, formally celebrated their covenant with the Sisters of Saint Francis.

Cojourner is the name given to a lay associate with the Sisters of Saint Francis of Rochester, Minnesota. Cojourning describes a relationship in which individuals and the Sisters of Saint Francis desire to journey together, or "co-journey," sharing their lives, prayer, mission and ministry in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi and the foundress, Mother Alfred Moes.

Professing First Vows

Sister Patricia George and Sister Ramona Miller anticipate the celebration!

Sister Ramona receives Sister Patricia's profession of first vows.

Professing First Vows

For Sister Patricia Byrne George, life has come full-circle!

Born in Ireland, she spent her first two-and-a-half years in a Convent with her birth mom before being adopted. Her adoptive parents raised her in Chicago. She graduated from University in San Francisco, first with a bachelor's degree in organizational development and systems, and later a master's degree in teaching and school counseling and psychology, as well as in clinical therapy. She spent 20 years of her career in telecommunications in executive positions, serving 10 years as a vice president with AT&T Wireless. This was followed by 15 years in the Diocese of Sacramento in pastoral care, education and spiritual direction.

So much happened during this time, but most importantly, she was married, raised a daughter (Kaitlyn) and a son (Brian), became a grandmother to 3 amazing grandchildren; Emma, Sophie and Bentley. She subsequently, lost her husband, Jeff, of 37 years. As she companioned him through his illness, care and eventual death, she did some deep soul searching. An encounter with Sister Linda Weiser on retreat in Racine, Wisconsin, brought her to Assisi Heights and the Rochester Franciscans. It was shortly after that meeting, that she decided she would bring her life full circle and return to her roots, so to speak, sharing life, once again, with Catholic Sisters. And so, on October 4th, we welcomed Sister Pat as our newest professed Sister. Her gifts are many and she has so much more to share.

"Our soul knows the geography of our destiny. The soul alone has the map of our future, therefore we can trust this indirect, oblique side of ourselves."

- John O'Donohue

Diamond Jubilarians 60
sixty years

Standing, L to R: Sisters Briana McCarthy, Ramona Miller, Nancy Kinsley and Dolore Rockers.

Seated, L to R: Sisters Mary Pat Smith and Dominique Pisciotta.

Also celebrating, shown below: Sisters Cashel Weiler and Mary Beth Burns.

Property: Care for Assisi Heights

Caring for the integrity of buildings and property is a never-ending responsibility. On our grounds are the Assisi Heights Motherhouse, Power Plant, Wilson House, barn and small outbuildings. Add in parking lots, grottoes, orchard, prairie, flower gardens, windbreaks, and woods and it becomes a much more complex system that needs constant monitoring and upkeep. A review of just the Motherhouse itself reveals what a challenge a 70 year old building can be. We have engaged in many projects over the years to maintain and even upgrade it, but as the years go on, the task becomes even more challenging.

When we decided to make the Health Care rooms and bathrooms handicap accessible nearly 20 years ago, we decided to improve that whole wing in anticipation of the needs of our aging population. That project evolved from "simple" accessibility to the complete gutting of the wing. In the process rooms were reconfigured, wiring, plumbing, heating and cooling were updated. The central air, small chapels, dining rooms on 2nd and 3rd, the sunroom on 3rd, gathering spaces on 2nd, the kitchen and community room on 4th are all appreciated now and will be even more welcome as we become fewer and live in closer proximity to one another.

Following the completion of this major renovation of the Francis wing, attention was turned to the ongoing maintenance of the building's exterior. As the technology of stone and mortar exteriors changed over the years, we were caught up in the problems created by the use of artificial mortar. Only after a time did we discover these problems and spent 5 years replacing the artificial material with standard mortar. As the contractors worked on the Campanile (our bell tower) they discovered that the tower was more vulnerable than anyone had realized. The subtle swaying of the tower undermined its integrity and ultimately required a completely new interior supporting structure.

by Sister Charlotte Hesby

We had barely completed work on the Campanile than a whole new set of needs emerged. This past spring we began to simply refresh the wall paint and window coverings in the parlor section after the terrazzo and ceramic floor tiles were stripped of too many layers of wax. Before we knew it, this simple refreshment became another major renovation. We learned the plaster above the ceiling tiles was damaged, which meant the tiles needed to be removed, but then asbestos was discovered in the glue which had been used. Asbestos abatement was called for. Everything just cascaded from there: the 70 year old window casements were badly damaged and needed replacing; replacing the windows called for discontinuing the use of window-based air conditioners and the installation of central air; the wiring in the light fixtures was found to be badly frayed – as was the wiring in the walls; more careful examination of the walls revealed subtle cracks; and the woodwork in the Walnut and Pine parlors needed refinishing.

These recent major renovation/repair projects don't even include the ongoing stripping of the terrazzo and ceramic tile floors, refinishing of the chapel pews, scheduled painting of rooms... and the list goes on.

This is just a small taste of the work involved in caring for this one building. Those of you who are home owners know what it is like – but just imagine your 2,000 sq. ft. wooden structure as a 450,000 sq. ft. stone and mortar building. Staggering isn't it?! Blessedly, we have had good consultants and contractors along the way.

Assisi Heights was built at a time when the architecture of convents and monasteries referenced the buildings in medieval Europe. Although we would not choose this expensive kind of structure if we were building today, we appreciate the beauty of our home and are committed to caring for it.

Cultural Resources: A Trip to the Amazon

Sister Carolina (R) at Maria's home.

Sister Carolina embarks on an adventure in a canoe.

It has been years since the last time I was awakened by the howling of monkeys and the squawk of flocks of parrots. I can already feel the humidity on my skin and see the iguanas on the patio´s *Chirimoya* tree. I am in the Colombian Amazon region, the state of Putumayo by the Caqueta River. It feels good to be back in the rainforest, this time in the Amazon, home to more than 30 million people and one in ten known species on Earth.

I decided to respond to Pope Francis' invitation (see *Querida Amazonía* document) to go and protect the natural environment, to serve and learn from the peoples living in this region, the largest of the last five rainforests in the world (next to Congo, Burma, Malaysia area, Australia-New Guinea). [1]

I want to learn from the groups that live here, for whom simple living is not an option but a way of life. I want to know their ways, always in harmony with the Earth. I want to connect with the river, to be on mission, and respond to these communities that need the presence of committed people and of religious to protect their land and share their fate.

The Latin-American Conference of Religious (CLAR) has extended an invitation to Congregations to create an inter-congregational team to serve in the Amazon. The Carmelites (men and women), the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, the Compañía de María, and the Missionaries of the Consolata have responded to this call by sending one member each and have been here in this miniscule town of La Tagua for about 8 months. Sister Azucena, my friend, is part of this team and has invited me to come.

About an hour after we leave Bogotá in a small plane, I look out the window and see the vast jungle underneath. We fly into Puerto Leguizamo on the Putumayo river, a natural border between Colombia and Peru. Families of indigenous and *Colonos* navigate up and down the river in canoes, among freight boats and speed boats … the river is the main highway here as there are very few roads in the area.

The Bishop of Puerto Leguizamo, the recently formed Vicariate, welcomes us. He is warm and welcoming and is happy that we are coming to support the team. The communities served can be as far as 6 hours down the river. In a small car, we travel for an hour from Puerto Leguízamo to La Tagua, a town of 200 families on the Caquetá river.

Azucena and I want to visit the afro and indigenous (Huitoto and Coreguaje) families in town. Lina, the 90 year old afro matriarch died the day after we arrived. We planned and accompanied the wake at her home, and after the funeral walked with the whole town all the way to the cemetery to bury her. In the two weeks that I was there, there were two more natural deaths and three murders. We accompanied the families. It had been years since someone had been killed in town. However, tension is building after the peace accords in Colombia.

As much as we want to idealize the Amazon, it is

Approaching one of the flooded villages.

Sister Carolina cooks in a Maloca.

a region with a lot of political tension because of its resources in wood, land, gas, oil, its large-scale infrastructure projects and strategic geographical location for drug and arms trafficking. The indigenous communities have always been in the middle of the extractives boom of the moment: being persecuted, tortured, murdered and ransacked since the rubber boom (1880-1945) (triggered by its trade in Europe and the U.S.) until now. The Amazon extends across 9 countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guyana, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela.

The highlight of the trip is the visit to the home of Maria, a Huitoto woman living in La Tagua. She lives alone since her husband died and her children are dispersed. But Maria conserves all the cultural traditions, (unlike her sister who was forced to go to a boarding school and never learned the traditional ways). When we arrive at Maria´s *Maloca*, she is making yucca powder from scratch, has a frame where she is weaving a straw mat and has a basket started. All are from tree barks, palms, and plants growing around her. I quickly get involved and help her with the tightening of the handmade rope, and admire her weavings. She shares stories, sad ones, joy-filled ones, always with a broad smile on her face. I feel at home sitting by her bare feet on her dirt floor Maloca. Some days, learning to get salt from the fruit of a palm tree, or stirring the tart beverage coming from a nut, or harvesting *Guamas* to eat on our way home, I remember little is needed to make one happy. The last day when I tell her I am leaving, she takes out a basket for me to bring home.

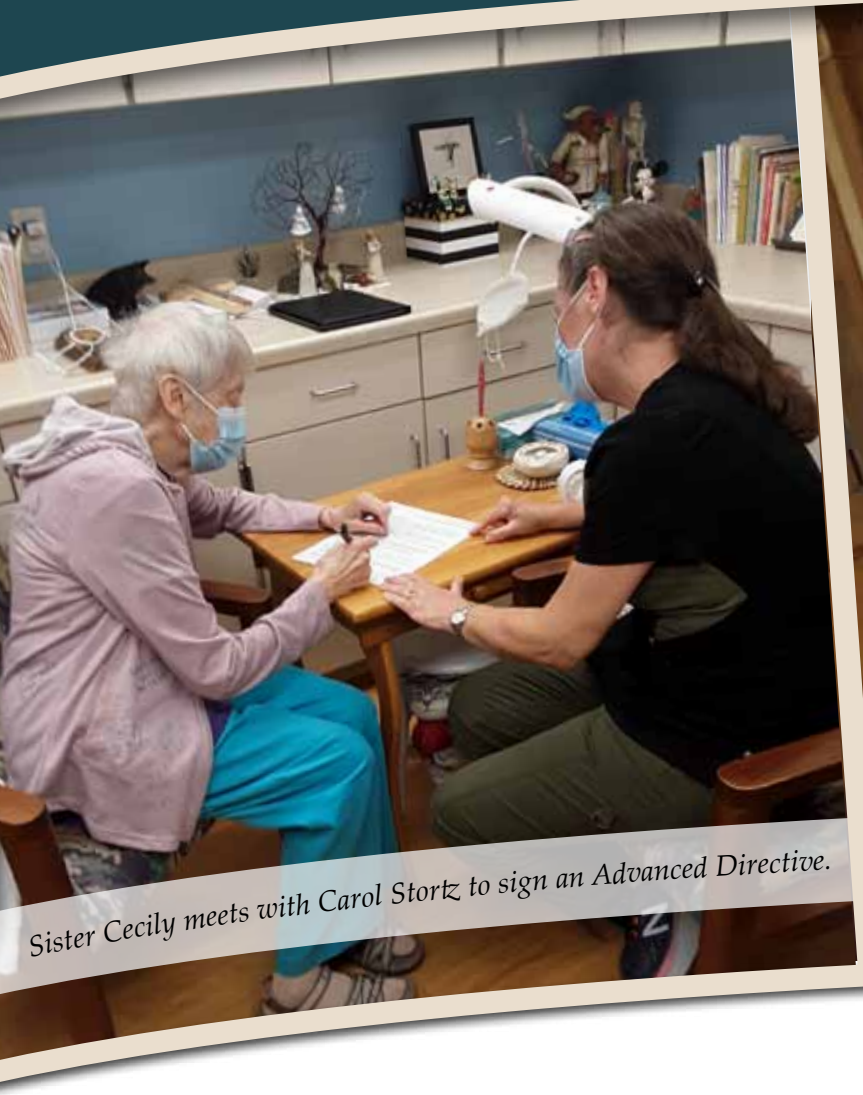
The town is full of challenges, including the flooding at this time of year. Usually the river reaches its highest level by the 20th of July (Colombia's independence day.) However, this last week I am told the water has continued to rise and the only way to get to Maria´s house is in a canoe! La Tagua is flooded and of course her house is also. The rising of the Putumayo and Caquetá rivers creates havoc for thousands of people who live on the river margins and for entire cities like Mocoa and Puerto Asis.

As I return to Bogotá, I pray that the lessons learned remain in my heart; that I can live and act conscious of how my choices affect those like Maria and the communities living in the Amazon; that I can raise awareness of the importance of caring for our Common Home and the need for protection of the Amazon and its people. I am grateful for those open to go and be with those who have always known to be one with Earth.

Definitions:
**Maloka: indigenous hut, center of life and family for the indigenous in the area*
**Chirimoya: custard apple fruit*
**Colono: settlers*
**Guamas: known as the ice cream bean, a fruit native to South America*
Other Resources:
- Querida Amazonia (Beloved Amazon) https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20200202_querida-amazonia.html
- Repam: Latin-American Catholic Church transnational network created to respond to the challenges facing the people of the Amazon and their natural environment. http:/Columbancenter.org/extractive-industries-amazon

[1] Rainforests.mongabay.com

Health: Stewardship in Healthcare at Assisi Heights



Sister Cecily meets with Carol Stortz to sign an Advanced Directive.

Sister Wanda welcomes a coffee refill after lunch.

Stewardship embodies our appreciation for God in giving us the gift of the world and our responsibility of caring for this creation. It moves us to operate towards a common good that is committed to dignity of human creation. In healthcare, stewardship is most often reflected in a way that considers appropriate management of resources, both human and material, in a sustainable manner. Stewardship looks to increase high-quality healthcare opportunities for those in need and decrease harm and waste that occur when resources are inappropriately consumed. Ultimately, all healthcare professionals are responsible for resource stewardship. It could be how one sustains themselves in caring for others. It could also mean working together to improve capabilities in providing high-quality care. When we consider characteristics of high-value healthcare it is often aligned with the ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, and autonomy.

Beneficence ("do good") and non-maleficence ("do no harm") are principles that underpin the need to continuously improve care while abating harm and costs. Beneficence means to act with compassion with consideration of the individual's needs and feelings. Holding the hand of someone who is dying or going through a difficult time is a simple way this principle is practiced. Justice ("fairness and equity") in healthcare refers to appropriate allocation of resources and minimizing waste. This can also be extended to an individual being impartial and fair in making decisions. Finally, autonomy ("right to make own decisions") ensures that the wishes of a person are followed with consideration of resources needed to meet their needs. Advanced directives are one way to ensure the autonomy of an individual when they are unable to make decisions for themselves.

Person-centered care is driven by the ethical principle

by Eric Engelhardt, Director of Nursing

Sister Gladys shares her concerns with Candace.

Staff inventory and maintain records of linens and other supplies.

of autonomy. It considers an individual's culture, circumstances, preferences, values, lifestyle and more to empower living life to the fullest with the highest degree functioning. A person-centered care model emphasizes the social and relational aspects of an individual's life as part of the delivery of healthcare. An example of this was the hospitality shown to relatives to come for a compassionate visit at end of life for a Sister even though we were closed to the public during this pandemic. The environment in which one ages is critical to maintaining quality of life. Aging in place aims to keep individuals in their home of choice for as long as possible. Assisting Sisters to remain independent without moving into health care might include purchasing an electric recliner so that they can more easily get up and down without assistance. The effects of moving or changing residence can create stress and other untoward effects due to a changing environment and social dynamics.

The choice to age in place gives an individual control over their quality of life and has implications for not only physical, but also mental and emotional health. To create and maintain optimal living in a home setting, there needs to be careful planning and investment into services and resources, both human and material, to ensure sustainability. For example, it may be prudent to both assess and financially plan years ahead for home modifications that can provide safety (e.g. medical alert system). Providing a medical alert system provides confidence for the residents as well as the staff for the ability of Sisters to be mobile around Assisi Heights knowing that if they fall or need medical assistance that they can get help immediately. Life enrichment activities are provided so all may live the fullest life while aging in place.

Information: From the Archives – Saint Marys Hospital Sponsorship Board Transitions to the Mayo Values Council

In 1986, Bishop Loras Watters (standing) witnesses the signing of the Sponsorship Agreement with (l to r) Sister June Kaiser, Sister Patricia Fritz and Dr. Eugene Mayberry, CEO of Mayo Clinic.

How can "stewardship" – as described in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as the "careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care" – be considered in the example of one of the significant moments of the history of the Rochester Franciscans?

Let's start with 1973, when the Community owned and/or operated several institutions, both educational and healthcare related. The Sisters developed a document called the Philosophy of Sponsorship. This paper affirmed that the Community was committed to promote life and person, to promote the integrity of management, and to promote unity among persons and institutions. This written document reflected a value that had been evident throughout the history of the Congregation – the concern and care for persons and for all that was part of the Congregation's responsibility.

Going forward to the 1980s, there were fewer Sisters available for health care ministry at Saint Marys Hospital in Rochester, and significant and complex changes in how hospitals and health systems needed to operate. In 1986, an Integration Agreement was signed between the Mayo Clinic, Rochester Methodist Hospital, and Saint Marys Hospital, which consolidated the work of the three entities under a new form of governance.

At the same time, the Saint Marys Sponsorship Board was created, and a Sponsorship Agreement was signed which "recognized the centrality of the Catholic identity of Saint Marys Hospital, the Sisters' many years of dedicated service to health care through the hospital, and the desire to continue the mission of healing." [1]

In a 1986 press release about the Sponsorship Agreement, Sister Patricia Fritz, then President of the Rochester Franciscan Congregation, talked about the purpose of sponsorship: "to influence a system – in this case a healthcare system – with values. For us those values include: dignity and rights of human person (patient, family, physician, staff); concern for whole person – spiritual as well as physical healing – in an environment of support; collaboration rather than competition; and equality for all people regardless of color, race, creed, sex, or socio-economic status."

Sister Mary Eliot Crowley (front row, second from right) leads a pilgrimmage to Italy.

Also in the 1980s, a position was created for a "Counselor for Human Values and Sponsorship" to ensure that the values continued, even without large numbers of Sisters involved in the day-to-day functions of the hospital. One of the responsibilities of Sister Mary Eliot Crowley, who served in this position for 27 years, was to establish reviews with all the various departments. During these reviews, staff members had the opportunity to reflect on how the Franciscan values were practiced and lived out within their particular work settings on the Saint Marys campus.

Fast forward to 2014, when Saint Marys ownership was transferred to Mayo Clinic and the stewardship and continuity of the Franciscan influence was expanded to become system-wide. A Values Council was created which regularly invites reflection from personnel of departments not only from Mayo Clinic–Rochester, but also the Mayo campuses in Jacksonville, Florida, and Scottsdale, Arizona.

Sister Tierney Trueman, who currently serves as the Coordinator of the Values Council, singles out one significant experience of how the Franciscan heritage is passed along to newer and younger leaders: the Mayo/Franciscan Pilgrimage. Begun in 1997, this experience involves sending 10 upper level leadership colleagues to Assisi, Italy, on a yearly basis, to "learn about and become imbued with the Franciscan part of the charism," according to Sister Tierney. Thanks to technology, virtual pilgrimages have been developed in recent years that involve various levels of leadership personnel within the system.

As followers of Saints Francis and Clare (and thus of Jesus and the Gospel), we are asked to be responsible stewards of all that we have been given. From the founding of Saint Marys Hospital, in 1889, to the present day, through the many changes to the institution and healthcare ministry, this has been an example how the Rochester Franciscans have consistently promoted the "careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care."

[1] Ingrid Peterson, OSF. *Keeping the Memory Green: Mother Alfred Moes and the Sisters of Saint Francis, Rochester, Minnesota,* (Rochester, Minnesota: Sisters of Saint Francis, 2013), 310.

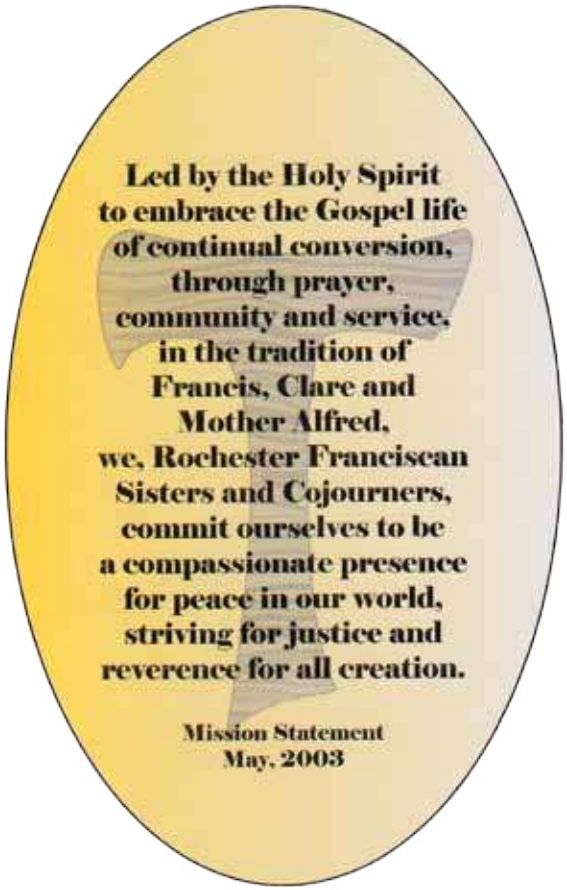
Theology: The Franciscan Way of Life

by Sister Katarina M. Schuth

What is the theology of stewardship?

> Stewardship is a theological belief that humans are responsible for the world, and should take care and look after it. Believers in stewardship are usually people who believe in one God who created the universe and all that is within it, also believing that they must take care of creation and look after it.
>
> *Source: https://en.wikipedia.org*

An almost endless variety of definitions of stewardship can be found from many sources on the internet, but the one noted above encompasses our relationship as Franciscans. What we "should take care and look after" is defined by our mission.



And while the particulars of that definition have certainly changed over time for our congregation, the emphasis is still the same.

As it applies to us now, we are responsible for the various ministries to which we, as a Congregation, through the agency of individuals, have committed ourselves over time and adjusted according to our present circumstances. The present considers our capacity to respond to needs that are compatible with our mission and congruent with our current abilities. The notion of taking care of creation is well-suited to our long-term and strong commitment to this truly Franciscan principle.

For example, in earlier days we used our talents, abilities and often physical efforts to evoke changes and care for creation. Now, as many of us are entering the realms of an aging population, we are able to give of our time, as well as our treasure, in other ways.

What does stewardship mean to the Rochester Franciscans now and how do we live those principles? A few of these Bible verses illustrate those principles:

> **1 Peter 4:10** - As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.
>
> **2 Corinthians 9:6-7** - The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
>
> **Proverbs 16:3** - Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.

Caring for creation, committing ourselves to be a compassionate presence for peace, supporting others through prayer, community and service… all are examples of our Franciscan way of life, which embraces the theology of stewardship.

From the Office of Mission Advancement *by June Howard, Director*

"Entrust your works to the Lord, and your plans will succeed."

- Proverbs 16:3

Dear Friends,

As faithful stewards in the Mission Advancement office, we strive to assure that your gifts to the Sisters of Saint Francis are used in accordance with your wishes.

Working with you and the Sisters is a great joy and uniquely rewarding.

We are committed to ensuring that your gift-giving experience meets all expectations and that you know that your support and generosity are so important to the daily well being of the Sisters and the communities they serve, both in the United States and abroad. Whether your gift was intended for the Sisters retirement fund, their Franciscan ministries, the CASFA school children in Bogotá, Colombia, or the greatest need, Robin and I are devoted to managing your gifts as you have planned.

Presently, the house has been in need of renovations and many updates are being accomplished while we are closed to the public during this pandemic time. We also found that both Our Lady of Lourdes grotto as well as the Lady of Beauraing grotto are in need of repair. Their restoration will be the focus for our Day of Giving campaign on Thursday, November 18th.

Thank you for once again taking the time to prayerfully consider how you can best be the steward God is calling you to be.

Love, Joy and Peace be with you,

Sisters of Saint Francis
Academy of Our Lady of Lourdes

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Rochester, MN 55901

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