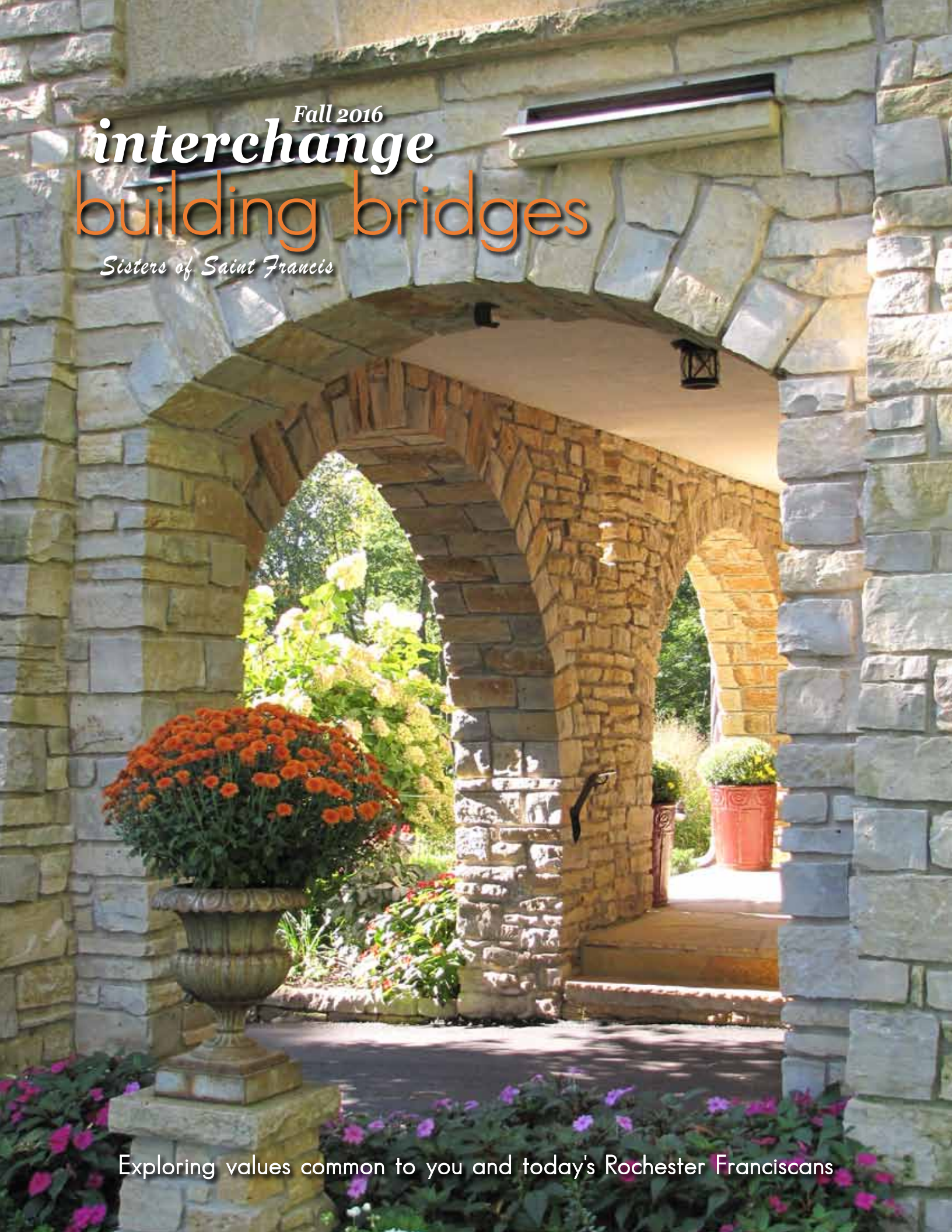

Fall 2016

interchange

building bridges

Sisters of Saint Francis

Exploring values common to you and today's Rochester Franciscans

Focus: building bridges

interchange

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Letter from the President

Sister Marilyn Geiger

Dear Friends and Family,

As the saying goes, I'll cross that bridge when the time comes. For us as Franciscans, it appears that the present moment may well be the time for us to cross that bridge.

As Sisters, we are looking back at our life experiences and see the building of bridges as a means of transition to move into new stages of life as Franciscans. We are bridging the past with the present; our former life in ministry with a new reality; some physical limitations with new forms of activity and transportation; and extending a bridge to share our prayer life with the greater community.

To build a bridge, you must start with a firm foundation. It was 139 years ago that the Sisters of St. Francis were founded by Mother Alfred Moes in Rochester, Minnesota. The Articles of Incorporation and the By-Laws establishing the legal entity of the Sisters of St. Francis have stood the test of time, built with a firm foundation by the women called to serve. As an aside, our firm foundation is in stark contrast to the physical condition of many of the bridges in Minnesota, which we note are under repair or replacement! That is because we have gathered every 6 years for Chapter meetings to review and reflect upon our mission and direction, enabling us to maintain that firm foundation.

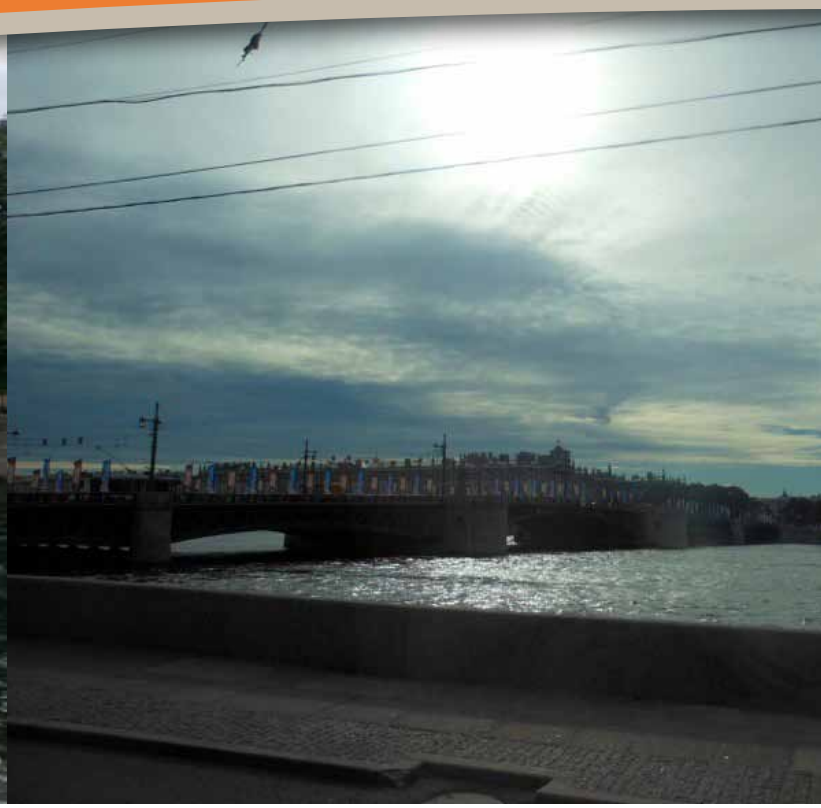
As you read the stories of building bridges in this issue of Interchange, it may be important to consider the choices you have made in your life. How do you go about building bridges? Is now the time for you to "cross that bridge" and make a decision about a particular area of your life? Or do you need to build a bridge to close the gap in an important relationship?

As we continue to be bridge builders, the Sisters are so grateful for your support to us in our mission and ministries. May we all work and pray together for peace and mercy in our world.

Sr Marilyn Geiger, OSF

Sister Marilyn Geiger
Congregational Minister

Building Bridges



Living mindfully with intention, there seems to be meaning in everything around us and in us. The theme of "Building Bridges" is an opportunity to linger longer with the experience of "bridges," literally, figuratively, symbolically, metaphorically.

Bridges have been on my mind as I look at pictures from a recent trip to the Baltic countries. St. Petersburg, Russia, claims 342 bridges on the Neva River (*see photos above*). This gives pause to ask about these constructions. Certainly, they provide shore to shore connections, a means of crossing over, going somewhere, getting somewhere, spanning the divide. There's the shore and there's the bridge, both invite a metaphor for life's journey.

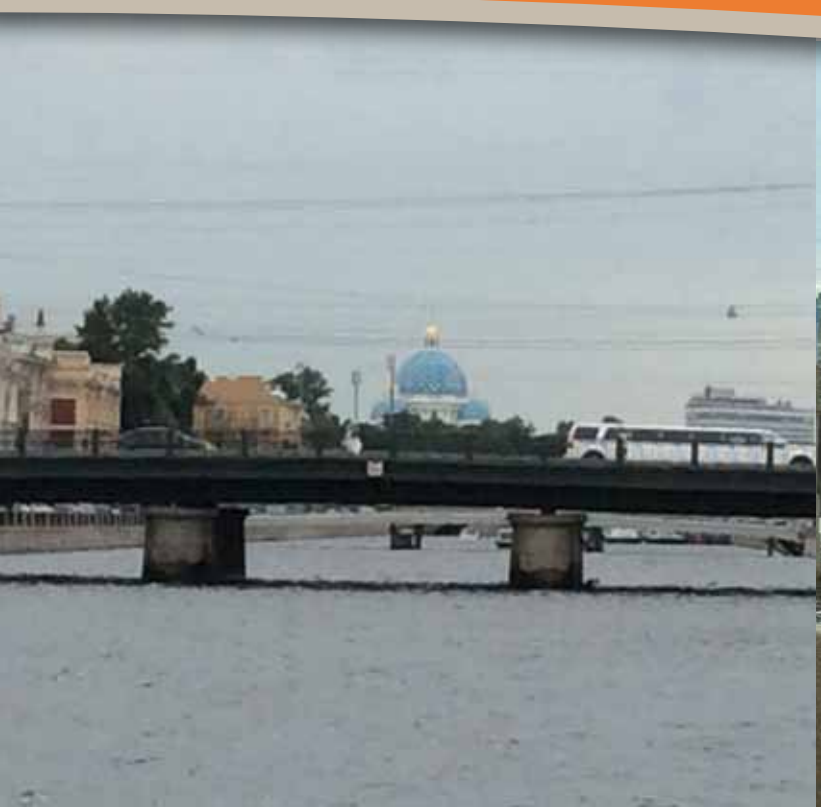
In these turbulent times in our world perhaps a narrow, swinging bridge best symbolizes the uncertainty and insecurity being felt. How many in war-torn countries see no path to safety? In our divided cities, how many see no path to change? In the reality of aging religious communities, do we find ourselves clinging to the shore, to the riverbank? In You, O God, I find my strength.

The earliest reality of being born teaches that we are called to live surrendered lives. Childhood to adolescence, living into the first half of life establishing home, profession, work, etc. and before you know it there is another transition. Getting retrained, relocating, needing to find a new spiritual guide, a new community, building new friendships – all are inner bridge building exercises.

Illness and/or retirement offer a challenge and opportunity to walk across a bridge that may never have been spanned before. These may be marked by "the priority of being...over being useful," awakening to a new horizon. There are choices in the steps one takes to live into the new with its questions, the unknowns, on a rollercoaster ride. In You, O God, I find my footing.

The protagonist in Arthur Miller's play "A View from the Bridge" lives in self-delusion. In 2008, the taxpayer-funded "bridge to nowhere" in Ketchikan, Alaska confronted citizens to consider the monies be sent to rebuild in Louisiana after the hurricane. Some chose to go nowhere. Some may feel the urge to hunker down under the bridge. To a life of self-delusion? To go nowhere? Staying stuck out of fear, going backward, or forward taking the risk, are all choices, consciously or unconsciously made.

by Sister Monessa Overby



There may be a side road to avoid moving forward. At a fork in the road, there can be the attraction of the well-worn path, and in the other a nudging invitation to the new, a bridge with no clue as to what is on the other side.

I find it worthwhile to think about the "usual" choices I have made. The value is that at a point in life when most of the years of living have been completed and choices become fewer, what does my pattern tell me about the path I'm most likely to choose? As a community what has been the pattern?

As in any community, including our Franciscan Community of some 200 women, we probably carry the possibilities of delusion, going nowhere, being women of the bridge. What we offer each other is the invitation to walk forward together. As Richard Rohr says, "to bring about the Kingdom requires letting go of kingdoms." We have walked the path and now we are ever more challenged. A memory that I hold happened at our General Assembly this summer. Some 100 Sisters were gathered in the conference room while others were gathered throughout the house around TV monitors. We had just received a report and the response was palpable. Utter and total silence. This was one of the most profound experiences for me of Community. Together we accepted and together we grieved. It seemed that as a body, we were silently assenting to let go of what was, "letting go of the kingdoms," that we might together walk boldly toward the new shore.

God, who is always approaching us, calls us forward... to the other side.

But now I'm left with this thought. What about bridging between the 20th and 21st centuries? A whole new cultural shift has taken place in the digital age. Is our indomitable spirit called to bring meaning to the social media world which provides instant bridging? *Laudato Sí* states, " ...all creatures are moving forward with us and through us toward a common point of arrival, which is God..." Embracing our Franciscan spirit, how exciting it is to embrace what Francis of Assisi embodied...no divides, all are one.

Pope Francis says unhealthy dualisms have disfigured the Gospel: we vs. they; you vs. me; humans vs. creatures...so deep in the personal and collective conscious begs letting go of the shore, jumping into the river anchored by Jesus being the bridge!

Planting the Seeds: Bridging Awareness into Action

I met with Grace Dokken, a 2016 graduate from John Marshall High School, to hear the story of how the seeds of human trafficking awareness have impacted her young life over these past four years. Grace plans to study psychology and criminology while attending Carson Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee. These two fields will lay the foundation for her future work in reaching out and helping abused women and children.

Bella Voce Choir Director Shelly Winemiller has been an inspiration to Grace. Grace was a member of the Bella Voce choir since 2012. Not only did Shelly bring out the best in her singing talents, she mentored and modeled womanhood for the teens. The songs selected addressed themes relating to current issues of the day. A major event for Grace was on March 15, 2013, when Bella Voce and the Minnesota Youth Ballet Academy dancers, directed by Ellen Huston, joined the Sisters of Saint Francis at Lourdes Chapel to sing, pray and raise awareness about the issues of human trafficking. The seeds of awareness were planted in Grace. Breaking the Chains of Modern-Day Slavery, a series of presentations hosted by the Sisters of Saint Francis, continued to groom Grace's interests and have inspired her to follow God's call to action.

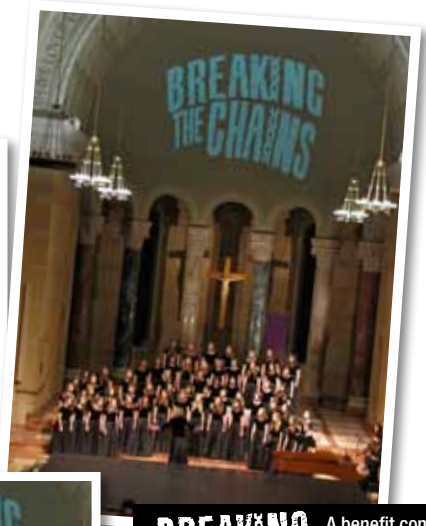
Grace shared how another person, Vicki Tiede, director of Tiny Hands International, was inspirational during her freshman high school year. Vicki and her daughter travel the world, to places where children have been abused and trafficked. Vicki takes photos

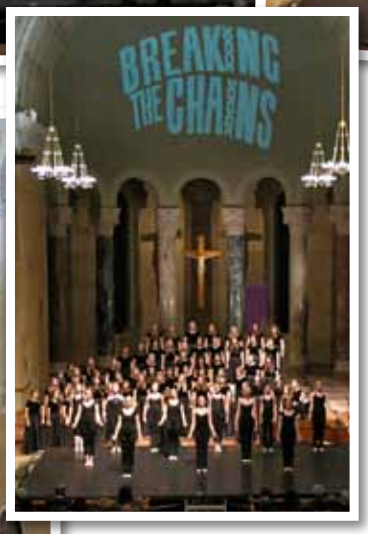
and then writes stories about each child. Tiny Hands International is a non-profit organization which touched Grace's heart. With her love of photography, musical talents (singing, playing piano and guitar), Grace offered both her spiritual and musical talents to this organization.

Grace comes from a loving home with her parents, two younger sisters, Greta (17) and Gabby (15), and brother, Gunther (13). As the big sister, Grace has set the bar high for her siblings. During high school, she served as a youth leader in the Christ Community Church. Grace's eyes danced with joy and excitement as she shared her involvement in the liturgies and other youth activities. "We have an active and contemporary youth group in our church."

Now, a few months after we first met, Grace is attending college in Tennessee, where she hopes to join a church choir on campus. In the future she wants to work in a Christian non-profit organization to serve the people of God. It was so evident of Grace's deep faith and love of God.

The seeds are planted. Grace, we expect you will grow and flourish in God's graces. You, along with others in your generation, are the hope of the world.





BREAKING THE CHAINS
of Modern Day Slavery

A benefit concert to promote awareness of the issue of Human Trafficking.

Featuring:
Bella Voce
Young Women's Choir
and
Bella Fiore Choir
With guest appearance by:
Minnesota Youth Ballet Academy

Proceeds will support the Human Trafficking Awareness ministry of the *Sisters of Saint Francis, Rochester, MN*

$10 per person
Register at: www.singoutloud.org
Hurry, seating is limited!
March 15, 2013
Doors open at 7 PM - Concert starts at 7:30 PM
Lourdes Chapel, Assisi Heights

In Memoriam...

Sister Alverna O' Laughlin (February 1, 1932 - May 30, 2016)

"Her life was a prayer." Anyone who knew Sister Alverna O'Laughlin would say so. Whether she was a nursing assistant answering a call bell in St. James Hospital, in St. James, Minnesota, an occupational therapist or activities director at Assisi Heights, a ham radio operator at Courage Center in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis, or the first Catholic chaplain at St. Louis Park Methodist Hospital, she wanted to "share the joy." As she reflected on her life as a Franciscan, she wrote of this time of her life as a time of finding a highpoint and fulfillment in ministry. After her chaplaincy training, she enjoyed her job as the first Catholic chaplain at St. Louis Park Methodist Hospital. "This was a move into the greater community representing the church, as well as our community," she wrote. "As I worked with patients who were dealing with death and dying, wellness and illness, I tried to act as the hands and heart of Jesus."

Sister Angelo Grose (April 18, 1932 - April 3, 2016)

Agnes Marie Grose followed her two older sisters, Margaret and Elizabeth, known as Sisters Luisa and Florita. Agnes entered the Sisters of Saint Francis in Rochester in 1950, and received the name, Sister Angelo. She earned a degree in elementary education from the College of St. Teresa and completed a program which gave her the training she needed to become a Montessori teacher. In Owatonna, Minnesota, she set up a Montessori program for pre–Kindergarten children, equipping the room with Montessori material direct from the Netherlands. She loved the little children and they loved her. Sister Angelo also enjoyed entertaining others and the Sisters enjoyed her impersonations. In addition to displays of her humorous side, Sister Angelo was also known as a prayerful woman. When Vatican II brought changes, Sister Angelo decided which colors she would wear and chose to continue wearing the veil. She was a woman of insight who followed her beliefs.

Sister Generose Gervais (September 18, 1919 - October 7, 2016)

Sister Jeanne Rose Gervais attended the Immaculate Heart of Mary School in Currie, Minnesota, and was taught by the Sisters of St. Francis. In 1938, at age 18, she entered the religious congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis. Initially she trained as a teacher, but her path took a turn when she was asked to study nutrition. After receiving a bachelor's degree in 1945, she became a dietetic intern at Saint Marys Hospital. In 1954, she earned a master's degree in Hospital Administration from the University of Minnesota. In 1971, Sister Generose became the fifth and last Sister Administrator of Saint Marys Hospital. She oversaw the construction of the Mary Brigh Building in 1976, was later named Executive Director of Saint Marys Hospital. Sister Generose was a woman of faith, honesty, integrity and always putting the needs of others first. In 1983, Sister Generose began the Poverello Foundation, a ministry to help patients at Saint Marys Hospital who have difficulty taking care of their medical expenses. She worked tirelessly making jellies, jams, bread and butter and dill pickles for the annual bazaar to raise funds. In 1985, Sister Generose officially retired as Executive Director; yet, in 1986, she was instrumental in the integration of Saint Marys Hospital and the Methodist Hospital with the Mayo Clinic. In 1993, the last building completed on Saint Marys Campus was the Generose Building, named in her honor.

Sister Irene Dobson (August 4, 1924 - September 14, 2016)

Sister Irene was a good student, avid reader, writer of poetry and an accomplished pianist, having taken lessons from Veronica Gleichauf and the Franciscan Sisters. Under Sister Vivian's guidance, she played her concerto before graduating from high school. Sister Irene graduated from the College of St. Teresa and continued her education at Winona State University, Winona, Minnesota, where she earned a master's degree in education. For 31 years, she taught at various schools in Minnesota and Ohio. In addition to teaching, she often directed the choir, played the organ, and gave piano lessons. While in Tracy, Minnesota, she served as principal of the school. During the summer of 1971, Sister Irene went to Charleston, South Carolina, to be part of "Project Sail." After studying for her CPE at Methodist Hospital in Rochester, and Aquinas Institute in Dubuque, Iowa, Sister ministered to the sick at St. Joseph Hospital in Marshfield, Wisconsin and other institutions. In 1990, she moved to Assisi Heights and continued her ministry until her retirement in 1996. Many experienced her compassion, prayers, and love of fun.

Sister Margaret Louise Branton (May 3, 1913 - May 8, 2016)

Sister Margaret Louise spent 85 years of living as a Sister of Saint Francis. Her first ministry, as an elementary school teacher, continued for thirty-four years, serving in Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota. In preparation for transitioning from elementary school ministry to serving in resource centers, she completed graduate study in library work at the Northwest State College in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and received a Master's Degree from the University of Wisconsin at Platteville. She then spent many years as the Director for the Resource Center for nursing students at St. Marys Hospital. Always a woman for adventure, even during retirement she became involved in volunteer ministries: senior citizen volunteer, hospital patient visitor and retreat center assistant. She moved to Assisi Heights in 1990 where her merchandising skills promoted the Nearly New shop. Above all, Sister Margaret Louise is often remembered for keeping informed on world news, saying "she prayed the news."

Sister Rafael Tilton (October 4, 1929 - September 20, 2016)

Madonna Elaine Tilton entered the Congregation in January of 1949, making her perpetual vows in 1954, and received the name Sister Rafael. She was well educated, having completed studies for a Bachelor's Degree in English/Education at the College of St. Teresa, Winona, Minnesota in 1959, followed by a Master's Degree in English at Fordham University, Bronx, New York, in 1963. Later, she earned a Master's Degree in English from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1991; and a PhD in English from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis in 1994. Sister Rafael began her teaching career in intermediate education in 1951. She taught at several Catholic schools in southern Minnesota and Illinois. In addition, for three years she taught elementary education in Rochester and Winona, Minnesota. After completing her Bachelor's Degree in 1959, she taught English at the secondary level at Catholic High Schools in Minnesota and in Columbus, Ohio. She was a freelance writer, had several books published and received multiple awards as a writer of poetry. Rafael always had a garden. When she retired to Assisi Heights in 2006, she continued producing jams and flowers to show at the Olmsted County Fair winning ribbons in abundance. She was an active chaplain for the Secular Franciscans in Rochester. One of the members shared about Rafael; "Your words inspire, your actions teach, your presence is blessing."

Sister Severin Duehren (September 18, 1935 - August 31, 2016)

Sister Severin attended the College of Saint Teresa in Winona, focusing on the sciences with medical school in mind. After an internship as a medical technologist, she finished her last year of college and entered the Sisters of Saint Francis in 1958. She served as a medical technologist at Mercy Hospital and a microbiologist at Scioto Memorial Hospital after completing an MA degree at Ohio State. Sister Severin went on to earn a Hospital Administration degree at Saint Louis University, which led to becoming an Administrative Fellow at Saint Marys Hospital in Rochester. She then served as administrator of the Tyler Hospital and Sunrise Manor in Tyler, Minnesota. Sister Severin returned to Portsmouth where she became assistant administrator for Mercy Hospital and US Health Corporation. In 1991, she became President and CEO of St. Margaret Hospital, Spring Valley, Illinois. She was sought after and served on many civic community committees and boards throughout her administrative career. As a woman of our Congregation, which she loved deeply, she served in many roles. Sister Severin was a lover of people and life; of nature and solitude; of peace, non-violence, and justice; of learning and the pursuit of knowledge; of storytelling; of children of all ages; and of being with her God in every person and place where she ventured.

Sister Vera Klinkhammer (November 26, 1911 - September 10, 2016)

Odelia Mary Klinkhammer, known today as Sister Vera Klinkhammer, grew up with ten siblings on a farm in rural Adrian, Minnesota. During the Great Depression, her family lost two farms and were forced to move to town. At age 19, she found work in the laundry department of Saint Marys Hospital. In 1942, Sister Vera became a member of the Sisters of Saint Francis, following in the footsteps of two of her siblings, Sister Gildas and Sister Loretta (Raymunda). She entered Saint Marys School of Nursing in 1944, and in 1947, she began her nursing career at Saint Marys. Sister Vera also worked in St. James, Minnesota; Portsmouth, Ohio; Austin, Minnesota; and in health care at Assisi Heights. The endless hours she spent visiting patients, walking up to 12 miles a day were widely known; and, in fact, the Employee Walking Path at Saint Marys Hospital (now part of the Mayo Clinic) was named in her honor! Sister Vera endured many changes with an optimistic spirit and expressed her gratitude to the Sisters who provided her with an education and opportunities to serve God in so many diversities of ministry during her life.

Sister Vinciana Bauer (August 18, 1925 - July 2, 2016)

Sister Vinciana's smile revealed a happy and grateful heart. She made first profession in 1947 and began her elementary school ministry that continued for twenty-five years, mainly in southern Minnesota. Those who lived and worked with her recall how she enjoyed having fun; her happiness spilled over to her co-workers. When she left the school ministry, she worked in the Assisi Community Center before going to St. Theodore's Parish in Albert Lea for a ministry that continued for twenty-five years, evolving from Religious Education Coordinator to Pastoral Minister and Volunteer visitor. A plaque beneath refurbished windows in St. Theodore's Church says "in honor of Sister Vinciana Bauer OSF." This recognition speaks clearly the gratitude of the parishioners for Sister Vinciana's presence and ministry with them. It was in Albert Lea that Sister Vinciana began her ministry as Spiritual Advisor to Teams of Our Lady, groups of five to seven couples with a spiritual focus. When Sister Vinciana retired and came to Assisi Heights she continued her involvement as a spiritual advisor with Teams of Our Lady in Stewartville.

Journey of Peace

by Sister Kathy Warren

The Seventh Annual Journey of Peace celebrated the hope-filled theme and reality of *Rochester: A City of Compassion.* The event, held at Assisi Heights on October 23, 2016 drew an enthusiastic crowd eager to engage with the people presenting the "Compassion Fair" – beautifully portrayed illustrations of compassion offered by organizations which included Rochester ACT for Alzheimer's, Quarry Hill Nature Center, Recovery is Happening, Community Food Response, In the City for Good, NAMI, Tri-County Community Corrections, Catholic Charities, Adult & Teen Challenge, and the Youth Commission. These are only a few of the local groups who promote compassion, limited only by display space constraints.

Building bridges was indeed the activity of the event as energetic conversations brought about new understandings. Dynamic discussions also resulted in insights which helped to eliminate some misunderstandings and fears. Additional opportunities for volunteer commitments were plentiful. Comments from attendees included such statements as: "this was so helpful; it made concrete the how of being compassionate," and "each speaker used the justice model of *see, judge, act* to move us toward response."

Sponsored by the Interfaith Journey of Peace Planning Committee, the event began with stirring prayers from the Native American tradition and concluded with a beautiful Qigong meditation of oneness with the universe. The Mission Statement of Journey for Peace, adopted only this year, was certainly visible and enhanced through the event which concluded with refreshments and community building. Follow up from this event will include continuing to move the city of Rochester towards signing the Charter for Compassion, under the leadership of Mayor Brede. As a designated City of Compassion, Rochester would be joining other cities around the globe in a commitment to build a more compassionate world. Our work of building compassion continues! Plan to join us for Journey of Peace VIII in 2017!

For more information on the Charter for Compassion, visit: http://www.charterforcompassion.org/

Turning the Page - Bridging Continents

The Italian word "Avanti" is relatively new to our Franciscan Community. Translated as "forward," the word has the thrust of advancing, making headway, pressing forward and moving on. With the passing of Sister Joseen in October 2015, forging ahead seemed to be an even steeper climb with a missing piece. But moving on best describes what Joseen would desire for the COERR Language Skills School in Battambang, Cambodia. The annual graduation ceremony of awarding certificates took place on April 7, with S. Marlys Jax delivering the Certificate Program's address via video recording. The Deputy Governor of Battambang (a former COERR Student) asked the audience to stand up for 30 seconds silence to pay tribute to Sister Joseen Vogt; many of whom consider her to be both a mentor and the mother of Cambodia's English education system.

As a result of her dedication and in tribute to her contributions, the COERR Language Skills School decided to build a library to honor the memory of Sister Joseen. Architectural plans are currently in the design phase. But the new and exciting page in this story is that the school has been selected to offer an opportunity to 25 students as part of the Access Micro-Scholarship Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. Sister Joseen would have been thrilled with this opportunity! Two teachers have been selected to teach in the program and will receive periodic in-service instruction to improve their techniques and style.

The benefits are many. These 25 students will have the opportunity to study English for two years at COERR Language Skills School tuition free, and receive all the necessary learning tools and materials, even including a bicycle to go to and from school! They hope to gain opportunities to expand their cultural experiences, and obtain job skills, such as writing resumes, communication and interview skills. Through school and volunteer activities, they will broaden their awareness of global issues, such as pollution, drought, climate change and other environmental and social issues. They will expand their knowledge of world

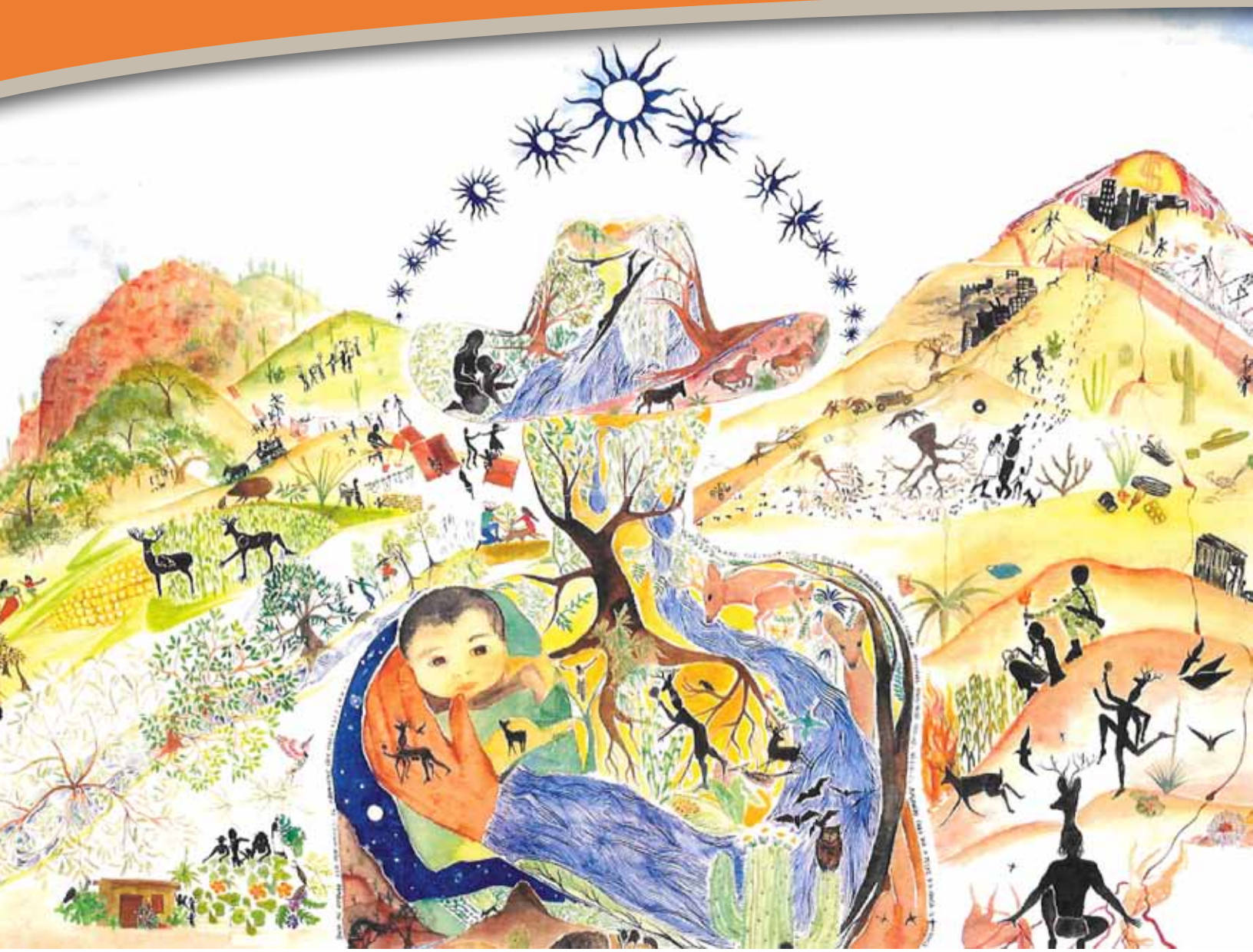
▲ *Photo of scholarship recipients courtesy of Sotith Srun*

cultures from presentations by Americans and U.S. State Department alumnae. In addition, there will be field trips and camping expeditions to enhance a command of the English language. They hope to be better prepared to search for further scholarships, exchange programs and other specialized trainings to grow and overcome the poverty in which they were raised.

Initially, there were 62 applicants! The selection process included a written application, written tests in English, and an oral interview. The testing was rigorous by any standards, let alone having to complete it in another language. Other criteria included the provision that the students must be between the ages 13-20 and in grades 9, 10 or 11. Special consideration was given to those coming from the following backgrounds: orphans; from families with divorced or handicapped parents; from low-income families; being raised by (retired) grandparents; or from large families unable to afford education for all their children. Each applicant had to demonstrate with examples from past experiences, or prove a willingness to volunteer in the future, on project related to support for disadvantaged people; assist with environmental awareness projects; promote cultural tolerance and diversity; engage in sanitation projects or take on duties while camping. Most importantly, all had to have a strong commitment to the program and be willing to work hard. This is a carryover of the expectations and benchmarks set by Sister Joseen!

New pages in the story of COERR are now being written with Sotith Srun at the helm. With this gift from the U.S. Embassy, they are starting a new chapter. We expect that Sister Joseen continues to monitor the progress of this story, while she turns the pages from a much higher vantage point!

Anamaria Vasquez Leon: Bridge Builder



Building bridges in Colombia, Florida, France, Peru, the Arizona/Mexico border, Mexico and Panama – this has been and remains the work of Anamaria Vasquez Leon, Rochester Franciscan Cojourner and co-founder of Bridges Across Borders.

Anamaria was born in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1965, just a year after the onset of the internal war in Colombia. She lived there until she was 14 years old and attended Colegio Santa Fransisca Romana. Having the Rochester Franciscans as her teachers and mentors, and with an aunt among the Sisters of Saint Francis, she grew to be deeply impressed with the Sisters' way of translating the Christian message into real actions. She knew Colombia to be, as many countries are, a land of profound contrasts between the wealthy and the poor, so she found a kindred spirit in the Rochester Franciscans' commitment to serving the most needy. "I had learned something important from the Franciscan Sisters," she said, "What is life worth if we are not serving each other?"

At age 14, she moved with her family to Florida where she met numbers of other people interested in social justice and peace. In the American Friends Committee, she met activists fighting against nuclear proliferation and was awakened to that global problem. With a pastor she met there, along with several others, she helped form a group called "Peace for the Future." From this group, and from her Quaker friends, she learned the power and effectiveness of non-violent,

peaceful protest. But she was bothered by what she saw in other young people around her who showed no interest in participating in global issues, as if those issues had nothing to do with them. "I felt sorry for them," she said, "for their limited awareness, even about the racism so detrimental to their own country. I remember reading newspaper interviews with many young people, asking why so many among them had drug problems, and one answer has remained with me. 'It is because,' the answer said, 'young people in the U. S. are taught to think they live in the best country in the world.' At least in other countries we know that things are not going well, that it could be better. So we have that hope. But here in the U.S., what do they have left if this is the best?"

When she turned 17, Anamaria went to France to study and found what she described as a "dead" spirit, large but empty churches, "...many young people interested in nothing." But she met a number of Latin Americans there, and through them she developed a love of Andean music.

From France, she traveled to Peru where she lived and worked among the indigenous Quechua people. From them, she learned a special relationship with the earth – Pacha Mama (Mother Earth). She began to realize that pollution and deforestation with its resulting erosion were destroying parts of the Andes from Bolivia to Colombia. So she resolved to commit much of her energy to the care of the environment. This deep commitment drew her even more to the teachings of St. Francis of Assisi and his special relationship to nature.

Anamaria completed a BA in Anthropology in Florida

continued...

Anamaria Vasquez Leon: Bridge Builder

continued...

and then went to Ecuador to work in the Ministry of Agriculture on their reforestation programs. But the bureaucracy became a burden that drained her energy from the real tasks and challenges. So she decided to work more directly with organizations serving rural communities, leading a move toward organic gardening, native species reforestation, and economic alternatives to the cutting down of precious trees. She worked with others to introduce and restore the making of traditional crafts to aid as economic alternatives.

After that, she went to live among the indigenous communities in the Choco region of Colombia, focusing her work on the environment, traditional crafts, and in the schools. In 1996, her son Pablo was born, and just a year later her husband Richard died of stomach cancer. When the paramilitaries took the village of Jurado, she and her son Pablo moved to the village of Jaque in Panama. During this time, Sister Carolina Pardo was working with Justicia y Paz and the communities of Cacarica. A great inspiration to Anamaria, Sister Carolina helped her start the little school in the forest and continues to send volunteers there.

Anamaria also cofounded Bridges Across Borders with friends and supporters of her projects. "There I worked with community leaders organizing different programs: educational, environmental and for economic sustainability. My son is now 20 years old so it has been 18 years doing our work in Panama. But when Pablo was 5, I was at the SOA watch in Georgia and had joined those protesting a nuclear dump site. It was there I met Sister Joan Brown and where I renewed a former friendship with Richard Boren who was also involved in that protest. Richard and I married, had a daughter, Maya Luna, now 15 years old, and finally moved to Magdalena de Kino in Sonora, Mexico, which is an hour from the Nogales border. Here we work in small projects on environmental programs, with the schools and with a transition house where kids coming out of orphanages are helped to integrate into the community. Our work varies. It includes border issues, the Border Patrol Victims' Network, Bridges Across Borders, peace and justice issues in Colombia, and the SOA Watch."

"The coming of the SOA Watch to Nogales this year was an incredible event. We were involved with preparations and in choosing the area, settling on Nogales because of its size. Organizing began in April. Then Father Roy came. A site was set up in Tucson in June. June to September found me involved in Panamanian reinforcements. We held Border Patrol Victims' workshops on the U. S. side and held a welcome event on the Mexican side; some of the girls from the transition house danced…. I did not stand still!"

"I urge readers to visit the Facebook page for *Border Patrol Victims Network* and also the website for *Bridges Across Borders.* Also, this is a crucial moment for Colombia. All of our struggles will grow stronger if we can make peace last in Colombia."

Anamaria is right. She does not stand still. She moves and is a mover, always working with others to build bridges of peace, justice and compassion and, with the power of non-violence, to address the root causes of violence and hatred in the world.

Information in this article was drawn from correspondence with Anamaria and from the website for Bridges Across Borders. Artwork on pages 12-13 by Anamaria.

▲ *Anamaria Vasquez*

Building Bridges with the Native American Community

by Sister Therese Jilk

Since 1979, Sister Cecily Schroepfer has been ministering with Native Americans in Montana; first as pastoral minister for fifteen years and now as healer. In 2016, she remains vibrant and spirited at 80! Her enthusiasm is very apparent in her voice as she shares with me some of the current realities among this community. In an earlier email response to me, she shares her schedule of commitments:

"…I just got back after midnight, Sunday evening, from our Ahimsa Franciscan Life Group gathering (I was gone almost a week) and I am still playing catch up from that. I am collecting warm clothing and blankets for the people of Standing Rock Reservation to give to a Northern Cheyenne woman to take the next time she goes. Sister Ann Schoch, Sister Marya Grathwohl and I plan to go to offer solidarity and healing with our Standing Rock brothers and sisters on the first weekend of November. I am also working very steadily the next two weeks here, at Prayer Lodge (1 ½ hours from Billings) next week and in Sheridan, Wyoming, the following week. I stay at these places when I work there and don't return home until the end of the week. I am also committed to a reflection process with a group of women here that requires hours of reading and reflection each week in preparation…"

My first question to her was how does she see herself "building bridges" among the Native American tribes? Her immediate response was, "It's not about me building bridges. It's about me listening to and learning from these incredibly wise and generous people who often feel that the government and the Church haven't taken time to listen to or even want to understand them." Because a healing gift was first called out of her by Crow people of Lodge Grass, Montana and affirmed by Northern Cheyenne friends, Cecily now engages people in a process of healing as a registered practitioner of Ortho-Bionomy. With this, she remembers and honors the fact that Native people relate to Creator as a Healing God. In this journey, Cecily is indeed building bridges. What keeps her going is the privilege of being with these beautiful people and being included in their generous sharing of themselves, of their spiritual ways, and of the realities of their lives lived in a predominantly white society; which oftentimes still relates to indigenous peoples out of the belief in and oppression of the "Doctrine of Discovery." Her best gift to others is simply being present with them.

Bridging the Past with the Present

On the feast of Saint Francis in October 1997, Nancy "Nan" Edstrom and I were grieving about the news of the earthquake that had damaged many Franciscan places in Assisi. Nan had visited Assisi many times and enjoyed a close relationship with a canon of the Cathedral of San Rufino, Don Aldo Brunacci. Nan asked, "How could we raise money to send to them?" She answered her own question by stating, "I have an idea for a musical. I'll begin composing songs to see if we can get a performance together to promote the story of Saints Francis and Clare, and bring attention to the suffering persons in Assisi."

During the ensuing years of 1997-2000, a supportive consulting committee met on Sundays to discuss lyrics, historical context of the 13th century, themes for more songs, etc. Their combined educational backgrounds provided all that was needed for birthing a musical: Nancy Edstrom Bachler, a creative composer and keyboard musician; Bruce Ramsdell, an experienced Winona High School Musical Director with years of expertise directing 80-150 students on stage; Ingrid Peterson, OSF, author of *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study* with a Ph.D. in medieval literature; Eileen Haugh, OSF, a retired teacher with a gift for poetry; and Ramona Miller, OSF – an educator with a Master of Arts in Franciscan Studies, and many years of experience leading pilgrimages to Assisi, Italy.

Excerpts from the musical were performed at Tau Center and, in 2003, at Assisi Heights during a Congregational assembly. The unfinished musical was "put on a shelf" for a few years when the committee

disbanded, as some committee members had moved away from the local area, and Tau Center, the hub of this creativity, closed in 2002.

In 2013, when the new pope took the name "Francis," a person who had attended performances of excerpts of the Francis and Clare inquired about the musical: had it ever been completed? Was there ever a premiere production? Upon discovering that the musical had not been performed in its entirety, and since the new Pope Francis was awakening a global consciousness of the story of Saint Francis, this generous benefactor gave money to the Sisters of Saint Francis to underwrite the costs for the production of the musical.

Photos by Kintzi Photography

The timelines of the message of the Franciscan tradition for contemporary society, along with the financial initiative, re-activated the authoring committee to renew their work on the musical. Sister Eileen, a member of the original committee had died, but the committee gained a new talented member, Steve Bachler. Steve, who married Nan in 2010, became invested in self-directed learning of the 13th century story of Saints Francis and Clare. His own musical talent and love of theater brought new insights to the committee who met many times over the past three years to tighten the narrative script and review the song lyrics. The lives we were living twenty years ago seemed removed from the realities of today. Themes to be surfaced through the musical needed to resonate with this current era of Pope Francis.

The musical, now newly completed, is titled "Francis and Clare - A Musical of Light and Love." Just as Francis provided a new world vision at a time of genocide in the streets of Assisi, so today that same world vision awakens the deepest yearnings to live lives of light and love. A variety of music types – from popular and comical to serious chant – provide delightful entertainment. At the same time, it plants a subliminal message of the desire to live lives of light and love.

The premiere performance is scheduled for August 2017 at the Page Theater at Saint Mary's University in Winona, Minnesota on August 4 and 5 at 7:00 pm, and Sunday, August 6 at 2:00 pm.

Bridging Continents - Cultures and Colleges

▲ *Sister Marlene Pinzka with students and teachers*

In 1982, Sister Tierney Truman's dream of providing opportunities for students and teachers to experience an exchange program as a means of understanding how our cultural differences mutually enrich us, rather than divide us, became a reality. Twenty-four students from Colegio Santa Francisca Romana (CSFR) in Bogotá, Colombia, traveled to the College of Saint Teresa (CST) in Winona, Minnesota, (both educational institutions owned and operated by the Rochester Franciscans) for a six-week enrichment program. Thus began what became known as the "Colombian Exchange" program. The goal of the Colombian students was to strengthen their English-speaking and writing abilities prior to beginning their university studies in Colombia.

The following academic year, full scholarships to attend the College of Saint Teresa were offered each quarter to a teacher from Colegio Santa Francisca Romana, providing the opportunity to experience content and a variety of methodologies in their educational areas, with the commitment to return to Bogotá to share their learnings with colleagues. Over the next few years, teachers in physics, music, mathematics, economics, English, and elementary education benefited from this opportunity.

▼ *Sister Tierney Trueman with students and teachers*

In 1985, Sister Marlene Pinzka spent three months in Bogotá, providing in-service teacher training and worked with students exploring the use of computers as educational tools in the classroom. Students from the CST also journeyed to CSFR in Bogotá to teach or provide summer enrichment opportunities and service.

When the College of Saint Teresa closed in 1989, Sister Marlene was offered a position at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa. Within a year, Loras offered to continue the Colombian Exchange program. Each year three students from Colegio Santa Francisca Romana were accepted on full scholarships for one year. Many of these students wanted to continue their education at Loras. Given that they were such strong leaders, Loras recognized the value of their presence within the student body, and offered them greatly reduced tuition, as well as housing. The Colombian students served as officers in clubs

by Sisters Tierney Trueman and Marlene Pinzka

▲ *Jimena's graduation address*

and organizations, leaders in campus ministry, and volunteers in outreach and service programs in the city of Dubuque.

Teachers from Santa Francisca Romana also began coming to Loras for a semester, a full year, or summer school programs in a variety of academic areas. Loras students and two professors also found their way to Bogotá to teach or work at the school and were greatly enriched by the Colombian people and their culture. Sister Valerie Usher has been coordinating the Exchange Program on the "Bogota end!"

This year, Loras College celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Colombian Exchange program. For commencement ceremonies, they invited Jimena Gonzalez, a graduate of both Colegio Santa Francisca Romana and Loras College, to be the commencement speaker. Jimena had just received a PhD in economics, with environmental issues as her research area, and now serves on the faculty of Manhattan College in New York City. Her commencement address focused on the many opportunities and experiences that have enriched and challenged her as a result of bridging continents and cultures.

The connections between CSFR in Bogotá, Colombia, the College of Saint Teresa and Loras College have been an incredibly expanding experience for all whose lives have been touched directly or indirectly by the student and faculty exchange. In our world today, which is so divided by cultural and ethnic differences, this exchange program has truly built bridges that serve as a gift to deepen appreciation for the unity and rich diversity that multi-cultural experiences bring to our lives, and hopefully, that challenge us to be persons who are able to value cultural diversity as a reflection of the Creator's great love for all.

Diamond Jubilarians

Standing, left to right: Sisters Mary Lou Connelly, Maureen Dolan, Rosemary Cordell, Kenric Ruppert, Alice Thraen, Corona Malis, Claren Sellner, Franchon Pirkl, Patricia Fritz, Nena Larocco and Nicholine Mertz.

Seated, left to right: Sisters Mary Lynch, Rita Patzner, Charlotte Dusbabek, Dale Lewis, Helen Chatterton, Lauren Weinandt and Sean Clinch.

60 Year Jubilarians

Sister Alice Thraen
Sister Charlotte Dusbabek
Sister Claren Sellner
Sister Corona Malis
Sister Dale Lewis
Sister Franchon Pirkl
Sister Helen Chatterton
Sister Kenric Ruppert
Sister Lauren Weinandt
Sister Mary Lynch
Sister Mary Louise Connelly
Sister Maureen Dolan
Sister Nena Larocco
Sister Patricia Fritz
Sister Rita Patzner
Sister Rosemary Cordell

75 Year Jubilarians

Sister Nicholine Mertz
Sister Sean Clinch

by Barbara DeCramer, Director

Stewardship of Our Gifts

"I have done what is mine to do. May Christ teach you yours."

According to tradition, when Saint Francis was dying, these were his words to his friends. Truly, the Rochester Franciscan Sisters are the embodiment of this counsel. The Rochester Franciscan Sisters continue to renew and reinvent their ministries in order to meet the needs of the times. They faithfully allow Christ to teach them what is theirs to do, year after year.

In turn, we, as friends of the Sisters ask ourselves, "What is Christ teaching us?" Perhaps mine is to work in a ministry similar to the ministries of the Sisters. Perhaps mine is to support the Sisters financially. Perhaps mine is to pray for the Sisters' ministries and those of all religious communities working throughout the world.

There is a project at Assisi Heights that needs our financial support this year. The Inner Courtyard at Assisi Heights is a beautiful focal point and gathering space for Sisters and visitors. It is enjoyed especially by our retired Sisters, as it is a safe and welcoming place to be outdoors and enjoy a perfect Minnesota day.

In the center of the Courtyard is a statue of Saint Francis, surrounded by a flower garden. This entire structure is slowly sinking into the ground and the stonework is crumbling. As you can imagine, every sort of patchwork that is available has been tried to make repairs without a complete reconstruction. But, the patches are not doing the trick, and we've come to the realization that a rebuild of the stone structure is going to be necessary, including putting in a drain to prevent future erosion and expansion.

Without a reconstruction project, it will be necessary to remove the stonework and garden in order to maintain safety.

This issue of the Interchange, entitled "Building Bridges," has told the stories of bridging cultures, careers, time, and continents. Please consider joining the *Re-Building Our Inner Courtyard* team with your gift to the Sisters today.

Make a Gift Today

The Mission of the Sisters of Saint Francis of Rochester, Minnesota is to be a compassionate presence for peace in our world, striving for justice and reverence for all creation. Our ministries include praying for the needs of our world in the silence of the chapel and daily in our homes; ministering in hospitals and hospices; eliminating social injustice; providing support to immigrants and working to end human trafficking; volunteering at Dorothy Day Centers and social agencies in our local communities; ministering to those with addictions and those imprisoned; providing education in schools and serving as spiritual guides.

Your generosity allows us to continue these ministries as well as maintaining our home, Assisi Heights, which provides care for our retired Sisters. In addition, we welcome hundreds of people each year, who come to Lourdes Chapel for prayer, liturgy and reflection, or to Assisi Heights Spirituality Center for educational programs or retreats.

We are a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your gift is tax-deductible as allowed by law.

To make a donation, you may use the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.rochesterfranciscan.org. Click on the "Make a Difference – Donate" button at the bottom of the homepage.

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Christmas on the Hill

An Umbrian Celebration

Saturday, December 3, 2016

Assisi Heights

6:30 pm	Party in the Parlors
7:00 pm	Prayer and Music in Lourdes Chapel
7:30 pm	Italian Appetizers and Gourmet Dessert Bar with Beverages
	Music in the Dining Room
	Live Auction

Reservations required: www.rochesterfranciscan.org or call 507-282-7441