



# FRANCISCAN CONNECTIONS

The Newsletter of the Associates of the  
Hospital Sisters of St. Francis

*"Sharing in a Franciscan way of life and a healing Spirit"*

Volume 13, Issue 1

February 2018



## New Beginnings . . .

As the New Year began, we also began a new era in the Associate Office. On January 2, 2018 RuthEllen Davis concluded her service of 13 years as Associate Coordinator. We wish her many happy years of retirement and offer our heartfelt thanks for her leadership of the Associates. On the same day, Nancy Davis assumed the position of Associate Coordinator. Nancy has been an Associate since 2016 and brings a wide variety of professional and personal experiences to the Associates. We offer Nancy a warm welcome and promise our support as she begins to serve in the Associate office.

**Sister Maureen O'Connor, OSF**  
Provincial Superior

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## Associate Office

By Nancy Davis

### Led by the Spirit

It is with great pleasure, excitement, and a bit of trepidation that I introduce myself as the new Associate Coordinator for the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis. I am aware of the hard act I am following as I step into the role after RuthEllen Davis who has faithfully and wonderfully led the Associates for the past 13 years. Just in the two years I have known her, I could see that she was beloved by both the Sisters as well as the Associates. With that being said, I am happy to be coming on as your Associate Coordinator.

I live in Elkhart, IL and attend Holy Family Catholic Church in Lincoln. I have been married for 42 years

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## **Associate Office –**

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to my husband, Tom. We have three grown children, Nick (Katie), Casey (Devin), and Mallory (AJ), and have two granddaughters, Violet and Clara. My career has been in nursing. I have been a registered nurse case manager for the past 25 years and co-owned a small case management company for the past 12 years. So, this is quite a career change for me, but one that seems to be God-driven. I have been very active in my faith for many years including being the high school youth group coordinator for nine years, which was the joy of my life.

I began missionary work in 2002 and founded a non-profit for the orphans of Tanzania, East Africa in 2012. I also do mission work in Piedras Negras, Mexico and have been going there for the past nine years. In addition, I'm active in the choir, an Extraordinary Eucharistic minister, and sacristan at Holy Family. I became an Associate in 2016 after being led here by the Holy Spirit. I discovered, in my preparation for a trip to Assisi and Rome in late 2015, that I had a Franciscan heart but just didn't have a name for it.

Living my faith out in community is important to me and finding this new faith community quickly became a blessing in my life. As I considered applying for this position, I did some soul searching, but in that searching I felt led at every turn to continue to pursue this opportunity. Someone once told me that if someone asks you to do something spiritual, you should just say, "YES". As the pieces fell into place, I relied heavily on God's guidance for the courage to make a change.

I am excited to be your new Associate Coordinator, and look forward to getting to know all of you and relying on you to show me the ropes. I will be making the rounds to all the locations in the next few months. Peace and Blessings. ❖

## **Moment of Reflection . . .**

### **What do you do in a monastery?**

Humility does not chain us to a lesser self. Ironically enough, it is humility that stretches us beyond ourselves. Humility does not say, "I can never succeed." It says, "Whatever happens, I must always get up again. I must learn to live with failure, I must go on." Why? Because failure is one of the great teachers of life.

The hard truth is that humility is a lesson that can take a lifetime to learn. Yet, in the end, its great reward is contentment, serenity, trust, and a sense of the success that comes from having arrived at the fullness of the self by understanding our own smallness.



Humility is the great liberator in life. No one and nothing can undermine the humble person's confidence in God. Nothing can deliver us from committing ourselves to the will of God for the world. Nothing can convince us to adapt ourselves to a world whose greed is crushing and whose arrogance is smothering. We will be forever happy with what we have. We will not live pretending to be what we are not, forever worried that our masks, our toupee, our cosmetics and costumes will come off in public. Everything we do will speak of kindness, of acceptance, of care for those in whose presence we stand. We will have put down all the trappings that are meant to hide our real selves from the world. Freed from all pretensions now, I will be honest, open, and my authentic self to all people and in all situations.

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## Being Franciscan . . .

### Christopher Schmit

(Springfield)

**Year of Commitment –  
2015**



I became aware of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis through a couple of encounters I had with the Chiara Center. I had attended a lecture in the Food and Faith series and was impressed by the facility and the feeling of calm and peace that seemed to radiate from the building and its grounds. The following Christmas, I attended the Nativity Festival and was again impressed by the Chiara Center as well as the beautiful St. Francis of Assisi Church. It was around this same time that Sister Marguerite Cook came and spoke to my church (St. James in Riverton). I had been looking for something to expand my faith and the Franciscan Associates sounded like an opportunity to take that step.

Being a Franciscan means being compassionate and hospitable to others even those who may not have a great deal in common with you. It also means having a love for Mother Earth and treating her with the respect that she deserves. I am not what you would consider an outdoors person so I do struggle with trying to connect with nature and its many aspects.

When I began the process of becoming an Associate, Denny Kirchgessner was my sponsor. Denny is one of the most helpful people I have ever met. I am also inspired by his attention to the Sisters and how he comes to visit and spend time with them.

I am single and have a daughter (16) and two nieces (15 and 7). My daughter and I like to go bowling and she beats me most of the time. I am a lector at my church and also teach our 7th and 8th grade PSR class. I enjoy reading, going to movies and working out when I can. ❖

### Mary Contri

(Springfield)

**Year of Commitment –  
2014**



I first became interested in being an Associate of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis when Linda Dice, a co-worker of mine at that time, shared her experience as an Associate and described how it had enriched her spiritual life. Both Linda and I were educated as Medical Technologists and she suggested Sister Carol Sue Daniel for my sponsor. Linda knew Sister Carol Sue was also a MT and believed we would be a good fit, and I am so glad she did. Sister Carol Sue has a quiet and peaceful presence. She has counseled me in ways to enrich my prayer life and be open to God's guidance in my life. Her selfless dedication to serving those who are suffering is a true example of what it means to be a Franciscan.

I worked for St. John's Hospital for eight years before taking a new job in 2016. Leaving St. John's was a very difficult decision because I considered it a privilege to be part of the mission of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis and feared I would not find the same type of fulfillment in my new role. I have learned that to share the Franciscan spirit can be healing no matter where I work. I start each day with a prayer asking God to guide me, so I may treat all people with respect, listen to their needs and do my best to help them. I am learning that St. Francis' path to God is not simply acts of kindness but a lifestyle of loving and giving of oneself to others.

My husband, Steve and I have been married for 35 years and we have two grown sons, Jack and Val. Jack works as an Engineer with GE Aviation and is married to Katie Duffin. They have two daughters and live in Mission, TX. Val graduated from St. John's School of Nursing and currently works in ER at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, TN. ❖



## Musings from Chiara

By Dan Frachey



### Real Presence

This is a phrase held dear by Catholic Christians because of how it acknowledges Jesus Christ as being present *body, blood, soul and divinity* in the form of bread and wine that becomes the Eucharist. In terms of the relationship within spiritual direction, real presence is the underlying dynamic and the signifying element between a director and his/her directee. As a spiritual director, I believe that to offer the gift of real presence is to truly inhabit a sacred space *with* another. It is the greatest gift that we can humanly extend within this companioning relationship.

Mindful of this belief, I recently had a conversation with a colleague who bemoaned the growing reality of people bringing and then using their cellphones during meetings. He lamented how this compromised the hoped-for sense of connection at a meeting *that was specifically intended to foster understanding and awareness*. Instead, those using their phones at important moments communicated distance, divided attention; leaving my colleague to feel somewhat demoralized afterwards. Truly we're always communicating something so what is it that we're saying to others with our actions?

In this instance, there is an impoverishment of real presence. As those who follow in the ways of Francis and Clare, two souls so utterly present to their God, all of creation and to those in their midst are called to become people who are noted for extending this gift of real presence to those we encounter each day. Others will know and cherish us as these people because of how we:

- make eye contact and respond to what others are sharing at that moment
- set down whatever it is that is occupying us and prayerfully make room for them
- enter their stories by setting aside our own for a time

Just as incarnation is the manifestation of LOVE become REAL in our time and place, may God help us all to live into this much-needed encounter of real presence in a world of souls crying to be understood, welcomed and loved. ❖

## Moment of Reflection –

Continued from page 2

It is the work of a lifetime, yes, but it is a lifetime that gets quieter, calmer, kinder, and more satisfying as we go. An old monastic tale says it all. The disciple asks, "What do you do in a monastery?" And the old monastic answers, "Oh, we fall, and we get up. And we fall, and we get up. And we fall, and we get up again."

—From *Radical Spirit: 12 Ways to Live a Free and Authentic Life* by Joan Chittister ❖

## News Bits . . .

The Associates in Springfield collected \$427 for their annual Christmas donation in support of St. John's Breadline. A total of 173,387 meals at the Breadline were served in 2017. ❖



## A Different Kind of Service

**By Sister Helen Marie Plummer, OSF**



My service to the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis has included more than 30 years in nursing and nursing administration, nearly 32 years with HSHS and its Illinois hospitals, and most recently a leadership role at St. Francis Convent. Since 2015, I have found the opportunity to be of a different kind of service in providing a hot meal for breakfast at St. John's Breadline, Springfield. Spending a few hours with the other volunteers, I receive so much more than I could ever dream of giving as I serve breakfast to a guest who is hungry. In doing so, it makes me realize how we must be mindful of the less fortunate in our world. I'm humbled to hear the stories of our guests, especially those who ask for prayers with the challenges they face. For example, a kind grandmother brings her 18-month baby boy with Down syndrome every morning, so his mother can work two jobs. This time of year, I encourage everyone to be aware of opportunities to give back or pay it forward.

My involvement with volunteering began in 2004 as I joined Sister Jamesine Lamb in preparing baskets of food for Thanksgiving and Christmas to Catholic Charities. This evolved into my service at the Breadline and it's a privilege to be part of this ministry that many of my Sisters have supported over the years – including the founding of it in 1929 through the kitchen door of St. John's Hospital.

I was born on October 14, 1935 in Decatur, IL, and I made my First Profession of Vows with the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis on September 8, 1959. I am a graduate of St. John's Hospital School of Nursing and hold a Bachelor of

Science degree in nursing from Marillac College and a Master of Science degree in nursing administration from DePaul University. I serve on the Board of Directors for HSHS Holy Family Hospital (Greenville, IL) and HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital (O'Fallon, IL). ❖

## Departing Gratitude . . .

I wish to thank the Sisters and Associates for their kindness and faith in me during the 13 years I served as your Associate Coordinator. I was touched by all your expressions of gratitude shown to me through cards, warm and heartfelt words and/or gifts. What a blessing you have been to me. I will be forever grateful to have journeyed with you through this unique and special ministry.

Sincerely in Franciscan Spirit and friendship,

*RuthEllen*

## Happy Trails to you . . .



The theme for the Associate Christmas Bingo in Springfield was "Christmas on a Trail Ride." Associates Mike and Margie Sgro came up with the theme and the three grand prizes. At the end of the party, Mike held up his iPhone to the microphone to the song "Happy Trails to You" while the Associates and Sisters sang to RuthEllen in gratitude for her leadership and for a happy and long retirement. ❖

# Justice and Peace Connection

By Sister Mary Shaw, ASC



## Racism

Recently an Ad Hoc Committee against racism was formed by the USCCB and the urgent need to come together as a society to find a solution to it (8-23-17). The events in Charlottesville, VA. seemed to have tipped the scales for many to say a solution is needed. Racism is evil and those who cause violence in its name are criminals/thugs.

Some of us still deny that racism is an issue in U.S. Not sure where you stand? "Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are" (Benjamin Franklin). How outraged are you? Take your pulse.

Let me suggest a couple of books. *Small Great Things* by Jodi Picoult was offered to me by one of the Hospital Sisters. "With incredible empathy, intelligence, and candor, Picoult tackles race, privilege, prejudice, justice and compassion...and doesn't offer easy answers." We need to name our sins in order to tame them...own our blind spot and see our part in white privilege. Another good resource is Jim Wallis' *America's Original Sin*, in which he captures the persistent pieces and sin of racism in America. Both call us to conversion and grassroots action/advocacy to eradicate this evil. Wallis makes it clear that "it is time for white Christians to be more Christian than white".

There is a call to each of us to stop the excuses and to commit to movement/way of non-violence. We must begin to see all as family, made in God's image and likeness. We must imitate the non-violent Jesus, who "brought us near through the Blood of Christ, our peace who broke down the barriers of hostility" (Ephesians 2: 13-14). It cost Him his life. What are you willing to risk? One

small action step: reach out and encounter another who may be of a different race and be present to them. Invite them to lunch at home. This builds trust and is transformative and makes us part of the solution. Don't be surprised if they enrich your life for it is entertaining strangers that we encounter the One who is the Prince of all Peace and non-violence. ❖

## IN LOVING MEMORY . . .

### SISTER FRANCIS KUO

BORN 01-12-1920

FIRST PROFESSION 09-17-1946

DIED 10-24-2017

**May she share with Jesus the joy and peace of heaven . . .**

## WE SUPPORT IN PRAYER ...

- Aggie Hayner (Springfield) who is receiving medical treatment
- Rita Keys (Springfield) who had surgery
- Ruth King (Springfield) who had surgery
- Margie and Mike Sgro (Springfield) whose brother-in-law died
- Debbie Waitkus (Springfield) who is receiving medical treatment
- Our Hospital Sisters ❖

## Franciscan Connections Newsletter

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# Crazy Christmas Bingo . . .





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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

### Upcoming Events at Chiara Center . . .

**Tai Chi Easy:** Mondays at 5:30 p.m. February 5, 12, 19, 26 and March 5. Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. February 6, 13, 20, 27 and March 6.

**No More Perfect Marriages - February 9-10:** Authors and presenters Jill and Mark Savage will inspire, educate and equip couples to succeed.

**Spirituality in Recovery Retreat February 16-18:** "The Recovery Process" - David Kerwin and team will unpack the opportunities and struggles for those living in recovery.

**Food and Faith Final Dinner Series – March 15:** "Recognizing the Other" - Practice building a culture of encounter with people of other faiths. Join us at 6:00 p.m. for the dinner series. \$20 per person and \$35 per couple. Reservations required.

**"Weaving Your Story" March 16-18:** Presenter Sister Anita Cleary, OP

**Ah Days of Quiet - March 27 –** Extend the gift of time, peace and sacred space to yourself. 9 a.m. - 3.p.m. Lunch served at noon. \$20 per person. Reservations required.

**Challenging Conversations: Strategies for Working through Ministerial Conflicts - April 23 - A** workshop for ministry teams with Ann Garrido, D.Min.

**Spirituality in Health Care Conference "Conflict as Catalyst for Understanding" - April 24 -** Presenter Ann Garrido, D.Min.

To register for any of the Chiara-sponsored events, visit the Events section of our website or call us at 217-523-0901. There is a 10% discount for Associates.

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