Around me the trees stir in their leaves, and call out, “Stay awhile.” The light flows from their branches. And they call again, “It’s simple”, they say, “and you too have come into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled with light, and to shine.”

From Mary Oliver’s When I am Among the Trees
The changing seasons always seem to invite us to be attentive to the seasons of our own lives. As we begin to feel the presence of autumn, may we listen well to the lessons she has to teach us about life, about letting go, about transformation. Autumn invites us to breathe deeply, to look around (as well as within) and to listen to nature as she speaks.

Transformation is more than a simple change; it calls us to look forward, to see anew, to let go and to trust. The process of transformation speaks of new life, of hidden life.

One of the best examples of transformation in nature is the caterpillar that becomes a butterfly – there is no way she can change back to being a caterpillar – the transformation is real and is permanent. It is a slow process and can’t be rushed. But there is no doubt that when the transformation happens and the butterfly unfolds her wings, she is a marvel to behold.

As we begin to see the colors of the leaves change, feel the crisp air on our faces, and experience this season that shouts the loudest about change, beauty and transformation, we are called to reflect on our own process of transformation. How are we being called to see more, to be more aware of the many miracles of life that happen around us and within us? What are the changes being asked of us that are part of the reality of our own process of transformation?

These lines from An Autumn Blessing by Joyce Rupp and Macrina Wiederkehr encourage us to reflect on the gifts, the lessons, the beauty of this season.

Blessed are you, autumn, chalice of transformation,
you lift a cup of death to our lips and we taste new life.

Blessed are you, autumn, season of surrender,
you teach us the wisdom of letting go as you draw us into new ways of living.

This issue of the Whitehall Franciscan celebrates the gift of giving. It calls us to be mindful of the fact that the gesture of self-giving, sharing who we are, being present to another transforms us. Transformation is about becoming more aware of God’s goodness, seeing the many manifestations of God’s handiwork in all creatures, being attentive to the ways we are being asked to give of ourselves, to celebrate the good news of our faith and to proclaim the goodness of God with every breath. May we embrace this process of yet becoming more of what God calls each of us to be!

How Will You Celebrate?

October 4 is the Feast of St. Francis. For some people, there might be something peculiar in the word “feast.” One might think of a “Thanksgiving feast” or perhaps a “feast fit for a king.” You might recall how St. Francis himself in his younger years participated in feasting and was the leader of a group of “merry makers.” But then you’ll also recall his later years when food was of little importance to him. As the brothers would beg for food, they ate what was given to them. Chances are, it wasn’t always the tastiest.

So, if you’re looking to honor the Feast of St. Francis in a way besides or in addition to a special meal, what could be that special way to honor, remember and celebrate his life?

Perhaps you can take a walk in a park and recall how Francis was able to see things and understand that they all say something about God. Maybe you can seek out an opportunity to aid and comfort those who are on the edge of society – those who might be seen as the “lepers” of our day. Or you might spend a bit more time in prayer giving thanks and praise to God for all the good gifts you’ve been given.

It looks like you have a few different possibilities on how to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis. Let’s all celebrate the Feast of St. Francis in a special way this year.
Our Sisters Serve Rural Communities in Brazil

“Called together by a Good and Provident God and faithful to our Charism, we go to those to whom Providence sends us, and conscious of our mission in the Church we witness to the Kingdom by our lives and service.”

~ from the Mission Statement of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God

In 2006, Sister Madalena de Silva, a member of our Brazilian Sisters, was on retreat at Taize, Brazil. During a casual conversation with Dom Paulo Romeu, Bishop of Alaghinhas, he invited our Sisters to open a new community mission in his diocese. Alaghinhas is a city in the state of Bahia.

Believing that God leads us and sends us, our Sister Elenice Costa and Sister Janet Gardner, the General Minister at the time, began the process of opening a new mission in the town of Aracas. Sisters Margarida Souza and Maria do Carmo Nogueria were the first sisters assigned to this new mission.

Today, that mission, the Deus Parish, is comprised of 16 base communities*, 15 of which are in rural areas. Our Sisters are active in both pastoral and social works in the parish to include catechetical and liturgical pastorals, funeral celebrations, Holy Childhood pastoral, prayerful reading of the Bible, family visits, children’s pastorals, the Legion of Mary, the Apostleship of Prayer, Rosary with men and leadership training.

The current mission is served by our Sisters Maria do Carmo Nogueria and Carmen Lucia de Almeida. Since it is now considered a formation community, there are also two aspirants (candidates) missioned there. The Sisters ask your continued prayers for the mission and those they serve.

*Sisters Maria do Carmo Nogueria (back row, left) with some of the children and women she serves in the rural town of Aracas, Brazil.

*Sisters are face-to-face meetings of a group of lay Catholics who support and challenge each other to act on their faith. Meeting at a local parish church or community center, the group dedicates time to prayer, reading of the Bible, discussing the reality around them and debating in which ways they can make a difference to their community. There is usually a communion service, since there is no priest for Mass. Base communities are most popular in rural areas wherein a typical member is low-income and unschooled. There are almost 100,000 of these communities in Brazil today.

Sister Janice Ministers to those Experiencing Grief and Loss

People often feel lost after the death of a loved one, frequently thinking they could have done more. That’s why our Sister Janice Campbell helps people cope and heal after a loved one’s death through a seven-week program at St. Ursula’s Church in the Pittsburgh suburb of Allison Park.

Sister Janice currently ministers as a pastoral associate at St. Ursula. An important part of her pastoral duties is to assist with this bereavement program by facilitating group discussions with participants after the death of a loved one. The group also offers suggestions on ways to do something good for oneself to help in the healing process.

“We hand out packets of information . . . we let people introduce themselves and tell who it is that they’ve lost, and when they died and what their relationship was,” says Sister Janice. “Sometimes people are ready to open up the first night. Most of the time, they’re not.”

“We start with a prayer. We end with a prayer. But we don’t pray through the sessions,” she says. “It’s a faith atmosphere but not centered on any one denomination. It’s open to anyone.” Participants also learn to memorialize a loved one, perhaps by having a piece of jewelry made from a late spouse’s wedding band. Or one might cut squares from a late mother’s apron to make a quilt of fabric in creating a keepsake pillow.

“It’s something you can hug,” Sister Janice says.

The group also advises the bereaved to avoid making big decisions for a year after the death of a loved one rather than to quickly sell a house, for example. “A lot of times, you’re not thinking clearly. You’re thinking out of your grief,” she says. “We try to tell people to kind of slow down.”

The support series ends with a prayer service and a social for participants.

Sister Janice Campbell (left) and Sister Louise Marie Simcoo listen to others speak about their experiences with grief during a group discussion at the motherhouse.
In Gratitude

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God would like to thank all of you who gave so generously during the period July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014. Funding our ministries as well as the care of our elderly and infirm Sisters comes in large part from private contributions, so every gift received is very much appreciated. We would never be able to accomplish much of what we do without your compassionate support. Thank you for reaching out to us with your prayers, financial gifts and friendship. Your kindness has made a profound difference in the lives of many, especially our own and those we serve.

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We Should All Be Thankful . . .

“In everyone’s life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit.” ~ Albert Schweitzer

Albert Schweitzer’s remarks found among his writings speak to us today. As we share this issue of The Whitehall Franciscan with you, our readers and donors, we feel thankful for each and every person whose name is presented here, who have rekindled our spirit. What a special issue this is for the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God as the names of our donors form a “litany of gratitude.”

We realize that there are a variety of motives behind a person’s willingness to share their financial gifts. Some donors want to live the Gospel mandate of love and outreach. Others know our Franciscans sisters who “click” with their values. They may have observed their financial gifts. Some donors want to live the Gospel mandate of love and outreach.

We are always amazed at the response to our fundraising efforts. For the eighth consecutive year, we launched our Annual Appeal. Our donors were again generous, donating more than $20,000 to help with expenses in running the sisters’ motherhouse. Over 200 donors responded to this year’s Sarah Fund for our retired and infirm sisters with generous gifts totaling more than $25,000.

As the Development team, we recognize the presence of our donors in the lives of our sisters and the contributions you make. We believe strongly that such gifts are to be used wisely and frugally. To this end, we have made every effort to be good stewards.

Sincerely,

Nick Rodi
Director of Development

Robyn N. Moeller
Development Assistant
Thank you, Volunteers!

“Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take nothing that you have received...but only what you have given; a full heart enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice, and courage.”

~ St. Francis of Assisi

With hearts full of gratitude, we gratefully acknowledge our volunteers for their service in support of our mission. Your gifts of time and talent are invaluable and vital to the continued efforts of our Sisters and ministries.

Our gratitude is also extended to members of the following organizations who give of their time in support of events, programs and projects benefitting the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God.

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St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association
Gives Much Needed Support for an Essential Technology Upgrade

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God are grateful to the St. Francis Academy Alumnae Association’s recent generous gift that went toward the purchase of much needed upgrades to our server - the central computing component in our computer network. This is part of our ongoing efforts to improve our business equipment and technology essential to our mission, which you may have read about in this year’s Annual Appeal letter. New upgrades and improvements will support:

- Efforts of our sisters and staff to efficiently support our mission.
- Good stewardship of your generosity through properly supported and up-to-date financial software and equipment.
- Compliance with state and federal regulations that we must follow to maintain our 501(c)3 non-profit status.
- Outreach and communication efforts, including maintaining an online presence and responding to the needs and requests of those seeking our services and spiritual guidance.

Support from individual donors is vital to our efforts, and any amount is greatly appreciated. If you would like to designate a gift for improved equipment and technology, you may use the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.osfprov.org (please include “equipment/technology” in note). For more information, please contact us at (412) 885-7232 or info@osfprov.org.
Seventy-seven years after President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law a national minimum wage, many workers still struggle to support themselves and their families living at or slightly above that pay.

Today, the current federal minimum wage is $7.25 an hour; had the minimum wage kept pace with inflation, it would be at $10.74 per hour. Additionally, minimum wage for tipped workers hasn’t been raised in more than 20 years and remains at $2.13 an hour.

Chanting “we can’t survive on 7.25,” fast-food workers have organized walkouts in cities like Chicago and New York. The movement in Chicago called the “Fight for 15” held protests last year and has encouraged others in the city and around America to fight for living wages.

When those fast-food workers walked off their jobs demanding higher wages, their actions should have caught the attention of the nation’s Catholics, say those who stress the call for a living wage that echoes long-standing Catholic social teaching.

Does the minimum wage in the U.S. fulfill the prescription for a “family wage,” that is, a wage sufficient for a father or mother to support a family decently if they are the sole wage earner? If we take U.S. statistics regarding the “poverty line” for a family of four as our baseline, the answer is no, it does not accomplish that now, nor has it ever. According to these statistics, the minimum wage has never risen to, much less above, the poverty line. In real dollars, the highest minimum wage that has ever been, when it was 90 percent of the poverty-line wage, was in 1968. Currently, the minimum wage is approximately 60 percent of the poverty line.

Raising the minimum wage is a moral issue; it is about dignity and it is about justice. More than a century of Catholic tradition places work at the heart of human dignity. Wages are more than a mere product of economic bargaining. Rather, wages that do not allow workers to support themselves, their families, or the common good demean human dignity.

Some will argue that the marketplace determines the level of wages and that the market should be allowed to function freely. Catholic teaching disagrees on two counts: the duty in justice of employers and the responsibilities in justice of government. The moral duties of employers, says Bishop Stephen Blaine, who leads the U.S. Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice, is a vital piece of the conversation that is often ignored. In addition, government has a further responsibility for the common good which includes the rights of workers.

At a Senate committee meeting last year Bishop Blaire made a strong case for protecting the rights and dignities of workers, calling on the teachings of several popes including Leo XIII, John Paul II, Benedict XVI and, of course, Pope Francis. In his testimony, Blaire argued that a just wage – one that realistically allows a worker to support their family based on the current cost of living – is critical for workers and would be a positive first step in fixing the economy. “Work should be the ladder out of poverty for families, it should not trap them in poverty. Yet this is where we find ourselves – a growing number of families are working but do not make enough to live with dignity. It is a scandal that the richest country in the world has allowed over 23 million children in working poor families to become the norm.”
Work and Wages (continued from page 8)

Are there precedents in state and/or local minimum wage laws?

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 18 states and the District of Columbia have minimum wages that are higher than the federal minimum wage, while 23 states have minimum wages equal to the federal minimum wage, and four states have minimum wages below the federal minimum wage. Five states have not established a state minimum wage.

A Personal Account

22-year-old Martina Phelps says the Seattle City Council’s historic votes recently to raise the minimum wage to $15 an hour could change her life. Phelps earns $9.47 per hour working for a McDonald’s near downtown Seattle. She wants to move out of her mother’s home and go back to school. She says these things could happen now that the city will have the nation’s highest minimum wage.

The plan, which includes a lower training wage aimed at teens, would require businesses employing more than 500 employees to pay $15 an hour by 2017, or 2018 if health care is offered. Smaller businesses would have five to seven years to phase in the increase.

To put it succinctly, raising the minimum wage is about dignity and it is about justice. It is clear from more than a century of Catholic teaching that work is at the heart of the social question, at the heart of human dignity.

Prayer for Those in Poverty

God of justice and compassion,
we ask forgiveness for the widening gulf between rich and poor,
for the use of money as a measure of all things,
for the culture of self-gratification,
for the continuing disparities between those that have so much,
and those who have so little,
and for the suffering of those people who are excluded from the table of abundance.
Forgive us for our focus on material goods,
and our part in the worship of economic growth in a world where resources are limited
and where we are already using more than our fair share.
Forgive us for going along with what is easy,
for failing to come to grips with the problems of change and to engage in the complexity of social issues.
Fill us with a living faith that we may become lively seeds of your kingdom,
continually growing in your way of love, instruments of personal and social reconciliation,
vehicles for a new dawn when those in poverty are welcomed to the table where compassion and justice meet.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our Prayer.

Based on a prayer by Alan Litherland

Sisters Remember Gary Carlough

If you ride Pittsburgh’s light rail “T,” you might have heard the name, Gary Carlough. After all, he helped design the light rail station at Gateway Center.

But to the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, he will long be remembered as one of the architects involved in the 1995 re-design of the Mary Immaculate Chapel located in our motherhouse.

An innovative force in Pittsburgh architecture, Mr. Carlough passed away on June 29, 2014.

In addition to the Gateway Center station and our chapel, Mr. Carlough also worked on additions and renovations for the University of Pittsburgh’s Swanson School of Engineering, Carnegie Mellon University, the Carnegie Museums and the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh.

He and his wife, Anne Chen, started Edge Studio in 1995 and lived in a house they designed together.

A graduate of Latrobe High School, he earned a bachelor’s degree in architecture from the University of Arizona and studied at the Architectural Association in London. A member of Pittsburgh’s Art Commission, Mr. Carlough served on the board of Quantum Theater and was also an adjunct professor of architecture at Carnegie Mellon for more than 20 years.
In Prayerful Memory

Sister Marianne Walters, OSF

Born: July 16, 1917
Entered our community: September 14, 1934
Returned to God: May 26, 2014

Sister Marianne Walters, OSF, a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 80 years, passed away on May 26, 2014, at the motherhouse, at the age of 96. A Pittsburgh native, Sister attended St. Casimir’s elementary school before enrolling in St. Francis Academy in 1931. Upon graduation, she entered the congregation a year after her sister, Frances Walters, who survives. Sister’s initial assignment was as an elementary teacher in Grand Rapids, MI. From here, she went to Elizabeth, NJ, as well as Mahanoy City, Homestead and Dubois, PA. In 1950, Sister travelled to Brazil where she ministered for 12 years. Upon her return, she resumed her teaching career at St. Valentine’s in Bethel Park, prior to becoming a principal in Mt. Vernon, IL, Elizabeth, NJ, West Mifflin, Pittsburgh and Moon Run, PA. From 1993 to 1996, she served in Lithuania, followed by five years in Grand Rapids as a tutor. Upon her return to the motherhouse, she helped out in the Archives department.

Sister Marianne attended Duquesne University, earning both her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Education.

In contemplating her years as a Sister, she says there was “blessing in the way we worked and rested in the Lord without pressures and deadlines.” In beginning her teaching ministry, she described herself as “a person in process, learning, changing and growing.” Sister said that she went to Lithuania in her “golden years” to bring solace, care and education but instead, “the youth there inspired me with their energy and love of God to help them rebuild their Church.” She added, “With the passing years, many events revealed who I am and the truth of who God is.”

Sister M. Antonieta Ambrosevicius, OSF

Born: October 3, 1925
Entered our community: June 13, 1942
Returned to God: June 24, 2014

Sister Mary Antonieta Ambrosevicius, a Sister of St. Francis of the Providence of God for 72 years, died at our Comunidade Recanto Paz e Bem in São Paulo, Brazil on Tuesday, June 24, 2014 at the age of 88.

The youngest of six siblings, Sister Antonieta was born Adele Ambrosevicius in Piepalu, Kaunas, Lithuania, to parents Juozopa and Francisca. Her family soon immigrated to Vila Zelina, Brazil where, at the age of 17, she became the third Sister to enter our community from Brazil. Sister Antonietta was a dedicated educator who taught at our St. Michael the Archangel School, as well as other schools in Brazil served by our community. Our Sisters remember Sister Antonieta for her generosity and readiness to assist others. Conscientious and dedicated to her work, Sister always maintained a happy disposition. We give thanks to God for Sister’s life, her generous spirit, and her unique way of manifesting the goodness of God.
The Center is Available for Meetings, Retreats or Programs

The Franciscan Spirit and Life Center is located on the grounds of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God campus in Pittsburgh, PA. The Center’s facilities, its warm hospitality and peaceful surroundings make it an ideal site for:

- Retreats
- Meetings
- Conferences
- Seminars
- In-Service days
- Adult Education Programs
- Days and Evenings of Recollection
- Spiritual Direction (by Appointment)
- Counseling - Individual & Couples

Our Facility includes:

- Wireless Internet Access.
- A variety of meeting rooms equipped with audio-visual equipment.
- The option of having meals prepared by staff or catered. By special arrangement, you can also choose to prepare your own meals in our on-site kitchen.
- Single and double bedrooms furnished with bed linens and towels. We can accommodate up to 29 persons.

The Hermitages
Peace, Reflection and Renewal

- $20 per day
- $38 overnight
- $250 per week

Small additional fee for Hermitage #2 w/fireplace

Spiritual Direction
(by Appointment)

- Sister Joanne Brazinski, OSF  (412) 885-7409
- Sister J. Lora Dambroski, OSF  (412) 885-7408
- Sister Althea Anne Spencer, OSF  (412) 885-7406
- Sister Carolyn Bodenschatz, CSJ  (412) 819-0135

Counseling - Individual & Couples

- Sister Nancy Langhart, OSF  (412) 882-9911

Featured Programs

Connecting Women’s Wisdom
Sunday, October 26, 2014
8:30 AM - 1:00 PM
Sisters of St. Francis Motherhouse Lecture Hall
3603 McRoberts Rd. • Pittsburgh, PA 15234

Take time to focus more clearly, breathe more deeply and live more mindfully. Designed for women of all ages and backgrounds, Connecting Woman’s Wisdom includes a liturgy service in Mary immaculate Chapel followed by brunch with the Sisters and a program featuring group sharing, quiet reflective time and a program relevant to woman today.

FREE-WILL Program. All gifts are greatly appreciated.

To register, or for more information, please call (412) 885-7406 no later than Monday, October 13.

Tea with Mary of the Rosary
Tuesday, October 7, 2014
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Franciscan Spirit and Life Center
3605 McRoberts Rd. • Pittsburgh, PA 15234

To register, or for more information, please call (412) 215-7743

Tai Chi
With Gurney Bolster, MA, Dance Therapy
Certified Tai Chi Instructor and Movement Analyst

Tai Chi focuses on gentle, flowing movement and centered relaxed posture. Regular practice of Tai Chi has been shown to:

- Improve Balance, Gait & Coordination
- Increase Muscle Strength
- Improve Focus & Concentration
- Prevent Falls-Reduce Stress
- Lower Blood Pressure Improve Overall Psychological Health

Gurney teaches a form of Tai Chi endorsed by the Arthritis Foundation as a safe exercise that may diminish pain and prevent falls. Satisfied clients include adults 50+, persons with chronic pain, those working sedentary jobs and others seeking a more healthy and active life.

Monday Evenings
September 15 - December 8
(no class, Sept. 29)
Continuing Class: 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Introductory Class: 7:15 PM – 8:15 PM
Cost: $95.00 for 12 classes

Wednesday Afternoons
September 17 - December 10
(no class November 26)
Introductory Class: 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM
Continuing Class: 2:15 PM - 3:15 PM
Cost: $95.00 for 12 classes

To register or for more information, please contact Mimi DiGregory at 412-881-9207 or mdigregory@osfprov.org.
Soup Take Out

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Permit No. 2544

October Menu
Pick-up: Wednesday, October 15
Order Deadline: Thursday, October 9
Choices: Wedding, Acorn Squash, & Stuffed Cabbage

November Menu
Pick-up: Wednesday, November 12
Order Deadline: Thursday, November 6
Choices: Wedding, Sweet Potato & Stuffed Pepper

All proceeds benefit the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God

Childcare is in our Hearts and Children are the Heart of Our Center!

(412) 882-5085
fcdcc@osfprov.org
www.osfprov.org/fcdcc.asp

The Franciscan Child Day Care Center (FCDCC) has provided a child-centered environment for over 30 years. Our secure center is a Keystone STARS facility. We care for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, as well as provide care for school age children in our Before and After Care Program and Summer Program. Full and part time care plans are available.

UNITED WAY CODE: 3485
Labels For Education Participant

Price: $5 per quart (includes 2 rolls)
To Order: Please call (412) 885-7232 by the Deadline
Pick up: 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM
3603 McRoberts Rd. * Pittsburgh, PA 15234