



The Whitehall
FRANCISCAN

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The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God

Mission Statement

We, Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, commit ourselves to the evangelical life of continuous conversion in the tradition of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis.

Called together by a good and provident God, we cultivate an intimacy with God that is nourished by Scripture and Eucharist and a reverence for all creation.

Faithful to our Charism, we go to those whom Providence sends us, and conscious of our mission in the Church, we witness to the Kingdom by our lives of service.

We will be instruments of justice and peace among those in need of evangelization, healing, and reconciliation, especially the poor and oppressed.

In simplicity and joy we want to be signs of hope, for we believe that Jesus Christ is with us in the power of His Resurrection.

In This Issue

- 3 ACR in USA and Brazil
- 4 Season of Creation
- 5 Drowning in Plastic
- 6 Sister Janice's Ministry Story
- 7 Sister Althea Anne to Serve as President of Sisters Place Board
Leaving a Legacy
- 8 Franciscan Federation
- 9 Associates Share our Franciscan Mission
- 10 Sister Janice's Ministry (cont.)
- 11 Maintaining a Child-Centered Space at the Franciscan Child Day Care Center

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3757 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234
412-882-9911
www.osfprov.org



facebook.com/osfprov

EDITORIAL BOARD

Sister Joanne Brazinski, OSF
Sister Janet Gardner, OSF
Sister Barbara Zilch, OSF
Robyn Moeller, Development Director
Contributor: Nick Rodi
Proofreaders: Sister Margaret Markey, OSF and Mimi DiGregory

RECOGNIZE – RESPECT – REVERENCE

A message from General Minister Sister Joanne Brazinski, OSF

The lessons of nature are very profound if we pause long enough to listen and learn.

In August, I visited our Sisters in the Amazon. One of nature's lessons that hit me between the eyes was the gift of diversity, the beauty of "different." The Amazon manifested this in so many ways; one reality that spoke to me deeply was the encounter of the Amazon and the Tapajós Rivers (*pictured right*). I witnessed this phenomenon outside of the city of Santarém, Para. The rivers run together for miles – not invading the space of the other, not dominating the other. Each river with its properties and uniqueness flowing alongside the other, proclaiming a lesson in the beauty of diversity that I cannot put into words. The color of each river is different, the density, the pH, the transparency, the electrical conductivity, and so much more. I do not pretend to know the why of this unique encounter of the waters but I was caught by the power of the image. I began to reflect on what creation and the world would be like if it were not for diversity.



For many years, Pope Francis has invited us to be part of the Culture of Encounter. At our congregational assemblies this summer we reflected further on this theme and what it means for us today, wherever we are living and serving. This Culture of Encounter invites us to recognize, respect and reverence the other, the different. In Parker Palmer's recent book, *On the Brink of Everything*, he states that homogeneity is as dangerous to a society as it is to an ecosystem when it comes to productivity, creativity, sustainability, and resilience. He believes that our fear of "otherness" will be our undoing unless we learn to value our differences and allow our tensions to pull us open to something new rather than pull us apart. What is the challenged in that for us today? How are we allowing our tensions to pull us open to something new?

The media in the USA echoes the mantras of our political leaders: Division and separation are the answers. Let's build the wall. Let's keep them out (whoever they are). As the population of Brazil prepares for their presidential elections, people are listening to the candidates and asking: Will they help build a better Brazil, a better world? Who is the candidate with integrity? Our world is experiencing crises and on multiple levels. In the midst of it all, we are called to walk with not only our eyes and our minds open, but also our hearts. Do we recognize, respect and reverence the "different" that is gift for the whole?

In this issue of the Whitehall Franciscan we share some simple yet very real ways we are trying to see, listen and respond. We are doing this not by separating ourselves from the other, but by recognizing along with so many others that we are all part of one unique common home. We must take care of this planet as well as the people on it. You are invited to pray and act on ecological issues as well as be a compassionate presence in this world.

If you did it for one of these, you did it for me. (Matthew 25:40)

The Gospel proclaims how Jesus Christ reached out to those in need, the excluded, those who were different. We are called to do likewise. Francis of Assisi went to the sultan – a person very different in faith, culture, background, and beliefs. The encounter changed both Francis and the sultan. What are the ways we are reaching out to the immigrants, the stranger, those who are dying, the imprisoned, those needing a second chance?

Constructing the Culture of Encounter is a difficult task; bridge building is indeed hard work. However, this is the bridge our world needs today – recognize, respect, reverence. Are you willing to do your part in this bridge building?

Called Together by Providence

Sisters Gather for Annual ACR in USA and Brazil

Our annual Assembly of Corporate Refection (ACR) in the USA was held May 17-19, 2018. Our General Minister Sister Joanne Brazinski and General Councilor Sister Maria Goretti Avanzi traveled from Brazil to join General Councilor Sister Janet Gardner and our USA Sisters as we gathered together at Nativity Convent for prayer, reflection and discussion of topics important to our Sisters and mission. This year was especially blessed as 13 of our Associates joined us on the last day of our ACR. During this time, we gathered together at the former St. Francis Academy for prayer, reflection and discussion on our shared Franciscan mission, as well as updates on our ministries and outreach efforts in the United States, Brazil and Bolivia. We also were blessed with a beautiful Eucharistic Liturgy celebrating Pentecost, followed by a special dinner.

Sister Janet joined our Sisters in Brazil for their annual Assembly of Corporate Refection (ACR) that was held July 2-5, 2018. Like in the USA,



Sisters Theresa Codispoti, Peg Markey, Edward Urban, Ann Marie Lostoski, Francine McDonald, Janet Gardner, Elise Mora, Mary Ann Lostoski, Maria Goretti Avanzi, Hilária de Oliveira, Joanne Brazinski, Barbara Zilch, J. Lora Dambroski, and Althea Anne Spencer.

ACR is not all work. In the USA, Sisters Mary Ann and Janet accompanied Sister Maria Goretti to her first Major League Baseball game where they rooted for the Pittsburgh Pirates. In Brazil, our Sisters scheduled breaks so they could cheer on Brazil in the World Cup.



our Sisters engaged in the same activities – prayer, reflection, discussion of our Franciscan mission, and updates on all our ministries and outreach efforts. We were also blessed by the presence of members of the Lay Fraternity (Associates). During a Liturgy celebrating our Community's 80 years in Brazil, eight Lay Fraternity members formally committed their lives to our shared Franciscan Charism - the first laypersons in Brazil to make such a Commitment.

Another special

moment during our ACR in Brazil was the recognition of our Jubiliarians. In our last issue, we celebrated our Jubiliarians celebrating 50 and 25 years, Sisters Joance Conceição dos Santos and Luzia Ferreira. At ACR, we also recognized Jubiliarians Sisters Suzana Kirkila and M. Conceição Rodrigues for 65 years of service. Sister Suzana served as an educator, and for many years she has engaged in pastoral ministry with communities of farmers without land of their own, the Sem-Terra Movement. Sister Conceição also served as an educator. Her prowess with the English language now keeps her busy with translations for our Community. She is currently translating short biographies of our deceased sisters.

Thank you to all our Sisters, Associates, Lay Fraternity, and many wonderful friends who contributed to our 2018 ACR gatherings in the USA and Brazil. Because of you, we were able to focus and listen to how Providence is calling our Community to “confidently, joyfully, go forward.”



A highlight of Brazil ACR, members of our Lay Fraternity committed their lives to our shared Franciscan Charism during a Liturgy celebrating our Community's 80 years in Brazil.



Jubilarians Sisters Suzana Kirkila and Conceição, were recognized for their 65 years as Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God.

Celebrate the Season of Creation

On September 1, 2018, Christian churches came together to celebrate the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation and kick-off the month-long Season of Creation between that day and October 4, 2018—the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology in many traditions. Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican organizations have joined together to encourage the 2.2 billion Christians worldwide to pray and act on ecological issues. Their efforts include a new ecumenical website with special resources: SeasonOfCreation.org.

Hundreds of prayer services on six continents have been reported, with many of them being ecumenical in nature and with participation of local bishops and faith leaders.

The Season of Creation, originally launched by the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople in 1989, has been progressively joined by other Christian churches, with Pope Francis announcing the Roman Catholic

Churches' participation in 2015. In heralding the Church's involvement, Pope Francis asserted, "I invoke upon this initiative the intercession of Mary, Mother of God, and of Saint Francis of Assisi, whose Canticle of the Creatures inspires so many men and women of goodwill to live in praise of the Creator and with respect for creation."

Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew released their special messages for the 2018 Season of Creation using strong language to stress the urgency of the ecological crisis and the need to take action.

Pope Francis said in his message, "Christians or not, as people of faith and goodwill, we should be united in showing mercy to the earth as our common home and cherishing the world in which we live as a place for sharing and communion."

Patriarch Bartholomew reiterated, "During the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, we recall the need to make everyone aware of

the ecological problems faced by our planet."

The theme for this year's Season of Creation celebration is "walking together." As the urgent need to solve the environmental crisis continues to grow, Christian churches from across the world are being called to strengthen their united response. Whether the celebration takes place in a church, at a climate march or in a neighborhood park, there are endless ways to celebrate the season.

It might be as simple as planting a tree to create a living reminder of your community's shared commitment to creation. A tree planting ceremony is a wonderful occasion for prayer, song and children's activities. Other activities and events are available on SeasonOfCreation.org.

The Season of Creation is a wonderful time to reflect on how our lifestyles impact the environment and to make a commitment to live in ways that better care for our earth. The good news is that making more sustainable lifestyle choices in just a few areas adds up to a big difference overall. This can be done individually or in a communal setting.

- **The first step** is to commit. Consider taking a pledge from the Global Catholic Climate Movement. (CatholicClimateMovement.global)
- **The second step** is to reflect on one change you can commit to as you begin to live your pledge. One noteworthy example might be to cut down on your use of plastics and be sure to recycle plastics that you do use.
- **The final step** is to share your commitment widely to inspire others and to help create a culture of accountability. For example, you might send an email to friends inviting them to join you in the pledge.

There is an urgent need to find solutions to the crisis facing our common planetary home. Together, we are fulfilling our role as stewards of God's creation.

A Prayer for our Earth

**All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.**

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

**Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.**

**Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.**

**O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned
and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.**

**Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.**

**Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.**

**Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.**

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love, and peace

From Pope Francis' encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*

Drowning in Plastic



Did you know that by the year 2050, scientists predict that the oceans will contain more plastic than fish by weight?

There's no denying that marine plastic pollution is one of the most significant threats at present to our environment. According to the most recent data, a staggering one million plastic bottles (mostly disposable water bottles) are sold globally each and every minute. Unfortunately, most of these bottles are thrown away rather than recycled. Americans alone used about 50 billion plastic water bottles last year. However, the U.S.'s recycling rate for plastic is only 23 percent, which means 38 billion water bottles are discarded each year. Add to this the 100 billion plastic bags Americans throw away annually and you begin to see a crisis.

Regrettably, a huge amount of unrecycled plastic, up to 12 million metric tons, will eventually end up in the ocean and be mistaken by animals as food, among other such

problems. Plastic pollution impacts sea turtles, whales, seabirds, fish, coral reefs and countless other marine species and habitats. In fact, there are at least 267 known marine animal and bird species that have suffered from the entanglement or ingestion of plastic debris. Even plankton, the tiniest creatures in our oceans, are eating micro-plastics and absorbing their toxins. The substance displaces nutritive algae that creatures up the food chain require.

Plastic also mars otherwise beautiful beaches and coastlines, even in the most remote regions.

One of the principal reasons that plastic pollution presents such a problem is that it just doesn't go away! Plastics (just like diamonds) are forever. Plastic cannot biodegrade. Plastic debris simply breaks down into ever-smaller particles, known as micro-plastics, whose environmental impacts are still being established. Think about this: if plastic had been invented when the Pilgrims set sail from Plymouth, England, to North America – and the Mayflower had been stocked with bottled water and plastic-wrapped snacks – their plastic trash would likely still be around, four centuries later.

"This isn't a problem where we don't know the solution," says Ted Siegler, a Vermont resource economist, who has spent more than 25 years working with developing nations on the proper disposal of garbage. "We know how to pick up garbage, anyone can do it. We know how to dispose of it. We know how to recycle." It's just a matter of building the necessary institutions and systems, ideally before the ocean turns, irretrievably and for centuries to come, into a thin soup of plastic.

This past June, the U.N. established a theme for this year's World Environment Day entitled, "Beat plastic pollution." In a message, the U.N. Secretary General urged all people to reject so-called single-use plastic items and warned that growing levels of plastic waste were becoming unmanageable.

For more information, visit PlasticPollutionCoalition.org. The coalition is a global alliance of individuals, organizations, businesses, and policymakers working toward a world free of plastic pollution and its toxic impacts on humans, animals, waterways, oceans, and the environment.

Join Our Mission

What can we do about plastic pollution?

- **Reduce your plastic footprint.** The easiest and most direct way to get started is by reducing your own use of single-use plastics. These include plastic bags, water bottles, straws, cups, utensils, dry-cleaning bags, take-out containers and other plastic items used once and discarded.
- **Recycle what you can't reduce or reuse.** When you do happen to use single-use (and other) plastics that can be recycled, always make sure to do so. This helps keep them out of the ocean and lowers the amount of "new" plastic in circulation.
- **Participate in a beach or river clean-up.** Help remove plastics from the ocean and prevent them from getting there in the first place by taking part in or arranging a clean-up of your local beach or waterway.
- **Support and promote bans.** Many municipalities have enacted bans on single-use plastic bags, take-out containers and bottles. You can support the adoption of such policies in your community.
- **Avoid microbeads.** Tiny plastic particles, called microbeads, have become a growing source of ocean plastic pollution. Avoid products containing microbeads by watching out for "polyethylene" and "polypropylene" on the ingredient labels of your bath and body products and cosmetics.

Shaped by Providence

Sister Janice Campbell's Ministry Story

“Have no regrets in life because of the choices you make. Good or bad, they are a learning experience to help you grow. The only regret in life, is to never make a choice at all.”

~ James Hauenstein

The earliest choices in my life – some made by me, some made for me—led me to be, first of all, Franciscan:

- Born at St. Francis Hospital
- Baptized on September 17 – the Feast of the Stigmata
- Taught by Franciscans for 12 years
- Confirmed on November 29 – the Feast of All Franciscan Saints
- Joined the Third Order Secular Franciscans in High School

While attending Carlow College, meeting the Sisters of Saint Francis of the Providence of God sealed my choice to become a vowed Franciscan. I already had a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education when I entered the Community in 1974. So, of course, my “first life” – and love was teaching. My first assignment was at James Lavelle School in West Mifflin for three years. During my next four years at Mt. St. Peter School in New Kensington (pictured below), our then Major Superior – Sister Marian Blodis asked if I would be willing to teach English at our St. Francis Academy. Thank goodness Providence lead me to take classes and credits in English at Carlow. However, I also needed to be certified in secondary English education, which meant a return to studies while teaching full time. After being away from serious studies for nearly ten years, this was a challenge.

In the fall of 1983, I began the adventure of teaching at St. Francis Academy during the final eight years of its 55 years of existence. During this time, I was also called to serve as a guidance counselor for two years. After a full-time lay guidance counselor was hired, I returned to



teaching English full time, as well as continued to sponsor the Drama Club – The Academy Wits, serve as moderator for *the Esefay* school newspaper, and do publicity for the school and its activities.

In 1988, I moved to a local convent house. Even though it meant more of a commute, it put me in the right place at the right time, all by the grace of God. In 1991, the principal of James Lavelle School in West Mifflin, who I had gotten to know through our Sisters Lucy and Louise Marie, let the Sisters know that nearby St. Agnes School was looking for a fifth grade teacher. I applied, and when the Academy closed in the Spring of 1991, I had a new ministry assignment at St. Agnes School.

St. Agnes School posed another challenge - moving from an all girls' high school to a fifth grade homeroom of 22 students, 20 of whom were boys! The principal from the Sisters of the Holy Spirit supported me in my culture shock even as she shared with me that this was the most challenging class for all of the teachers.

I absolutely loved my five years at St. Agnes! One aspect was that each teacher prepared a liturgy with their class every eight weeks. My kids really enjoyed the Franciscan touch to the liturgies. “Oh, this must be the Franciscan week.” During this time, a family nominated me and I received the Golden Apple Award given for excellence in teaching.

When a friend became the first lay principal at Mount Alvernia High School in Millvale, PA, my alma mater, she invited me to serve as her Assistant Principal. After three years, a new Principal was appointed, and I continued to serve at Mt. Alvernia in the guidance office and as a religion teacher.

After teaching for 24 years, and witnessing declining enrollment in Catholic Schools, my God-inspired intuition told me to “re-tool” myself for a new ministry away from education. Once again, with the grace of God, I faced a new challenge when learning of and enrolling in Duquesne University's new Masters in Pastoral Ministry program. Thank God for my early choices to take theology classes at Carlow College! Starting classes during my last year at Mount Alvernia, I was able to finish the program in just two years. During this time, I also served as our Community's Vocation Director. So, while finishing the Master's Program, I attended two summers of the Franciscans in Action service program, participated in Vocation Fairs at Duquesne University, attended an international vocation conference and spoke on panels sharing about

Continued on page 10

Serving Families in Need

Sister Althea Anne Spencer Elected President of Sisters Place Board



The Sisters Place Board of Directors for the 2018-2019 term include Joseph Cvitkovic, PhD - Secretary, Sister Althea Anne Spencer, OSF - President, Sister Mary Parks, CSJ - Executive Director, and Debra Donley - Vice President. (not pictured: Judy Brennan - Treasurer)

In May, Sister Althea Anne Spencer was elected President of the Sisters Place Board of Directors for the 2018-2019 term. Sister will add this responsibility to her many other hats that include spiritual direction and massage therapy, as well as serving as chair of the Executive Committee of the Franciscan Federation and a member of the Pittsburgh Religious Vocations Council.

Sisters Place, Inc. is a supportive housing community committed to serving homeless single parent families in southwestern Pennsylvania. Their mission is to empower such families to achieve and sustain self-sufficiency through providing housing and supportive services. Sisters Place was founded in 1993 as a collaborative endeavor of our Community and 13 other Catholic Communities of Religious Women serving Western PA. Sisters continue to be involved through participation on the Board, donations and other support.

Board in prayer as they work to create a viable strategic plan for Sisters Place, as well as navigate the challenges of providing housing for the families they serve. For more information about Sisters Place, and how you can support their efforts, please visit SistersPlace.org.

Leaving a Legacy through Giving

As a friend of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, you're probably among over 90% of Americans who support charitable organizations. Have you remember these organizations when planning the distribution of your estate upon passing? Planned giving provides an excellent opportunity for you to leave a legacy of your own.

What is an estate? I don't have a lot of money or property!

"Estate" is simply a word describing any money or belongings you have at the time of your death. Most people have an estate, even if they are not wealthy. Through planning, your beneficiaries and how your estate is distributed is up to you. Anyone can leave a gift to the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, as well as to their family, church, charity or other beneficiary.

How do I leave a gift to the Sisters?

Most people give by leaving a charitable gift in a will or trust, or by naming the Sisters as a beneficiary of an insurance policy or retirement plan such as an IRA. A trusted financial advisor can best guide you to which is best for you and your beneficiaries.

Do I tell the Sisters that I've left a gift to them in my will?

That's up to you. Like most charitable organizations, we prefer that you let us know about gifts in advance. This way, we can express our gratitude for your generosity while you are alive.

Who can help me in making a gift to the Sisters?

A professional advisor, such as a financial planner, an attorney, or an accountant, will get you off on the right foot by advising you on the various ways you can make a gift. It is recommended that persons seek a financial advisor who is a "fiduciary," and must place a clients' interest above his or her own, as well as disclose all fees, how they are compensated, and any other conflicts.

Why should I leave a gift to the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God?

You truly will leave a legacy by supporting the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God through a will or estate. And, your gift need not be a large amount to be effective. Each gift is vital to the continuation of our mission and ministries as well as the care of our senior Sisters.

For more information and other ways you can support the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God, please contact us at 412-885-7232 or info@osfprov.org.

Instruments of Peace

Franciscan Federation Meets in Buffalo, NY

The Franciscan Federation, a national organization founded in 1965 to promote Franciscan evangelical life, held its annual conference on June 11-14 at the Adam's Mark Hotel in downtown Buffalo, NY. This year's theme was titled Christian-Muslim Relations: Lessons from the Past and Prospects for the Future.

Throughout the conference attendees enjoyed presentations on Christian-Muslim relations highlighted by two experts in the field, Sr. Kathy Warren, OSF and Fr. Michael Calabria, OFM.

Sister Kathy and Father Michael, both scholars of Franciscan-Muslim relations, provided the historical background for the meeting between Francis and Sultan Al-Kamil. Taking place during the terrible time of the Crusades, their meeting speaks with urgency to our present time. Two men of faith, one an itinerant Christian preacher, the other the ruler of a Muslim Kingdom, bucked a century of war, distrust, and insidious propaganda in a search for peace.

There was also a panel discussion that included a young Muslim woman who attends St. Bonaventure University and a Muslim Professor from Niagara University. Their reflections served to foster deeper reflection and further questions from the participants.



Conference attendees from our Community were Sisters Elise Mora, Janet Gardner, Barbara Zilch, Eliana da Silva, Joanne Brazinski, and Althea Anne Spencer, who serves as the Chair of the Executive Committee of the Franciscan Federation.

Sisters Rally Against Gun Violence



In previous *Whitehall Franciscan*, we examined gun violence in the United States. On June 2, Sisters Elise Mora, Barbara Zilch, and Janet Gardner were called to act by attending an anti-gun violence rally in downtown Pittsburgh, PA. The Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God continue to join the US Catholic Bishops, Franciscan Action Network and others in the Catholic community to call upon our legislators to work together to create policy and legislation to reduce gun violence. Read more about our Justice and Peace efforts at www.osfprov.org.

Inspired by St. Francis' examples of his pursuit of peace, the sisters were also challenged to rediscover the common ground among Christian, Muslim and Jewish faiths, as well as work to end prejudice, discrimination and violence that threatens sustainable peace.

Each day also included moments of prayer, Eucharistic Liturgy, reflective time and table talk in response to the presenters.

In addition, in light of the refugee crisis around the world, the 175 attendees passed a resolution concerning migrants and refugees globally:

"As the international community, through the United Nations, works to create the first intergovernmental agreement to cover all facets of migration, we, the members of the Franciscan Federation, join Pope Francis and support all efforts to ensure that displaced people are treated in a way that is consistent with Catholic Social Teachings."

For more information about the Franciscan Federation, please visit www.franfed.org.

Serving in the Spirit of St. Francis of Assisi

Associates Share our Franciscan Mission

Would you like to pursue a more formal relationship with the Sisters? Would you like to learn how to live a more simple life of prayer and giving – all while you continue your everyday life?

Perhaps God is calling to you through a heart hurting with emptiness in the midst of material plenty. Perhaps you are in need of prayerful support in your life. Perhaps God is leading you to follow the little poor man of Assisi in order that your love for God and creation may grow.

Perhaps you would like to consider becoming a member of the Associate Community of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God.

Since the Vatican Council II, there has been a worldwide movement by both laity and women religious in response to the call of God's Spirit in their lives.

During this period, women religious developed a strong and growing conviction that the future of their congregations would be different from the past. Persons across the country, both vowed and non-vowed, were exploring new models of being present to and enriched by one another.

In response, the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God looked at their past and present experiences and were prompted to explore new ways of being in community with others. It is out of this background and vision that the Associates of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God were born and have taken shape.

It was in 1990 – June 20th to be exact – that the congregation's first Associates made their formal commitments when Kathy Horgan, Valerie Gawlas and Nancy Kryger became the original Associates of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God. Sister J. Lora Dambroski was appointed the



The first group of USA Associates made their formal commitment in 1989. Pictured are Nancy Kryger, Sister Barbara Zilch, Kathy Horgan, Val Gawlas, and Sister J. Lora Dambroski.



Our Associates were invited to join our Sisters at this year's ACR in the United States. Pictured are (Standing, left to right) Barbara Sawyer, Audrey Patterson, Lori Vallarian, Sister Peg Markey, Sister Edward Urban, Sister Ann Marie Lostoski, Sister Francine McDonald, Sister Janet Gardner, Sister Elise Mora, Sister Mary Ann Lostoski, Sister Hilária de Oliveira, Sister Eliana da Silva, Sister Barbara Zilch, Sister J. Lora Dambroski, Sister Althea Anne Spencer, Mary Ann Garfold, Mary Ann Abt, Michaele Fisher, Pat Enscoe, Margo Fittipaldo, Joan Ammon, (seated, left to right) Sister Theresa Codispoti, Rosemary Byrd, Sister Maria Goretti Avanzi, Janet Maddock, (kneeling, left to right) Chris Lipinski and Kathy Antoniazzi.

Director of the Associate Membership with Sister Barbara Zilch assisting with the core committee.

According to Sister Barbara, who is now our Community's Associate Director, Associates bond with the congregation in a non-vowed yearly commitment that invites them to share in the proclamation of Franciscan values in today's world. They are lay persons who officially commit to actively participate in the prayer and mission of the Sisters.

"Associates unite with the sisters in a relationship of mutual support and encouragement," said Sister adding that they choose the extent to which they wish to be involved and formalize that desire in a public commitment ceremony where they are commissioned.

Associates come from all walks of life — single, married, widowed, divorced, etc. They share the values and spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. The purpose of the Associate Community is to extend a Christian person an invitation to identify more closely with the Charism of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Providence of God. Together with the sisters, they seek to live the Gospel in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. In addition to supporting one another in prayer, Associates and Sisters meet regularly for faith sharing.

While the modern Associates' movement began as a response to the Vatican II directive that the laity be given a more active role in the Church, the history of the Franciscan family has had a long tradition of secular association. From its beginnings, Franciscans have provided the opportunity for non-vowed persons to live the spirituality of both St. Francis and St. Clare by involving the laity in their ministry. St. Francis believed the laity could attain an apostolic life by living according to the Gospel.

If you feel you are being called to be an Associate of our congregation, please contact Sister Barbara Zilch at sbzilch@osfprov.org or 412-559-7502.

Shaped by Providence (continued from page 6)

religious life in several high schools in the Pittsburgh and Greensburg Dioceses.

After receiving the Masters in December, I interviewed at Saint Ursula Parish in Allison Park, and was hired in February 2002 by Fr. Garrett Dorsey to serve as the parish's first Pastoral Associate. Interestingly enough, Fr. Dorsey shared with me that his family "watched over" the property at Grove and McRoberts Roads until the Sisters took possession of it in 1925—what a wonderful connection—another God-incidence. My 13+ year ministry at St. Ursula included training and scheduling Eucharistic ministers and altar servers, teaching in the RCIA program, and visiting the shut-ins. I also helped families prepare funerals for their loved ones, held vigil services in the funeral homes, and participated in nearly 500 funerals. This was truly a blessing and gift, as well as a great

preparation for my present ministry within hospice. Through this, my ministry came to include beginning a bereavement ministry, where two seven-week sessions were held each year in the Fall and Spring.

"Keep a clear eye toward life's end. Do not forget your purpose and destiny as God's creature. What you are in God's sight is what you are and nothing more. 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." (Attributed to St. Francis of Assisi)

In May 2016, what I refer to as "my third life"



Sister Janice regularly shares the Eucharist with our Sisters at Presbyterian Senior Care.

began as a Spiritual Care Counselor with Good Samaritan Hospice. All of the commuting to and fro during my teaching and pastoral ministry has been good road experience, since on some I'm in and out of the car for 3-4 hours traveling between patients. On occasion, I travel over 80 miles a day. My hospice experience first included a number of Concordia facilities in Pittsburgh's North Hills, as well as home-visits in Allegheny, Armstrong and Butler Counties. In February 2017, my territory switched to encompass Beaver County with a few treks up into Lawrence County.

Close to my home in Allison Park, I continue to visit two Allegheny County Concordia facilities, as well as facilitate a bereavement support group.

In my bereavement ministry, initial introduction to most patients and their families is by phone asking if they want Spiritual Care which is a benefit offered to all. Every Hospice must offer care which addresses the patient's physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs for those who have a life prognosis of six months or less if their diagnosed illness ran its normal course. Hospice care also helps a patient's families and caregivers. Each patient is assigned a team to address medical needs, home health care, social work needs and, in my role, the spiritual needs of the patient and their families. My responsibilities include visiting the Inpatient Hospice Unit (IPU) twice a week to be spiritual care counselor to our staff nurses at the unit. Our IPU is unique because of the often-short span of time patients remain alive once being admitted, some as short as 45 minutes.

Even though some visits are energy consuming, it is a blessing to be able to touch people's lives when they are at their most vulnerable. I have come to appreciate that there is only a thin veil between heaven and earth—not a chasm. With the grace of God, I am able to comfort both the living and the dying by offering a supportive presence, empathetic listening, and prayer to console and comfort.

Sometimes we who serve are comforted and consoled through offering hope in the midst of profoundly poignant moments in other people's lives. A challenge exists every day that I am ministering. One very profound moment was with a patient who was diagnosed with an ailment that not too long ago was feared as a "contemporary leprosy"—medical personnel were afraid and sometimes even refused to treat patients with this disease. Personally, I have a compromised immune system, and I admit that I hesitated a bit as to whether this visit would be a "hands on with gentle touch" while I spoke to and prayed with the patient. He was lying in his bed and there were secretions from his mouth running down his face and onto his shirt. I took a number of tissues and gently wiped his mouth as we spoke; he barely able, and then he gently took my hand and kissed it. St. Francis kissing the leper came into my mind and it was tough to hold back my tears. Some months after his death, his partner brought crosses made of olive wood from Jerusalem to be shared with other patients and families. The cross I picked up was the cross that I placed in my best friend's hand as she lay dying on Good Friday this past March. I said to her, as I share with many of my patients who are Christian, "You will be healed, made whole, transfigured and transformed in Christ, Jesus. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord show his face to you and be gracious to you, and may the Lord give you His peace!" (*Aaron's Blessing, Numbers 6:24-26*)

A Child-Centered Space to Learn & Grow

Franciscan Child Day Care Center & Logo Receive Makeover



For over three decades, Noah's Ark imagery has been represented in our Franciscan Child Day Care Center's logo and décor. Beyond the adorable animals, this theme represents our commitment to care for the children at our Center— just like Noah cared for those God entrusted to his safekeeping on the ark.

In July and August, our talented caregivers began a colorful and vibrant makeover of our hallways and classrooms. Caregiver Amy DeFalco painted a Noah's Ark mural in the main first floor hallway, as well as a peace dove, dolphin, duck, octopus, and other water-based animals on children's lockers that had previously been painted to look like waves. To the delight of the young toddlers in our Seal Room, artist and caregiver Joyce Sutton repainted the seal figures, as well as added colorful fish to a water themed wall. By the end of the year, all of our classrooms will sport bright, joyful and inviting animal

figures that will complement each classroom's unique educational and seasonal child-centered décor and art projects.

The outside of the Center also got a makeover with a resurfaced playground to maintain a soft play surface which helps us keep our children safe during outside playtime.

Our logo received a full color makeover in early June. Due to decades of evolving computer hardware and software, our original logo lost clarity and resolution that was especially noticeable when printed. Adding to this challenge, the only original print of our logo has been on display in our front office and faded over time. Needing the services of a professional, we sought the help of one of our Center's parents, Chris Moeller, a freelance graphic artist who also works for Giant Eagle Market District. Using a scan of the faded print, he was able to preserve the original design, brighten the colors, and create a high resolution graphic that meets modern requirements for printing and digital use.

Thank you to all our Franciscan Child Day Care Center caregivers for giving your time and talents to create and maintain a safe, nurturing, and child-centered space for the children entrusted to our care to learn and grow. We are also grateful to those who support our Center, including parents,

donors, volunteers, and all who participate in our fundraisers. Your generosity enables us to fund these and similar improvement projects, as well as purchase needed supplies, books, toys, and equipment.



Caregiver Amy DeFalco with the Noah's Ark mural she painted for the Franciscan Child Day Care Center.



For over 35 years, families in Pittsburgh have entrusted the Franciscan Child Day Care Center with the care of their precious children. Our Center offers full and part-time care programs for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years-old. We also offer a Before and After School Care Program for children in Kindergarten through 5th grade and a Summer Program for children Pre-Kindergarten through 2nd grade. For more information, please visit FranciscanChildDayCare.org, or contact the Center at fcdcc@osfprov.org or 412-882-5085

Caregiver Joyce Sutton introduces delighted youngsters in our Seal classroom to the fish mural she painted for the Center.



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