

Volume 24.2 Fall/Winter 2021

# NEWS

A Publication of  THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

## Setting an Eye on Our Future

Also in this issue:

- Catholic Health Services in the West: Continuing Our Legacy
- People & Places
- Foundation Annual Report

## Commitment Statement

We recommit ourselves to “rebuilding the Church” by living the passion of the Gospel in the discerning spirit of our Franciscan charism and tradition.

We are willing to take the necessary risks to be a healing, compassionate presence in our violent world, especially with women, children, and those who have no voice.

We desire to reflect this commitment in our dialogue with the entire Church, in our own governing structures, and in our relationship with one another as sister.

## Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, choose to live the Gospel in the prophetic spirit of Francis of Assisi and our Foundress Mother Francis Bachmann. With Jesus Christ as Brother, we live as sister with one another, with the entire human family, and with all creation. Calling ourselves and one another to continuous conversion of heart, we commit ourselves to a life of contemplation, poverty, and humility.

As vowed women of the Church, we respond with diverse gifts in a spirit of collaboration and of mutual service to the needs of others, especially the economically poor, the marginal, and the oppressed. Seeking to participate in the Spirit's action in the world, we direct our personal and corporate resources to the promotion of justice, peace, and reconciliation.

Filled with trust in the goodness of God, we move forward.

## POINT OF VIEW

*Be strong and courageous.  
Do not be disheartened,  
for I am with you  
wherever you go.*

Joshua 1.9

**T**he creativity and resilience of the human spirit give birth to hope and boundless possibilities for the world's people in desperate need to love and be loved.

*During the pandemic people of all generations longed to be connected to one another. Some seized the moment to focus on the plight of others. Passion to make a difference unleashed inspiration: Ways to distribute food that otherwise would have been wasted, to make gestures of appreciation for the service of frontline personnel, to communicate through Zoom, to find creative ways to relate to one another. Latent goodness activated hearts numbed by harrowing schedules. The pause Covid-19 demanded presented us with the gift of reassessing our values: What is really important? Who really matters? What can I do without? Needs—belonging; praying; doing something to make a relationship, a place, or a situation better—become the priority.*



**Sister Theresa Firenze, OSF  
Congregational Minister**

*This issue of Good News highlights the courage and fortitude of our first Sisters of St. Francis who, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, forged the way to improving health services on the West Coast. Focusing on what God was asking of them led them to change direction from education to health care. Their openness to God's design enabled the sisters to perceive the needs of the people, and the Franciscan Health System was born — a legacy of quality health care that continues to evolve. Sisters Anne McNamara and Jude Connelly build on the hopes and dedication of those who came before them. Prayer and discernment fuel their passion to meet the needs of people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Quality health care for all is a timeless right of all.*

*Our Congregational Chapter 2021 invites us, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia of today, to “do what is ours to do” (St. Francis). The challenge beckons us to supercharge OUR LIFE TOGETHER, to contribute faithfully to our SUSTAINABILITY, and to awaken the gifts of LEADERSHIP within each of us to explore avenues that will heighten our interconnectedness with our sisters and brothers and with all of creation.*

*Let us ponder the role each of us is called to take. Ask yourself:*

- *What are the Covid challenges/crosses and lessons that I am called to embrace?*
- *What is my passion?*
- *What can I do to make today better for someone?*

*May God bless you always and in all ways!*

*Theresa Firenze, OSF*





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Written by Sara McDermott  
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The purpose of *Good News* is to further the Gospel mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia by sharing the good news of the congregation with our friends, family, companions, and sisters. Through this publication, we hope to share the charism of our congregation and invite others to become involved in our mission.

*Good News* is published twice per year (spring/summer and fall/winter) by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. We welcome your feedback and comments; correspondence should be addressed to *Good News* at the address above.

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*On the cover: Sisters Donna Desien and Patricia Hutchison both attend the chapter with the aim to revitalize the spiritual, communal, and ministerial life of the congregation and help decide the direction for the future.*



▲ *More than 140 sisters traveled from near and far to convene and shape the future of the congregation. Their work included electing new leadership, which is generally done every six years but was postponed due to Covid-19. Those who were unable to attend in person could take part via livestreaming.*



# Setting an Eye on Our Future

✧ A CONGREGATIONAL CHAPTER IS AN ENGAGING AND ENLIGHTENING EXPERIENCE; IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR BONDING, REFLECTION, AND ACTION.

The value of taking time to reflect on life and connect with those we care about is undeniable. We all can take opportunities to contemplate where we've been and what our goals are for the future. Such shared insight is vital to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia in helping to prioritize what is most important. And so regularly, according to their constitutions, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia hold a Congregational Chapter meeting as a time for retrospection and goal setting. It is a time for gathering as a congregation, reflecting on what has been accomplished, pondering the challenges faced, and discerning how to move forward in the future. "It's a sacred, strategic, and social time," says Sister Patricia Smith, a former congregational council member, "a meeting of the minds and hearts of sisters."

Although the Congregational Chapter typically takes place approximately every six years, this past time around was different due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The meeting, originally scheduled for June

2020, was postponed until November 2020, and then postponed again until May 2021. Meeting virtually was not an option because, according to canon law, the event requires a physical gathering of the community. Finally chapter was possible, and on May 21-24, a somewhat limited number of sisters gathered in the Mirenda



*Sister Kathy Dougherty, who has been leading the congregation for the past seven years as congregational minister, gave a moving speech as she welcomed in the newly elected leadership team. Sister Kathy served an extra year in her role due to Covid-19.*



*Our new congregational minister, Sister Theresa Firenze, was professed in 1976 and served as the principal of St. Catherine of Bologna School in Ringwood for 25 years. She also ministered as a caregiver, a tutor, and a spiritual director. She began her new role in July 2021 and, referring to her new responsibilities, remarks, "I trust that I will know what God is asking of me and God's Providence will take care of the rest."*

Center at Neumann University, in Aston, Pennsylvania.

While the 2014 chapter gathering saw about 300 attendees, this time around, due to social-distancing and travel restrictions, the event consisted of about 145 sisters. Additionally, the meeting, typically lasting a week, was shortened to four days, and evening gatherings and activities had to be foregone. Despite such limitations, an air of excitement still hung over the proceedings as sisters were eager to see each other and focus on the congregation.

## Adjusting in a Challenging Year

Postponing the event and making other technical adjustments weren't the only ways in which the pandemic impacted the sisters. According to Sister Arlene McDonough, the chair of the 2020/2021 Chapter Planning Committee, the sisters have been led to reevaluate the meaning of key terms such as "relationship."

The relationship the sisters have with each other and with the rest of the world is often a focal point at chapter meetings,

but throughout this past year in relative isolation, "relationship" became something different from what it was in the past. Even when people can't be together in person, the concept of relationship still carries significance. It's important to reflect on that significance so that all relationships—including virtual ones—may be served in all of their forms.

Additionally, a big challenge that Sister Arlene and the planning committee faced was deciding how to engage membership and keep them interested in preparation

*continued on page 6*



*Approximately 145 sisters gathered in the Mirenda Center of Neumann University in Aston, Pennsylvania, for a time of both reflection and connection. Even though attendance was limited due to social distancing and travel restrictions, it did not diminish the positive attitude and overall excitement of the sisters.*

So many sisters were absolutely joyous to be reunited with their fellow sisters. The pandemic has taken an emotional toll on many, and this very active community of women is no exception. The group thrived when finally brought together during the days of chapter, dedicating themselves to charting their future and deepening their commitment to life as sisters.



▲ (L-R) Sisters Maureen Duignan, Elizabeth Patricia Murphy, and Ann Marie Slavin, all professed as Sisters of St. Francis in 1962, enjoy the chance to visit and reminisce with each other prior to the start of chapter. As executive director of the East Bay Sanctuary in California, Sister Maureen has done extensive work with immigrants. Sister Elizabeth, recently deceased, received the Bishop Dorsey Award for Distinguished Service to Catholic Education for her work at St. John Vianney School in Orlando, Florida. Sister Ann Marie recently transitioned from her long-time role as associate director of communications into retirement and plans to continue to minister through poetry writing and other opportunities at Assisi House in Aston, Pennsylvania.

“WE LOOK AT WHERE WE’VE BEEN AND WHAT WE SEE FOR THE FUTURE. WE ASK IF WE HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL TO OUR VALUES AND EVALUATE HOW WE CONTINUE TO IMPROVE ON THAT.”



▲ Sisters Moira Frawley and Guadalupe Medina share a hug. Sister Moira volunteers at St. Mary Medical Center in Langhorne, Pennsylvania. Sister Guadalupe has ministered in Oregon for the past 15 years and currently uses her bilingual skills to serve as spiritual assistant to the Secular Franciscans.

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for chapter despite the two postponements. A key factor in maintaining enthusiasm was encouraging sisters to use this time for additional reflection. Given the specific struggles of the past year, this year’s gathering carried a much more profound awareness of the importance of maintaining relationships and communication with one another.

## Visions for the Future

There are two main parts to every Congregational Chapter: discussing the issues that are presented and then holding elections for the next term’s leadership. Chapter is really “a self-evaluation and overall planning session combined,” Sister Arlene explains. “We look at where we’ve been and what we see for the future. We ask if we have been faithful to our values and evaluate how we continue to improve on that. Then after dealing with our affairs of life, we elect a new leadership team and

they have direction from what we’ve talked about as they’re beginning their plan for their term.” The 2021 chapter meeting focused on four primary directives: Our Lives Together, Legacy, Sustainability, and Leadership. All four issues are closely related to the reality and trending of an aging congregation, with the median age for an American sister now in the 80s.

In addition to the emotional toll that goes along with these hard conversations and decision-making sessions, there are a number of other practical concerns. Fewer sisters and more retired sisters mean that income has been lost while expenses have risen. The need to care for aging members is expanding, as is a sense of urgency in understanding the best ways to engage with the larger world. All of this heightens the need to act.

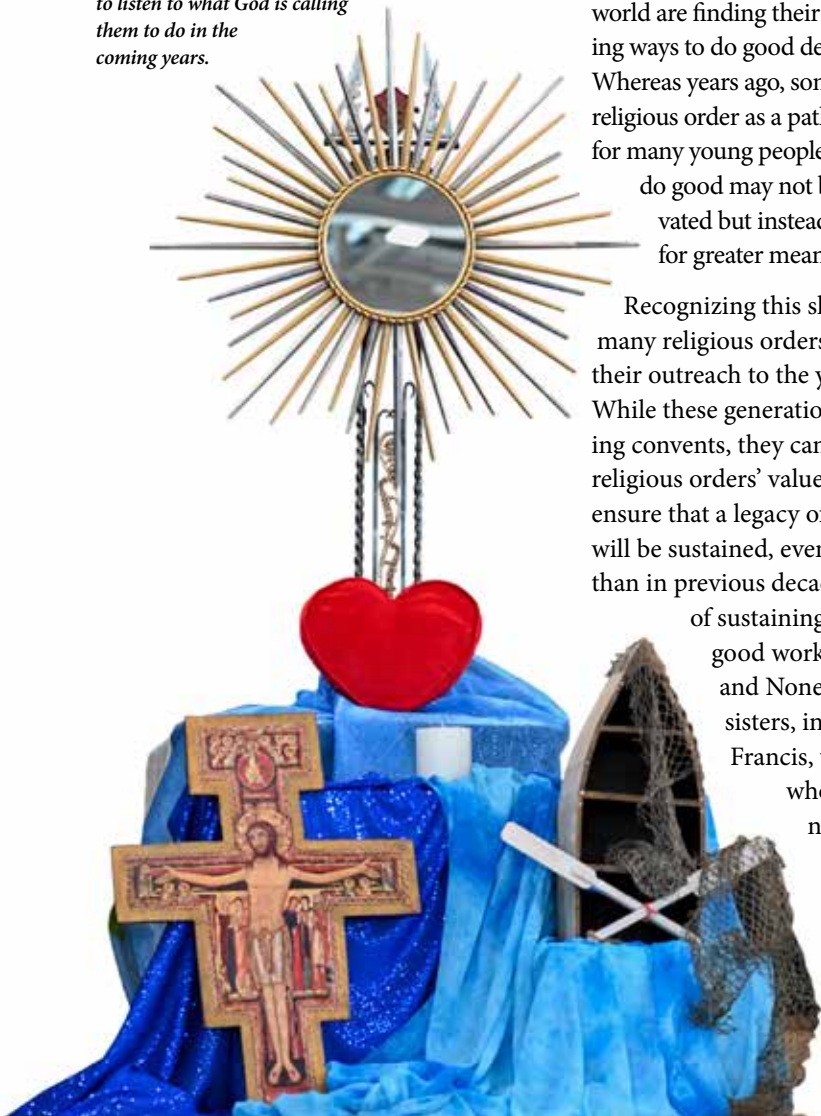
“What’s been dramatically influenced by recent years’ experience is the interconnectivity of all the issues,” says Sister Arlene, “our interconnectedness with the larger





▲ For a Congregational Chapter with the theme Row with Your Heart, prayer and the Gospel are the anchors for our discussions and exploration. The time together is steeped in rituals and faith, interspersed with moments of singing God's praise and with reflection and gratitude. In the photographs here, Sister Kathleen Flood chimes the opening bowl bell, Sister Andrea Likovich leads the choir, and Sister Martha Pooler folds her hands in prayer.

Symbolism is heavily used to inspire reflection among sisters. The theme Row with Your Heart, evidenced by the addition of a rowboat to this display, reminded sisters to listen to what God is calling them to do in the coming years.



world and our place in it, our awareness that membership is declining and that we need to look to the younger generation to carry the torch. Younger women continue to inquire about becoming Sisters of St. Francis and are being accompanied by our sisters as they discern their call to religious life. However, in addition, the youth of our world are finding their own voices and finding ways to do good deeds in their own way. Whereas years ago, someone might join a religious order as a pathway to doing good, for many young people today, the desire to do good may not be religiously motivated but instead stem from a search for greater meaning."

Recognizing this shift is prompting many religious orders to expand and vary their outreach to the younger generations. While these generations may not be joining convents, they can still carry on the religious orders' values. This reality can ensure that a legacy of doing God's work will be sustained, even if it looks different than in previous decades. An example of sustaining a legacy of doing good work is the group Nuns and Nones, which connects sisters, including Sisters of St. Francis, with young people who, while they may not have a religious affiliation, still want to do good works that closely align with religious values. As Sister

Arlene explains, the sisters are sharing their legacy. "It's different, yet not different," she says, "just served up differently."

When thinking about this route to continuity, Sister Arlene likes to refer to a quote from St. Francis: "Preach the gospel always, and when necessary, use words." This principle encompasses the value of mentoring. By letting younger generations simply see who they are and what they value, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia can impact the future.

## A Day in the Life of Chapter

What does a day during a Congregational Chapter typically look like? The time spent together is prayerful and deliberate. The chapter space is broken down much like for any other conference or meeting, with round tables, podiums, and presentations, but the air during chapter is one of contemplation and spiritual awareness, an awareness that carries the weight of the future and legacy of the congregation. Congregational Chapter 2021 opened on Friday with a beautifully prepared prayerful ritual and time for reflection along with a presentation on the journey to chapter and beyond.

In the hours and days that followed, when there was not active decision-making discussion among the small groups of sisters at tables or with the entire group at large, there was silence in the meeting space set for deep contemplation.

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The gifts and talents the sisters share with their local communities in their individual ministries bring a wide array of perspective and a wealth of knowledge to the work required at chapter. For example, (Top L-R) Sister Ronnie Grier is an educator with Camden County Educational Commission, and Sister Nancy Lamey volunteers with the elderly at Immaculate Mary Home.

Middle row: (L-R) Sister Nora Nash, director of corporate social responsibility, is often recognized for her role in taking on major corporations; Sister Jude Connelly volunteers in social service at St. Francis House in Puyallup, Washington; Sister Margaret (Peggy) Egan, former administrator of Assisi House, talks business with Sister Deborah Krist, director of the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation.

Bottom row: (L-R) Sister Marie Lucey is a former congregational minister and is director of advocacy and congregational outreach with Franciscan Action Network. Sister Rose Raymond Barba serves as assistant administrator at Assisi House.



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While the sessions were livestreamed for sisters unable to attend, to allow them to follow along and join in the reflection, the sisters in attendance, otherwise known as “chapter delegates,” were, as in every Congregational Chapter, the only sisters permitted to cast votes. Voting is a task that the sisters take very seriously. The 145 attendees at this year’s Congregational Chapter represented the entire congregation. The group voted on changes to the constitutions of the

congregation, voted on the congregation’s direction for the next five years, and elected new leadership—no small feat. One decision from Congregational Chapter 2021 was opting to have chapter every five years instead of six.

## Electing New Leadership

Whatever goals are uncovered during exploration of a chapter agenda, no progress can be made without strong leadership. This is why the second major purpose of a Congregational Chapter meeting is to hold elections.

Since this year’s meeting was postponed from June 2020, the nominees for leadership positions waited a full year and a half for the elections to take place. Prior to a Congregational Chapter, nominated sisters receive an invitation to a discernment meeting where they have the chance to reflect on whether taking on a leadership role is something they’re currently being



▼ The event culminated in the introduction of our new leadership team, who were anointed by the outgoing team and blessed by the entire congregation with the “Blessing of St. Francis.” The sisters face many challenges in the years ahead but are more than up to the task! New leadership team: (L-R) Sisters Theresa Marie Firenze, congregational minister, Celeste Crine, assistant congregational minister, Marian Leaf, Florence Marie Hee, and Karen Pourby.



called to do. After the meeting takes place, nominees have the option to remove their name from the list. In advance of the 2021 Congregational Chapter, approximately 40 sisters were nominated and 14 chose to stay in the process.

While in session, the Congregational Chapter is the highest authority and governing body of the congregation. This group elects the congregational minister and council members to carry on their work, transferring the group’s authority to the leadership team, who will then delegate responsibilities.

At the conclusion of this year’s chapter, the outgoing leadership team impressed the attendees with a lively performance. Reflecting the 2021 Congregational Chapter theme of *Row with Your Heart*, they donned sailor caps and ties and sang three original farewell songs set to popular music. After the fun was over, the outgoing team received a standing ovation in appreciation for their dedication over the past seven years.

The outgoing congregational minister, Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, anointed

the newly elected leadership team with oil and handed her role to Sister Theresa Marie Firenze. Joining Sister Theresa Marie on the incoming leadership team are Sister Celeste Crine, who will serve as assistant congregational minister; Sister Marian Patrice Leaf; Sister Florence Hee; and Sister Karen Pourby.

Sister Kathy Dougherty expressed her support and appreciation to the congregation’s new leaders: “We are blessed by this newly elected leadership team. These sisters bring a wealth of experience, years of commitment, and deep faith to guide them as they lead us into the future. We warmly welcome them and offer them our love, support, and prayers.”

## Looking Forward

A Congregational Chapter is an engaging and enlightening experience; it is an opportunity for bonding, reflection, and action. Sisters walk away feeling refreshed, renewed, and recommitted to their mission.

It is truly a time for the sisters to see what the future is calling them to do. As Sister

# HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- **Reflect on your life.** Just as the sisters do, designate time to reflect on your life, assess the challenges that lie before you, and tune in to what needs to be done. Before anything can be accomplished, we all first need to gain a greater understanding of ourselves, the world around us, and our place within that world.
- **Row with your heart.** In keeping with the theme of the chapter meeting, tune in to what you’re being called to do by your higher power. Perhaps there are talents you’ve yet to express or causes you’ve yet to fight for.
- **Gather with loved ones.** Reflection is only one half of the equation; the other half is gathering with the people who are most important to you so you can look to the future together and collectively plan your next steps. By supporting one another, working together, and connecting with each other, you can make greater strides.
- **Support the Sisters of St. Francis.** By donating to the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation, you help us to help others through our ministries and allow us to continue our legacy.
- **Join a group that represents your values.** If you are not part of a religious order, consider joining a group such as Nuns and Nones so you can offer your time and talent in the name of values that you support.

Pat Smith explains, “This doesn’t mean living in the future. It means living in the now, but envisioning what could be.” Then, the sisters take steps toward that vision as a community, “rowing with their hearts.” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

# PEOPLE & PLACES

► (L-R) Sisters Jean Rupertus, Nora Nash, Kate O'Donnell, Miriam Eileen Murray, and Marian Leaf represented the Sisters of St. Francis at a protest against the Covanta incinerator.



## PENNSYLVANIA

On Saturday, April 24, five Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and eight members of St. John Chrysostom Parish in Wallingford participated in a march/walk/caravan protest led by **Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living (CRCQL)** and directed against the Covanta incinerator located in Chester, Pennsylvania. As CRCQL Chairperson Zulene Mayfield explains, "Chester residents do not have justice as the largest trash incinerator in the nation pollutes our air. And air doesn't just stay in one place. It affects all of us."

The Energy Justice Network ([energyjustice.net](http://energyjustice.net)) emphasizes the harm inflicted by incinerators: "In fact, trash incinerators are the most expensive and polluting way to manage waste or to make energy—dirtier than coal power plants, and dirtier than landfills... They release pollutants like nitrogen oxides, lead, mercury, and dioxin that contribute to [numerous] health problems."

To improve the health of the children and adults of our region, CRCQL and other concerned groups and individuals will continue to work to prevent Covanta from renewing its contract in 2022.

## PENNSYLVANIA

Each year the Sisters of St. Francis hold their annual **Service Awards Ceremony**. Due to Covid-19, this year we honored our 2020 and 2021 awardees together at our April 29 celebration. The event's theme was "Mutual Relationship." Sister Kathy Dougherty opened the ceremony by observing that "Relationship is at the heart of the lives of Sts. Francis and Clare." Sister Kathy asked everyone present to join in thanking our award recipients and all of our employees for the special relationship we have established with them and they have established with us.

During the ceremony, the outgoing leadership team members were celebrated for their enormous contributions and service over the past seven years. The honorees for the 2020 and the 2021 Charism Award—given each year to a person who exemplifies Franciscan values and charism—were John Walsh, from information services, and Roseanne Bittner, administrative assistant to leadership. The Assisi House Charism Award honoree for 2020 was James McGuire, from food services. For 2021 the committee chose Assisi House nurses Hanh-My Lay and Martha Dwomoh, who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to keep our sisters safe.



The 2020 and 2021 Service Award recipients line up to process into Our Lady of Angels Chapel.

## Who are the 'Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia'?

Through this section we hope to share a glimpse of our congregation and the individuals who make real its mission.





Portland companions (L to R) Lauralie Haikin, Nancilee Baker, Michelle Kroll, and Linda Smith provided a very special Easter treat for the sisters at Assisi House. Each sister received a handmade Easter card. Inside each card was a special greeting and a sweet treat.

## CALIFORNIA

**Sister Maria Anna (Peaches) Dela Paz** is one of three sisters profiled in a July 11, 2021, article in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, "For Three Nuns, Answering God's Call Meant Finally Finding Their Home," by Sandi Dolbee. The article stresses that for women joining a religious community, engagement with the world and commitment to their community are both central. As the article notes, declining numbers do not equate to a loss of opportunities and relevance for those called to religious life. Sister Peaches, who is the program coordinator for the University of San Diego's Center of Student Success, explains in the article, "They [new sisters from several orders] are a huge support and a place of hope for me because we can really express our hopes and dreams for religious life. We love this life and we want it to continue." Sister Peaches professed her first vows on August 10, 2019, in Our Lady of Angels Chapel.



## PENNSYLVANIA

**Sister Marguerite O'Beirne** recently retired after 50 years in Catholic education administration, including 25 years at Neumann University. After taking a month off to go back to Ireland, Sister Marguerite plans to return to Neumann but not in the same role. The university put out a wonderful tribute video on YouTube stating, "Her role may be changing, but her impact will always be present at Neumann University." You can watch the touching video here: [https://youtu.be/3imrx6\\_nO2A](https://youtu.be/3imrx6_nO2A).

## PENNSYLVANIA

**Sister Margaret Xavier Romans** was acknowledged in the *St. Anthony Messenger* a few years back for her designing and creating prayer pillows for those who are sick or in difficult situations. This summer she completed and sent off her 1000<sup>th</sup> pillow. Sister Margaret explains in the article, "This ministry is the outgrowth of just being aware of the needs of others and using something as simple as a pillow to let the other person know that he or she is not alone but is held in prayer in a special way." The pillow-making process is a very thought-out one. She chooses a fabric in the person's favorite color, attaches a cross-stitched block with the person's name and its meaning, and sends the pillow along with a personalized card. Sister Margaret stated, "Having a ministry that reaches so many and which has brought so much joy and consolation is a dream come true. I hope and pray that others will come up with their own version of a way to reach out to those in need." Her 999<sup>th</sup> and 1000<sup>th</sup> pillows went to relatives of Sister Bernie Brazil, whose grandniece was born early.

Sister Margaret Xavier shows off her 999<sup>th</sup> and 1000<sup>th</sup> pillow made.



This image and the annual corporate report on our website highlight some of the over 100 corporate engagements that took place over the past 12 months by Sister Nora Nash and our Corporate Social Responsibility Office.

## NATIONWIDE

The 2020-21 annual report from the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia's Office of **Corporate Social Responsibility** (CSR) highlights some of CSR's more than 100 recent corporate engagements. As the CSR annual report explains, "The coronavirus didn't interfere with these engagements; in fact, it heightened the need for engagement across most lines of business and challenged corporations to address the very core of their existence." In their interactions with corporations, CSR has been working tirelessly and with meaningful progress in areas including—but not limited to—improving human rights, counteracting climate change, stopping human trafficking, safeguarding workers, improving product safety, reducing violence and war, implementing health equity and food justice, and promoting racial equity. The full annual report is available on our website: <https://osfphila.org/corporate-social-responsibility/corporate-engagement/>.

# Catholic Health Services in the West: Continuing Our



*The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have always prioritized serving and advocating for those who are poor and underserved. As early as the 1890s, they headed west to found St. Joseph Hospital, the first Catholic hospital in Tacoma, Washington (above left). St. Elizabeth Hospital (above center) in Baker City, Oregon, was next, in 1897, and St. Anthony Hospital (above right) in Pendleton, Oregon, followed in 1902.*



*St. Joseph's in Tacoma, Washington, was later razed and rebuilt. A new, updated building, St. Joseph Medical Center, now stands in its place.*

**T**he first Sisters of St. Francis to move to the West Coast traveled across the country by horse and buggy along sparse dirt roads. They arrived in Oregon tired and weary. Originally these pioneer sisters were sent as educators. As time went on, however, the need for quality health care became evident. In 1891, Mother Agnes Bucher sent Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia to found St. Joseph Hospital, the first Catholic hospital in Tacoma, Washington. The sisters continued expanding the congregation's health-care ministry into the West. They opened St. Elizabeth Hospital in Baker City in 1897 and St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton in 1902. Thus began the legacy of the Sisters of St. Francis in what would become Franciscan Health System-West.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> century continued, lay personnel joined the sisters in shared ministry and began to assume administrative and management roles in many of the Franciscan hospitals. In 1984, the Sisters

of St. Francis of Philadelphia formed the Franciscan Health System by combining their hospitals from both coasts. There was further integration when, in May 1996, leaders from ten congregations of women religious combined their health systems into one—officially uniting Catholic Health Corporation, Franciscan Health System, and Sisters of Charity Health Care System into Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI).

## Ongoing Presence

*Advocacy, stewardship, and community benefits:* These are the three pillars that Sisters Anne McNamara and Jude Connelly, OSF, identify as the core of the Franciscan legacy in health care. Both sisters are on the Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI) Franciscan Regional Board. These three pillars are critical for the ongoing mission of advocating for those who are poor and underserved. While the Franciscan health-care system



“THE SISTERS REMIND US THAT AT THE  
ROOT OF OUR CURE IS OUR CARE FOR  
THE HUMAN PERSON.”

# Legacy



*Uli H. Chi, as the board chairperson for newly formed Virginia Mason Franciscan Health, is going to lead the Franciscan Health System into the future. He vows to continue to prioritize the sisters' long-standing mission of serving the underserved and believes that "in many ways the Franciscans embody the best of what health care is about."*



*The sisters were early champions of advances in x-ray technology, clinical pathology, anesthesia and surgery, hydrotherapy, and breathing technologies such as this iron lung in use at St. Anthony's Hospital in Pendleton, Oregon. Later they became advocates for innovative intensive care, renal dialysis, burn care, and open heart surgery.*

has gone through many iterations over the years, these ideals, along with a devotion to providing quality care, have stayed at the heart of what the Sisters of St. Francis value. Stewardship, for example, supports the allocation of resources to the health of the individual and benefits the local community by partnering with community member organizations for the health of the entire community.

In health care, “focus on clinical quality sometimes supersedes compassion for the other person,” says Uli H. Chi, board chairperson for newly formed Virginia Mason Franciscan Health and former board chairperson of CHI Franciscan Health System. “The sisters remind us that at the root of our cure is our care for the human person.” Indeed, compassion and empathy remain central to the mission. The goal is to serve anyone, regardless of race, creed, color,



or income: “Anyone in need,” Sister Jude emphasizes. The sisters also emphasize that they as a congregation seek to serve “persons who are poor,” whether materially poor or poor in body, mind, or spirit. To that end, the preventative and community projects that CHI Franciscan has spearheaded aim to encourage people who are happier, healthier, and safer.

## Pioneers in Health Care

CHI Franciscan has long been a pioneer in medical advancement and quality care.

“People need to understand the history,” says Uli Chi. “The sisters were delivering health care in Washington State when it was the Wild West. They were also the ones who first championed advances in the medical field, such as x-rays.” Other advances championed by the Sisters of St. Francis in the early days include clinical pathology, surgery, anesthesia, hydrotherapy, and later innovative intensive care, renal dialysis, burn care, and open heart surgery. “It was a very forward-thinking, progressive approach,” Uli acknowledges.

*continued on page 14*

*continued from page 13*

That forward-thinking approach continues to this day as CHI Franciscan has implemented innovative responses in remote patient monitoring, telemedicine, preventative care, and community outreach.

“The sisters have a longstanding commitment to preventing violence,” says Doug Baxter-Jenkins, the community integration program manager for CommonSpirit Health, the parent company of CHI Franciscan. Continuing this commitment, CHI Franciscan has been funding anti-violence programs for the past 12 years, allowing time enough for true progress.

were addressing domestic-violence issues, yet there was a real lack of resources to address violence in schools. “Urban areas had more resources,” Doug notes, “but the suburban area between Tacoma and Seattle was a blind spot.”

In response, a social- and emotional-learning curriculum was developed to address school and emotional violence. The curriculum has expanded to all middle schools and has been a great success, with expulsion and suspension rates dropping by about 58%. This reduction has been life altering for students who might

to address those issues as well. Help and attention flow in the direction of greatest need. CHI Franciscan’s programs on human trafficking prevention are particularly powerful as they’re led by human trafficking survivors.

Beyond staff members, people in the community are able to spearhead many initiatives. CHI Franciscan provides the community members with resources so they can make improving life for their communities their full-time work. For example, one woman founded the program Phenomenal She, dedicated to helping young women of color build life skills and attain well-being. Another program raised awareness about the importance for women of yearly mammograms and made this service accessible to all.

## Coming Together

Helping to enable CHI Franciscan to continue its good work is its recent merger with Virginia Mason, another Washington-based health system. Most recently, CHI Franciscan and parent company CommonSpirit Health, along with Virginia Mason, have formed Virginia Mason Franciscan Health.

Uli Chi is able to observe the new merger from the unique vantage point of having been on the other side of the table. Years ago, when he was on the board of Highline Medical Center, a secular institution, he learned that they were to merge with CHI Franciscan. Understandably, there were concerns over the blending of a secular and a Catholic institution. But after much research into potential partners, the board at Highline Medical Center determined that CHI Franciscan was most aligned with their core values. “In many ways the Franciscans embody the best of what health care is about,” says Uli. “They set the bar high for the rest of us.”

There is currently significant pushback in Washington State over the fact that much of the state’s health care has a Catholic affiliation. The central question people are asking is why a mostly secular region should entrust their health care to Catholic insti-



*(L-R) Sisters Jude Connelly, Christine Still, Anne McNamara, Margaret Whalen, and Patricia Jane Walsh (seated, since deceased) attend a CHI Franciscan hospital dedication ceremony in the Tacoma area. The sisters are happy to be a part of the long-standing history of bringing the latest and greatest medical services to the Tacoma area.*

“[Great change] doesn’t happen in year one of implementation,” Doug says. “You spend years doing infrastructure to make a real difference.”

To determine the projects on which to focus, Sister Anne says, “You look at what the needs are in the community,” a view that Doug echoes. “What works in Tacoma might not work in Dakota,” he says, discussing the need to research and uncover the pressing issues in each area. For example, in the Tacoma area, other agencies

otherwise have jeopardized their education had they not further developed their social and emotional health. One teenager who had spent much of his middle and high school years in a juvenile detention center was able to participate in CHI Franciscan-funded programs upon his release. He remarked that, had the programs been available earlier, he likely wouldn’t have spent time in a detention facility.

When gun violence and human trafficking began to increase, programs were created





*Sister Marie Monica Borden (pictured here; now deceased) worked as a patient visitor at St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton, Oregon, for many years. Sister Monica was continuing a 118-year tradition of the Sisters of St. Francis serving at St. Anthony's, a rural hospital located at the base of the Blue Mountains in eastern Oregon. In 1901, four sisters began caring for patients in a large, two-story Victorian house on the property of St. Joseph Academy (see page 12).*

tutions. The very things that the objectors most care about, however, such as social justice and care for the disenfranchised, are the very things the sisters have been championing since well before the rise of formal movements around these causes.

## The Benefits Continue

In addition to the close alignment of CHI Franciscan and Virginia Mason values, other core benefits made this merger a natural fit. The Franciscans needed a partner in Seattle in order to provide patients with greater access to care. Not having a partner in the state's largest city was a huge disadvantage, and building a new hospital from the ground up was impractical. By merging with Virginia Mason, CHI Franciscan has a much wider array of resources to draw upon, making care much more accessible and attainable for those in need.

On their side, Virginia Mason lacked the geographic reach and clinical scope of CHI Franciscan. In particular, they did not have an obstetrics unit. CHI Franciscan's obstetrics unit was exemplary, so before the decision on a more formal partnership was made, there was a test partnership to see if

they could work together to provide obstetric care. Beginning there, both sides were able to work through any differences that arose. The result was a plan that the archbishop was able to approve. "We worked together despite our differences and did it with great respect for, and honoring of, the concerns of both sides," says Uli.

## The Legacy Continues

Uli Chi is aware that the average age of sisters has risen and that in the future, sisters may not be able to continue to further their health-care legacy directly. He is deeply committed to ensuring a pipeline that will allow the legacy to continue. Even if things change in the future, "this [health-care system] should still embody the hopes and dreams and expectations and values and commitments of the sisters—that should not be lost," he says. One thing is certain: the landscape of health care in Washington would not be what it is today without the relentless determination of the Sisters of St. Francis. Their mission has been and is a sacred one.

"Through healing, the presence of God is known," says Sister Jude. "A person, when healed, will innately know God's presence." ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

## HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- **Be a pioneer.** Just as the sisters were pioneers in the 1800s, bringing health care to areas that desperately needed it, think about how you can be a pioneer in your own community. Look for those "blind spots" where people are being underserved and advocate for better programs and change.
- **Remember compassion.** In health care, as in other things, it can sometimes be easy to forget that compassion for another person should be at the root of all we do. Remember to practice compassion for all human beings, regardless of your line of work.
- **Promote the sisters' legacy.** Visit <https://www.chifranciscan.org/our-foundations.html> to learn about the foundations that comprise the philanthropic arm of Virginia Mason Franciscan Health. Consider donating to the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation to help us to help others through our ministries and allow us to continue our legacy.

# What's New With Mother Seton Academy



▲ *Mother Seton Academy challenges their students to realize their God-given talents and become leaders who serve their families, communities, and society.*

✠ COMMITMENT TO SERVICE TO THOSE WHO ARE POOR CONTINUES TO BE A DISTINCTIVE ELEMENT OF MSA'S MISSION.

So much has happened in the life of Mother Seton Academy, one of our cosponsored ministries, since the school was last featured in *Good News*, in 2004. Having outgrown its setting in the former convent at St. Stanislaus in historic Fells Point, in 2009 Mother Seton Academy (MSA) relocated to the former St. Ann School on Greenmount Avenue in Baltimore, Maryland. With the support of generous donors and benefactors, administrators were able to bring the 1923 building into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Natural lighting and bright colors create a warm and welcoming environment. Students take pride in

the school and have regular chores to help maintain the new-school feel.

In 2015 the empty space that had been the site of the parish convent between the church and the school was converted into a peace garden, creating a place of beauty and tranquility in a very busy urban setting. The garden was developed during the time of uprising after the death of Freddie Gray. The school's strong Franciscan roots have guided their commitment to being peacemakers and responsible stewards of creation.

In December 2019, the construction of a gymnasium for the school was completed. In addition to a regulation-size basketball court, the building also houses a community room that is used for music classes during the day and for meetings of neighboring community groups at other times. Additional garden space also adds to the beauty and peace of the setting. Furthermore, solar panels were installed on the roof of the new building as a source of green energy to respond to the challenges of climate change. Technology connected to panels creates opportunities for real-life science education.

Moving to the new setting has made it possible to significantly grow the enrollment at MSA to 84 students. The school continues to serve sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in small classes—having no more than 15 students in a class. The school also boasts dedicated space for computer and



► Construction of the new gymnasium was completed in December 2019 and subsequently dedicated and named for Msgr. Joseph Raley.

science labs as well as a library and art and music classrooms.

What remains unchanged at MSA is the commitment to building a faith-based community among students, staff, and families. Each day starts and ends with prayer as the students gather in the assembly hall. Prayer and mindfulness exercises create an atmosphere of peace throughout the day. Each of the homerooms is named in honor of founders of the six sponsoring congregations. Special school-wide prayers celebrate their foundation dates and special feasts such as that of St. Francis.

Although there are no Franciscan sisters present daily in the building, several play an important part in the life of the school. Sister Anne Hefner is actively engaged though her role on the board of directors. Sister Karen Pourby represents the congregation on the school's board of members. Their leadership and support keep the Franciscan charism alive as part of the mission and vision of the school. Sister Ruth Goodwin and the sponsorship office provide resources to support education in the Franciscan tradition.

Commitment to service to those who are poor continues to be a distinctive element



of MSA's mission. The students themselves and their families are encouraged to participate in service programs in the broader community. Even though Covid-19 has restricted some opportunities for outreach, students have designed cards and letters to bring words of hope and caring to others in the area.

Although the virus has changed much of everyday life, MSA has been quite proud of its resiliency. In March 2020, students and staff responded quickly and effectively to the challenges of remote learning. Donors and benefactors supplied needed technology for remote instruction and personal protective equipment (PPE) for the eventual return of students to the school building. Although long-established traditions such as graduation could not be celebrated in person, efforts were made to find ways to honor the graduates and their achievements. Faculty worked to maintain community through virtual connections. The goal was always



▲ Sister Margaret (Peggy) Juskelis, principal of Mother Seton Academy, presents the Founder's Award to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia.

to return to being a community in the school building. Efforts at different models of hybrid learning faced challenges from recurring infection in the broader community. Future planning looks hopefully to a full return to school.

MSA is especially proud of the holistic growth of its students. During their time at the school, they grow academically, physically, socially, and spiritually. Beauty nourishes their spirit and encourages them to be environmentally responsible. The school's mission statement focuses and guides the students' daily actions. In part it states, "Promoting dignity and respect for each person, Mother Seton Academy challenges its students to realize their God-given talents and become leaders who serve their families, communities, and society." ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

◀ (L-R) Mother Seton Academy Board of Directors member Sister Anne Patrice Hefner and principal Sister Margaret (Peggy) Juskelis are joined by Sisters Kathryn Dougherty, Ruth Bernadette O'Connor, Margaret Xavier Romans, and Marie Colette Gerry, who accepted the Founder's Award from Mother Seton Academy.



# SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

*Everyone has within a piece of good news.*

— Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org)

## Dear Friends,



Peace and all good!

*“Love and charity are service: helping others, serving others. . .*

*When you forget yourself and think of others, this is love.”*

— Pope Francis

Our Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia Foundation Annual Report for 2020 is the story of your deep generosity and commitment to our mission. We pray that you and your family are well. The year was filled with challenges from the Covid-19 pandemic, yet you did not allow these hardships to turn you away from supporting our ministries for your neighbors everywhere, including the elder care for our retired sisters.

Preparing this report has given me a deeply meaningful opportunity to reflect on the ways your gifts are truly changing lives. Through your support for our ministries, you are serving others—expressing love that is improving life for many. You help to make possible such ministries as those now easing the suffering of abuse victims, refugee families, and the poor. For example, during even the darkest months of the pandemic, Anna's Place in Chester, Pennsylvania, continued to help its neighbors by giving food and other necessities. Supported by your gifts, we also work on behalf of social justice near and far. And the care we provide for our retired sisters, who have given their lives in service to others, is more complete because of you.

Bill Fegley, who serves as the board chair for the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation, speaks for many of us in saying, “I am humbled and filled with gratitude because of your generous and faithful support of the ministries and needs of the sisters, including their elder care. Together we advance the Franciscan mission and spread the Gospel message of love to our brothers and sisters.”

Without you, much of what we do would not be possible. I hope that as you read this report, you will see in your mind the many whose lives you are touching through your contributions and your belief in our Franciscan mission and ministries. You are truly living the Gospel, loving “your neighbor as yourself.”

With gratitude and thanksgiving,

*Sr. Deborah Krist, OSF*

Sister Deborah Krist, OSF  
Director of Mission Advancement

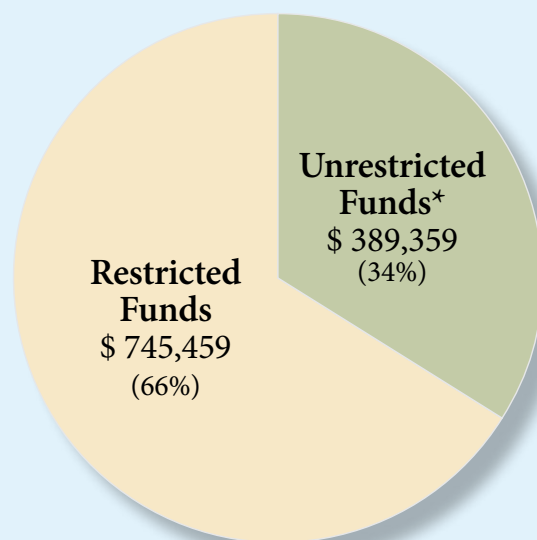
SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS FOUNDATION

## 2020 Annual Report

FISCAL YEAR 2020

**Total Donations Received:**

**\$ 1,134,818\***



**Sources of Donations:** Website/Social Media Donations, Direct Mail Appeals, Good News, E-news, Memorial Gifts, Memorial Cards, Grants, Recurring Gifts, Estates, and Inheritances. Due to Covid-19, our annual events—Golf Tournament, Franciscan Night, and Craft Fair—had to be foregone, but some donations for these events were received.

\* These figures do not include \$86,000 of Unrestricted Funds gifts received in FY 2019 that were designated and distributed in FY 2020.

WITH HEARTS FILLED WITH GRATITUDE,  
THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

*thank you*

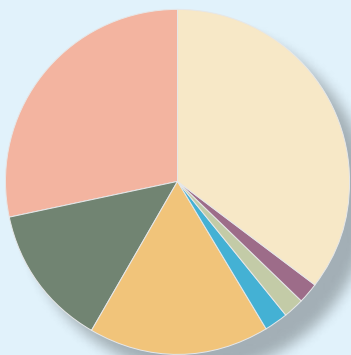
*The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia assume operational costs of the foundation.*



## Distribution of Unrestricted Funds: \$ 429,494

Distribution includes funds received in FY 2019 (\$389,359 received in FY 2020).

Unrestricted funds were designated by the congregational leadership to support the elder care of our retired sisters and to assist in various ministries—for example, helping to improve lives through social ministries such as Anna's Place, Ministry of Caring, St. Mary's Franciscan Shelter, and Transitions. Funds were also allocated to support justice and peace efforts.



- Capital: \$ 150,000 (35%)
- Ministries outside the U.S.: \$ 10,000 (2%)
- Ministries inside the U.S.: \$ 10,000 (2%)
- Education: \$ 10,000 (2%)
- Shelter & Social Ministries: \$ 72,000 (17%)
- OSF Volunteer Program: \$ 57,494 (13%)
- Retirement: \$ 120,000 (28%)



## In Memoriam

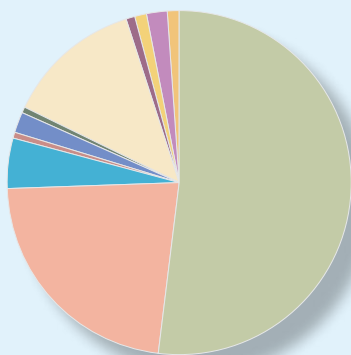
Sister Agnes Borkowski  
(formerly Sister Walter Josephine)  
May 25, 2021

Sister Elizabeth Patricia Murphy  
(formerly Sister Charlotte Anne)  
June 30, 2021

Sister Patricia Jane Walsh  
August 12, 2021

Your generous donations to the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation help us to care for our elderly sisters residing in Assisi House and allow us to reach out to those who are poor and disenfranchised by helping us to offer a safe, welcoming place where neighbors and visitors can experience radical hospitality at both Anna's Place in Chester and the Aquinas Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

## Distribution of Restricted Funds: \$ 745,459



- Retirement: \$ 397,066 (53%)
- Shelter & Social Ministries: \$ 170,387 (23%)
- Parish & Spiritual Ministries: \$ 34,744 (5%)
- Memorial Garden: \$ 2,200 (>1%)
- Covid-19 Safety: \$ 16,612 (2%)
- OLA Capital: \$ 125 (>1%)
- Assisi House Needs: \$ 93,249 (13%)
- Formation and Sisters' Needs: \$ 4,000 (>1%)
- OSF Volunteer Program: \$ 6,326 (1%)
- Education: \$ 15,850 (2%)
- Ministries outside the U.S.: \$ 4,900 (1%)

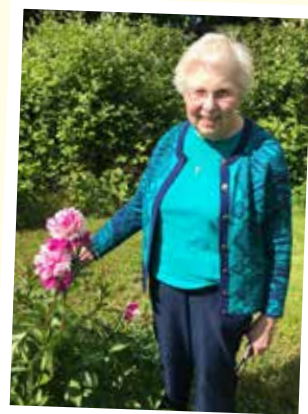
### Distribution of Restricted Categories:

**Ministries outside the U.S.:** Africa, Haiti; **Assisi House Needs:** camera system, patios, sidewalks, Covid-19 expenses, aquarium, music therapy; **OLA Capital:** furnishings; **Education:** Drexel Neumann Academy, the Catholic High School of Baltimore; **Parish & Spiritual Ministries:** Franciscan Spiritual Centers, OLA Chapel collections; **Memorial Garden:** trees and benches; **Shelter & Social Ministries:** Anna's Place, Chester Community Coalition, Clare of Assisi House, Hispanic Ministries of DELCO, peace and justice initiatives, Red Hill Farm, Philadelphia Catholic Services, discretionary fund for the poor.

Therefore, every dollar that our donors give is used solely for the ministries and elder care.

# FoCUS

► *Cathy Nugent states that she has stayed involved in the Franciscan companions over the years because she feels there is so much about the Franciscan values and spirituality left to learn.*



## CATHY NUGENT

“CATHY COORDINATES THE TACOMA COMPANIONS GROUP USING HER ADMINISTRATIVE SKILL GENEROUSLY. WE ARE LUCKY TO HAVE SUCH A WONDERFUL FRANCISCAN SOUL IN OUR MIDST.”

— SISTER CAROL ANN WARNKE

Cathy Nugent embodies the Franciscan spirit. Cathy was introduced to Franciscan values and prayer life when she was employed by St. Clare Hospital, Lakewood, Washington. There she accepted an invitation to become the hospital's representative to the Sisters of St. Francis, including attending meetings in Aston, Pennsylvania. Cathy also served as the hospital's administrative representative to Franciscan Health System–West. The close relationships that followed led to Sister Anthony Consilia Griffin inviting Cathy to join the Tacoma, Washington, Companions in Mission in 1995.

Sometime later, Sister Anthony surprised Cathy by presenting her with four boxes and an invitation to lead the Tacoma companions group! She agreed and continues to serve as the group's coordinator. Until March 2020, Cathy also participated in the

Social Justice Committee as a congregational representative. Cathy welcomes opportunities to continue learning about the Franciscan charism, for example through Zoom sessions with companions and sisters across the country and through Franciscan Action Network and Franciscan School of Theology lectures and programs. Cathy explains, “Franciscan values are a part of who I am, and those values give me direction.”

Now retired, Cathy begins each day with prayer and Mass, currently livestreamed. By 8 A.M., she has joined her walking group. Later her day is filled with community involvement and family activities with her five adult children, eleven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Among her avocations are sewing and machine embroidery, as well as participating in faith-sharing and Bible-study groups.

Continuing to use her bachelor's and master's degrees in nursing from the University of Washington and her certificate in nursing administration from the American Nurses Association, Cathy provides care to a family with a member in home hospice—a service that takes her away from home several days at a time. When Franciscan sisters were living at St. Ann Home in Tacoma, she transported sisters to doctor appointments, administered flu shots, and filled in for St. Ann administrators.

The Franciscan story that inspires Cathy in difficult times is St. Francis' care for lepers. In Sister Christine Still's words, “Cathy's compassion, gentleness, and collaborative spirit are hallmarks of her interactions with others.” How like St. Francis and St. Clare that is!



▲ *In retirement, Cathy Nugent practices balanced living including her prayer life, her family life—spending time with her children and grandchildren—and taking care of the physical self with daily exercise.*



## Gratitude and Warm Memories at the End of an Era

Sunday, May 16, 2021, represented the end of an era. At an outdoor “Mass of Gratitude” and ceremony, 10 Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia were honored as part of their community’s 90 years of service, ministry, and Franciscan presence at the school and church of St. Stephen Parish in Bradshaw, Maryland.



*The Sisters of St. Francis gather outside St. Stephen Church—a place where our sisters have ministered for over 90 years.*

Angela DeFontes, Ann Dutrow, and Rose Mary Eve Holter, the May 16 Mass acknowledged their upcoming goodbye to their home in St. Stephen Convent. St. Stephen will be expanding, and the planned construction means that in July these five Franciscans moved to a house owned by the Benedictine Sisters in Lutherville, Maryland. Both Sister Angela and Sister Rose Mary Eve anticipate continuing to serve the parish.

Shortly before the Mass in their honor, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia arrived for the event in two golf carts decorated with red hearts. Spirited organ music celebrated their arrival. During the Mass, the heartfelt homily was delivered by Fr. Joshua Laws, who, as a child, was taught by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia at St. Stephen School. Honoring the sisters in their turn, the congregation sang the “Blessing of St. Francis.” At the close of the Mass and ceremony, the sisters’ departure in their golf carts was accompanied by the parishioners’ applause and signs expressing appreciation and warm wishes.



*At the close of the Mass and ceremony, the sisters’ departure in their specially decorated golf carts was accompanied by the parishioners’ applause and signs expressing appreciation and warm wishes.*

The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia who were present for the occasion included Sisters Barbara Carr, Kathy Dauses, Angela DeFontes, Kathy Dougherty, Ann Dutrow, Florence Hee, Rose Mary Eve Holter, Helen Jacobson, Ruth Bernadette O’Connor, and Margaret Xavier Romans. For Sisters Barbara Carr, Kathy Dauses,



*Right Photo Group: Sisters Jean Ustasiewski, Geralda Meskill, Margaret Xavier Romans, Kate O’Donnell; Left Photo Group: Sisters Marie Patrice Feeney, Catherine Ginther, Margaret McCarthy, Eileen Hennessy, Margaret O’Brien, and farm worker Linda Mysop. Margaret Lilley was also present and took the photo.*

## Earth Day 2021

In celebration of the 51<sup>st</sup> Earth Day, April 22, 2021, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia’s Care for Creation Committee invited sisters, companions, and employees to consider several meaningful activities in honor of our planet and environment. The activity suggestions included viewing the movie *Kiss the Ground*, responding to the film by planting a garden, and planting trees to commemorate special occasions or to be memorials for friends and family.

On the morning of this year’s Earth Day, Sister Eleanor Moore greeted everyone arriving for work at Our Lady of Angels with a thought-provoking email asking such questions as, “What commitment will you make to care for our planet?” and “What changes are you willing to make in your life to help the Earth?” Sister Eleanor’s email also reminded readers to make Earth Day a joyous birthday celebration for the Earth.

Other OLA Earth Day activities included Sister Jean Ustasiewski’s blessing of the crops at Red Hill Farm. Many other sisters joined Sister Jean and closed the ceremony by singing “America the Beautiful.” Continuing to honor Earth Day and the wellbeing of our planet, several sisters joined members of the Chester Residents Concerned for Quality Living in their April 24 protest against the heavily polluting incinerator in Chester, Pennsylvania. In the ongoing spirit of Earth Day, the congregation invests substantially in support of efforts to stem climate change.

# Donor Spotlight

► Jackie and Bill Fegley encourage anyone who has had a previous connection with the sisters to attend an event and reconnect with them. Doing so opens up the door to a great and lasting relationship.



## BILL & JACKIE FEGLEY

▼ Bill Fegley actively participates in and supports the Annual Franciscan Night—a fun-filled casino night held at Our Lady of Angels Convent to raise funds to support the sisters and their ministries.



The Fegley family has a long and loving history with the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Jackie Fegley was educated by our sisters, beginning in elementary school at Resurrection School in Chester, all the way through college, receiving her nursing degree from Neumann University. In 1962, when she graduated from high school, she decided to enter the convent. During that time she worked in an orphanage, as a teacher, and later as a nurse. “Being around children, day in and day out, made me want to be a mother,” said Jackie. After much deliberation, she opted to leave the congregation in 1972. When she married her husband, Bill, in 1974, she introduced him to her “sister” family. Bill immediately realized what Jackie saw in the sisters.

When the pipes collapsed at the motherhouse in the early 00s, causing major damage, Jackie and Bill gave a generous donation and have been donors ever since. About seven years ago, Sister Mary Vandergeest invited Bill to join the Sisters of St. Francis Foundation Board and today, Bill is the chair.

Bill and Jackie are involved with many events held by the congregation, but Franciscan Night is the event in which they are most invested. Bill helps to find sponsors and always brings a large group of friends to Franciscan Night. Jackie and her friends get together and make baskets for the auction. In addition, Bill’s company, Fegley & Associates, is often a generous sponsor of the congregation’s various events.

When not giving their time and talents to the Sisters of St. Francis, Bill and Jackie enjoy spending time with their five children and 10 grandchildren. They are very active in their parish, where Jackie serves as a Eucharistic minister and participates in bazaars. Bill, a CPA and president of Fegley & Associates, also serves on the Carbon County Board of St. Luke’s Hospital and previously served on the Blue Mountain Health System Board.

When asked why he chooses to give so generously to the sisters, Bill replied, “I am amazed at all the good work they have done in the past and continue to do daily. When attending the events, people get to meet the sisters and talk with them one-on-one. It brings back memories of the past and an appreciation for all the sisters have done.” Jackie echoed Bill’s thoughts: “When you sit with a sister, you see they are actual people. We can tell you all about how great the sisters are, but to actually speak to and meet them personally is truly invaluable.”



► Bill and Jackie Fegley pose with Sister Kathleen Parisi, good friend and Sisters of St. Francis Foundation staff member.

“POPE FRANCIS SAID, ‘LOVE AND CHARITY ARE SERVICE: HELPING OTHERS, SERVING OTHERS. . . . WHEN YOU FORGET YOURSELF AND THINK OF OTHERS, THIS IS LOVE!’ GOD’S LOVE AND GOODNESS SURELY SHINE THROUGH JACKIE AND BILL FEGLEY!”

— SISTER DEBORAH KRIST



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## Select areas of interest to receive information about the congregation.

- ☐ Companion Program    ☐ Franciscan Spiritual Centers (select one):    ☐ Aston, PA    ☐ Milwaukie, OR    ☐ Young Franciscans  
☐ Community Supported Agriculture:    ☐ Sisters of St. Francis Foundation    ☐ Vocations    ☐ Young Adult Engagement  
 Red Hill Farm, Aston, PA



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## Join us!



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## SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS FOUNDATION

For it is  
in Giving  
that we Receive



As 2021 comes to an end, you are, no doubt, reflecting on the best way of making financial and tax plans. Are you seriously considering philanthropic gifting?

Most gifts to the Sisters of St. Francis at year end are gifts of checks or cash. Donations are tax deductible to the extent the law allows.

I would like to support

- ☐ the sisters' elder care    ☐ renovations to the Assisi House kitchen  
☐ greatest need    ☐ education efforts  
☐ Red Hill Farm    ☐ other ministries

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Please mail your donations to: Sisters of St. Francis Foundation, 609 S. Convent Road, Aston, PA 19014. You can also make your donations online by visiting our website: [www.osfphila.org/donate-now/](http://www.osfphila.org/donate-now/). For more information contact: Sister Deborah Krist, (610) 558-7713, OSFF@osfphila.org.

**GIVING TUESDAY**

Save the Date – Giving Tuesday

**November 30, 2021**

Give to the Assisi House Kitchen Renovation Project.

Please tear out this page and mail completed to:

GOOD NEWS, Communications Office, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, 609 S. Convent Road, Aston, PA 19014-1207

Visit us online at [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org) or call us at (610) 558-7726

FALL/WINTER 2021 23

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## Sharing our History!

For many years, Sisters Mary Catherine Gurley, Adele Francis Gorman, and Emily Ann Herbes carefully and lovingly researched our history. Their efforts helped us to preserve our legacy and to document our roots and our growth. Our history unfolded as the Spirit of God inspired Anna Bachmann (Mother Francis) to look beyond her personal challenges to respond to the unmet



needs of those who were poor in her own neighborhood. Her courageous spirit has taken us far

beyond her original imaginings and, after more than a century and a half, endures in the hearts of our sisters today. Would you like to know more about our history? We are now offering free copies of *Celebrating our Journey...*, Volumes I and II, a history of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia from 1824-1970. If you would like a copy of this historic journey, please contact Florence Smith, (610) 558-7726 or [fsmith@osfphila.org](mailto:fsmith@osfphila.org).

## Neumann University Purchases Properties from the Sisters of St. Francis

On June 30, 2021, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and Neumann University formalized an agreement for the university to purchase Our Lady of Angels Convent, three smaller buildings, and about 63 acres of land. The Sisters of St. Francis will lease residential and office space in the motherhouse through at least 2030 and will continue to use Our Lady of Angels Chapel. Neumann University President Chris Domes has stressed that Neumann



University is committed to preserving and honoring the many sacred spaces on the property. He explained, the purchase “positions us to strengthen the residential experience for our students and supports our desire for expanded extracurricular programs.”



▲ *Congregational Chapters are an integral part of religious life as they allow sisters to give feedback and vote—setting the future direction for the congregation as a whole. As with all chapters, this gathering held in 1996 was as much about business as it was about prayer and relationship building. Read more on page 4 about the 2021 Congregational Chapter and what happens during a chapter.*