

# Partners on the Journey

Sisters of the Most Precious Blood Partners in Mission Newsletter

WINTER 2020



*Reconciliation—Deepening our Relationships with God, each other, and our suffering World.*

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## New Year's Greetings from the Board Chair



*Happy New Year!*

Hopefully the sparkle of your Holidays is a warm memory and the anticipation of the New Year has you feeling Grateful!

This is an exceptional year! This coming February, the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood are celebrating their arrival to the Midwest 150 years ago.

There are wonderful opportunities throughout these coming months for you to visit with the Sisters and participate in celebrating this momentous occasion. Please check your emails or call the office to learn more.

This October we were delighted to welcome two new Governing Board Members to our meetings: Kris Jackson from *Gurtweilers* Small Faith Community as Secretary and Recruitment Committee Chair, and Jean Douglas from *In His Footsteps* Small Faith Community as Spirituality Committee Chair. Kris and Jean join Carol Oldendorf (Communication Committee Chair), Denis Wilhelm (Formation Committee Chair), Dawn Boschert (Board Vice-Chair and Development Committee Chair), and Patti Belmont (Board Chair). We also welcomed Sr. Julia Marie Wolf as a new Sister Advisor to the Board.

As Small Faith Communities partake in the Anniversary Year festivities this Spring, we hope each Partner in Mission enjoys connecting with his or her Sister whose name was drawn last September. The opportunity to be Partner in Presence to a Sister has been the underlying theme of "All is Gift" for the Partners.

The conversations, emails, cards, and visits are wonderful ways of making personal connections. May each of you recognize the incredible "gift" we have in sharing our time, experience, and spirituality with one another.

As this year progresses, the Board members and Director Audrey Jungermann would like to come and visit your Small Faith Community. We would like to learn first-hand what your group needs and what your vision for Partners in Mission is as we move into the future.

May the Lord fill each of you with His Enduring Love.

-Patti Belmont



## Work at the Border in Nogales



*Partner in Mission Bettie Comas Vallee with husband Ron in front of the wall at the U.S.—Mexico border*

Last January 28, 2019, my husband Ron and I, along with a group of Jesuit students from various schools, drove to Nogales, Arizona to drop off clothing donations at a storage facility. We then parked our car and walked across the border into Mexico to the Kino Border Initiative. We took along all our medications in case the border would close and we could not get back.

At the comedor where food is served to men, women and children, we assisted two religious Sisters who had prepared a breakfast of scrambled eggs, bacon, tortillas, salsa, and rice. Patrons began arriving at 9:30, and it took some time to serve everyone--about 50 people, in all. While everyone was waiting, I said to them, "Let's sing "de Colores". This song will place a smile on your faces!" And so, we sang it, several times, and it did indeed put a smile on the children's faces. We continued singing other songs as we waited.

After one group of people finished in the dining hall, another group would come in to be served. When breakfast was finished, everyone left. They would return for dinner at 4:00 p.m.

Ron and I helped the children use the toilets and sinks in the bathroom, since they were unfamiliar with them. We learned that the large duffel bags people carried were filled with dirty clothes that they could not afford to have washed. We were not allowed to give the people money. We were told that people were discouraged from using their phones to call home to tell their families they were alive. This was because the cartel would steal phone numbers and try to get money from the families. Someone there had free phone service they offered people.

At the time Ron and I visited, there were also a doctor and nurse who could give medications, plus a social worker, a lawyer, and a banker. Each of these individuals could help people with their various needs—advice and legal help if someone was seeking asylum, currency exchange, etc.

Recently, a brand new facility opened with free washing machines, dryers, bedrooms, toilets, kitchen, and lunchroom .

-Bettie Comas LaVallee

## Featured Partner in Mission: *Kasey Navratil*

My Name is Kasey Navratil and I recently became a Partner in Mission.

I have two sons, Garret, 27, who is a procurement agent for Defense, Space & Security for the Boeing Company, and Grant, 24, who is a hospitality sales executive for Kansas Speedway.

In my free time I enjoy playing with my two "granddogs", Winston and Kevin, and going for walks with them. Their opposite personalities keep things interesting. Winston, a French Bulldog, is full of energy, while Kevin, a Pug, is laid back and relaxed.

I was raised Catholic, and attended Epiphany of Our Lord Catholic school in South St. Louis. I was first introduced to the Precious Blood Sisters two years ago when my mom, Karen

Cella, became a Partner in Mission. I attended some of the meetings with my mom and helped her Small Faith Community, *In His Footsteps*, with their chosen ministry: Helping the Sisters and other residents of Abbey Senior Health with a craft project each month. I enjoyed being part of the fun!

I made my initial commitment to Partners in Mission this fall and joined the newly formed Small Faith Community, *Heart to Heart*. For our outreach ministry, our members trained and became docents and greeters for St. Joseph Chapel tours. We each also have individual ministries we are involved in.

I am excited to be a part of such a great group of women!

-Kasey Navratil



*New Partner in Mission Kasey Navratil*

## Getting to Know: *Sr. LaVerne Wester*



*Sr. LaVerne Wester*

Way back on April 30, 1931 a beautiful little girl was born to Adele and John Wester named "LaVerne" (that was me!), the third of seven children--three girls and four boys.

Our family lived in South St. Louis and attended St. George Parish. My parents were "faith filled" and taught us everything necessary to becoming true Catholics. I thank God every day for my parents.

All of us attended St. George parish school. Naturally, I became acquainted with many of the Precious Blood Sisters from O'Fallon. The life that they led and all that they did at school were so impressive to me. The years went on and I knew that in time I would become a Precious Blood Sister. At age 14 I left home and entered the Aspirancy. My three years at the Aspirancy were three of the happiest years of my life.

I made my first profession in 1951 and my final vows in 1954. In two years I will celebrate my 70<sup>th</sup> Jubilee as a Precious Blood Sister. I am GRATEFUL beyond measure for my vocation as a Sister of the Most Precious Blood.

My chosen vocation has enabled me to serve people in various ministries. I was an elementary school teacher for ten years and an elementary school principal for 29 years. I then had the opportunity to

be Activity Director at St. Elizabeth Adult Day Care Center for a year. Sister Andree' Fries then asked me to be a Local Coordinator at St. Anne's Retirement Center in O'Fallon, where I worked for ten years. My time there with our Sisters was wonderful!!!

Lo and behold, I was further blessed to hold the position of Pastoral Minister at Mercy Medical Center for ten years. I presently volunteer at Sts. Joachim & Ann Care Service, ministering to the needy.

I am a Partner in the Small Faith Community, *Latecomers*. I find this to be a gift in my life because it has helped me to strengthen my faith as we meet so many tremendous men and women.

-Sr. LaVerne Wester

## Small Faith Community in the Spotlight: *Latecomers*

Hi! We are the *Latecomers* Small Faith Community! We formed in 2014, and we meet in the Precious Blood Center from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. every second Monday, October through May.

We find great encouragement from each other through our faith sharing. Most recently, we have been discussing books by Paul Coutinho, "How Big is Your God" and "Just as You Are".

Central to our group's outreach is the offering of support. We enjoy contributing a gift basket to the annual Partners in Mission Trivia Night raffle. We have helped the residents of Villa Theresa by being their arms & legs at the Spring picnic in their honor. We have also focused on regular visits to the second and third floor community to visit Sisters and residents.

At the close of our monthly gatherings, we typically embark, two-by-two, to the upper floors, hoping to extend a word of cheer and offer prayers for the residents' special intentions.

This year, we are exploring new options for outreach. While we plan to visit residents as occasions permit, we've recognized that the timing of evening visits may not fit with their routines. Our recent searches to expand our outreach show no shortage of needs! We're confident we'll soon discover what Our Lord is now calling us to do. It is our sincere goal to bring the presence of Our Lord's loving mercy and compassion to all whom we meet and in all that we do, day by day and hour by hour. That is foremost in our genuine commitment to bringing reconciling support through outreach.

-Chris Shields



*Members of Latecomers (left to right) Front row, seated: Sr. LaVerne Wester and Sr. Viola Marie Spire; Back row: Chris Shields, Sr. Robert Ann Harper, Denis Wilhelm, Connie McKoskey. Not pictured: Helen Brown.*

# “Second Sundays” St. Joseph Chapel Tours

Regular Chapel Tours, held on the second Sunday of each month, are now in full swing! From that first Open House in October, and at each one since, one thing has become clear: The Open Houses are a great way for Partners to bond with Sisters around a shared love: This magnificent Chapel!

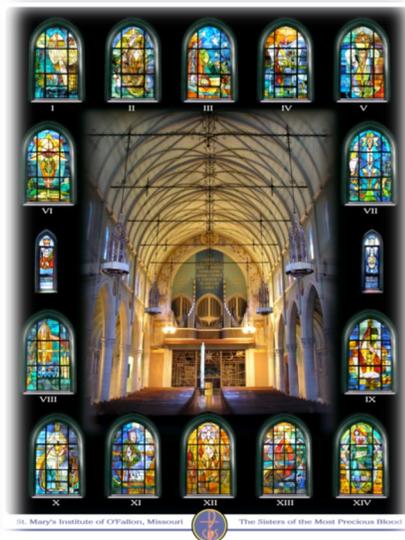
Thanks to the efforts of Sr. Cecile Gunelson and the Heritage Committee, a wonderful group of volunteer Sisters and Partners has been formed to make these monthly events possible.

Guests are welcome to come after 1:00 p.m., with the last of the tours finishing around 4:00 p.m. Guided tours last approximately one hour; self-guided tours may also be taken at the guest's own pace. Either way, it's a memorable experience that appeals to a wide variety of individuals—fine arts students, sewing groups, history enthusiasts, or those simply seeking a meditative experience in a sacred space—and what better sacred space!

In addition to monthly Open Houses, private tours are given by appoint-

ment and may be scheduled with Sr. Cecile at [mcgunelson@cpps-ofallon.org](mailto:mcgunelson@cpps-ofallon.org). Small Faith Communities and individual Partners who wish to participate by becoming greeters or docents may also contact Sr. Cecile to arrange for training.

-Audrey Jungermann



St. Mary's Institute of O'Fallon, Missouri (The Sisters of the Most Precious Blood)

## CPPS Partners in Mission

*Partners in Mission strive to bring Christ's reconciling presence to those we encounter in our daily lives. We seek to carry on the legacy of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood by deepening our relationship with God, each other, and the Community to heal our suffering world.*

### GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS

**Patti Belmont, Board Chair**  
**Dawn Boschert, Vice Chair**  
**Kris Jackson, Secretary**  
**Carol Oldendorf**  
**Denis Wilhelm**  
**Jean Douglas**  
**Sr. Ginny Jaskiewicz, Sr. Advisor**  
**Sr. Julia Marie Wolf, Sr. Advisor**  
**Audrey Jungermann, PIM Director**  
**204 North Main St.**  
**O'Fallon, MO 63366**  
**636-542-9479**

### Partners on the Journey Newsletter

Editors: Carol Oldendorf  
 Sr. Mary Joan Dyer  
 Publisher: Audrey Jungermann

## That Which You Have Received, Give as Gift



*A reflection on a philosophy of teaching by Mary Jane Matejka.*

I have taught many immigrant students and I often found that they felt inferior to others because of language difficulties. I taught them to feel proud of what they did know and to share that knowledge with others.

This was my success in getting children to help each other. Those who were quick at math, for example, were to help those who weren't. In our school garden, some excelled at explaining how to plant well and how to identify weeds. The children's artwork often proved useful in their animal and science projects.

Since everyone's gifts were valued and shared, self-esteem blossomed; even "trouble makers" had their time to shine and feel valuable.

This whole philosophy carried over into religion class, too. Jesus shared himself with others and we are to share ourselves with others. It is not simply an option but a responsibility. This all was part of teaching stewardship, which we valued in our school, as I do in my life.

If this seems like I'm tooting my own horn, I'm not. I just would like to share the beauty of the "All is Gift" theme. It even continues now in my handicapped state. What I still can do, I am given to do to help others.

-Mary Jane Matejka

### Upcoming Event Reminders:

January 12, 2020—Open House Chapel Tours  
 February 2, 2020—150th Anniversary Celebration Mass  
 February 9, 2020—Open House Chapel Tours  
 February 18, 2020—PIM Governing Board Meeting

February 26—Ash Wednesday, Lent Begins  
 March 2020 (Date TBD)—PIM Trivia Night  
 March 8, 2020—Open House Chapel Tours  
 March 28, 2020—CPPS Community Day