

Partners on the Journey

Sisters of the Most Precious Blood Partners in Mission Newsletter

SUMMER 2021



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What's Your Story?

We hope you enjoy this Summer edition of "Partners on the Journey" Newsletter. And, we would love to feature **your** story in our Fall issue!

Think about what has been a blessing in your life, or maybe a challenge you have met, or a discovery you made that others might find interesting.

We would love to hear from you! Contact Carol Oldendorf or Audrey Jungermann to have your story shared in our next Newsletter.

Thank you!

- Communications Committee

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

The Work of Bold Action Continues

"By acting compassionately, by helping to restore justice and encourage peace, we acknowledge that we are all part of one another." —Rahm Dass

This quote describes so well the spirit and the work of our Bold Action Committee. Partner Susan Buerkle recently told me about some of the things the Committee has been involved in lately. Here is what Susan shared:

"The Bold Action Committee has tried to respond to needs identified by LCWR (Leadership Conference of Women Religious) of the agencies serving immigrants at the border as well as local agencies.

"The Sisters have been extremely generous, sending monetary donations to multiple agencies this year, including Catholic Charities agencies, Annunciation House, La Posada Providencia, National Immigrant Justice Center, and KINO Border Institute. They most recently sent \$3,000.00 to Catholic Charities to be used according to need among 19 border agencies, particularly for services to unaccompanied children. Locally, they have sent substantial donations to

St. Francis Community Services for Legal Aid to DACA recipients, and further assistance to the International Institute of St. Louis. The Sisters, despite their inability to be engaged 'on the ground,' continue to minister to those 'outside the gates' by sacrificing their own resources.

"Partners are also invited to contribute to the cause. Bob Palombo, husband of Partner Jeanne Palombo, has responded to the call, and (in April) returned to work at Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley."

Susan also reminds us of the Bold Action Advocacy subcommittee that, "...continues to raise voices to our legislators in support of the Dream and Promise Act, farmworker justice, and to urge our President to follow through with his promise to increase refugee admissions." If you would like to be part of Bold Action efforts, Susan will be happy to tell you how.

Look for an announcement soon from the Committee about an informational Zoom presentation coming in August.

-Audrey Jungermann & Susan Buerkle

Congratulations, 2021 Jubilarians!

20th

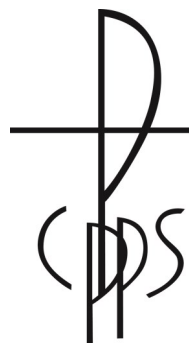
Sr. Geraldine Vogel
Sr. LaVerne Wester
Sr. Claire Slama

60th

Sr. Esther Hogan
Sr. Loretto Maes
Sr. Teresa Joseph Ganley

25th

Sr. Guillermina Loma Aliaga



*Clap your hands, all
you peoples;
shout to God with
loud songs of joy!*

- From Psalm 47



Meet our New Governing Board Members!



Julie Schlichting



Mary Jo Williams

This past May, two new members were elected to serve on the Partners in Mission Governing Board: Julie Schlichting and Mary Jo Williams.

We virtually “met” Julie and Mary Jo prior to the Board elections. And, many of you already know them, since they have both been Partners in Mission for several years. For those of you who might not know them so well, here is a brief recap of what Julie and Mary Jo shared about themselves when they met with the Board on Zoom.

Julie is married, has three children in school, is a member of Christ Prince of Peace parish, and has been a Partner in *Disciples in Action* Small Faith Community since 2013. In describing why she accepted the invitation to run for a Board seat, Julie put it this way, “It seemed like a good time in my life to step up my involvement and commitment to Partners in Mission. I know I will have things to

learn, and I bring that willingness to learn and grow and hope to blossom from that.”

Mary Jo is also married, with two adult children, and she has been a Partner since 2017 in the “small but mighty” *Listening Hearts* Small Faith Community. Mary Jo is very dedicated to the cause of social justice and is an active member of her parish, Our Lady of Sorrows. This year’s election marked the second time someone suggested to Mary Jo that she should run for a seat on the Board. The timing was not quite right the first time, but when she was asked again, Mary Jo felt, “the Holy Spirit is trying to say something!”

We are blessed that both Mary Jo and Julie listened to the Spirit’s call, and I know we can look forward to great things from them as members of the Board!

Welcome to you both!

-Audrey Jungermann

Stepping Outside the Box

Having just finished reading Pope Francis’ column on increasing discipleship, where we need to “step outside the box” to welcome others, I stepped outside my house to run an errand. It was a hot, sultry August day. I saw a woman struggling to drag a cart of groceries down the street; she looked so very exhausted.

Recalling Pope Francis’ words, I asked the woman if I could take her somewhere. “Your cart will fit inside my car and you can cool off”. She was reluctant at first, but I convinced her to come along.

“My name is Mary Jane, and I can take you home”, I began. “What is your name?” The woman’s speech was slurred, but I finally understood that her name was Cynthia and where she lived. She was coming home from the food pantry, a round trip of more than two miles!

I gave her my phone number and told her to call me the next time she needed groceries.

Over time, Cynthia came to trust me, and I took her to get groceries regularly. I learned that her husband, Gary, was disabled and that she took care of the shopping. Knowing all the steps to get inside her apartment, I cringed. I know my own limitations and could not help her.

Along our route, we passed my parish and I mentioned it was where my mother and I belonged. Cynthia said she used to go to church but no longer did because the church moved. She then asked to come to my church, and we began going to Mass and church events together. Cynthia got to meet more people and participate in church activities.

After about three months, I asked Cynthia if she would like to learn more about our faith and she readily agreed.

“I used to stop and rest on your steps,” Cynthia told me once. “It’s halfway to the store, and I always wondered what it looked like inside.”

“We’ll invite you over for lunch and you can see it all decorated for Christmas”, I told her.

Christmas came and I invited Cynthia to meet my mom and enjoy Christmas lunch. She did not have a creche, so I made her a cardboard diorama of the Nativity from a poster that I had showing the Holy Family as African. Her husband even came down to thank me.

After four more months I asked Cynthia if she wanted to become Catholic. “Oh, yes!” she responded. She and I went through the RCIA together. Imagine my joy on Holy Saturday when Cynthia was confirmed! She chose her middle name, Josephine, after St. Josephine Bakita, an African American saint, as her confirmation name.

Three years have since gone by. My mother and Cynthia’s husband have both died. And Cynthia, too, who became extremely sick around Christmas and just couldn’t get better. My parish celebrated a beautiful funeral for her. Cynthia has truly, “gone on to Glory!” I will remember her each time I see the forsythia bush planted in her honor in our prayer garden. Our congregation is richer for her example. All this happened because I “stepped outside the box” to welcome a new disciple.

-Mary Jane Matejka



Mary Jane and Cynthia



Getting to Know: *Sr. Suzanne Besancenez*

From the desk of Sr. Suzanne Besancenez:

Hello, Partners in Mission!

I was baptized Janet Marie on July 21, 1934 at St. Monica's Parish in Creve Coeur, MO. The Precious Blood sisters taught me, my three brothers, and two sisters. Ever

grateful for this Catholic elementary education and desiring to teach the "little ones", I came to O'Fallon to join the CPPS Community after graduating from Mercy High School.

With a teaching degree from Quincy College, I taught first grade at ten different parish schools in the St. Louis Diocese. I truly enjoyed the children, and I still treasure a lot of lovely, funny, never-to-be-forgotten memories of "God's little ones."

In 2004, with the closing of St. Lawrence the Martyr's parish in Bridgeton for airport expansion, I came home here, to O'Fallon, and began working in the Ecclesiastical Art Department, our EAD.

Yes, quite different from the classroom, but I'm ever grateful for the acceptance and help I received from all the different sisters who shared their expertise, kindness, and patience with me from 2004 to 2018.

My ministry now is "Prayer and Presence."

The love and support I receive from our CPPS Partners in Mission is truly a gift. Each day at Holy Mass I include one of the Partners and one sister as a special intention in prayer.

Thanking you,

Sr. Suzanne



White House Retreats: *"...like a three-day vacation with Christ"*

I absolutely love White House Retreats and am so excited to share this experience with Partners in Mission!

This is a silent, guided retreat opportunity based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. It is a peaceful break from the chaos and confusion of everyday life. It's like a three-day vacation with Christ on a beautiful 80-acre campus located in South County, high on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River. All meals and private lodging are provided.

Due to COVID restrictions on the number of persons who can attend at a time, space in upcoming retreats fills up quickly.

Retreats begin on Monday with a noon meal and conclude on Thursday with a brunch.

There is no set fee to attend a retreat at White House! The facility operates

on a free-will offering basis, allowing those in attendance to simply give what they feel they can give at the conclusion of the retreat.

To register, call 1-800-643-1003 or visit: www.whitehouseretreat.org, where you can find out more information about the retreats and see which of the upcoming dates have openings available. The website shows listings for both men's and women's retreats.

I would love to have you experience one of these retreats with me!

-Kris Jackson, PIM



A Rich History Just Minutes from Downtown

Just five miles from downtown St. Louis, on the Illinois side, is the oldest continuous parish in the United States and the oldest Catholic church West of the Alleghany Mountains: The Church of the Holy Family in Old Cahokia. Some of its members fought in the French and Indian and American Revolutionary wars. Their gravestones are in the cemetery behind the church. Notable visitors include Lewis and Clark, Abraham Lincoln, and Charles Lindbergh. The church's founders were Jesuits dedicated to converting Native Americans in the area, primarily the Tamaroa. When Britain triumphed over France, many of the parishioners crossed the Mississippi River to avoid British rule and founded Ste. Genevieve, MO.

My parents first took me to visit the church way back in 1963 and I have since brought many visitors to this place that is so near and dear to my heart. Cross the Mississippi River on Highway 40, make a right turn onto Route 3, and the church is 5 miles down the road at the corner of Church and East First Streets (116 Church Street).

There is much I *won't* tell you about the church because I want you to visit. When you do, you will find a French-style log cabin—one of only five remaining in North America, with its original small rose window and cornerstone that reads 1799. Step inside, and you'll be touched by the reverence of those who went before, of the weddings, funerals, First Communions, and Confirmations that took place there. Kneel down and spend some quiet time with the Lord before exploring the sanctuary and then on to the adjacent museum. You'll marvel at the various phases of this church and the fact that architects are presently

studying its form, which is capable of withstanding even the New Madrid earthquake.

At 9:00 a.m. on some Sundays, you will hear the Mass prayed in Latin by a priest wearing stiff vestments with his back to the congregation. Or, walk across the parking lot to the new Holy Family Church for the 10:00 a.m. Mass and a more familiar Liturgy. Either way, you'll receive the same Holy Communion and experience the heritage of over 300 years of Catholicism in America. Walk the peaceful grounds, visit the cemetery, and learn about the Jarrot Mansion, the oldest brick building in the Upper Mississippi Territory, which served as both school and convent. It will be a truly memorable day trip!

The church is open to visitors Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation; guided tours may be arranged by contacting Jakob Greer: 618-741-3212 or holyfamilycahokia@yahoo.com.

-Mary Jane Matejka



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.

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