

# Benedictine Bridge

connecting with the communities at Holy Wisdom Monastery  
weaving prayer, hospitality, justice and care for the earth into a shared way of life

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September 2018



*Kate Stel (second from right) came to Holy Wisdom for a 9 week internship this summer as part of her master of divinity program at the University of Chicago Divinity School. During her time at the monastery she worked in the prairies and gardens and lived with the Benedictine sisters, (l-r) Mary David Walgenbach, Joanne Kollasch, Lynne Smith, Denise West, Paz Vital.*

Sisters & Sojourners

## Pathways to wisdom

by Kate Stel, Benedictine Women of Madison intern  
August 28, 2018

*"Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she is easily discerned by those who love her, and is found by those who seek her. She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her. One who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty, for she will be found sitting at the gate. To fix one's thought on her is perfect understanding, and one who is vigilant on her account will soon be free from care, because she goes about seeking those worthy of her, and she graciously appears to them in their paths, and meets them in every thought."*

—(Wisdom 6:12-16).

Last week, Sister Mary David Walgenbach asked me some simple questions at lunch: "Why did you want to come here? Why did you choose us?" I was stunned by this very straightforward question. In the moment I put together an answer but admitted I wasn't exactly sure. (Good thing she didn't ask me this question when I visited in the spring for an interview!)

Over the last week or so, as I get closer to the end of my time working at the monastery, I've been pondering my answer.

I chose to pursue my internship here at Holy Wisdom because I saw a place for myself here. True, this summer's work counts towards my Master's degree at the University of Chicago Divinity School, but my internship was never only about work or requirements. From my first forays into the website to my visit here in the spring and throughout the summer, Holy Wisdom has never asked me to sacrifice any part of myself, any commitment or ideal. I have been able to practice my call to environmental ministry and work towards holistic personal professional development here in a way I didn't know would be possible before I came.

At Holy Wisdom I have experienced a community like no other: courageous women leading the charge (and change) towards faithful environmental healing in the Church, intentional space for women's spiritual growth, care and attention for the marginalized and oppressed, and the embrace of connection rather than division. Rather than define yourself over and against what the Monastery is not, the communities here constantly work to build and grow into what they are and hope to become.

As a young woman floating at the fringes of Catholicism, unanchored yet still bobbing around somewhere within the vast ocean of the Church, my prayer and work at the monastery has reoriented me on my personal spiritual path and the direction of my ministry alike. For this, I can only say thank you. Thank you to each person, guest, volunteer, and the many plants and animals I have encountered this summer. At the time I'm writing this, tomorrow is my very last day. I've sincerely enjoyed my time working with the sisters community, gardening, meeting volunteers and oblates, and my opportunities to write things for the wide online community of Holy Wisdom. You have revived my spirit, renewed my body and mind, and touched my heart.

So, Sister Mary David, I chose Holy Wisdom because I sensed from afar what I now know to be true. Holy Wisdom Monastery is a place where I and many others have found their spiritual home.

*"And thus the paths of those on earth were set right,  
and people were taught what pleases you,  
and were saved by wisdom." (Wisdom 9:18)*

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### New Benedictine Sojourner

by [Sister Lynne Smith](#), co-director of formation

The sisters welcome Rachel Olson, a coworker at Holy Wisdom, as a Benedictine Sojourner, September 15-December 15, 2018. Rachel will continue her work with the Benedictine Life Foundation while she lives with the sisters and experiences the rhythm of prayer, work, learning and leisure at the monastery. Please welcome Rachel as a Sojourner when you see her.



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### Become a Benedictine Sojourner

by Sister Lynne Smith, OSB, co-director of formation

Are you looking for meaningful change in your life? The sisters at Holy Wisdom offer a six-month experience for women to live together with the sisters and other Sojourners in a spiritual community. Participants will:

- Learn and share spiritual practices
- Find time for personal reflection
- Experience a balanced life of prayer, work, learning & leisure
- Share in garden to table living
- Care for the earth
- Leave renewed

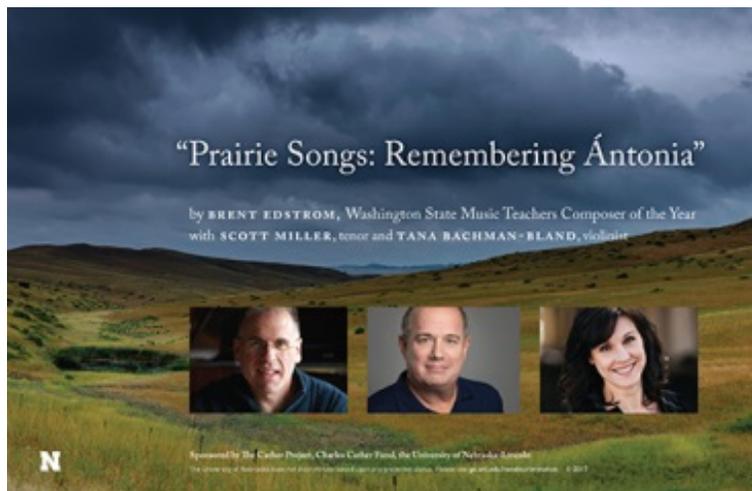
If you are a single woman, 24-50 and are interested in learning more, contact [Sister Denise West](#) at 608-836-1631, x197.

Friends & Supporters

Prairie Rhapsody, Thursday, September 27

Prairie Songs: Remembering *Antonia*—an evening of music, food and fun

By [Rachel Olson](#), Foundation Project Manager



*My Antonia* by Willa Cather is a remarkable novel, drawn in part from Cather's own childhood, about two pioneer children coming of age on the Nebraska prairie. In 1918, when it was first published, it established Willa as literary star.

In celebration of *My Antonia*'s centennial, award-winning composer and pianist, Brent Edstrom, has written *Prairie Songs: Remembering Antonia*, a song cycle based on Willa Cather's work. The music features Edstrom on piano, the tenor voice of Scott Miller and violin played by Tana

Bachman-Bland.

Holy Wisdom Monastery is very pleased to present this extraordinary musical experience for this year's Prairie Rhapsody. The evening's entertainment begins at 5:30 pm with a reception in the monastery's gathering area. Light refreshments will be served. The concert begins at 6:30 pm.

Tickets are \$50 for adults and \$20 for children under 18. Registration closes tomorrow, so don't delay!

[Registration for  
Prairie Rhapsody ends tomorrow](#)

Register at [holywisdommonastery.org/prairie-rhapsody-registration/](http://holywisdommonastery.org/prairie-rhapsody-registration/) or contact Rachel Olson at [rolson@benedictinewomen.org](mailto:rolson@benedictinewomen.org), 608-836-1631, x120.

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**Thank you for making a difference!**

by [Janet Neurauter](#), director of mission advancement

I know you've heard it before. Variations on five simple words—depending on the circumstances.

You can make a difference.  
Your gift makes a difference.  
You have made a difference.

Even though you have heard it from us before, we don't tire of saying it. And we never tire of thanking you for the difference you make. Because indeed you do.

Last November we had a very successful Giving Tuesday campaign and raised more than \$36,000 to purchase items to expand, enhance or improve what we do at the monastery. We sent emails with pictures of items on our wish list and you responded!

While some gifts are hard to photograph—like credits and educational opportunities for the sisters, stipends, support and medical insurance for sojourners, scholarships, technology support and program development—there are photos of items that were purchased or areas like the trails which have been enhanced through generous gifts to Giving Tuesday.



[Click here to see a photo collage of items we purchased.](#) These include books and periodicals, music, lights for the art gallery, mattresses and bedding, tables, chafing dishes and card holders, a privacy screen for weddings and pitcher and goblet sets. Work on the prairie has been made easier with the purchase of the Bobcat Utility vehicle and the BCS Tractor with a cultivator. Both of these have seen a lot of action this spring and summer! And take a look at the photo of the garden forks in use! New this year was funding for a Summer Youth Program—Wisdom Explorers—where kids and families spent the day exploring the prairie and garden, building wood duck houses, music, and of course, eating!

Thank you again for making a difference here at Holy Wisdom through Giving Tuesday. As we consider Giving Tuesday 2018, we'll see if there are other items not in the budget that would help us to better serve you in the future!

Want to make a cash gift now? You don't have to wait until Giving Tuesday in November! [Click here to make an online gift now!](#)



### A visual journey: the watercolors of Ann Herrold-Peterson

by Rachel Olson, foundation project manager

Ann Herrold-Peterson started painting late enough in her life that she likes to tease her son Erik, the eldest of three boys and a sculptor by profession, that she inherited her artistic inclinations from him. In turn, he jovially reminds her that genetics don't work that way.

But it wasn't until 2010 when she retired from the Psychiatry Department of SSM Health (formerly Dean) that she became seriously interested in working with watercolors and began studying with teachers Peg Ginsberg of Mount Horeb and Helen Klebesadel of Madison to hone her naturally-occurring abilities.

When asked about what other artists have influenced and inspired her, she admits that because she is not classically trained in art, she doesn't usually think that way. "I tend to be inspired by the world around me; the things I see and the experiences I have of them. For example, the inspiration for my Dragon Mask painting came to me in San Francisco during a visit to Alcatraz to view an exhibit of China's most famous dissident artist, Ai Weiwei. I remember feeling that I was in some way participating in sharing Ai Weiwei's message outside the prison walls and that my struggles for expression were only one small part of his powerful message. I just knew I needed to paint this!"



When asked about the connections between her artwork and her professional experiences as a psychotherapist, she shared that her work with clients "behind closed doors," taught her to "look deeply into things." She has also learned that "art invites taking a risk to reveal deeper aspects of yourself and that process can be both risky and thrilling."

The fall art exhibit opens on Friday, October 12, 2018 from 5:00-7:00 pm with a reception. Ann will speak briefly about her work at 6:00 pm and be available to answer questions. The exhibit is scheduled to run through January 6, 2019. No registration necessary and bring your friends!



Sunday Assembly  
**Wisdom Explorers—  
 summer program for youth**

Sarah Wilkin Gibart, Sunday Assembly member

For my husband, Tony, and me, the Wisdom Explorers program for kids was a highlight of the summer. The seed for this event began with generous donations from many people on Giving Tuesday which established a budget for a summer children’s program. A committee including Sunday Assembly members, sisters and co-workers met during the spring to plan a special day for children and families.

On a hot, sunny Sunday in July, we welcomed nine young people ages 6 to 14 to the monastery. The theme for the day was based on Genesis 1:26-28 (MSG version) about how God created earth and all things and God invites us to join in God’s care for creation. We had a gathering activity including introductions, fun songs, a bible verse and discussion. Then the kids were led in a prairie exploration activity with Julie Melton. When they returned, we had snack prepared by Rita Emmenegger. Next, some Explorers chose to pick produce in the garden and prepare salad for the evening’s supper. Others chose to help construct a wood duck nesting box. Wood ducks are regularly seen passing through on Lost Lake, but have never nested there. They nest high in hollows of old trees, a habitat that is scarce in many areas. We hope the box will encourage the ducks to stay!

Meanwhile, parents and children under five were invited to play outside before dinner. To close the day, the explorers took a hike to the top of the hill to



pray, reflect on the day, enjoy the beauty and sing a song together. Our closing prayer-song was Gentle Breeze by Luke Ka’ a Morgan and Dale Garratt. Look up “Gentle Breeze Hula” on YouTube to see a Christian hula dance to this lovely song! The original song has beautiful lyrics evoking island imagery. We changed a few words (\*) to reflect the natural environment around us. “Gentle breeze, breath of God, peaceful waters\* running deep. Bending grass\*, your tender touch. Leaves of green\* your countless thoughts. I feel your love. I know your love, surrounding me. Thank you for your love, Creator. Thank you for your love. I will let the streams of your compassion flow

through me.”

Finally, everyone gathered on the patio to enjoy pizza, salad and eventually s’mores! We relaxed, conversed and played into the evening. We left with full, grateful hearts. My favorite quote from a 7 year-old participant was, “I want to come back to the monastery every year until I’m 20!”

Thanks sincerely to our participants, to our committee members and the donors. We hope to provide more programs like this in the future.

## Volunteers & Coworkers

### Volunteering at Holy Wisdom

Rachel Olson, Foundation Project Manager

Laura Norby (left) is Holy Wisdom Monastery's newest volunteer, Her first shift at the monastery's front desk was August 23, 2018—coincidentally also the day of the 2018 Volunteer Appreciation Picnic.

Laura is a retired nurse, semi-retired Episcopal Deacon serving Saint Dunstan's Episcopal Church congregation, and an Oblate in the Order of Julian of Norwich. Laura has been coming to Holy Wisdom for events and meditation retreats for years, but has found that volunteering at the front desk and acting as the welcoming face of the monastery is a great way to get involved, and get to know people.



Laura became one of nearly 300 women and men who, since November 2017, have contributed time and energy to our ministries. Volunteers are at the heart of every mission, ministry, class, program, project and event that happens here.

And volunteerism isn't just good for the monastery. Scientific studies have shown that being challenged by new experiences, being active and involved in a mission you believe in, and building relationships with and people you care about, all promote better health and greater sense of wellbeing. It may even help you live longer.

Even with the impressive number of people who are already involved, there are still plenty of opportunities to serve. To learn more visit [benedictinewomen.org/support/volunteer](http://benedictinewomen.org/support/volunteer) or contact [Rachel Olson](mailto:Rachel.Olson) at 608-836-1631, x120.



## Oblates

### My Benedictine Rule: a haibun of reflections

by David McKee, Oblate class of 2016

*Read David McKee's personal Rule he created during his oblate candidate year.*

Concerning the word "haibun"...

The writing and study of haiku is one of the pillars of my life. So, I have chosen to express my Rule in the form of a haibun: a Japanese literary form which consists of prose interspersed with haiku. The relationship of the haiku to the prose is often mysterious. They make sense to me, and I hope they make some sense to

you.

Though I am giving what follows the title of "Rule," it is essentially a series of reflections on the spiritual dimensions of my life and how they are interwoven with the Benedictine principles that have been most resonant for me in the formation process.

Concerning the word "oblate"...

waning gibbous moon  
so much left  
to pour out

To be an oblate means to make an oblation: a pouring out, a sacrifice. This has a deep resonance for me: a life of pouring out, of emptying oneself and, thereby, open to being filled with God. As someone on the

contemplative journey, this paradoxical image of emptying-and-filling is the central guide for my Rule.

Concerning “practices” ...

cottonwood fluff  
trying so hard  
to give up trying

If a personal Benedictine rule is a trellis to guide the growth of my life, the rungs of my trellis are practices: the regular, repeated routines and relationships of my everyday life that exemplify key Benedictine values. These practices are skillful means to the end of purity of heart: to live focused on Mary of Bethany’s “one thing necessary”—the abiding presence of God—letting go of attachment to my unavoidable cravings and aversions.

Prayer

prayer at dawn  
the chambered nautilus  
unwinds

My practice of prayer is both private and communal, and it takes a few different forms:

- daily practice of contemplative prayer or zazen
- daily practice of studying and writing poetry, primarily haiku; this is my *lectio divina*, with the *oratio* aspect of the process being my own writing.
- regular attendance at the Midwest Soto Zen Community for zazen and chanting
- regular participation in a centering prayer group at Holy Wisdom Monastery
- participation in Zen sesshin (retreats) and Benedictine retreats
- attending the Sunday Assembly of Holy Wisdom Monastery for the prayer of the Eucharist

Read more at [holywisdommonastery.org/blog/my-benedictine-rule-a-haibun-of-reflections](http://holywisdommonastery.org/blog/my-benedictine-rule-a-haibun-of-reflections)

Celebrating 65 Years Faith & Service

## An oblate community is born

by [Sister Denise West](#), Benedictine Women of Madison

Last November in her address to the Fourth World Congress of Benedictine Oblates in Rome, Sister Joan Chittister remarked, “Oblate programs are often now twice as large as the monasteries that sponsor them.” At Holy Wisdom Monastery our oblate program is nearly 40 times the size of our community!

We all know that the oblate community holds an integral place in our 65-year history, but do you know when the oblate program began? If you said late 1990s, you’d be right, but *notentirely* accurate.

The initial oblate community began with the sisters and their high school students in the 1960s. The oblate community as we now know it became a community in 1998.



*Oblates reconnect at retreats at the monastery.*

I recently sat down with a few people who were here in the beginning, and they shared their reflections on the experience of nearly 20 years ago.

Jody Crowley Beers joined the staff at Holy Wisdom in 1997 and worked in the department of spirituality. She joined Sister Mary David Walgenbach, prioress, and Father Ken Smits, OFM, Cap., director of spirituality and liturgy, on a committee to form an oblate community. Sister Mary David recalls that she and Sister Joanne Kollasch wrote to a lot of communities to see what their oblate community was like. Jody remembers her input, "You can't start a community without the people who are going to *be* the community; we need to bring together people who are interested in being oblates." Her task then was to find these people.

Reverend Jan Summers recalls, "At that time I was a United Church of Christ (UCC) minister in West Bend, Wisconsin. The first Sunday I ever came here to a service they were singing out of the UCC hymnal and so I felt right at home. I had been coming to St. Benedict Center on personal retreats every couple of months, and one day Mary David asked me, 'How would you like to be part of a new group we're creating called the oblates?' Well, I had absolutely no idea what 'oblate' meant because I had not been raised Catholic." But because Jan always felt so welcome, she accepted.

A number of other people joined the planning group and they met every two months. This original group included Charlie Carlson, Susan Carlson, Deacon Joan Smoke, Gail Lamberty, Anne Edwardson (who was actually in that original oblate group in high school), Marjorie Nixon, Reverend Bill Beers, and Sue Schoenbeck. Jody described the meetings, "Sister Mary David and Father Ken were always there. One of the sisters would give a presentation on some topic of Benedictine spirituality at every meeting, and there was faith sharing. At the time, the monastery held 'Together in Monastic Experience' (TIME) retreats, and the rhythm of these retreats influenced the formation circle."

Jan remembers the process of the meetings as being very supportive and very spiritual. "The way we communicated was intentional. The welcoming, the listening, the gift of hospitality was so important, and I hadn't always experienced that in church settings. It was significant and lived out here in a way that was a new experience for me."

The group spent a whole year planning. There were many unknowns: *What would the oblate community look like? What would be the requirements? What kind of commitment would people have to make? What would be the process of formation?*

The planning committee addressed these questions. Oblates would write their personal rules patterned on the *Rule of Benedict*. After a year of meeting, the members of the committee said, "We will be the first oblates." Julia Weaver joined this group and the oblate class of 1999 was complete.

Mary David recalls, "An important element of the oblate formation process was prayer, but also developing community among all the participants as well as leadership. The formation circle, in dealing with the future of oblates, was always looking forward; it was never stagnant." During that formation year, the oblate candidates shared in the leadership of sessions, calling forth one another's gifts.

Creating an ecumenical oblate community was born of the sisters' emerging ecumenical monastic community. Like all the communities of Holy Wisdom, the oblates grew out of a need—a need that lay people had to deepen their spiritual lives.

Anne remembers, "That first year was really creating your path by walking it. One of the things that I enjoyed was 'Emmaus Walks,' where we would go out two-by-two. It was a nice way to know someone a little more deeply, to talk about whatever was on our mind at the time." Marjorie added, "Jody was a wonderful leader, and we all developed very close relationships. I think one thing that has stayed constant is that everybody has loved and appreciated their formation year."



On March 27, 1999 the group of 11 women and men (l-r)—Charlie Carlson, Susan Carlson, Reverend Jan Summers, Julia Weaver, (Sister Mary David Walgenbach), Deacon Joan Smoke, Gail Lamberty, Anne Edwardson, (Sister Joanne Kollasch), Marjorie Nixon, Reverend Bill Beers, Sue Schoenbeck, and Jody Crowley Beers—made their promises as the first Benedictine Oblates of the Sisters of Saint Benedict of Madison.

Sister Joan Chittister said in her talk, “ vowed Benedictines and committed oblates need one another,” and we affirm that statement at Holy Wisdom. Witnessing the oblates’ promises, made each spring, renews the sisters’ own call. The oblates add to the diversity of voices and energy in the world, reaching into places where the sisters don’t go. Sister Joan continues, “It is the growing oblate programs of small monasteries that are becoming tentacles of the spirit of the Rule, the outreach of spirit of the monastery to which they are attached.”

*The Benedictine sisters at Holy Wisdom Monastery celebrate 65 years of faith and service in Middleton, Wisconsin this year.*

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#### Guests & Retreatants

#### What they're saying

We always enjoy hearing what our guests think. Here are some remarks from people who have been here this year.

“Once again the monastery has been a welcoming oasis for our gathering and renewal of friendship. Thank you.”

“I came here this week hoping and praying for new life and new growth in my heart and spirit and the Lord has given me that. I am deeply grateful for your hospitality in providing a wonderful place to stay, maintaining land with beautiful trails to walk, offering times of community prayer, and sharing heart-warming conversation over meals. Thank you for using what the Lord has given you to bless others. Praise Him for His presence in this place. May He bless you and keep you now and always!”

“Everything was delightful! Everyone was so welcoming and nurturing! I loved the cuisine!”

## We remember



Our thoughts and prayers are extended to the families and friends of the following:

**Calogera (Lilla) Valenti Miceli**, mother of Sunday Assembly member Giovanna Miceli Jeffries. Lilla passed away on September 8, 2018.

**John Morris**, father of oblate and volunteer Liz Morris. John passed away on September 12, 2018.

We celebrate the gifts they shared and rejoice in the promise of eternal life.

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## New on our website

Follow the links below to see what's new on our website.

[Restoration and hope](#) by Sister Lynne Smith

[September phenology \(monthly nature happenings\)](#) by Sylvia Marek

[September new books in the library](#), by Nancy Sandleback

Recent homilies:

- [Wayne Sigelko's homily, September 9, 2018](#)



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## Calendar

[Sunday Worship](#), 9:00 am  
Monastery Assembly Room

### [Daily Prayer](#)

Monastery Oratory

Morning Prayer, Sunday-Saturday, 8:00 am

Midday Prayer, Tuesday-Friday, 11:45 am

Evening Prayer, Tuesday-Sunday, 4:30 pm

### [Centering Prayer](#)

Monastery Oratory

Morning Centering Prayer, Tuesday-Saturday, 7:35 am

Evening Centering Prayer, Tuesday-Friday, 4:55 pm

Retreat & Guest House Room 10

Centering Prayer Group, Wednesdays, 7:00 pm

Follow the links below to learn more or register for upcoming events at Holy Wisdom Monastery

For the complete calendar visit [holywisdommonastery.org/events](http://holywisdommonastery.org/events)

September 23

Children's Liturgy of the Word, 9:00-10:00 am

Children of all ages welcome on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. Students are dismissed from worship to hear and learn about the scripture readings at their level, then return later in the liturgy to receive communion.

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September 27

Prairie Rhapsody benefit concert, 5:30-8:00 pm

[Tomorrow is the last day to register.](#)

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September 30

Friendship Sunday and Blessing of New Members

Hospitality and Car Pool Sunday

Hospitality Sunday is the last Sunday of the month. All are encouraged to bring food to share and meet and get to know other members and visitors. Carpool Sunday: gift your neighbors and Mother Earth by sharing a ride.

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October 3

Wisdom Prairie Workday, 9:00 am-12:00 pm

[Register by Oct. 2, 2018.](#)

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October 7

Sunday Assembly Childcare Ministry, 9:00-10:00 am

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October 9

Sacred Citizenship: Immigration Justice in Wisconsin and at the Border

Erin Barbato is an immigration lawyer and director of the Immigrant Justice Clinic at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School. Erin and a few students who accompanied her to the Texas border in August 2018 will speak about family separation at the border. [Register by Oct. 2, 2018.](#)

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Luke House

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October 13-14

A Weekend Away

This facilitated retreat for women offers participants time and space to connect with themselves, with God and others in the peaceful setting of the monastery. The weekend will include faith sharing, prayer, journaling, contemplative walking in the prairie, meals, worship with our ecumenical Sunday Assembly and conversation. If you have never been on a retreat or have not visited the monastery, this retreat is a good introduction to a contemplative retreat. Those who are familiar with the monastery are also invited to attend. [Register by Sept. 29, 2018.](#)

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October 14

Solidarity Sunday

Children's Liturgy of the Word, 9:00-10:00 am

Social Justice Group, 10:30-11:30 am

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October 17

Wisdom Prairie Workday, 9:00 am-12:00 pm

[Register by Oct. 16, 2018.](#)

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October 21

Sunday Assembly Childcare Ministry, 9:00-10:00 am

Sunday Assembly General Meeting, 10:30-11:45 am

October 28  
Children's Liturgy of the Word, 9:00-10:00 am

Hospitality and Car Pool Sunday

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October 30

Sacred Citizenship: Restorative Justice & Youth Court/Dane County Time Bank

Stephanie Rearick is founder and former co-director of the Dane County TimeBank, founder and steward of Mutual Aid Networks. Stephanie, along with Alexis Gardner and Aaron Blake from the Dane County Time Bank Youth Court staff will give a history of the Time Bank and the Youth Court process, which sends kids in trouble to a jury of their peers rather than through the court system. [Register by Oct. 23, 2018.](#)

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Complete calendar at [holywisdommonastery.org/events](http://holywisdommonastery.org/events)

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