

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

[Sisters & Sojourners](#) | [Sunday Assembly](#) | [Oblates](#) | [Guests & Retreatants](#)
[Friends & Supporters](#) | [Volunteers & Coworkers](#) | [New on our website](#) | [Calendar](#)

December 2018



*2018 marked the 65th anniversary of the sisters at Holy Wisdom Monastery. The sisters (top photo) started the celebration by inviting all to attend an art exhibit displaying photos from the past and present. Caring for Common Ground (photo with tree), a pilot program for those wanting to learn how to do environmental restoration launched in June. Native American speaker Robin Wall Kimmerer drew more than 300 people to the monastery for her talk *What Does the Earth Ask of You*. The next day she joined a volunteer workday at the monastery (Robin pictured at the workday in center). Women needing A Day Away, came to the monastery to pray, share, work and relax (participants shown washing dishes). Guests enjoyed themselves at the Sapphire Soiree, an elegant night of dining and music. Women interested in Benedictine spirituality and possibly becoming sojourners attended Experience Benedictine Life at the Monastery (bottom, middle).*

The season of Advent announces it is time to prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christmas. The 65th Anniversary year will end. What a difference a year makes.

The Benedictine sisters arrived in Madison, Wisconsin 65 years ago. We celebrate their arrival. Decorations, banners, songs, feasting and a photo display marked our observance of the year. An altogether joyful time.

The many activities reminded the sisters and communities at Holy Wisdom to remember, affirm and celebrate our common story.

We recognized the courage and pioneering spirit of our foremothers; they set the community on a new path with a new ministry.

Vatican Council II and its *Decree on Ecumenism* in the Roman Catholic Church, along with the signs of the times, opened a different path for the community. Hearts and minds would see a new way of being church. The opening of Saint Benedict Center in 1966 brought us face-to-face with Christians of many traditions and with members of world religions. A lovely exchange of insights and understanding among us followed. A recent guest at the monastery offered his reflection: "We are all blessed and changed by the people who find us." Yes!

An open door and a listening heart brought seekers to the monastery—some in search of community. We name those who embrace our vision and mission—co-workers; volunteers and donors; the Oblate Community of Holy Wisdom; the Sunday Assembly, a worshipping community; Friends of Wisdom Prairie; and in this anniversary year, the Ecumenical Center for Clergy Spiritual Renewal. Together we raise a mighty chorus of thanksgiving and praise to our God and thanks to one another.

We have a guide for the future. It is our mission to weave prayer, hospitality, justice, and care for the earth into a shared way of life.

May we be faithful to this mission as we enter the coming year, as we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christmas. In the spirit of Isaiah, we pray to open our hearts to receive the gift of peace for our world.



A blessed Christmas and peaceful New Year to you.

Mary David Walgenbach
Prioress

Advent Longing

In the soft sweet longings
of early winter mornings
my soul waits.

It is an Advent Waiting that engulfs my soul
with heart throbs of wonder as I wait.

Wait? What Child is this that longs to be
so blessedly born?
Who can I be that God dare desire
to be reborn again, in me?

How can I prepare my rooms for such a
God, whose divinity so sweetly longs
to make me her home?

It is nothing less, I am told
by gracious Wisdom's decree,
that I am so eternally loved
that God chooses to
dwell in me.

And, lo and behold, I further learn,
it has been and will be so,
for all galaxies and stars

who yet forever are to come.

Ah! Sweet Advent longing,
teach me yet again and again,
it is the Word made flesh
that brings me finally to this,
this my Christmas birth.

-Rev. Dennis Crowley, retired diocesan priest, long-time friend of the sisters, Advent 2018

Sisters & Sojourners

Advent as a sojourner

by [Rachel Olson](#), foundation project manager and Benedictine Sojourner

Advent is a season of hopeful expectation. Nowhere is that more clearly illustrated for us than in the Gospel stories of mother-to-be Mary as she surrenders herself to God and then patiently waits for the Divine plan and purpose for her life to develop and emerge within her. I'm guessing from my own childbearing experiences that it wasn't always easy or comfortable. For Mary, saying yes to the Spirit was a risk. It was a guarantee that her life would change and that some of that change would bring pain. But, saying yes to God also meant that she would be an integral part of one of the most amazing stories in all of human history.



Being a Benedictine Sojourner during this season comes with its own kind of hopefulness and expectation. As you read this, I will have just completed my first three months of the Sojourner experience. Based on my arrangement with the sisters, mid-December could have been the end of my time, but we have agreed that I will continue on and complete the full term of six months. I'm staying because I am finding the experience meaningful, and because my heart tells me that whatever God has planned in this place and at this time, it has not finished developing.

[Read the rest of this month's Sojourner's diary](#)

Advent reflection

by Rev. Dr. Joseph Duggan, Sunday Assembly member



When we push back all the commercial parts of these weeks before Christmas, Advent is really about the quality of our welcome for the Word Made Flesh, Christ incarnated in our world.

How do we know if we have had a good Advent?

We receive hints by which Matthew 25 statement we feel drawn into:

I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

Or

I was a stranger and you did not welcome me.

The Advent-Christmas story holds the truth of both narratives. The words of scripture reflect the first statement, but the lived reality throughout the ages also gives credence to the second statement.

Holy Wisdom Monastery's worship does not let us gloss over felt inertia between these two ways of hearing Matthew 25. We are not granted the privilege to gloss over the dissonance we may feel or release ourselves from the gripping unresolvable tensions produced by these two statements.

Last spring and summer I remember hearing week after week one of the Sunday Assembly members praying for the women, men and children at our nation's borders. During those months I was in a time of grief and I was not able to take in a lot of the painful news from the media. When I first heard the prayer for those at the border I realized how far behind I was in the news. As each week passed and we continued to pray as a community, I realized the extent of my isolation from the world's suffering.

As the weeks passed, here at Holy Wisdom I was thrust into the painful realities of Central American people (not invaders) coming towards our nation's borders. Eventually I went from my complete lack of knowledge to reading the Washington Post's daily caravan journal. There I heard the Advent story told through the voices of the caravan. When asked if people were afraid of the police or of Trump's military at the borders, the response was always, "We trust in God." Reporters pressed further and asked, "Are you not afraid?" "No, we are not afraid, we trust that God is with us. God is bigger and more powerful than Trump!"

God is with us!

Advent is a journey that brings us to that place where we, like the people in the caravan, can boldly proclaim Emmanuel, God is with us!

Advent is a time when we awake from our slumber, albeit our legitimate grief, or the daily concerns of our lives, to hear and learn from the fervent proclamation of the poor's faith.

On the first Sunday of Advent we will hear of the "distress among the nations". And the prophet Jeremiah reminds us that, "The days are coming, says the Most High, when I will fulfill the promise I made." The people of the caravan have no doubt about the promise of Advent, and even when tear-gassed they continue their journey.

What about us?

What is the quality of our faith this Advent?

Can we proclaim God is with us and walk on in mercy, love and justice?

Friends & Supporters

Giving Tuesday donations surpass goal!

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



For the third year in a row, the generosity of donors helped exceed our Giving Tuesday goal. The amount raised now stands at \$23,803.95 which exceeds the goal of \$17,000. Additional gifts are expected to come in!

There were several items which were fulfilled entirely including eight chairs with arms for the assembly room, materials to build four bat houses, five heavy duty easels for the Retreat and Guest House, a trailer for the Bobcat utility vehicle, and the \$400 needed to complete the set of 25 chimes.

Other popular donation areas were continuing education credits, support of the sojourner/novitiate programs, prairie experiences for children, prairie and oak savanna restoration and library books. There were also gifts to be used where we need it most—including debt reduction.

Thank you for your generosity! If you missed the opportunity and are interested in making a gift, it's not too late. Call Janet at [608-836-1631](tel:608-836-1631), x124 for further information.

Year-end gifts to Holy Wisdom Monastery

Have you been meaning to make your year-end gift to Holy Wisdom? There is still time! Here are some options:

- Mail your donation to us at Benedictine Life Foundation, Holy Wisdom Monastery, 4200 County Road M, Middleton, WI 53562. **The envelope must be postmarked by December 31, 2018 to count toward the 2018 tax year.**
- Donate online by December 31, 2018 at HolyWisdomMonastery.org/support/donate-today/
- Drop off your donation in the development office, with the front desk receptionist or with another staff member between 8:00 am-4:30 pm Monday-Friday when the monastery is open. Please note that the monastery will close at noon on Friday, December 21, 2018. Donations can also be dropped off Wednesday through Friday, December 26-28, and Monday, December 31, 2018. Please come to the back door of the monastery nearest the Retreat and Guest House between 9:00 am and 3:00 pm.

Questions? Contact Janet at 608-836-1631, x124 or jneurauter@benedictinewomen.org.

Gary Eldred: The Simple Beauty of Native Plants art exhibit starts in January



Artist and environmentalist Gary Eldred, left, meets with art exhibit sponsor Ron Endres, center, and Greg Armstrong to discuss his native plant sketches for the upcoming January art exhibit.

From a young age, Gary Eldred loved nature. He could be found hiking, fishing and exploring the woods and fields around Albany, Wisconsin, where he grew up. Gary became aware that many of the wild places he enjoyed were being lost to development and increased agricultural pressure. "Reading Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* gave me a new perspective on caring for the

land," Gary said. "I began to think about how I could give back to nature rather than always being a consumer."

Gary's interest in native prairies emerged in the mid 1970s and he became one of the founders of The Prairie Enthusiasts—an organization dedicated to preserving prairie in Wisconsin. Gary began sketching native prairie plants in the winter of 1989. In order to raise awareness of these rare species, he completed this collection of 23 pen and ink drawings over the course of three winters. Gary did this without any formal training in art and his last pieces took more than 40 hours to complete.



Holy Wisdom Monastery is pleased to offer the first public exhibit of this remarkable collection of Eldred's work showing the delicate beauty of native prairie plants. The collection has been donated to the monastery by the event sponsor, Ron Endres, who has been instrumental in prairie restoration at Holy Wisdom and is a council member of the Friends of Wisdom Prairie. Ron met Gary through his own membership in The Prairie Enthusiasts and felt that Holy Wisdom's mission of caring for the earth was a perfect fit for the exhibit.

The exhibit will run January 11 through February 28, 2019. Gallery hours are M-F, 8:00 am - 4:30 pm (excluding holidays) and Sun, 10:00 - 11:00 am.

An opening reception will be held on Friday, January 11, 2019 from 5:00 - 7:00 pm at Holy Wisdom Monastery. The evening will include light refreshments and a brief reflection by Gary at 6:00 pm. All are invited to attend and no registration is necessary.

The gift of music Middleton High School Choir Concert

Need a break from your final preparations for Christmas? Give yourself a gift and join us for the annual concert by the Middleton High School Choir. Invite friends and family to enjoy the free half hour concert scheduled for Thursday, December 20, 2018 at 12:30 pm. This holiday tradition includes the concert, hot chocolate, cider, and cookies. RSVP's are not required. We hope to see you there!



Top five reasons to volunteer at Holy Wisdom Monastery

by [Rachel Olson](#), foundation project manager

1. **Mattering:** Volunteers are a vital part of every aspect of Holy Wisdom, and unlike other areas of life that you may not be able to control, volunteering at Holy Wisdom allows you to choose where, when, and how to make a difference in the lives of others.
2. **Belonging:** Looking to connect with others who share your interests? Volunteering is a great outlet for getting to know other members of Holy Wisdom's "community of communities."
3. **Wellbeing:** Volunteering is good for you. Studies have shown that volunteering makes people feel physically healthier, manage chronic health conditions and lower stress—and what better environment could there be than Holy Wisdom?
4. **Leading:** Often what a great idea needs most is a great leader, and there are many of both at Holy Wisdom. Leadership can be rewarding in itself because of the opportunity to share passion, values and inspiration with others.
5. **Growing:** Volunteering is a great way to share and improve existing skills, as well as learn new ones. Classes, courses and trainings can be expensive—but volunteering is free! Holy Wisdom offers many opportunities, both indoors and out, to learn, grow and share.



Sunday Assembly volunteer Margaret Sommers, right, works with director of worship and music, Lynn Lemberger, most weeks.

Holy Wisdom Monastery has a wide variety of volunteer opportunities available. Learn more by following the link below or contact Rachel Olson at rolson@benedictinewomen.org or 608-836-1631, x120.

[Sign up to volunteer](#)

Friends of Wisdom Prairie year in review

by Greg Armstrong, director of land management & environmental education

The purpose of the Friends of Wisdom Prairie is to help the sisters at Holy Wisdom Monastery care for the earth. It has been a rich and fulfilling year, and a lot has been accomplished.

From November 2017-November 2018
the Friends of Wisdom Prairie:

- Provided more than 1400 hours of volunteer service to the monastery
- Burned more than 100 acres of prairie & woods
- Sowed prairie and savanna seed on 10 acres of land
- Controlled weeds on newer prairies
- Planted 35 bur oak trees in savanna restoration areas
- Used low impact logging in



- remnant savanna to remove weedy trees
- Collected prairie seed with Dane County Parks
- Initiated a systematic program of surveys of biota at the monastery including identifying 4 kinds of bats that live on monastery land.
- Provided environmental and eco-spiritual education through lectures and monastery tours.

Thank you to all who participated and we hope to see you in 2019!

[Become a Friend or give a membership as a gift](#)

Sunday Assembly

Christmas liturgies and holiday prayer schedule

All are welcome to join us for prayer and worship during the Christmas season at Holy Wisdom Monastery. Come, let us all rejoice at the birth of Jesus.

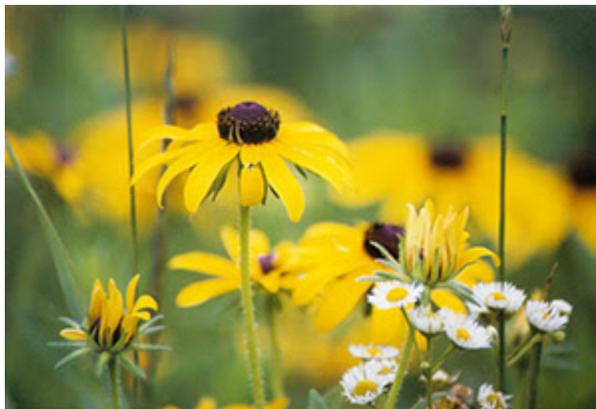
- Christmas Eve worship – 8:30 pm on Monday, December 24
- Christmas Day worship – 9:00 am on Tuesday, December 25
- Sunday Assembly worship – 9:00 am on Sunday, December 30



Holy Wisdom Monastery, including the Retreat and Guest House, will be closed from Friday afternoon, December 21, 2018 through Tuesday, January 1, 2019. During this time our public prayer schedule is modified:

- Morning Prayer – 8:00 am from December 24 - December 31
- No public Midday Prayer
- Evening Prayer – 4:30 pm from December 24 - December 31
- No public Centering Prayer
- No public prayer on January 1, 2019
- Our regular prayer schedule resumes on January 2, 2019

We remember



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

Max D. Gaebler, dear friend of the sisters. Max passed away in September.

Mary Louise Kauper, mother of the monastery's Chef Robert Kauper. Mary Louise passed away on November 18, 2018.

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

New on our website

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

[Sojourner diary—hopeful expectations](#) by Rachel Olson

[Learning to hope](#) by Sister Lynne Smith

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

[December new books in the library](#), by Nancy Sandieback

Recent homilies:

- [Jerry Folk's homily, December 2, 2018](#)
- [Leora Weitzman's homily, November 25, 2018](#)
- [Steve Zwettler's homily from Jim Green's funeral, November 24, 2018](#)

Calendar

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

Holiday Prayer Schedule

Morning Prayer, 8:00 am, December 24-31

No public Midday Prayer

Evening Prayer, 4:30 pm, December 24-31

No public Centering Prayer

No public prayer on January 1, 2019

Regular prayer schedule resumes on January 2, 2019

[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

December 20

Holiday Concert with the Middleton High School Choir, 12:30-1:30 pm ([read more](#))

December 21, 2018-January 1, 2019

Holy Wisdom Monastery closed except for some prayer and worship services ([see schedule](#))

December 23

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

Kids on the Prairie, 10:30-11:30 am

December 24, 2018-January 1, 2019

Monastery closed, except for worship services

December 24
Christmas Eve Liturgy, 8:30 pm

December 25
Christmas Day Liturgy, 9:00 am

December 30
Hospitality and Car Pool Sunday

Sunday Assembly, 9:00 am

January 6
Solemnity of the Epiphany of Jesus

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

January 8
Luke House

January 11
Art Exhibit Opening Reception, 5:00-7:00 pm ([read more](#))

January 12
A Day Away - retreat full

January 13
Feast of the Baptism of Jesus

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

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

Anointing of the Sick, 10:20-11:00 am, monastery oratory

January 16
Resilience and Trauma in Daily Life, 6:30-8:00 pm
Donna Carnes, a trained psychologist and survivor of major life trauma, has developed this four-part workshop for women who are open to exploring the relationship between the individual self, life trauma and resilience—all in the context of our current cultural surroundings. During the 90-minute sessions, members of this small group are invited to share their personal experiences and coping strategies, including “favorite things” such as food, music, books, storytelling, and spirituality.



[Learn more and register by January 7, 2019](#)

January 18-25
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



January 19
Snowshoe Under the Moon Tour, 7:00-8:30 pm
Join us for a tour of Holy Wisdom Monastery land on snowshoes, under the moon. Sylvia Marek and Greg Armstrong will be the tour guides. No registration necessary, just come. Bring your own snowshoes or borrow a pair from the monastery on a first come, first served basis. Contact [Greg Armstrong](#) to let him know you are coming and if you'd like to reserve snowshoes.

January 20
Sunday Assembly Childcare Ministry, 9:00-10:00 am

Kids on the Prairie, 10:30-11:30

Sunday Assembly Council Meeting, 10:30-11:30 am

January 27
Children's Liturgy of the Word, 9:00-10:00 am

Hospitality and Car Pool Sunday

Complete calendar at holywisdommonastery.org/events

Holy Wisdom Monastery

4200 County Road M, Middleton, WI 53562 | Phone: 608-836-1631

Website: www.holywisdommonastery.org | Email: info@benedictinewomen.org