

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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November 2018



Dear Benedictine Bridge Readers,

Thank you for the many ways you support the sisters and the mission at Holy Wisdom Monastery! You are a blessing to us and we hold you in our prayers. Happy Thanksgiving.

Peace,

Sisters Joanne Kollasch, Denise West, Lynne Smith, Paz Vital, Mary David Walgenbach (l-r)

Photo by Jennifer Peters.

Friends & Supporters
Giving Tuesday

#GIVING
TUESDAY™

You've probably seen it. Christmas decorations in stores before Halloween pumpkins are even carved. By the time the holidays are here, we are weary of the unrelenting consumerism.

In 2012 a group of people in New York began what they called Giving Tuesday. They wanted a way to express their gratitude to non-profits for the work they do and resist the commercialization of the holidays. Now an international effort, Giving Tuesday raised more than \$274 million in 2017 in the United States alone!

The monastery has been part of this effort by creating a wish list of things that would enhance Holy Wisdom but aren't in the budget. And you have responded generously. Last year Giving Tuesday brought in \$36,247 to pay for items on our list!

Giving Tuesday is November 27, 2018—the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. Watch for our emails and [take a look at this year's wish list](#). There's something for everyone.

In thankfulness for all your blessings, give generously to Holy Wisdom and other non-profits you support!



Giving Tuesday donors in 2017 helped support the Wisdom Explorers program for children at Holy Wisdom Monastery.

Thank you for supporting Holy Wisdom

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

We are thrilled with the grant the monastery received from the Lilly Endowment Inc.'s *Thriving in Ministry* initiative to establish the Ecumenical Center for Clergy Spiritual Renewal. The opportunity to help clergy from different Christian denominations thrive in their ministries compliments our mission to weave prayer, hospitality, justice and care for the earth into a shared way of life.

What is important to understand is that this large grant is for that program only! It does not cover any of Holy Wisdom's normal operating expenses.

Just as we are grateful for the opportunity this new center will bring to the monastery, we are grateful for the support you offer to Holy Wisdom through your financial gifts and volunteer time. Your support helps us care for people and the prairie, provide a spiritual home for many, and offer programs and experiences which refresh and renew.

We thank the Lilly Endowment for their belief in our plans to establish the Ecumenical Center for Clergy Spiritual Renewal and offering this amazing grant. But just as important, is our thanks to you, the people who support us throughout the year with your generous gifts.

To continue your support, [make a year-end gift by clicking here!](#)

A holiday tradition

It's not too early to mark your calendar for the free annual Holiday Concert presented by the Middleton High School Choir in the Assembly Room. The half hour concert is scheduled for Thursday, December 20, 2018 at 12:30 pm. Everyone is invited to enjoy what has become a monastery tradition of music, coffee and cookies. Support our area young people sharing their talent and invite your friends to join you! RSVP's are not required.



Artists wanted for 2019 art exhibits

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



Beauty is experienced throughout Holy Wisdom. Not only is the prairie beautiful, but so are the buildings. The sacred simplicity of the interior or the view of the monastery at night with light shining from the windows is a lovely sight.

Another way we welcome beauty into our midst are the spring and fall art exhibits. These exhibits generally feature solo artists whose two-dimensional work is on display for 3-4 months. If you know of any artists who may be interested in submitting work to be reviewed by the art jury, please direct them to

[https://benedictinewomen.org/blog/art-](https://benedictinewomen.org/blog/art-gallery-submissions)

[gallery-submissions](#) where submission guidelines can be found. **Submissions for the 2019 art exhibits are due on Monday, December 10, 2018.** Direct any questions to [Rachel Olson](#) at 608-836-1631, x120.

Oblates

Being Benedictine and surviving cancer

by Sue Ellen Zagrabelny, Oblate class of 2010



Sue Ellen Zagrabelny, Benedictine oblate class of 2010 and cancer survivor.

I am a cancer survivor.

The last eight months—from discovery of a mass in March 2018, to tests and exams, to surgery, to rehab, to finishing my sixth and final chemo October 24, 2018—have been a whirlwind weathering the adventure of ovarian cancer. It also has been a testament to the Benedictine life.

Here's what I found out:

I am connected to a community of prayer around the world. That sustained me through the difficult times.

Instinctively, I drew on Benedictine practices of delving into the Scriptures, listening, prayer, reflection, discernment, and acting on those practices as best I could at a given moment. I never imagined what God would open up to me! I met people of faith from all walks of life, not just in my church community, but in the hospital, in rehab, at my doctors' offices, at the television station where I volunteer, at the jazz club I frequent.

I've gained so much through the people I've met at the places mentioned above, and at Gilda's Club, a place for people surviving cancer to give and receive support and take part in activities which are crucial aids in recovery. Another important group who have aided in my recovery are the Chemo-chicks, a group of ovarian cancer survivors who gather monthly to provide critical personal support from those who have been through what I'm going through, and vital information about research, new drug protocols, and clinical trials.

What does this have to do with being a Benedictine. EVERYTHING! I learned that just because I was ill, I did not stop being a Benedictine. I was called to listen, pray, reflect, and discern as best I could at that moment. I was called to be present to myself, others, and most importantly, to God.

Oblates for the future

by Chris Todd, Mary Hoddy and Marge Nixon, Oblate classes of 2010, 2002 and 1999

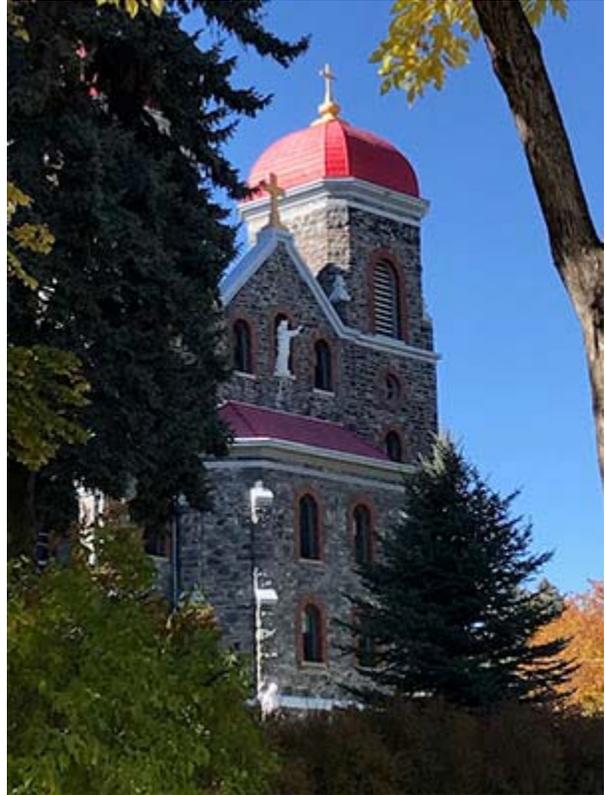
The role of oblates in monastic life has become a topic of conversation due to the rapidly changing numbers of professed monastics and oblates. It is estimated that worldwide the number of oblates now exceeds the number of professed sisters and brothers.

In October 2018, Chris Todd, Mary Hoddy, and Marj Nixon from Holy Wisdom traveled to the Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood, Idaho to join 40 Benedictine oblates and professed sisters at the Oblates for the Future Symposium. We worked collaboratively on three issues: assessing where we are, naming and claiming a vision for the future, and articulating next steps to bring what was learned back to our own communities.

In assessing the current situation, we discovered there is great variety in monastic life. A few monasteries have large communities of both professed monastics and oblates while others have only a few sisters with many more oblates. In some monasteries oblation is seen as a vocation and the formation process mirrors that of professed monastics. In other monasteries only professed monastics are viewed as having a vocation. Most monasteries are moving to a shared leadership model with professed monastics and oblates sharing responsibility for the oblate program. In a few communities, such as Holy Wisdom and the oblate community in Belgium, oblates are totally responsible for the leadership of the oblate community.

In her keynote address Sister Dr. Mary Forman OSB, prioress of St. Gertrude's monastery, provided an historical context for the role of oblates within monastic life. Oblates initially were children given to the monastery by their parents. Over time, adult oblates also joined monasteries, providing a workforce for the monastery and jobs, security and a religious environment for oblates. Over the centuries there have been regular cycles of growth and decline in monastic life in response to shifting religious, political and economic conditions. At a critical point in each cycle of decline, monastic communities had to evolve into something new in order to survive and grow. We appear to be at that point again.

Sister Teresa Jackson, OSB from St. Gertrude's pointed out in her presentations that monastic communities are now growing again rather than declining due to rapidly increasing oblate communities. She stressed that there will always be professed monastics maintaining the Benedictine charism within monasteries. But there is a growing hunger for Benedictine spirituality in the world and oblates are uniquely situated to bring it and the values of their monasteries into local communities. Dr. Charles Van Leeuwen, oblate at the Monastery Saint André in Belgium, outlined significant changes in oblate formation that will be required in some communities to prepare oblates to take on this enhanced role. This very positive view of monasticism was uplifting and we returned home excited about new ways the sisters and oblates of Holy Wisdom can work together to both support the sister's community and more fully extend Benedictine spirituality into



the world.

Sisters & Sojourners

Learn the practice of listening at A Day Away retreat for women and men

by David McKee, Sunday Assembly member and Oblate class of 2016

As the communities and departments at Holy Wisdom collaborate on program offerings, the membership retreat, A Day Away, has been expanded and will be offered for women and men in January 2019. In addition, the A Day Away retreats will be led by Oblates of Holy Wisdom Monastery members throughout the year.

Listening to God, Ourselves, One Another and the Earth | January 12, 2019 | 9:30 am-5:00 pm

“Listen carefully, my child, to the master’s instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart.” So begins the Prologue of The Rule of St. Benedict. “Listen” is the very first word in The Rule. Endeavoring to listen with the ear of the heart is a foundational practice in the Benedictine way of life. It is the basis for all the other Benedictine values of hospitality, humility, stability, and conversion of life. Through listening well, we deepen our relationships with ourselves, with one another, and with the earth, and, thereby, we may deepen our relationship with God.



Listening is a simple practice, but it isn’t easy and it requires our sincere effort. It particularly involves the work of stilling our bodies, calming our hearts, and quieting our minds, so that we are better able to attend to the voice of God as it arises within, between, and among us.

Oblates **Christina Roberts** and **David McKee** will be your guides for a day devoted to cultivating the practice of listening through solitary reflection and prayer, contemplative dialogue and group sharing and communing with the land (weather permitting). Participants are encouraged to bring with them any materials they already utilize for self-cultivation, such as journals, drawing and painting, or other creative vehicles.

[Learn more and register by January 4](#)

Memories of St. Benedict Center

by Joseph Wiesenfarth, Sunday Assembly member



Sister Mary David Walgenbach and Philip S. Kaufman, OSB preside over a worship service during the Benedictine Symposium in 1980 at Holy Wisdom Monastery (St. Benedict Center).

After we moved from Langdon Street to Greening Lane—from Downtown to the West Side of Madison—in August 1974, Louise and I eventually discovered St. Benedict Center. I placed a call there and asked whether just anybody could show up on Sunday for Mass, and I was told “Yes.” When we arrived on our first Sunday, we found a community of seven Benedictine sisters whose chaplain was Philip S. Kaufman, OSB. I knew his name because we had both recently published articles in the May 23, 1975 issue of *Commonweal*. Naturally, I felt that I’d come to the right place. Our first appearance as St. Benedict Center must have been sometime shortly after that date. Alas that it was the last year of Philip’s chaplaincy.

Of the seven sisters who were there, aside from Joanne Kollasch, who was then

prioress, and Mary David Walgenbach, who would succeed her as prioress, I remember best Sisters Danielle and Martha. Danielle because she sang so beautifully, and Martha because she shared recipes with me. In a very few years Danielle left the Benedictines for a ministry among Native Americans, and Martha returned with three other sisters to their Iowa motherhouse.

Philip conducted a very quiet and profound liturgy, wearing no vestments beyond an alb and a stole, just as Sister Lynne Smith does now. Whether there was officially a liturgical coordinator then, I do not remember. That Ted Reinke was the organist I do remember, and he carried on as such for a number of years. Liturgical services at Christmas and Easter were particularly memorable because Ted regularly brought in a trumpeter who, memorably rail-thin, played his instrument with genius. There was never any question that Jesus had been born or that he had risen from the dead. The glorious voice of Ed and Shirley Beers’ daughter, Sarah, left no one in doubt about the joy announced by the *Exultet* on Easter Eve.

Speaking of “no one,” there were not many people who attended the Sunday liturgy in the '70s, relatively brief though it was: 45 minutes at the most. Two dozen would be a crowd. Sometimes we’d be a dozen or a few more than that. It was, to say the least, intimate and quiet and thoughtful. Christmas and Easter, however, did bring some 50 to 60 people to the Center.

Once Philip, who died some years ago, returned to St. John’s Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, he was succeeded for just a year, as I remember it, by Gregory Lucey, SJ, the brother of the then governor Patrick Lucey. Given that the governor was in the process of merging the two university systems in Wisconsin, I had to restrain myself when telling Gregory how wrong Patrick was and what a mess the governor was about to make of things. Gregory himself was headed for the faculty of Seattle University, so he understood that colleagues could disagree, but he was not one to criticize his brother.

Subsequently the chaplain became Father Thomas Schroeder, a diocesan priest who had a ministry to the deaf. SO that after liturgy each Sunday, he signed a Mass for a group of hearing-impaired folks. Perhaps that dual mission every Sunday explained why Tom was not keen on speaking—on giving homilies. Consequently, after the reading of the gospel, we’d sit down and those who wished to were invited to say a word or two about the scriptures that had just been read. That may have been the seed that eventually burgeoned into members of the assembly presenting more formal reflections on the Sunday scriptures. But that ladder didn’t happen until Larry Heitke succeeded Tom as chaplain.

But before I go there, I must indicate that Tom Schroeder baptized our son Adam at St. Benedict Center on October 15, 1978. After Adam became engaged to Robin Schmoltdt, he very much wanted their wedding to take place at St. Benedict's too. Sister Lynne presided over that ceremony on October 21, 2006. That was not only due to Adam's having been baptized there, but also to his having been spoiled there. When he was still a toddler, he started tagging along with me each Sunday, and Sisters Mary David Walgenbach and Joanne Kollasch immediately acquired a nephew. Adam would arrive for services with toys and books, sometimes with rings of keys and at other times with electrical wires of different varieties to entertain himself, but his principal task was to be picked up in the arms of Sisters Mary David or Joanne in order to put out the candles after Mass. Then as he grew older and actually paid attention to what was going on in the liturgy, he became the official timer on any homily that I gave. Once I reached eight minutes, Adam gave me a signal that the time had come to call things to a halt!

As I mentioned, homilists arose from the hoi polloi during Larry Heitke's tenure as chaplain. Larry, quite understandably, wasn't too keen on weekly sermons of any variety. Thus the sisters and some of the few Sunday regulars got involved, but in no particular order. I still have the first homily that I gave back then written out on yellow foolscap—it must have been about 1984—and I remember it because it involved my driving through the English countryside and encountering an immovable donkey that was standing across a narrow dirt road. In order to get past the donkey, I had to get on the shoulder of the road and drive my car some two inches away from a stone wall on the left and one inch away from the donkey's nose on the right. Given the placement of the steering wheel in British cars, the donkey and I only just managed to avoid rubbing noses. I'm sure that the gospel text was about the Good Shepherd, and I was somehow suggesting that lost sheep were somewhat easier to manage than donkeys that set up as tollbooths!

Anyway, there were a handful of us in those days who began to learn how hard it was to speak coherently about the selection of scriptural readings.

Ken Smits followed Larry Heitke as chaplain. By Ken's time there had been a number of liturgical coordinators. Kathy Ley, who unfortunately died quite young from cancer in California, a few years back, I remember well. Others I remember less well until Mark Johnson came. He was the immediate predecessor of Lynn Lemberger. Such a position was needed because the numbers of people coming to Sunday liturgy began to grow as the assembly became more diverse, more welcoming, and more ecumenical as the diocese became less so and more conservative when the bishopric of Cletus O'Donnell came to an end.

And, of course, the place of liturgical services underwent a dramatic change. St. Benedict Center was originally built to accommodate the needs of a girls' high school with day and resident students. That was no more by the time my acquaintance with St. Benedict Center began. The buildings of the Center became too expensive to maintain without revenue to support them. Talk of something different to serve a more ecumenical community began; something new was called for. That something new became Holy Wisdom Monastery, a non-canonical ecumenical Benedictine monastery that could admit women of any Christian tradition as full members. But it had first to be built. And so it was done. But between our leaving the Center and entering the Monastery, our Sunday liturgy was moved to Waunakee Village Center for two years. Our first Sunday liturgy at Holy Wisdom Monastery was celebrated on August 30, 2009.

The last worship service at St. Benedict Center took place on September 30, 2007. It is now a memory...a happy memory for me.

Sunday Assembly

Welcoming children in liturgy

Joyce Wodka, Sunday Assembly Council Chairperson

On Sunday, October 21, 2018 the Sunday Assembly community gathered for our semi-annual general meeting. This is a time for our members to hear about some of the things that are happening in the committees of Sunday Assembly, as well as have discussion and give input on important issues affecting us.

Two important updates were given about statements approved by the Sunday Assembly Council in regard to Sunday Assembly membership and Community life. [These statements appear on our website](#) and are also a part of our new member packet of information. They emphasize the importance of the contributions that all of us make to Sunday liturgy as well as outline a structure that will guide us in the future.

The past two years we have been working on the organizational structure for each committee of Sunday Assembly. There are 10 committees: Liturgy, Pastoral Care, Stewardship, Hospitality, New Member, Ministry to Children and Families, Graduates and Young Adult, Social Activities, Social Justice/Sacred Citizenship and the Spiritual Deepening Council. Each committee is working on a "Nature, Purpose, Structure, Function" statement. The next step will be for each committee to write a 3-year plan based on our Mission, Vision and Values and Aims as related to their committee. Having a structure that informs its members of the committee's purpose and function will insure that they will continue into the future as membership changes and shifts. It is a long process but one that will be vital to our growth and stability.

The greater part of our meeting provided an update on the "Ministry to Families and Children." Members had an opportunity to present ideas and feedback about how we are welcoming children in our liturgy, as well as give suggestions about what might make it easy or what might make it hard for families with children to attend liturgy at Holy Wisdom

Monastery. Conversations and ideas were lively and members were happy to listen and share. The meeting concluded with Sister Paz Vital speaking about her future as a vowed member of the Benedictine Women of Madison. "I plan to be at the weddings of both Nancy and Grace. I hope to participate in the baptism of their children. Having families with children is important to our future and the stability of Holy Wisdom."



Stay tuned for more information in 2019 about the "Ministry to Family and Children" and the progress we are making in our effort to serve our community today and also plan for the future.

Restorative justice through youth courts

Susanna Bradley, Sacred Citizenship committee



Sister Paz Vital (third from right) dialogues with Alexis Gardner (second from left) and Aaron Blake (left) about the youth court process at the October 30, 2018 Sacred Citizenship program.

Stephanie Rearick, founder and former co-director of the [Dane County TimeBank](#), along with Alexis Gardner and Aaron Blake, staff of the Dane County Time Bank/Youth Court came to our October 30, 2018 Sacred Citizenship gathering to give us 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.

We sat in a circle and participated in the process of a

possible teen court case.

The connection between teen court and the time bank is unique. The Dane County Time Bank is one of the largest in the world with over 2,200 members, including about 200 organizations. Teen court exists in the four Madison high schools, Verona High School, and two community organizations.

Instead of getting a ticket for a mistake that they have made, they are given an opportunity to go before a jury of their peers. The accused one signs an agreement which is restorative and strength-based and is designed to increase their skills such as writing letters of apology or tutoring younger kids. When they have completed their agreement successfully, they will have avoided getting a ticket and having something appear on their juvenile record. They are encouraged to become jurors themselves. Jurors earn hours for their service which might include music, art, gardening lessons or they can give their hours to their schools.

We ended our time with the staff considering how we might volunteer with the time bank.

We remember



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

Jim Green, husband of Bill Diederich, long-time member of Sunday Assembly, active volunteer at the monastery, and friend to many. Jim passed away on November 17, 2018.

Marilyn McNamara Schaub, sister of Holy Wisdom Monastery Sunday Assembly member and Oblate, Eileen McNamara. Marilyn passed away on October 27, 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](#) by Rachel Olson

[Sisters support welcome and humane treatment of arriving migrants](#) by Sister Mary David Walgenbach

[Knowing who we are journeying with](#) by Sister Lynne Smith

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

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

Recent homilies:

- [Jim Penczykowski's homily, November 11, 2018](#)

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

November 18

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

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

To help children gain an appreciation for the natural world and a desire to care for it, we offer a monthly hike and exploration called Kids On the Prairie for Sunday Assembly members, their children, grandchildren, guests and friends.

November 25

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

Hospitality and Car Pool Sunday

November 28

Help us make the Advent Wreath, 9:30 am

Using evergreen boughs cut from trees on the property, Paul Boutwell our monastery groundskeeper, leads volunteers and staff in our annual Advent Wreath project. All are welcome to join us!

December 2

First Sunday of Advent

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

December 9

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

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

December 11

Luke House

December 14

Advent Taizé Prayer, 7:30-8:30 am

December 16

Sunday Assembly Children's Ministry, 9:00-10:00 am

Los Posadas

December 20

Holiday Concert with the Middleton High School Choir, 12:30-1:30 pm

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 2, 2019

Monastery closed

December 24

Christmas Eve Liturgy, 8:30 pm

December 25

Christmas Day Liturgy, 9:00 am

December 30

Hospitality and Car Pool Sunday

Complete calendar at holywisdommonastery.org/events

Holy Wisdom Monastery

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