Beyond Borders

Helping Hands Medical Mission in El Salvador
**A Mission Beyond Borders**

Sister Ursula Herrera, OSB has been a nurse for 45 years. She worked most of those years with the Maverick County Hospital District in Eagle Pass, TX. On October 23rd, she retired from her position as Diabetes Management Specialist. Two days later, she was on a medical mission trip with other professionals to El Salvador. Below are excerpts from her travels:

“The mission trip was fantastic. We had a priest with us so it was great having Mass every day. Our group consisted of physicians, anesthesiologists, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, surgical PAs, nurses, physical therapists, translators, and volunteers who came from different areas of the United States. From day 1 we worked well together. We saw 2,502 patients in the 5 complete and 2 half days that we were there. We did have a few doctors from El Salvador help us.

The folks were very receptive of us. I did some diabetes teaching and the patients were so amazed that I could speak their language. We were reminded every day to see Christ in our patients and it was easy to do this as they were very humble people.

We had a young woman come to the clinic just to have someone to talk to. She had lost her baby and was very despondent when her family went off to their obligations. Father talked to her then several of us were present to see her and to comfort her. She had been to the clinic before and we were able to help her. She was very grateful and said she would never forget the care she received.

An older lady came in accompanied by her daughter. She was saying her Diabetes medication as she had not been able to purchase it for 3 months. She was very grateful and said she would never forget the care she received. She was very grateful and said she would never forget the care she received.

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Monastery News

INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST STAFF

The Benedictine Sisters welcomed several new employees during the summer and fall. Right (clockwise):
Norma Samarripa joined the Monastery staff in July as administrative assistant to the Priorress. Her previous office and accounting experience helped make it an easy transition into her position. Norma enjoys reading and scrap-booking and she recently welcomed the arrival of her second grandchild, a baby girl!

Joseph (Joe) Kramer began in October as part-time Monastery cook. A former restaurant manager, Joe prepares great noon-time meals for the Sisters. In addition to his talents in the kitchen, he enjoys spending time with his family, playing the guitar and singing. He also likes gardening, construction, and sports.

Jaime Pulido joined our grounds & maintenance department in July. Prior to that, he held a position of maintenance supervisor at Peterson Regional Medical Center in Kerrville, TX. He enjoys all aspects of his diverse responsibilities and is considered a jack of all trades in order to keep up with various tasks. Jaime enjoys reading books, business magazines, and updating his own house.

Carolyn Ruiz, LVN joined the Benedictine Sisters in October. Her focus is tending to the Sisters’ medical needs during the evening shift. In her free time, Carolyn enjoys spending time with her family, decorating, and all things related to real estate.

Viviana Lopez began working with us in September as a full-time Home Health Aid. She divides her time helping both Sisters Mechtilde and Germaine. Recently, Viviana married Justin Lopez who is the kitchen manager at the Omega Retreat Center.

April Lopez has been with us since summer as a part-time Home Health Aid. She assists Sister Germaine during the overnight and early mornings. April and her husband just celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. They have five children and are adjusting to having an empty nest.

IN APPRECIATION

Our sincere gratitude to the following Organizations & Foundations for their generous support to our needs:

$25,000 from the Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters in support of immigration in South Texas for our Benedictine Coalition for Responsible Investment office needs and for the Interfaith Welcome Coalition to purchase 1575 backpacks for immigrant families in need.

$20,000 from the Kronkosky Charitable Foundation in support of the Health and Wholeness Center’s pool.

$10,000 - The Perry & Ruby Stevens Charitable Foundation in support of the Health and Wholeness Center’s water exercise program to purchase pool supplies and provide scholarships for participants who are unable to afford membership.

$2,000 - United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County in support of the Health and Wholeness Center.

$1,000 - Catholic Life Insurance in support of the Health and Wholeness Center.

$10,000 from the Perry & Ruby Stevens Charitable Foundation in support of the Health and Wholeness Center.

Our legal title is Benedictine Sisters (Congregation of Benedictine Sisters), and we are a 501(c)3 charitable organization. For more info, contact your estate planner, attorney, or Sr. Sylvia Ahr, OSB, Treasurer at 830.816.8504.

Leaving a Legacy

Please consider remembering the Benedictine Sisters in your Legacy Planning. There are many ways that you can make a difference in the lives of the Sisters and those who benefit from our programs and ministries.

$25,000 has been received for the health care and basic provision needs of our Sisters. If you have not yet participated in this important campaign, please consider a gift to the Sisters! Donations are still being accepted by mail, on-line, or in person.

RECENT GRANTS

For more info, contact your estate planner, attorney, or Sr. Sylvia Ahr, OSB, Treasurer at 830.816.8504.

WHATEVER GOOD WORK YOU BEGIN TO DO, BEG OF GOD WITH MOST EARNEST PRAYER TO PERFECT IT. ST. BENEDICT

Save the Date

Join us for our Annual Feast of St. Benedict Spaghetti Dinner and Silent Auction

March 20, 2019
4 - 7 pm • Benedict Hall
Tickets on Sale in January
(MUST be purchased in advance)
Call 830.816.8504 for additional information

2018 Annual Giving Update

“Thank you” to all who have generously responded to our annual appeal. To date, over $26,000 has been received for the health care and basic provision needs of our Sisters. If you have not yet participated in this important campaign, please consider a gift to the Sisters! Donations are still being accepted by mail, on-line, or in person.

LEAVING A LEGACY

Please consider remembering the Benedictine Sisters in your Legacy Planning. There are many ways that you can make a difference in the lives of the Sisters and those who benefit from our programs and ministries.

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2018 Summer Sweepstakes Winners

$1,000 Visa Gift Card - Lupe Valdez
$500 Visa Gift Card - Harold Norman
$250 Visa Gift Card - David Finger
$100 Visa Gift Card - Shirley Ahr
$100 Visa Gift Card - Anne Seidel
$50 Visa Gift Card - Jerome Ries

Congratulations to ALL our winners and special thanks to ALL who participated in the raffle. You helped raise nearly $5,000 for the Sisters!
COLLABORATING EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF THE IMMIGRANT

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me." — Matthew 25:35

The Benedictine Sisters always seek to do God’s work. We have been advocates for the immigrant in Texas and the Southwest for many years. Our Benedictine Coalition for Responsible Investment (BCRI) in San Antonio, under the direction of Sister Susan Mika, OSB, collaborates with the Interfaith Welcome Coalition (IWC) of San Antonio. The IWC serves immigrant families, especially women and children, who have been detained at detention centers in south Texas as well as those who have been separated after crossing the border.

BCRI conducts extensive research using print, web, and social media platforms to document and provide up-to-date information regarding multiple aspects of the immigration situation in the region. Data collected and updates include outlining what is impacting the work: proposed legislation, outcomes of ongoing judicial review at the national and local levels, and article summaries that document what is actually happening along the border. BCRI distributes the information to IWC members and alliances. They in turn, use this vital info to continue their piece of the collaborative efforts that make us a unified resource for immigration policies and advocacy.

Sister Ursula Herrera, OSB, director of our Caridad de Corazón ministry in Eagle Pass, TX, recently welcomed Religious and lay women from San Antonio to tour a facility in Mexico that houses immigrants seeking asylum in the U.S. She has also connected with the leadership of the IWC to begin talks about how to collaborate efforts along the US/Mexico Border. It’s an exciting time as our ministries reach out to others for a collaborative response to the immigration challenge.

The Interfaith Welcome Coalition (IWC) Backpack Ministry provides backpacks to distribute to immigrant families as they are released from the family detention centers. A donation of any amount will help this ministry. The backpacks contain toiletries, snacks and items for children.

If you would like to mail a donation, make checks payable to: University Presbyterian Church
ATTN: IWC Backpack Ministry
300 Bushnell Avenue
San Antonio, TX 78212
Oblates called to listen, listen deeply, to the moving of the Spirit within, and to the wisdom of others. Being an Oblate reminds me to listen well before making judgments.

*Like scattered grain on the hillside, you have been kneaded as one bread.*

Our Oblate community is a diverse bunch: Protestants and Catholics, men and women, different ethnicities and occupations.

*Embrace with joy these companions to go with you on your way*

Over the years, the Sisters and our fellow Oblates have become deeply appreciated companions. Both the Rule and the community are gifts that we treasure.

*With all good gifts within us, with the Gospel as our guide, let us set out together on the path to new life, to the feast of God's new earth.*

- Bill

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1. About the authors: Jan Davis, D.Min. is a Roman Catholic spiritual director and retreat leader who also teaches Ignatian spirituality at Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio. Her husband, Bill Howden, Ph.D., is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Married in 2004, they have been Oblates since 2006.

Chon Nguyen’s journey to Religious life began in Vietnam. The fifth of seven children, she faithfully attended Catholic Church in her native homeland. In 1995, she, her parents, and four siblings moved to Garland, Texas to begin a new life. Remaining devoted to her faith, Chon became active in two parishes in Garland - Our Lady of Perpetual Help Vietnamese Parish and St. Joseph Catholic Church, often making 2 visits a day to pray and worship. Over a twenty-year period (1995-2015), the call from God became stronger and clearer to her.

Chon’s favorite scripture is from John 21:17 and reflects her deepened calling, “… Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” In late 2015, after listening to the Spirit within and researching Religious communities in Texas, Chon contacted the Benedictine Sisters of Boerne to tell them of her interest in visiting the community. It wasn’t until after the Sisters moved into their new St. Scholastica Monastery in the fall of 2016 that Chon came for a visit.

She has since visited the community three more times, experiencing the Benedictine way of life firsthand. It is a monastic life, guided by the Rule of Benedict and the traditions of Ora et Labora (pray and work). Chon is attracted to this way of life in community. She finds strength in daily prayer and working, especially with the poor and with retreats. Reflecting on the sisters’ mission and Chon’s discernment, Boerne Prioress, Sister Frances Briseño, OSB noted, “Our Charism, as Benedictines, is to seek God in the communal life and to respond in prayer and ministry. In visiting with Chon, her desire to seek a deeper relationship with God was her reason for choosing our community.”

Religious life is revered in Chon’s family. Two of her siblings have already answered calls from God, a brother who is a Priest with the Vietnamese Redemptorist Priests in Houston, and her sister who is a Religious with the Immaculate Conception Sisters in Vietnam. When asked if her family was pleased with her decision to enter Religious life, Chon smiled and said, “My family is very happy that I, too, have chosen a life devoted to God.”

The Benedictine Sisters, who are very open to women inquiring about religious life, have welcomed Chon. Her Vietnamese heritage brings a new culture to their community which currently consists of Hispanic and European descent. With the guidance of experts in the field of inter-cultural diversity, the Sisters’ vocation/formation team will navigate Chon’s formation journey with inclusion that embraces both Vietnamese and western cultures.

**2019 Oblate Schedule**

**January 6**
Threshold into Our Future/ Federation Chapter

**February 3**
The Rule of Benedict Revisited

**March 3**
Lenten Reflection

**April 7**
Essential Elements of the Rule

**May 5**
Next Steps of Oblate Program

**June**
No meeting

**July 15-21**
Retreat and Oblation/Renewal

**August**
No meeting

### Chon takes time for reflection at the Benedictine Outdoor Chapel

#### Keep in Touch

We would like to hear from you! We are continually updating our database. Please send us your updated information if it is incorrect on the mailing label.
A special “Thank You” to all who supported the Songwriters’ events over the past 10 years! We are especially grateful to singer/songwriters, (left), Billy Montana, Austin Cunningham, Renee’ Coale Willis and Allen Shamblin! This year marks the end of Songwriters’ event. We are grateful for all the memories made over the past decade!

It was 1988 when Mary Lopez and Karen Herrin joined the staff of what is now Benedictine Ministries Corporation (BMC). Together, they have sixty years of combined service with the Benedictines. Mary has worked the past thirty years in food service preparing healthy meals, first at the Monastery, then at St. Albert Early Learning Center and at the Omega Retreat Center. She is a Benedictine Oblate and she also helps cook for the Sisters’ annual spaghetti dinner.

Karen began helping at St. Albert’s Early Learning Center thirty years ago as a teacher assistant. She eventually became the school’s bookkeeper. When the school closed, she advanced into the role of Benedictine Ministries’ Business Manager and Human Resource Manager. Currently, she also manages the Omega Retreat Center. Karen assists with special events at BMC and also with the Sisters’ spaghetti dinner.

Angie Webb (front row center) retired at the end of August after 28 years of devoted service to the Benedictine Sisters. She began working first at the Omega Retreat Center and then served as assistant to the Prioress with both Sisters Mary Agnes Zinni, OSB and Bernadine Reyes, OSB. Angie has been a faithful Oblate for 39 years. She is Sister Ursula Herrera’s sister. Angie is enjoying spending time with her family and writing a book. We owe her a debt of gratitude for her hard work and dedication over the years, and we wish her a peaceful and enjoyable retirement!

Chadd Lassitter (left) will bid us farewell at the end of December. He was first assigned janitorial duties at the Omega Retreat Center in February, 1993. His work ethic and loyalty provided him the opportunity to become Supervisor of Facilities and Grounds in 1998. Chadd began Ozone Air, an air-conditioning/heating business, in 2001. For the past 17 years he has worked tirelessly with us during the day overseeing the daily operations of our facilities and land while building a successful business working nights and weekends. Chadd will now devote his time to Ozone Air. God bless you, Chadd! We thank you and wish you all the best!

Congratulations, Mary (left) and Karen (right)!

Congratulations, Angie Webb, on Your Retirement!

Angie Webb (front row center) retired at the end of August after 28 years of devoted service to the Benedictine Sisters. She began working first at the Omega Retreat Center and then served as assistant to the Prioress with both Sisters Mary Agnes Zinni, OSB and Bernadine Reyes, OSB. Angie has been a faithful Oblate for 39 years. She is Sister Ursula Herrera’s sister. Angie is enjoying spending time with her family and writing a book. We owe her a debt of gratitude for her hard work and dedication over the years, and we wish her a peaceful and enjoyable retirement!

Congratulations, Mary Lopez and Karen Herrin, on 30 Years With Us!

Best Wishes Chadd Lassitter!

After nearly 26 years of dedicated service to our Benedictine community, Chadd Lassitter (left) will bid us farewell at the end of December. He was first assigned janitorial duties at the Omega Retreat Center in February, 1993. His work ethic and loyalty provided him the opportunity to become Supervisor of Facilities and Grounds in 1998. Chadd began Ozone Air, an air-conditioning/heating business, in 2001. For the past 17 years he has worked tirelessly with us during the day overseeing the daily operations of our facilities and land while building a successful business working nights and weekends. Chadd will now devote his time to Ozone Air. God bless you, Chadd! We thank you and wish you all the best!

Repairs and Upgrades at Omega and Health & Wholeness Centers

With the help of funds received from many of our faithful donors and grantors, several repairs and upgrades took place at our Boerne Ministries this past year. The Omega Retreat Center was able to replace a 20 year old air-conditioning and heating system in the kitchen, renovate 3 showers in the dorms, install a booster pump in the Omega House for better water flow, and replace 3 Chapel outside doors. The Health and Wholeness Center replaced dressing rooms in the bathhouse, purchased new equipment for the water exercise program, and replaced the pool bathhouse air-conditioner and heating system. The pool will be closed the month of December for additional upgrades including resurfacing the pool and deck areas. Our heartfelt thanks to ALL who helped make these repairs and upgrades possible! Below are photos of some of the completed work.
We wish you the Joys of Christmas & a Happy, Healthy New Year!

Ministries in Texas including Boerne, Eagle Pass, & San Antonio

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Mission Statement
We, the Boerne Benedictines, are called to seek God in community and to respond in ministry through sharing our spirituality and addressing the needs of the people we serve, especially the poor.