

Franciscan Voices

Living and Promoting Active Nonviolence and Peacemaking | December 2023

Supportive Housing Initiative Advances

The fate of a proposed \$5.5 million dollar [supportive housing initiative](#) in Clinton rested in the hands of the City Council during a regular council meeting on November 14. After three hours of public comment, the Clinton City Council by a 4-3 vote authorized the sale of DeWitt Park to the Clinton YWCA for its supportive housing project to help people who are homeless.

"We have consistently supported the YWCA's effort to build a supportive housing project all throughout this process," expressed Sister Jan Cebula, President of the Sisters of St. Francis, during the public hearing.



Sr. Jan Cebula during the public hearing.

She went on to say, "The Sisters of St. Francis and one of our employees began gathering a group of agencies and individuals concerned about addressing the needs of Clinton residents who are unhoused about nine years ago. The YWCA has participated in this coalition since its beginning. It has been a long road to this day."

In November 2022, the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) awarded a \$4.4 million dollar National Housing Trust Fund grant for this 24-unit supportive housing facility with office space. The City of Clinton and the Clinton County Board of Supervisors each pledged a \$500,000 commitment for the construction. An anonymous donor pledged \$500,000 towards an Operational Reserve account for ongoing expenses.

The contested decision to sell DeWitt Park for this project came after the City Council did not approve

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Peace & Harmony

Reflection by Sister Theresa Judge, General Secretary

When I reflect on what peace means to me, I often think about and quote a statement a professor in graduate school shared with us the first day of a discussion class: "We are all going to assume that everyone is acting in good faith." That made a huge difference in the atmosphere in the class, and I have often pondered that wise advice.

In the committees I volunteer on, there is often potential for contentious interaction, but the chair people keep everything peaceful. There is a healthy exchange of opinions, but issues are usually settled peacefully. In looking back on this past year, I recall several times when a fracture was threatening, but consensus was achieved, and peace was maintained.

Peace continued on page 2



*The Sisters of St. Francis
extend blessings of peace
and joy to you and yours
this Holy Christmas season!*

Art by Sister Carmel Jacobs

— Peace continued... —

My favorite word is “harmony” and I think that peace is synonymous with harmony. One of my favorite songs, “This Is My Song,” speaks to the harmony in the world, and balances patriotism with global understanding. The first two verses, to the tune of Finlandia, are:

*This is my song, O God of all the nations,
A song of peace for lands afar and mine.*

*This is my home, the country where my
heart is; Here are my hopes, my dreams,
my holy shrine;*

*But other hearts in other lands are beating
With hopes and dreams as true and high
as mine.*

*My country’s skies are bluer than the ocean,
And sunlight beams on clover leaf and pine;*

*But other lands have sunlight too, and clover,
And skies are everywhere as blue as mine.*

*O hear my song, thou God of all the nations,
A song of peace for their land and for mine.*

This song personifies heaven to me. When will we ever learn? It is especially troubling and heartbreaking with all the scenes of destruction and death in Gaza and Israel.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.” - Matthew 5:9



Sister Theresa Judge serves on the Clinton Human Rights Commission, Clinton YWCA Racial Justice Committee, L’Arche Clinton Board of Directors, and Clinton Area Showboat Theatre Board of Directors. She has served as the General Secretary for the congregation since 2021.

*Clinton Peace Coalition / Living Peace 365
presents the 36th Annual*

Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration
Sunday, January 14, 2024 1:30 p.m. CT
Clinton Community College
1000 Lincoln Blvd., Clinton, IA 52732

— Remembering Clinton Franciscan Associate —

Frances “Francie” (Bickelhaupt) Hill passed away on August 31 in Bettendorf, IA. Through her faith, she fearlessly fought multiple myeloma.

Francie was called to and deeply committed to service work. Her mission work included Catholic Charities, Meals on Wheels, and St. Martin’s Day Shelter for the Homeless, Albuquerque, NM. She also served as the director of Bickelhaupt Arboretum in Clinton, which was founded by her parents.

She served on the vestry for Christ Episcopal Church, was a Master Gardener, and volunteered throughout Clinton and surrounding communities serving on various boards, committees, and commissions.

Francie was married to Joseph Hill for 37 years. Together they had three children - Shawn, J. Robert, and Meggan. Joseph preceded her in death in 1999. She married Allan Rathje in 2008.

Allan and Francie attended Lenten and Advent services as well as special events at The Canticle prior to joining the Associate Partnership Program. Completing the course “Following in the Footsteps of Francis and Clare” led them to want to be more involved. They both committed to the Associate Partnership on December 16, 2011.

“In this very troubled and fragile world, I seek a way to help others listen to the voices of the marginalized, care for the gift of our earth, continue to educate myself on issues which I have seen presented to me, and work towards ways to further the mission of peace,” she wrote on her initial application.

Francie is survived by her husband, Allan; three children, six grandchildren, one great-grandson, and one sister.



Francie Hill

2023 Sharing Fund Grants Announced

The Sisters of St. Francis annually distribute grants from the Sharing Fund to organizations that benefit people who are poor, powerless, and oppressed; change attitudes or sensitize people to the causes of injustice; promote constructive change in institutions and structures affecting the well-being of people; or promote peace and justice. Individual sisters nominate the organizations and/or agencies in October. Then, a committee reviews the nominations and offers their recommendations to the Leadership Team.

The following twenty-five organizations in ten states were the recipients of the 2023 Sharing Fund grants:

- Aurora Area Interfaith Food Pantry **Aurora, IL**
- Bridgeview Community Mental Health Center **Clinton, IA**
- Café on Vine **Davenport, IA**
- Center for Action and Contemplation **Albuquerque, NM**
- Churches for Middle East Peace **Washington, D.C.**
- Cross Catholic Outreach **Washington, D.C.**
- Garden Center Services **Chicago, IL**
- Help Build Hope Housing Project **Orland Park, IL**
- Humility Homes and Services **Davenport, IA**
- Interfaith Community Services **Escondido, CA**
- Interfaith Power & Light **Des Moines, IA**
- Iowa WINS **Mt. Pleasant, IA**
- Mater Dei USA **Unionville, MO**
- Migrant Farmworkers Assistance Fund **Kansas City, MO**
- Red Cloud Indian School **Pine Ridge, SD**
- Sisters Water Project **Dubuque, IA**
- St. Francis of Assisi Crisis Center **Orland Park, IL**
- St. John Vianney Haiti Committee **Bettendorf, IA**
- St. Vincent Mission **David, KY**
- Wi'am Center **Lansing, MI**
- Willis Dady Homeless Services **Cedar Rapids, IA**
- Unity Christian Academy **South Holland, IL**
- YWCA **Clinton, IA**
- YWCA Children's Center **Clinton, IA**
- YWCA Empowerment Center **Clinton, IA**

Supportive Housing continued...

a rezoning request in September for the original proposed location (land donated by Clinton County) in the 600 block of 3rd Street due to concerns from the neighbors. IFA gave the YWCA until November 30 to find a new site in the same census tract that met all the guidelines.

According to the YWCA's website, 1 in 3 people are at risk of homelessness in Clinton County due to poverty, and this has only increased with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. "The need for this project has been shown. Both the YWCA and Information, Referral, & Assistance Services have provided information about the escalating number of requests for assistance with housing. There is a need," said Sister Jan.

With the green light to advance, the supportive housing facility to be constructed will serve persons

who are chronically homeless. Every client will be assigned a case manager. Administration will also be on-site to provide additional support and added supervision. Community-based service providers will also be able to work on-site, as space is available. Services may include: mental health providers, substance misuse/abuse treatment providers, educational opportunities, workforce development opportunities, religious/spiritual supports, peer-to-peer supports, etc.

To hear more about the supportive housing initiative, listen to [The "Center" podcast](#) published on November 9 with guests Shannon Sander-Welzien and Michelle Plasschaert from YWCA Clinton. The Catholic Messenger also published a detailed [news article](#) on the same day.

Join Us On Our Laudato Si' Journey

by Jennifer Kryszak, Director of Strategic Planning for the Franciscan Peace Center

In November 2021, we, the Clinton Franciscan Family, committed ourselves to the Laudato Si' Action Platform as a response to Pope Francis' call for people worldwide to respond to the interconnected ecological and social crises. We continue to make great progress on our [Laudato Si' Action Plan](#).

As of August 2023, we are one of 7,921 entities that have signed on to the Laudato Si' Action Platform. This number could be much higher as we consider the number of individuals, families, organizations, and parishes that are clearly committed to making a change in the world. As Pope Francis maintained in *Laudato Si'*, "Everyone's talents and involvement are needed." Pope Francis' recent Apostolic Exhortation [Laudate Deum](#) encourages us to consider how we can be involved and how we can advocate for greater commitment from our government. How can we more fully embrace this call to co-create our Laudato Si' future? How can we as people of faith respond to and help alleviate the ecological and social crises? How can we use our individual and collective voice to motivate those with greater political and economic power?

As people of faith, we are called to act on our responsibility to all of creation, but we know that we are not on this journey alone. The communal nature of our faith offers us other venues for participation as our parishes can move toward carbon neutral practices and advocate for change.



Participants visit booths at the Just Living Festival held in October on the grounds of The Canticle. The event focused on promoting nonviolence, environmental sustainability, and community building.

As of August 2023, 173 Dioceses and 427 parishes worldwide have signed onto the Laudato Si' Action Platform. The Diocese of Davenport, Iowa, [committed to this journey](#) in 2023. Could you encourage your parish to participate? Or, does your parish have a Care of Creation Committee that you could take part in?

In addition, there are concrete actions that we as individuals can take to influence others with political and economic power. The [Catholic Climate Covenant](#) is an organization that can assist us in these efforts. On the last Friday of the month, they host an Encounter for Our Common Home virtual meeting that provides background on current climate-related legislation and opportunities for advocacy and collaboration with Catholics across the country who are working for climate justice. All are welcome to join in these [Zoom meetings](#).

In response to *Laudate Deum*, the Catholic Climate Covenant encourages us to sign "[My Laudate Deum Action Pledge](#)" and commit to personal or family actions or advocate for change in the U.S. Catholic Church and at the national and global levels. To support us on our journey, they offer us a few concrete items we can start with and ways to take these actions.

Additionally, the Franciscan Peace Center's [Action Alert Digest](#) includes news articles and advocacy opportunities related to the Clinton Franciscans' corporate stands. Engaging these articles and taking action on these advocacy items are ways that we can continue to educate ourselves and promote peace and nonviolence.

These educational and advocacy opportunities enable us to work for our Laudato Si' future. Thank you for the many ways that you already participate in this journey. If you would like to share examples of how you are currently working for our Laudato Si' future, or suggestions for educational opportunities or actions, please contact [Jennifer Kryszak](#). Together we can act on our faith and work for greater justice and nonviolence in our world.

— Forum to Address Temporary Protected Status —

A discussion on Temporary Protected Status (TPS) and its profound impact on individuals seeking refuge in the U.S. will take center stage at an upcoming forum sponsored by the Franciscan Peace Center and Living Peace 365. Titled "What is TPS?," the event aims to shed light on the challenges and opportunities provided by TPS for immigrants from war-torn regions, including Ukraine, Somalia, and Central American countries.

Scheduled for **Wednesday, December 13**, from **5:30 to 6:30 p.m.**, the event will be held at **Clinton Community College**, located at 1000 Lincoln Blvd in Clinton. The forum will feature distinguished speakers:

- Jessica Malott, immigration attorney, Malott Law, PLC
- Angela Boelens, President, IA NICE

Malott Law, PLC offers personalized legal representation for a spectrum of immigration issues, staying updated on the latest immigration news and developments to provide effective solutions for their clients' needs.

IA NICE collaborates with local individuals and organizations to create a welcoming, supportive

community for Ukrainian newcomer families, aiding their resettlement and connection with local agencies and resources.

Temporary Protected Status, established by the U.S. Congress in 1990, offers a vital program for migrants whose home countries are deemed unsafe, granting them the right to reside and work in the U.S. for a temporary, renewable period.

"The mission behind this event is to highlight the significance of TPS and how it provides a crucial lifeline for individuals fleeing conflict and instability in their home countries," said Marsha Thrall, Director of Programming for the Franciscan Peace Center. "Understanding the nuances and impact of TPS is crucial for fostering a compassionate and informed community."

The event is open to the public, and while registration is not mandatory, interested attendees are encouraged to register by contacting Marsha Thrall at mthrall@clintonfranciscans.com.



J. Malott



A. Boelens

— Endowment Supports Housing Needs —

When the [Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa Endowment](#) was established in 2016 with the River Bluff Community Foundation in Clinton, the funds were designated to be used to help alleviate homelessness and financially assist organizations that work with persons living in poverty or at the risk of being homeless.

As our endowment grows thanks to donors like you, so does our annual gift to Information, Referral, & Assistance Services (IRAS) in Clinton, a local non-profit linking people in need with appropriate



services, identifying and responding to unmet community needs, and providing emergency assistance to people who fall through the cracks. Over \$7,600 from the annual endowment payout has been disbursed in the last three years to IRAS to help with rent assistance in Clinton.

Iowa residents can receive a 25% state tax credit with a qualified donation to our Endowment. A variety of gifts qualify for Endow Iowa Tax Credits including cash, stock, grain, and retirement assets. All 2023 credits have been allocated, however, your gift still counts! When the Iowa Economic Development Authority re-opens the program - expected in early 2024 - you can apply for 2024 credits. Interested in making a gift? Click [HERE](#).

Pictured: Sister Marilyn Huegerich and Regan Michaelsen, Executive Director of IRAS

Can We Grow in Awe and Wonder?

Our Laudato Si' Action Plan Committee invites you to reflect on this article published by Frank McCann, Peace through Justice Facilitator of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace.

Becoming a congregation that lives Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si' involves more than just turning off lights or taking shorter showers to conserve water. We are committing to a new consciousness concerning our relationships with Earth, our neighbors and fellow creatures. Doing so provides hope and a means for ending the extinction event we have initiated. Developing an ecological spirituality requires a profound personal transformation.

The need for a new consciousness is evident when Pope Francis writes of Sister Earth:

We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and all forms of life... We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters (Laudato Si', 2).

Developing an ecological spirituality means opening ourselves again to the mysteries of life, to reverence each other and other life forms, regularly reflecting on the fact that we are all connected. Can we rediscover the numinous presence as we walk among the trees becoming more aware of the ongoing miracles that surround us? Can we grow in awe and wonder as we plant a flower garden? We should try. We need a corrective to the anthropocentric, technological voice that would use every resource on earth for more profit without a thought as to how that will bring life as we know it to an end.

Thomas Berry studied the religious traditions from around the world relating to creation. He also studied the science. From both faith and science, he came to understand "the universe is not a collection of objects but a communion of subjects."



**Flower & Vegetable Garden
at The Canticle**

Our bodies are 55-60% water. Why do we stand for water being polluted by fertilizers and feces, or by oil and chemical waste from mining? How is it that water is treated as a commodity to be used to pay national debts, or to be bottled in plastic and sold? Is convenience so important to us that we will continue to use plastic which is poisoning our oceans and even entering our bloodstreams? Can we recover the sense of water as sacred to our lives, as the sustainer of life?

Recently, air in the United States was contaminated by smoke from climate-change-induced forest fires in Canada, blown down into our neighborhoods. Both countries have been burning

fossil fuels. For some, the smoke crossing borders was a wakeup call to our interconnectedness, an example of how meaningless borders can be in an increasingly interconnected global community. For others, it was just another opportunity to blame another country.

Are we not also connected to the polar bears in the northern regions, or to the people of Vanuatu in the South Pacific whose islands are being swallowed by rising seas, battered by cyclones, and threatened by earthquakes? These people have done nothing to cause climate disruption. What about our responsibilities to the millions of migrants, forced to flee their homes due to rising seas, drought, or flooding, who now sit at the borders of many nations around the globe looking for a new place to call home? What about the estimated 140 plant, animal and insect species that become extinct daily? What environment do we owe to our children and grandchildren?

To be who we say we are, we start with Jesus' admonition to love our friends and our enemies (Mt. 5:44), to realize our neighbors are not just people who live near us (Lk. 10:25-37). We recognize we are part of creation, interconnected to all life. How can we proclaim to love God when we actively destroy the abundant and beautiful creation provided for us?

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Franciscan Peace Connection Update

by Sister LaVern Olberding, Director of the Franciscan Peace Connection

Stuffed Animal Drive

The Franciscan Peace Connection commends Pastor John “Q” Quinata, of Our Father’s Grace Ministries, and his “Dream Team” for another record-setting Stuffed Animal Drive in October. Sponsored by Our Father’s Grace Ministries, the Interfaith Community of San Diego, and other community partners, 4,257 cuddly friends were collected by thirty-nine organizations, clubs, youth groups, and businesses. The donations were received at twenty-eight drop-off sites around San Diego County and neatly stored in uniform boxes, which John came around and collected in a U-Haul truck.

Half of the boxes were delivered to the Ronald McDonald House of San Diego, and the other half went to the Children’s Cancer Center. The young patients and their siblings in each facility will be enjoying stuffed animal surprises for quite a while!

John started this idea eight years ago with his fifteen CCD students at St. Martin of Tours Church in La Mesa, CA. They collected 150 animals that year. Since then he/we just keep adding folks... and others hear about it and ask to join us!

Fresh Start Outreach

The guests who come to our Fresh Start outreach at La Mesa First United Methodist Church on the last Saturday morning of each month have been quite vocal recently about the quality of our services. They are quick to say the breakfasts and the “to go” lunch bags are the best in the area; the showers are kept clean and welcoming; the resource tables and representatives for extracurricular services are more numerous and more helpful; and the

shopper’s section always has a greater variety of clothing, personal needs, etc. It is also very heartwarming to watch the guests volunteer to pitch in and assist where needed. It is definitely in giving that we receive!

Testimony

A participant in two of our weekly activities stated, “I have been involved with *Monday Mindfulness* and *A Course of Love* since the beginning of COVID-19. The ability to connect regularly with these two groups has helped me to stay centered during a very isolating time in my life. I am an extrovert who needs human contact and conversation. Zoom makes these types of interaction possible. The group participants have become my family. I count on them to assist me as I grow in solitude, reflection, and spirituality. I know I would be much poorer in spirit without them and our discussions.”



Pastor John “Q” Quinata (right) and volunteers assist with the 2023 Stuffed Animal Drive.

Can We Grow...continued

Look around and let the reality of what is happening to our common home sink in. Let our hearts be moved and our consciousness be changed. Let us read again the words of Pope Francis from his *Laudato Si’* encyclical:

It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an

“ecological conversion,” whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience (LS, 217).



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Women Religious Archives Collaborative

As religious congregations grow smaller, many are exploring possibilities of collaborative archives to keep the mission, charism, and history of sisters alive. As part of this nationwide effort, we, the Sisters of St. Francis, have joined the Women Religious Archives Collaborative (WRAC) based out of Cleveland, OH.

With fourteen participating congregations, WRAC is currently working on the creation of a regional space — a “Heritage Center” located in Northeast Ohio to serve as a resource center for religious congregations. Further down the road, we will send our archival material to this location for permanent storage.

Additionally, WRAC is planning to link with other regional centers (Boston College, Santa Clara University, and the Heritage and Research Center at St. Mary’s College) to create a national network of archives centers under one “virtual roof.” It will have a coordinated approach to support the

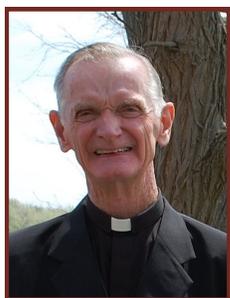
management and long-term preservation of archives of women religious.

We have welcomed an archival response team to Clinton on two occasions this year, most recently in October. The archival response team is a group that travels to do labor intensive work within a short period of time. The collaborative effort allows the team members to share expertise as they organize the collection and create an electronic finding aid to assist the congregation now and in the future.



Archival Response Team during their October visit.

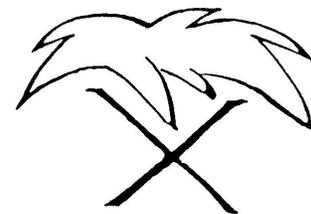
Advent Events at The Canticle



An **Advent Day of Reflection**, titled “Advent of Surprises,” will be held Saturday, December 2 at The Canticle. Bishop Daniel Turley, O.S.A., a member of the Midwest Augustinian Province and a friend of the sisters from his time serving as bishop in the Diocese of Chulucanas, Peru, will facilitate.

Advent is sometimes called a season or time of surprise. Advent is a time to remember that God is a God of surprises. God’s purposes are accomplished by always working in new and unexpected ways. As we celebrate the season of Advent, we can be open to the surprises that God may have in store us. 

As we celebrate the centenary of the Christmas at Greccio where St. Francis of Assisi created the first Christmas crib in the year 1223, we invite you to our evening prayers as we reflect on the simplicity, poverty, and humility that St. Francis desired. “**Celebrating Christmas at Greccio**” will take place in The Canticle chapel at 6:00 p.m. on Sundays during Advent — December 3, 10, and 17. All are welcome to attend these 30-minute prayer services. It is requested guests be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.



Art by Sister Carmel Jacobs



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