



THE COMMUNITY OF ST. MARY
SOUTHERN PROVINCE
THE MESSENGER



Volume XXXI, Issue 1

Pentecost 2022

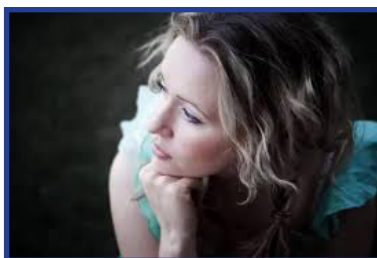
Today, we are quickly becoming used to virtual reality devices. They've been evolving since the sixties and have been used very productively for simulated activities such as flight training, simulated experiments or surgery, extreme sports, etc. Today, VR (virtual reality) headsets and games can give us full-immersion experiences that seem almost real and that are often far more exciting than our ordinary lives. Like books and movies, they can carry our imaginations into foreign lands, into space, and through amazingly beautiful fantasies that can inspire us and draw us beyond our material existence.



Personally, I have always liked activities and technology that can feed our imagination. I've never used a VR headset, but I imagine that I, too, would enjoy it. Human beings need play as well as work. On the other hand, they also need to recognize the difference between fantasy and reality. With our technological skills, our computer-generated images, photoshop, and the illusions we can create with blue or green screen techniques, virtual sets, etc. we can easily blur the boundary between reality and those virtual worlds we might prefer to live in. The more advanced we get in mastering digital virtual realities in games, movies, music, voice imitation, masks, etc., the more difficult it can be for viewers or listeners to know what is really

concretely, factually real and what is not.

Recently, movie plots have begun to question the ethics of becoming overly sucked into the virtual realities we choose: the fast, amazing, violent, and physically impossible scenarios that allow us to imagine ourselves achieving superhuman feats, easily interacting with imaginary characters, and experiencing life in the "fast lane," one thrill after another, without any real danger or toil. It shouldn't be surprising that some people would prefer to live in a virtual reality they can choose, control, and never have to fear. After all, in a virtual game even failure and death are experienced as minor setbacks that the player can shut down or easily start again. Add to this easily concocted and preferable virtual existence, the "show" quality that news programs have adopted, the intentional sowing of misinformation by some people, and the speed of communication, and we have a recipe for an uncontrollable circus of anxiety-promoting events that encourage us to give up or confuse the observable, measurable facts of reality with virtual realities that we would rather believe.



Here are some facts to ponder:

- 1) There is overwhelming evidence that the 2020 presidential election was legitimate and that the January 6th insurrection at the Capitol was a crime against the nation;
- 2) More people continue to die from COVID and the complications that

follow infection than from any COVID vaccine;

3) Russia, under Putin's direction, has viciously and wrongly attacked the sovereign nation of Ukraine without provocation;

4) There have been over 250 mass shootings in the U.S. so far in 2022, thirty-eight of which have taken place since the Uvalde shooting in May and most NRA members are for stricter gun control, but our Congress is still reluctant to pass strict gun laws.



These are measurable, empirical facts, not opinions. With all these harsh realities, it is no wonder that many people would rather live in a video game of their choosing. And yet, to do so would be to deny that reality, to ignore the pain and suffering involved in these facts, and to avoid taking responsibility for our indirect complicity in these concerns when we do nothing to address them. Consider the privilege of choice that most of us have; we can turn off

Inside this issue

- * Pentecost Reflection, p.1-2
- * Associate News and Continuing Service, p.2-3
- * "Reflection on St. Mary's" p.3
- * "Why we keep coming back" p.4
- * Sr. Madeleine Mary shares news from CSM, p.4-7
- * St. Mary's Chronicles, p.8

our televisions and radios and stop reading magazines and newspapers that present disturbing facts. We can stop allowing immigrants to cross our borders or say that we are not responsible for solving problems in other countries. We can find loopholes in the law that can justify our actions. But, what is our intention in such behaviors? How are we fulfilling our baptismal vows to proclaim the Good News, to seek and serve Christ in all persons, to strive for justice and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being? These are the intentions that should mold our lives as Christians and motivate our actions. The contemplative life is about recognizing reality as it is, being brutally honest with ourselves, and seeking to do justice with compassion. Our faith is rooted in an incarnational theology that values human life and all creation because God loves it all. How are we valuing it ourselves in reality? Let us take the time to ponder these things for our good and the good of others...and then, do our part.

-Sr. Madeleine Mary, CSM

Associate News



Sr. Elizabeth Grace, CSM

Dear Associates throughout the world,

Greetings from all the Sisters and our pets! I want to share with you some CSM news and also some musings.

The Sisters of St. Mary have been offering a silent retreat in Sewanee for Associates since the 1970's, and even earlier in other parts of the country. We had to cancel the in-person retreat in 2020 and 2021. This year 10 Associates, 4 Oblates, and 2 friends gathered together June 9-12 at St. Mary's Sewanee to rest, renew and refresh ourselves. One of the

highlights of the retreat was a Celtic Eucharist; we gave thanks for 17 Associates, one Sister, several family members and friends who have died since June 2019. Next year we will offer Associates and Oblates a silent retreat June 22-25; please consider coming in 2023 to the Mountain.

I was delighted that many of you were able to participate, in person or by Zoom, in some of the Saturday quiet days and programs offered by the Sisters in 2021-22. I am also grateful to visit individually with some of you on social media, and to correspond with others by snail mail.

It is always special when Associates join us for worship in the convent chapel or come by for a visit. We look forward to the time when we can safely open the dining room to all; we miss conversations with you around the dining room tables.

The Rev. Becky McDaniel was received as an Associate on Sunday, June 19th. Presently, we have three persons who are "living their rule" and hope to be admitted as Associates in the future. We also have had several persons who have expressed interest in the program. If you know of anyone who might want to learn more about the Community and our Associates' program, please direct them to the CSM website or ask them to contact me by snail mail or email.

As I try to live as a Christian faithfully in the twenty-first century, I find myself returning to my biblical and Community roots, and to the great commandment to love.

It is encouraging to read and to hear of the many diverse ways you, our Associates, commit to love. Here are some concrete examples taken from rules of life:

- Monthly date night with my spouse
- Spend time praying / writing hymn texts
- Say yes when God calls; be able to say no when I feel I should

- Be open to ways others are different from me and think in ways different from my usual ones
- Go to a movie once a month, and drink a regular Coke (not diet) every once in awhile
- Avoid using plastic grocery bags
- Be mindful of how I kill weeds; I commit to no synthetic chemicals
- In dealing with others, remember to ask myself: Is it kind? Is it truthful? Is it necessary?

We appreciate those of you who have reconnected with the Community. We pray for our Associates daily in chapel, and by name on your anniversary. I will be sending you a card on your anniversary. I ask that you please send a letter sometime during your anniversary month to let us know how you are. If you do not receive an anniversary card, please contact us.

One of my favorite songs is by Pete Seeger; "Turn, Turn, Turn" is based on Ecclesiastes 3; *May God bless you and our world as we turn, turn, turn with the various seasons of our lives.*

Deep peace and joy,

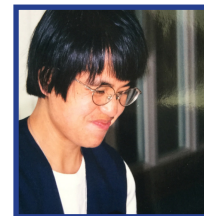
-Sister Elizabeth, CSM

Ever consider a planned giving gift or leaving a bequest to the Sisters?

You can make a tax-deductible gift by check or by an online donation to "The Sisterhood of St. Mary"

Continuing Service

Since our last newsletter, Sr. Ines has continued her ministry in the Philippines, amid various lockdowns due to COVID, by



Sr. Ines, CSM

participating in Virtual Bible studies. In December, she led her first ever Advent retreat. Later that month, the Church of St. Mary the Virgin was full of people at their Christmas Mass, including young children participating by playing on the keyboard.

Lockdowns prohibited in-person gatherings in January and May. However at the end of May, Sr. Ines was able to resume her visits to homebound church members. She was joined on these visits with 6 Associates and the church deacon. On Ascension Day, some of the Associates went to visit another parishoner.

On July 19th, two women were ordained to the priesthood and three women were ordained to the diaconate at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin. These women completed their summer field work there and wanted to have their ordinations in Sagada.

We are grateful for Sr. Ines' faithful ministry!

"Reflection on St. Mary's" by Lou Bullock

Hello, my name is Lou Bullock. I'm a sophomore at the University of the South, double majoring in Natural Resources & the Environment and Philosophy. I am also a Bonner student leader. Bonner is a four-year Service Internship and Leadership Program, and one of the program's main aims is to serve the greater Sewanee community. The Bonner Program is how I became first involved with the Community of St. Mary's. I was placed at St. Mary's in late September of the first semester of my first year.



Lou Bullock

When I first arrived, Sister Madeleine Mary exited the convent to greet me. She was clad in the Sisters' usual attire: a denim dress with a white shirt underneath paired with some well-loved Birkenstocks. Her salt and pepper hair was both visible and cut short. All of these things went against every preconceived notion I held about what a nun should look like. She then introduced me to Paul Steiner, the Sisters' groundskeeper. On that first day, Paul and I picked weeds in the garden. Weeding is a meticulous task, but nothing about what we were doing felt crucial in nature. My first job at the convent was one of immediate gratification. Seeing a weed literally removed from the ground over and over again until a once green bed has turned brown makes you feel accomplished without too much effort. Paired with Paul's steady presence, the work quickly became almost meditative, allowing me to let go of all my worries surrounding the new situation.

I left the convent my first day with a coupled sense of relief and anxiety that's hard to articulate. I was relieved that I was not promptly set on fire when the front tires of my vehicle crossed the threshold of the convent's property, but I was by no means entirely at ease with the prospect of working at a convent for my foreseeable future. That morning I was an 18-year-old queer, Black person walking into a convent, in Franklin County, Tennessee, for the first time in my life with no idea what to expect, and it's safe to say I went into that situation with a healthy amount of caution. Sister Madeleine Mary hadn't been rude by any metric, but I had seen too many movies and knew too many ex-Catholic school kids to not have my hackles up. Before that day, I had never spent any time with a nun. Growing up, my relationship with organized religion was involved but always very separate from the Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Looking back on that first task with Paul, I realized it was pivotal in

establishing a base level of comfort with the convent. I help Paul with much different work at the convent, and it's all hands-on. You get to see the progress you're making as you make it work, which directly contrasts all the other work I was doing in the other aspects of my life. Outside of Bonner, I have two other sites where I volunteer at, I run for Sewanee's cross country and track teams and am involved in Greek life. At school and at my other sites, it is mostly more academic and social justice work, which has its own merits and benefits but often takes a long time to see the end result. For the first semester that I worked at St. Mary's, I only came to the convent once a week for a couple hours max, and by the second semester, I was coming 3 times a week, spending most of my Friday there. At some point throughout the year, I came to need that feeling I found weeding with Paul that first day. My work at the convent helped keep me grounded in my other commitments. During that time, I also got to know the Sisters. I learned that they were kind and compassionate people and grew to release my harmful preconceived notions. I also started bringing some friends along to volunteer when they could make it.



Wine raspberry harvest

In the middle of the Easter semester, Sister Madeleine Mary mentioned that they had a summer internship, the Organic

Prayer Program, and that she thought I should apply. The internship is defined on the Sisters' website as "Spiritual and personal growth and development, vocational discernment guided by the Benedictine model of prayer, work, study, and rest that is rooted in intentional, communal living in harmony with the natural world, the Community of St. Mary, and the greater Sewanee community." For about as long as I had been at

Sewanee, I have been at St. Mary's, and I still had many questions. I wanted to know what drove these women to monastic living, and I think a part of me craved hands-on experience in a religious setting that greatly contrasted with the ones I grew up with. And this internship allowed me to explore these inquiries. Beyond that, as mentioned earlier, I am a philosophy and environmental science double major. This internship is centered on ecological and Benedictine philosophical study; it was the perfect opportunity. I've now been at the internship for a month, and every day, I grow happier with my decision to apply. I've learned so much about not only the world from an ecological and spiritual perspective but also about myself, and I hope to continue to grow in that knowledge.

"What Keeps Us Coming Back" by the Rev. Andy Gay



MaryAnn and the Rev. Andy Gay

One of the joys of being a retired pastor is the opportunity it offers to worship in a variety of places. When I retired in 2016, my wife, MaryAnn, had for some years come to St. Mary's where she got to know the Sisters, with me as a very occasional companion. When I retired, I was able to join her, and attend on Sundays. I recall Sister Elizabeth at my last pastoral service at the Cowan Fellowship Church, with her smile and prayers for that seminal moment in our lives. We are now part of three worshipping communities. The gracious ecumenical spirit of St. Mary's keeps us coming back. All in all, I prefer the quieter expressions of faith that do their evangelizing

through hospitality - to be in a place where words are given birth in an abundance of silence. In a convent community, that means, in large part, abiding in the wisdom of those who have gone before. In a noisy world, MaryAnn and I love coming onto the convent grounds where there is frequently no sound save the birdsong and the wind pushing through the trees. Or maybe a quiet conversation with Paul or one of the Sisters. We sense that we are deeply welcomed in a place that is comfortable with silence. We know that we are at home. That is another of the things that keeps us coming back.

In the last six years as regulars at St. Mary's, we have picked up some fond memories. Prior to the pandemic, there were great breakfasts after worship with their rich varieties of food and conversation where you sensed that the convent, far from being a mere enclave, lies at a kind of crossroads within the Episcopal community, as well as the community in general - where you cross paths with young and old, students, travelers, and veterans of the work of justice and peace who have dedicated their lives to their callings. And there have been some great storytellers in that mix, like Francis Walter and Gene Moritz and Joe Porter, to name a few. So many stories. The biblical ones, of course. The story of the martyrs of Memphis, Constance and Her Companions. The fascinating stories of each person breaking bread together at table, looking out on that glorious mountain landscape. The stories keep us coming back.

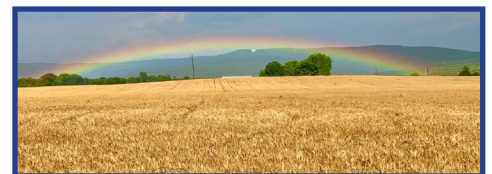
The Community has lost many friends over the past three years due to death and aging. The pandemic has not helped. Nor has the atmosphere of reactionary politics that has captured the countryside around St. Mary's. Indeed, it would seem that hope has become a scarcer commodity in our nation than houses and gasoline. But it is precisely in circumstances similar to these that communities like St. Mary's have shone in the darkness

of their times. The prayers continue, and the bells still toll the gatherings in the chapel. This is another thing that keeps us coming back.



The Rev. Andy Gay with his blueberry harvest last summer

I was the "official" blueberry picker for a time last summer at St. Mary's. So in the cool of the mornings I hopped on my motorcycle and rode up the thirty-two curves from our home in Cowan, amply sprayed and chigger-proofed, to harvest. Which is to embrace the deep peace of a place where work is part of the liturgy of trust. Sometimes I help MaryAnn out at the labyrinth, which is her gig. We have a history with labyrinths, since for forty years we have done this kind of work at labyrinths, prayer wheels, zen gardens, peace gardens, and general caretaking amongst the high desert mesas of Ghost Ranch in New Mexico, a conference center owned by the Presbyterian Church (USA), and one time home of the artist Georgia O'Keefe. Due to the rising cost of travel, our own aging, and distance, that western journey is harder to make. St. Mary's brings a unity to our lives that embraces the sacred lands and friendships we have been blessed to know. St. Mary's reminds us that the adventure continues on a mountain we can see from our front yard. Perhaps this is the most important thing that keeps us coming back.



Rainbow in Winchester, TN, taken by the Rev. Andy Gay in June 2022

Sr. Madeleine Mary Shares News from CSM

As I was examining St. Mary's Chronicles in preparation for a review of what has happened since our last newsletter, I, at first, thought that our activities



Sr. Madeleine Mary, CSM

seemed somewhat detached from what has been happening in our country. So, I tried to evaluate the year's news both from liberal and conservative news sources. I was overwhelmed by the task after only reviewing the events of this month. The exercise made it clear just how much we have been bombarded this year with various struggles over misinformation; hate crimes; race; gun violence; Russian aggression in the Ukraine and the global fallout resulting from it; gender-related bias; fights over reproductive rights; college scandals and student debt; sex crimes; immigrant and refugee protections and rights; climate change and the horrors stemming from it; assaults on democracy and the rise of extremism; increasing drug addiction; and fears of a recession and of rising interest rates.

Remember, all this news was reported this June and I began writing this article on June 18th. Is it any wonder that mental illness is escalating? Children are expecting to be killed in school, at the supermarket, or at a social event. Adults, also, have more anxiety around social events and going back to work- especially on mass transit or in regions where COVID cases are on the rise. People are exhausted by isolation, fearful of losing their savings in the stock market or by falling victim to one of the many internet scams that are proliferating across the web. It's actually amazing, isn't it, that we all

aren't paralyzed by fear, brainwashed by conspiracy theories, and hopeless of anything more than a dystopian future? We could understandably be tempted to protect ourselves by becoming more self-centered, by surrounding ourselves with pleasant distractions - if we have the funds for them - or by becoming obsessed with our own security above all else.

So, why aren't we all "basket cases" and what is the Community's role in this cacophony of public horrors? It was at this point in my pondering that I began to rethink our chronicles and focus more on the small and great triumphs that were interwoven among the year's struggles. I meditated on the thousands of little human kindnesses that have made life bearable, ranging from the world's outrage against a powerful aggressor and the generosity of neighbors offering shelter to homeless refugees, to our interns carefully transferring spiders and crickets from our chapel back to their natural habitat. I remembered the warmth, care, and wry humor of our Associate Gene Moritz who died on November 1st after years of faithful ministry and loving care of his family and others.

I also pondered the positive, stabilizing and healing force the Community has been throughout this year of distress, hate and fear. But unlike some more public individuals that have courageously confronted evil in governments, political arenas, or social institutions, I considered the quieter and, perhaps, less noticeable, yet powerful, role the Community played. Ovid once said: "Dripping water hollows out stone, not through force but through persistence." Quietly, imperceptibly for some people, the Community has continued to play its part: praying for all people and welcoming people for worship, retreat, and respite; offering programs to teach, inform and enlighten those who will listen and attend; pointing to God's activity among us through the festivals of the church year; caring responsibly for the part of creation

we inhabit and teaching others to do likewise; and sharing important moments in people's lives- including our own- as well as celebrating others' life journeys.

Actually, when I first glanced through our chronicles, I was stunned by the length- especially given the precautions we have observed throughout COVID. When this year's COVID numbers allowed, we managed to offer many more programs, sermons, and presentations away from the convent. Sr. Hannah led an Advent Quiet Day at Christ Church Cathedral in Houston, TX, and also did an "Ask a Nun" Q&A lunch with the youth and other parishioners at the Cathedral.

Sr. Elizabeth also led an Advent Quiet Day at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Columbia, SC. And, on that same day, Sr. Felicity served as a reader for Lessons and Carols at All Saints' Chapel in Sewanee.



Sr. Felicity, Novice, CSM reading at Lessons and Carols at All Saints' Chapel in Sewanee.

Photo credit: Lyn Hutchinson

Later, we also offered an Advent Quiet Day and Virtual Labyrinth Experience on Zoom, led by our employee, Casey Perkins. All these programs helped participants experience a little more normalcy as they gathered in community and prepared for Our Lord's coming.

We, likewise, welcomed Sarah Hess to preach at the convent once during Advent. This was an important moment for the Sisters because of our long connection with her since she was in high school. And, we enjoyed a

small thank-you celebration with our employees and a wonderful Christmas Eve service with many Sewanee friends.

Given that much of November and December felt assaulted with political accusations and strife, I think the Community offered a counterpoint, a haven, a peaceful, joyful, and focused witness to God's presence and love that challenged that darkness, and, I hope, helped people maintain a more balanced perspective and aspiration. That balance was to be very significant as we faced January.

On January 6th, Our Lord's Epiphany, darkness and hate waged an insurrection on our nation's capitol. Most U.S. citizens were stunned and felt violated, but there were also those who felt encouraged and justified in this overt violence in order to overthrow democracy itself or at least to manipulate it for their own agendas. We Sisters prayed and celebrated God's Epiphany, then studied the situation to inform all our prayer times for that day and for many others that followed. We are grateful for all those who stood firm on that day, who defended and cared for the innocent, and who sacrificed themselves for justice and freedom in our country.

We had no programs around that time, but all of our events and Facebook posts gave voice to the importance of honest discernment and celebrated life and new ministry. We remembered the lively and faithful ministry of our Associate, Ron Lee, who peacefully died in his sleep on January 13th. And shortly afterward, we were glad to offer hospitality to Sr. Monica Clare, the superior of the Community of St. John the Baptist, and Bo Davis as they participated in the Alternative Clergy Training Program at Sewanee.

Now, as I ponder this period, I realize that all the Community's activities and Facebook posts witnessed to the endurance of faith, life, and to the human potential to give of oneself

for others- a very different message than the ones overwhelming us in the media. Behind those public posts was also our daily round of prayer that supported others in their ministries and lifted up the cause of peace and the hope of healing.

In March and throughout the observance of Lent, we shifted again from an inside focus to more active public engagement, sometimes in person and sometimes on Zoom. We were with the people of St. John in the Wilderness Episcopal Church in Flat Rock, NC, each week for most of Lent. Over the course of six weeks, three Sisters taught the parish about the Benedictine Rule, and suggested ways that they might apply it to their lives. I was lucky enough to be in-person with the congregation the first week of the series and to preach that Sunday. I also got to share some activities with Fr. Josh Stephens and his family and to get acquainted with a number of the congregation over shared meals and visits. What a beautiful place Flat Rock is and what a creative bunch of people! Sr. Elizabeth Grace and Sr. Hannah also met with the congregation by Zoom in the weeks that followed.



Sr. Madeleine Mary, CSM speaking at St. John in the Wilderness Episcopal Church in Flat Rock, NC

While I was Flat Rock, Casey Perkins continued the Community's programs at the convent. He offered an **in-person** Lenten Quiet Day entitled, "That Wonderful and Sacred Mystery" and delved deeper into the use of the labyrinth as a spiritual tool through in-door meditations and out-door

experiences.

Later in March, I was privileged to be a Keynote speaker at the Thorne Sparkman School of Religion's Lecture Series on Faith and the Environment. It was a rare opportunity to teach a large crowd of Episcopalians about care for creation as a practical application of theology. It also gave me a chance to share how we lived out that practical theology through our Organic Prayer Program and Internship. My presentation seemed very well-received and some individuals even wanted suggestions of practices they could begin or ways they could sometimes volunteer in our gardens. I felt like I was planting seeds for a better earth and was heartened by the group's enthusiasm.

In fact, I was not the only one. Sr. Hannah, that same night, was guest preacher and speaker at the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration in Dallas, TX. The church hosted an evening Lenten series centered around Richard Foster's book, *A Celebration of Discipline*.

All through mid-February, March, and April, the world was torn, dealing with or protesting against the management of COVID and its variants, the invasion of Ukraine, political races, and legal investigations surrounding "January 6th," hate crimes, racist attacks, struggling businesses who couldn't get supplies, refugees, and starving people- and that is not a complete list. When one reviews just the headlines, it might seem like the world was going mad and spiraling out of control. And the fact is, some people were going down that path. For some individuals, our activities might seem a form of denial or at least, totally inadequate. I see our role differently: only a clear-headed person on stable ground who is listening can help a drowning person or a person crying out for help. We, of course, paid attention to the affairs of the world, spoke and preached about those concerns, but we took action more locally where we could better

effect change. Remember the saying: "Think globally but act locally?" It is far too easy to become numb or paralyzed by a storm of catastrophic events, but one can contribute in positive ways and lessen the fallout from those events.

That path was our route. On April 2nd, we had our first hybrid event on "Indigenous Communities and the Church: The Journey of Reconciliation," led by Adam Dawkins. Sr. Hannah spoke about vocations and Benedictine life at the adult forum at St. Mark's and St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Sewanee, and at the Diocese of East Tennessee's "Here I Am" Day for those in discernment. She also participated in the "Out of Darkness Suicide Prevention walk," sponsored by the University of Alabama in Huntsville. We welcomed women from the Tennessee group of The Episcopal Community and talked with them about our ministries, especially for creation care, and shared with them how they might become more involved. Later, Sr. Hannah participated in the Earth Day Local Market, held at Halleluiah Pottery in Monteagle. And, more behind the scenes, Sr. Felicity, Paul Steiner, and Bonner and Canale students were planting a new garden. We were also working with Paul and Tim Fults to clean up another piece of property to sell in order to increase our small endowment. We grieved the death of our friend, the Rev. Dr. Susanna Metz, who finally was released from her cancer suffering. We also gave a celebratory send off for Sr. Elizabeth Carrillo, a Roman Catholic Benedictine Sister from Mount St. Scholastica Monastery in Atchison, KS, who had lived with us for a semester and frequently attended our Sunday Eucharist. (She and her community have become good friends with us while Sister pursued an MA with a concentration in Religion and Environment at the Seminary.) We attended graduation events and welcomed back Eva Bogino, a former summer intern, for a visit and for

her belated 2020 graduation. And, of course, along with all this activity was the normal round of preparations for Holy Week, Easter and Pentecost. Sr. Felicity was finishing her Seminary work and developing her candle industry. I was also interviewing candidates for our summer internship and Oblate formation, and planning for new projects. And, Sr. Elizabeth Grace was preparing a sermon and addresses which she later delivered at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Rapid City, South Dakota, and a week-long retreat for the Diocese of South Dakota clergy at the Terra Sancta Retreat Center. For four Sisters, two employees and some volunteers, April and May was a very busy and productive period. We were all particularly proud when Sister Elizabeth was presented with a star quilt by the clergy of South Dakota, an act of praise and generosity in the Lakota culture. And after all this, our annual community vacation was a pleasant "time out" to be together, rest, read, pray, and have a little fun.



Our three summer interns: Caralynn Hampson, Dixon Cline, and Lou Bullock

Our Summer Internship began almost immediately afterward with THREE interns: Caralynn Hampson, Dixon Cline, and Lou Bullock. What a change since COVID began! After a week of orientation, we commissioned them to the Organic Prayer Program at Evening Prayer. Caralynn became our second intern from Boston, though she was born in Oregon, and Dixon is our third intern from North Carolina, though he and Lou Bullock, a native of Tennessee, are both students at the

University of the South now. In June, we welcomed back Sr. Monica Clare and Bo Davis. Bo completed his studies and hopes to become a Deacon, and Sr. Monica Clare completed her second study session in preparation for the priesthood. We also welcomed some of you to our first in-person annual picnic and retreat since COVID began. Sr. Elizabeth Grace led the group from June 9-12 in a retreat entitled "Sacred Stories for the 21st Century." We celebrated one such sacred story after the first Evening Prayer on June 9th as we rededicated a bench in our rose garden, beautifully refurbished by a local craftsman, David Southern, in honor of our Oblate Alice Ramsey's 90th birthday. This refurbishment was accomplished by donations made by Alice's friends at Grace Episcopal Church in Chattanooga. A little later and thanks to the effort of our friend, Kelton Riley, we also welcomed students from the Advance Degree Program at Sewanee to our Evening Prayer service on June 11. Next we enjoyed a visit from some of Sr. Hannah's family. (Her young nephews really liked helping Sr. Felicity in the kitchen and in harvesting lavender.) And most recently, we welcomed Becky McDaniel back, this time as celebrant and our newest Associate, and Casey Perkins as a new preacher at convent services.

The sad but real news is that the world is still tormented by crises. COVID and the War in the Ukraine continue. Climate change is burning up parts of the earth and causing floods and severe weather in various places. But, in the midst of it all, sacred stories are being told, unpublished saints are caring for those in need, holding fast to truth and justice, and doing their part for the stability, healing, and renewal of the earth. No one can take on the whole task, but with God's grace and love, and the sacrificial love of thousands we will never know, we can all do our part. May our energies contribute to a better world for all people, animals, and plants that together make our home.

St. Mary's Chronicles

December 4-5: Sr. Hannah was invited by our friend, Elaine McClurkan, to lead an Advent Quiet Day entitled "Food for Thought: Spiritual Nourishment" at Christ Church Cathedral in Houston, Texas. Sr. Elizabeth also led an Advent Quiet Day but at St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Columbia, South Carolina. It was entitled "The Comings of Our Lord." She also preached at their Sunday service.

December 5: Sr. Felicity represented the Community as a reader for Lessons and Carols at All Saints' Chapel.

December 11: Our employee Casey Perkins led an Advent Quiet Day and Virtual Labyrinth Experience on Zoom.

December 17: We had our annual Advent Thank You Party for our employees.

January 13: Our Associate, Ron Lee, died peacefully in his sleep at Deerfield Episcopal Retirement Community in Asheville, NC.

January 17-21: Sr. Monica Clare, Superior of the Community of St. John the Baptist, stayed with us a guest while she participated in the Alternative Clergy Training at Sewanee (ACTS) program.

March 3-6: Sr. Madeleine Mary was invited by Fr. Josh Stephens of the Episcopal Church of St. John in the Wilderness in Flat Rock, NC to be a

speaker in their Thursday night Lenten series on the Benedictine life and to preach there on Sunday.

March 5: Casey Perkins led an in-person Lenten Quiet Day entitled "That Wonderful and Sacred Mystery" about using the labyrinth as a tool for journeying into the wilderness with Jesus.

March 16: Sr. Madeleine Mary was the keynote speaker at the Thorne Sparkman School of Religion's Lecture Series on Faith and Environment. Sr. Hannah was invited by Fr. Ted Clarkson to be a guest preacher and speaker at the Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration in Dallas, TX for their Wednesday evening Lenten series.

April 2: We had our first ever hybrid, both in-person and online, event on "Indigenous Communities and the Church: The Journey of Reconciliation" led by local seminarian, Adam Dawkins.

April 3: Sr. Hannah led the adult forum at St. Mark's and St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Sewanee on the topic of vocations and Benedictine life.

April 9: We had a visit with the women from The Episcopal Community. We learned about their community and ways we can support each other.

May 1-5: Sr. Elizabeth was invited by Fr. Cody Maynus to preach at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Rapid City, SD on Sunday, and to lead a week-long retreat for the Diocese of South Dakota clergy.

May 10: We had a visit from the Episcopal Church Women of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Athens, TN. They toured the convent and grounds, joined us for Noon Office, and had a visit with us all afterwards.

May 21: Sr. Hannah was invited by the Rt. Rev. Brian Cole to be on the Religious Life panel at the Diocese of East TN's "Here I Am Day" for those in discernment.

June 9: During Evening Prayer, we had the Organic Prayer Program Commissioning Service for our three summer interns: Caralynn Hampson, Dixon Cline, and Lou Bullock.

June 9-12: Sr. Elizabeth led our annual June retreat entitled "Sacred Stories for the 21st Century" which was held in-person at St. Mary's Sewanee. At the end of Evening Prayer on the first night, the retreat concluded with the rededication of the bench in our rose garden that was restored by local woodworker David Southern, in honor of our Oblate Alice Ramsey's 90th birthday; thanks to the donations from Alice's friends at Grace Episcopal Church in Chattanooga.



The Community of St. Mary
Southern Province
1100 St. Mary's Lane
Sewanee, TN 37375
Ph. 931-598-0046; Fax. 931-598-9519
Website: communityofstmarysouth.org
Facebook: Community of St. Mary, Southern Province
Instagram: StMarysConvent