

Strategies

to Strengthen a New Year—a New Century

As we begin our second century in Cottonwood, what Benedictine contribution can we make to a new century? What changes will this require? With the help of 45 non-community members and two dynamic facilitators, we are about the work of answering those questions through a strategic plan for 2008-2020. The 300 interviews which 65 of us did with a cross-section of our friends, clergy, business associates and others, yielded 3000 pieces of information. Sifting and sorting this data together for two days brought focus to internal and external changes and developments needing attention. Not surprisingly, the first was to "... (re)commit ourselves to prayerful living through communal and personal prayer that connects us to a place of wholeness."

This "wholeness" from deepened prayer allows us glances of the generous God who sees the needs of all people. What among these many needs calls for our "glance" most urgently? What values from our heritage must we embrace most here and now, among ourselves and for the world? We begin with intentionally incorporating the Benedictine values of **Hospitality** and **Creative Peacemaking** into our lives so that we might witness them to the world. In their book *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way to Love*, co-authors Daniel Homan and Lonni Collins Pratt use preparing a table as an image of hospitality. In genuine hospitality we work to make our entire existence a welcome table where we are alert to and honor the longing of every human heart for communion with "something more". Our table of hospitality must



Sister Clarissa Goeckner, Prioress
in the monastery chapel.

extend to all we hold in personal and liturgical prayer, all who come to St. Gertrude's, all whom we contact in our ministries, all. We call ourselves to forego prejudice, forsake pettiness, abandon bitterness and

open our hearts to one another. We also pledge to grow in creative peacemaking among ourselves, with those with whom we live and work, and through involvement with other peacemaking organizations. How skilled are we at being peacemakers? We have set about learning how to engage more effectively in crucial conversations to work through conflicts and call forth the best in each other, and to bring these skills to all our relationships.

At the University of Idaho Dr. Gary Machlis teaches a class entitled "War and Our World." Intrigued to discover "Creative Peacemaking" emphasized on our website, he decided to add a new dimension to his class. In addition to presenting the dates, generals, battles and outcomes of the various wars, he brought 65 students to St. Gertrudes to discuss peace and how to make it happen. Sister Angela Uhlorn shared with them St. Benedict's strategies for creative peacemaking.

Henri J.M. Nouwen's thought from *The Road To Daybreak* speaks to the importance of creative peacemaking: "Technology is so far ahead of human relations! There is such a need for new ways for people to be together, to solve conflicts, to work for peace. On the level of human relations, we are still in the Stone Age, thinking that power games and fear tactics will settle our problems."

As we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Day, may the insightfulness, courage, and unwavering dedication that marked his transformative leadership inspire us past the Stone Age into the power of hospitality and peacemaking in this new century. ✱

Sister Clarissa Goeckner

Sister Elisa Martinez

Service and Justice at Soledad Enrichment Agency

For the past 23 years, Sister Elisa Martinez, from St. Gertrude's, has been involved with Soledad Enrichment Agency (SEA) in Los Angeles, whose mission is to provide high-risk youth and their families with alternatives to gangs, drugs and violence.

In 1975, while she was directing the Hispanic Ministry in the Diocese of Boise, she met a religious brother who was the director of SEA, then in its third year. He shared stories of the young people and families affected by the culture of violence and drugs in Los Angeles, and about SEA, which was founded by a group of mothers whose sons had been killed by gang violence.

He told about the program's mission to give at-risk youth an opportunity to succeed and the ways in which that goal was being achieved.

Intrigued, Sr. Elisa connected with the brother each time she visited her mother and sister in southern California. He took her to the neighborhoods and she began to know the people there. She was offered a job with SEA and presently serves as Assistant Executive Directress of the program.

"When I came on board," said Sr. Elisa, "I found that I had a lot to learn about the gang culture and the families who live in these neighborhoods." She began her work by visiting families during the day and going to the streets in the evenings.

"I would go out and find a gathering of gang-involved youth and begin visiting with them," she said. At first, they were suspicious of her actions. "They looked at me like I was some kind of crazy woman or a narc (police informant)."

"I am also much more aware of the responsibility that we religious sisters have to reflect peace, hope and strength as we walk together with society."

Sister Elisa Martinez

Despite their reluctance to accept her, Sr. Elisa kept going back.

Her involvement with gang members has given her a deeper understanding of the conditions faced by those

who live there. "I discovered mothers who were ashamed because the community criticized them for having a son or daughter affiliated with a gang." These mothers feel alone and trapped. Many of them raise their children alone and work long hours for less than minimum wage to pay rent and feed and clothe their families and the children. Their unsupervised youth are searching for love, family and respect

"and they create it in the only way they know how — through their 'homies,'" she said. For this reason, one of the goals of SEA is to work with parents to strengthen the family unit and build parenting skills through education.

Soledad Enrichment Agency includes SEA Charter School, a California public charter high school for at-risk youth, whose students have dropped out of or been expelled from traditional schools. They come from economically disadvantaged neighborhoods with

heavily entrenched gang activity and tend to perform at a lower academic level than their peers.

Their families may suffer from alcohol and drug addiction, poverty, teen pregnancy, unemployment and domestic violence. When students enter SEA Charter School, they know that it could be their last chance



Sister Elisa Martinez
(center) with her landlords
Eufemia and Saul Gonzalez.

to lift themselves from the surrounding culture.

The school's program includes character education, direct instruction, community service, individual learning plans for guidance and assessment, the use of technology and a highly structured outdoor program. These innovative programs, high staff-to-student ratio, a wide scope of support services and a focus on individualized attention enable the students to succeed. While some students are able to catch up with their peers and re-enter the public school system, others complete their education and graduate from SEA.

As a member of the Monastery of St. Gertrude, Sr. Elisa finds opportunities to demonstrate core Benedictine values of healing hospitality, grateful simplicity and creative peacemaking in her work with the youth and their families. Although SEA is not affiliated with a religious institution, it is Sr. Elisa's experience that these values are essential to the success of the program's purpose.

She finds that, as a religious Sister, she has "pull" with both the families and the gang-involved youth. When



Sister Elisa Martinez

teens contacted her to follow up with the mother of one of their friends who was killed, she found additional opportunities to minister to them. They gathered at the site where the youth was killed, bringing candles and flowers, and the situation became an ideal time to reflect with them and allow them to open up to her.

"The families here have taught me the resilience of faith," reflects Sr. Elisa.

"Regardless of shootings they may have witnessed or been victims of, they continue to go on without complaining. Despite the poverty they are experiencing, the tragedy they are involved in, they inevitably express their trust in God – that he will lead them to better times."

Her training for SEA staff members provides them tools for their challenging work in the neighborhoods. Her master's degree in social work qualifies her to counsel families and individuals and she makes herself available to respond to their spiritual needs, as well. Sr. Elisa sees life through the eyes of the people she serves. "They are teaching me to have faith in a better tomorrow and to be grateful for the many opportunities I have been given. I am also much more aware of the responsibility that we religious sisters have to reflect peace, hope and strength as we walk together with society." ✱



Above Sister Elisa participates in a Christmas fiesta.

Right Sister Elisa (far left) leading a youth outdoor program.



Spirit Center News

by Mary Schmidt, Spirit Center Administrator



THE NEED FOR SOLITUDE

"I'm in need of a monastery fix!" we often hear as people arrange for their personal retreat time and space at Spirit Center. Today's noisy, fast-paced world hungers for silence and reflection and we've noticed an increased number of people seeking solitude at Spirit Center. Our spirituality ministry responds to these "God-nudges" for spiritual nourishment by offering individual quiet days, weeks, or months as fits each person's schedule. Twice yearly our "Come

"The peace, joy and beauty of this sacred space has transformed my spirit."

private retreatant

to the Quiet" retreats also offer a silent and safe setting for continued individual growth. Designed for deeper listening, these days allow intentional space for being with

God "What a privilege it is to share with each individual awareness of the Spirit's surprising movements." reflects Sr. Lillian Englert, Spirituality Ministry Coordinator for Spirit Center. *To reach Sr. Lillian: retreat@stgertrudes.org or 208-962-2071.*

Enjoying a quiet moment on the Salmon river breaks.



E-NEWSLETTER

Spirit Center has recently introduced their new electronic newsletter. Published every 2-3 months, it will keep readers abreast of happenings at Spirit Center and the monastery. **Read the first edition and sign up for e-news at www.Spirit-Center.org**

SPIRIT CENTER HOSTS POVERTY SUMMIT

Forty-two leaders representing twenty-four organizations attended The Center for Community Building to End Poverty's Leadership to End Poverty Summit, November 12 – 13 at Spirit Center. The Center to End Poverty is a collaborative partnership between University of Idaho Extension, Community Action Partnership, and the Monastery of St. Gertrude Spirit Center. This partnership is based on the belief that community is a life stance of connectedness with those around us and community building is central to ending poverty. ✕



From left to right: Ericka Medalen (Community Action Partnership), Kathee Tift (University of Idaho Extension), Lisa Horan (The Center for Community Building to End Poverty), Lisa Stoddard (Community Action Partnership), Sr. Bernadette Stang, Mary Schmidt (Spirit Center)

Upcoming Retreats

To Have and To Hold
February 5-7, 2010

God's Earth, Our Home
April 16-18, 2010

Creative Expression in Prayer
February 19 - 21, 2010

Seeking God with Women of the Old Testament
April 30-May2, 2010

The Call to Go Deeper: An introduction to the spiritual journey
March 19-21, 2010

The Heart Aroused: Living with Passion, Compassion & in Your Fashion
May 21-23, 2010

Visit www.SpiritCenter.org for info!

Developments

by Sr. Mary Kay Henry, Director of Development

Many blessings for this New Year! You, your friendship and your support are an inspiration and blessing to us. **Thank you.**



Sister Mary Kay Henry

As we turn the page to 2010 we eagerly continue to implement our 2020 Vision that renews and deepens our commitment to prayer, justice and compassion for the sake of God's kingdom. Of our six goals for 2008-2020,

the two that leap out for Development ministry are #4: "The public portrayal of our monastic community's image aligns with and illustrates our values and mission," and #6: "The monastic community is financially viable." We state the goals in present tense so they serve as a checklist for reviewing our communal commitments. (*learn more at [www. StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org)*) **Turning the page to 2010 includes** welcoming Joy Kopp from Boise as our new Marketing/Communications Manager, and Carolyn Radakovich from Lewiston as our new Development Manager (fundraiser). Jacqueline Bradish, present Mar/Com Manager, will continue as Graphic Designer/Web Developer. Michele Byers will continue as Office Manager and Sister Angela Uhlorn as Coordinator of SGA Alumni Relations. As Sister Kim Marie Jordan, Assistant Director, moves out of our office we thank her for her unifying presence and effective work the last three years. As Director I remain privileged to stay in touch with so many of you and introduce you to our new staff members.

We appreciate the 25 of you who have let us know that you have included us in your will. We invite others to seriously consider this kind of gift. Our legal name is Idaho Corporation of Benedictine Sisters. **Thank you.** ✱ (for information: 208-962-5062 or develop@stgertrudes.org)

Mary Kay Henry, ois

Making Contact

Membership Update

People have been coming to Benedictine monasteries for over 1500 years. Some come for brief periods to experience the prayer and quiet in order to go home renewed and refreshed. Some come to the monastery to test a call to the monastic way of life. Our vocation team assists and supports these women as they listen to God's voice and discern a calling to this way of life. We provide various ways for women to learn about the monastic way of seeking God at our monastery and invite them to "come and see". Often their first contact comes from personal connections with a vocation director, sisters, friends and relatives who have visited the monastery. Increasingly, women discover the monastery online. Our extensive web site at **www.StGertrudes.org** allows them to get to know about us through our monastery Facebook page, our Daily Life blog, Twitter feed, news updates and descriptions of our life, prayer and ministry. These "virtual" contacts may lead to a visit in "real time" to participate for a few days, couple weeks, a month or more in our way of life as Benedictine sisters. We have a live-in volunteer program for men and women who want to live for a fairly short time within a monastery to experience the prayer, study and work there. Some women participate in this program as a helpful way to explore the possibility of a monastic vocation. Which ever way a woman begins to search out seriously whether God is calling her to Benedictine life in our monastery, the vocation directors provide support, information, and accompaniment on the journey as the woman decides whether she has gifts and skills needed to live the monastic way. These include such things as the physical, mental and emotional health, the capacity to live community life, the inner resonance with life at St. Gertrude's and the capacity and desire to grow in a deep relationship with God. Our community welcomes new members from their mid-twenties to their fifties.

Are you being called?

Contact Sr. Janet or Sr. Teresa at
vocation@stgertrudes.org or
208-962-3224

Master Forester

In the sixteen years Sister Carol Ann Wassmuth has been involved in active management of the Monastery's 1,000 acres of forest land she has learned about forestry from professionals and from workshops sponsored by the University of Idaho Extension Program. "This summer I was excited to be included in their Idaho Master Forest Stewards (IMFS) program whose purpose is to improve the growth and health of Idaho forests through forestry education by trained and certified volunteers," she said.

Participants were chosen for their interest in forestry and their knowledge and skills in forest management. They were required to complete 70 hours of training, spend a day with a professional forester and write a case study on what they had learned from that experience. Their qualification to become an Idaho Master Forest Steward was assessed by a written test and a field exercise to perform basic forest management activities.

"It was a proud day for me in September when I received word that I am now an official Idaho Master Forest Steward," Sister Carol Ann exclaimed. This means a commitment as an



official University of Idaho Extension volunteer to contribute at least 70 hours of volunteer time promoting good forest management. She looks forward to using these hours to share her forestry knowledge and skills with local landowners who have questions or concerns about their woodlands, to be available to lead tours for students to help them experience firsthand the qualities of a healthy, viable forest, and to serve as a member of the Idaho Forest Legacy Program sub-committee which helps landowners retain their acreage as working forest.

"The more I learn about forestry and am involved in managing the monastery's woodlands," reflects the new Idaho Master Forest Steward, "the more in awe I am of the beauty and integrity of nature." She appreciated the opportunity to spend time with other landowners who share that sense of wonder and are committed to doing what they can to maintain the viability and health of Idaho forests. "We are proud to be the first graduates of the IFMS program and hope many other Idaho forest landowners will join our ranks." ❖

Photos

Sister Carol Ann Wassmuth at work.



2009 NEWS ON THE WEB

September 24-28 Sister Mary Marge Goeckner Attends Sub-prioresses Meeting and Workshop

October 10 Sister Mary Bernard Lieser Presents at LCSC Student Nurses Conference

October 18-19 Northwest Association of Bishops and Religious Superiors Meets in Boise

October 18-19 Canonical Visitation

November 15 Dr. Nancy Copeland-Payton Book Signing Event at Spirit Center

November 16 Six Sisters Celebrate Jubilees

Full stories at www.StGertrudes.org
(Click on News & Links!)

Healing Center

Sister Cynthia Schultz

In September 2009 Sister Cynthia L. Schultz, OSB, RN, BCST successfully completed a 700 hour professional training program in Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy at the Colorado School of Energy Studies (energyschool.com) in Boulder, Colorado. This training meets curriculum guidelines of the International Affiliation of Biodynamic Trainings.

Sr. Cynthia is a registered nurse who has practiced nursing since 1982 in rural and critical care settings, as well as Emergency Services.

Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy is a gentle-touch health care method based on the discovery, 100 years ago, of a previously undetected, subtle, cyclic micro-movement in the body. Decades of research by osteopathic physicians have demonstrated that when this movement is fully expressed in its natural state, many conditions tend to improve on their own, from the inside out. Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy seeks to optimize this movement via light touch and other supportive strategies.

Sr. Cynthia has begun developing a Craniosacral practice in the monastery's new Healing Center at St. Gertrude's. www.HealingCenterAtStGertrudes.org ✕



Sister Cynthia Schultz ministering in the Healing Center.

In Memoria

In Memoria
**Sr. Sylveria
Weiland**
1924 - 2009

For more about Sr. Sylveria,
go to www.StGertrudes.com
and click on In Memoria.



Sister Sylveria (Alice Mary) Weiland, 85, died peacefully on September 23, 2009, at the Monastery of St. Gertrude in Cottonwood, Idaho. Born in Blue Grass, ND, she entered the monastery in December 1938 and made her Monastic Profession as Sister Sylveria on February 10, 1941. She attended St. Gertrude's Academy, Cottonwood, and earned her BA degree in Elementary Education from Mt. Marty College, Yankton, SD.

Sr. Sylveria served in the kitchen at St. Gertrude's; in Catholic hospitals in Cottonwood, Wendell, and Jerome, Idaho; as a teacher for eight years; and as manager of Hays House in Boise, a safe house for status offense teenage girls. Retired since 1985, she served as a driver and sacristan, and provided clerical help for the community, the retreat ministry and the development office.

Sister Sylveria was an adventuresome woman who loved to learn and try new things. She is remembered as frank in speech, a hard worker, and as compassionate and caring as her dimpled smile portrays her.

A Vigil Service was held in the Monastery of St. Gertrude Chapel on Friday, September 25, and the Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated there on Saturday, September 26. Rev. John Gathungu from Nezperce presided and Sister Clarissa Goeckner, Prioress, gave the reflections. ✕



Book & Gift

"I am excited about the new possibilities for the online Book & Gift Shop, especially the enhanced ease of shopping." *Sister Miriam Mendez*

Opening online in January 2010, the Monastery Book & Gift Shop (www.StGertrudesGifts.org) will feature a new look, new products and improved ease of shopping, including:



- ✧ Expanded payment options
- ✧ A wider variety of Nature's Gifts soaps (with new packaging for selected scents!)
- ✧ New logo design on t-shirts and crewneck sweatshirts
- ✧ Mix-n-Match medals and chains
- ✧ Books, logo items, candles, handcrafts, *Passion of the Earth*, cards and much more!



www.StGertrudesGifts.org
208-962-5022

Bed & Breakfast

One way we have chosen to extend hospitality to travelers and to increase our income stream is to open the Inn at St. Gertrude in June 2010. Regina Sullivan, Lisa Radakovich and other oblates and friends from Cottonwood, Lewiston and Clarkston are exercising their creativity, leadership, and muscles to turn five underutilized rooms at the Hospitality House (guest house) into a Bed and Breakfast. Working with community members, they have created business and marketing plans and have painted, redecorated and landscaped. We are grateful to Fr. John Robbins and St. Anne's Catholic Community of Houston for the generous donation in memory of Sister Sylveria Weiand which covers start-up costs so we can begin this new ministry on solid ground. Plan to stay at the Inn on your next vacation! ✧

www.InnAtStGertrudes.org

inn

at St. Gertrude
208-451-4321

