

CANTICLE OF ST. GERTRUDE

A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE



2012:
Healing Our Culture
This issue: Community

A MESSAGE FROM prioress SISTER CLARISSA GOECKNER:

Community: Burdensome, Blessing, or Both?

During the time of Benedict, the destruction and chaos following the Barbarian invasions invited thoughtful people to ask: What is an alternative to the division and violence which surrounds us? How do we live in a way that brings healing and hope to our homes and world?

Being a thoughtful person, St. Benedict reflected on these same questions. He envisioned a prophetic presence in the Church that would help people live a Christian life in time of social upheaval.

What was Benedict's vision that attracted followers then and continues to draw people today?

Benedict envisioned a prophetic community living the message that all are God's people and that strangers can commit themselves to one another and become family. He proceeded to bring together Romans and foreigners, rich and poor, talented and untalented to live in community, united in the love of Christ, gathered around the same vision, values, and mission, fostering attitudes of respectful acceptance and mutual sharing.

This sounds great on paper but as Charles Cummings, the author of *Monastic Practices* says: "Any random grouping of people inclined to the monastic ideal is likely to be a mixed bag of admirable and regrettable elements!" Granted, diversity is a gift but it also presents challenges. It is through these challenges that transformation and growth happen for the individual and for the community.

While community provides a place of support and solidarity, it is also a place where limitations are revealed. When living alone, we might think we love everyone; when we live full-time with others, we discover, to our amazement, how little we love anyone but ourselves; and, when put to the test, we are faced with our pettiness and our weaknesses. Community brings a

revelation of members' wonderful talents and incredible gifts; it also brings a revelation of limitations and darkness.

Through the support of community, members have the opportunity to look at their shadow side. Role models, saints among us, raise our awareness, invite us to the next level of spiritual growth and challenge us to look beyond our own needs, concerns and preoccupations to ask questions such as: How can we together respond to

the needs of our time? How can we share the resources we have with those who could benefit from them?

The important thing about community is that it doesn't exist primarily for itself. It supports the transformation of each member so that the individuals and community will be instruments open to the needs of others. A community is at its best when it sees beyond its own needs and seeks to serve the needs of others.



"A community becomes truly and radiantly one when all its members have a sense of urgency; there are too many people in the world who have no hope."

~Jean Vanier

In seeking this vision together, conflicts will surely arise. Many times members fall short of the ideals Benedict has set, the ideals they have set for themselves and for one another. Two values help restore and safeguard unity: Benedict's imperative to listen "with the ear of the heart" and Jesus' example of forgiveness. Forgiveness is at the heart of community and is the glue that holds it together. Since all are loved and forgiven by God, all must strive to act on this grace.

Monastic community is BOTH burdensome and a blessing: the work of transformation and growth can be difficult; it is this effort, though, that prepares a community to embrace a wider vision and bring the blessings of prayer, peace, hospitality, and hope to the Church and the world. ✕

OUR MISSION

Eager to welcome God's transforming power in ourselves and our world, we, the Benedictine Sisters of the Monastery of St. Gertrude, seek God together through monastic profession and respond in Healing Hospitality, Grateful Simplicity and Creative Peacemaking.

SISTER CHANELLE SCHULER: A BENEDICTINE BLAZE OF COLOR AND SONG

Despite recovering from foot and eye surgeries, Sister Chanelle creates a broad swath of vibrant Benedictine hospitality. She welcomes guests to the Inn, guides groups of visitors on tours, (recently as many as five tours in one day), and helps gather and arrange flowers. Sometimes she sings the community blessing song to guests as they depart. These have included a bus-full of college students at the end of a retreat and most recently over 250 cyclists at the Ride Idaho camp in Cottonwood. (She used the PA system.)

She is also a volunteer ombudsman, acting as a liaison between assisted living patients and caregivers, and patients and their families. With nearly 30 years of experience as a nurse and 18 years of experience as a hospital chaplain, helping to communicate patient needs comes easily.

Sister Chanelle's vocation did not surprise anyone. She is the youngest of twelve children, having been born on her parent's 21st anniversary. She was raised on a Holstein dairy farm and taught by the Sisters of St. Gertrude at St. Paul's School in Nampa. Her father expected one of his 10 daughters to become a nun, but it was her mother's spirituality that was most influential. “Mother was very quiet and prayed a lot,” recalls Sister Chanelle, “when she was cooking, sewing, baking, mending...she died when I was 16 and it was then that I began to think seriously about religious life.”

Before entering the community, Sister Chanelle went on a Marian Year Pilgrimage to Europe; the highlight was the canonization of St. Peter Chanel, her religious namesake. When she returned to Nampa in September, she stayed with one of her sisters to help with a newborn. In November Sister Lucile, the formation director of the Monastery, sent her a letter which said, in part, “Cinderella! The clock is striking midnight. You must come now or you will have to wait until next year to join!”

She arrived at the Monastery door a few days later in a bright red jumper, high-heeled shoes, and an orange corduroy jacket. One of her first assignments was to substitute teach for a week. It was not a good experience. “I told the formation



She arrived at the Monastery in a bright red jumper, high-heeled shoes, and an orange cordoroy jacket...



director that if I had to teach, I was leaving,” recalls Sister Chanelle, shaking her head.

Fortunately, she was able to enter a ministry which she loved. Sister Chanelle was sent off to nursing school in Ogden, Utah, after her First Profession as a Benedictine Sister on June 14, 1956. Upon graduating, she began working at St. Mary's Hospital in Cottonwood, where she spent many years, mostly on night shifts. (At the recent St. Gertrude's Academy All-Class reunion, Sister Chanelle was able to visit with many of the alums whose babies she had helped deliver.)

However, her mother's legacy of quiet service would take its toll. “In those days we, meaning nuns, were only as good as the amount of work we could do...and I wanted to be a great nun,” Sister Chanelle says. “I couldn't say no to any request. Not surprisingly, by 1981, I was completely burned out.” After taking six months off, she returned to the Monastery and took over caring for the elderly Sisters.

In 1984-85, Sister Chanelle participated in the Credo program at Gonzaga University which focused on spiritual renewal for Sisters. For the first time since making Profession she had time to immerse herself in theology, which resulted in deep spiritual growth. At the end of that year, she participated in a two-week pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Upon her return she became a hospital chaplain — first at St. Benedict's Medical Center in Jerome, ID, and then at Sacred Heart Medical Center in Spokane, WA where she worked for over 14 years.

“I loved nursing, as well as my time being a chaplain — sharing Christ with others and being His instrument,” says Sister Chanelle. “To ease patients' fears by singing and praying with them, these were sacraments, sacred times.” In 2004 Sister Chanelle officially retired from Sacred Heart Medical Center and returned home. “I love praying with community, celebrating daily Eucharist, and sharing the wisdom of my Sisters. Although each of us is unique, we seek God together with one heart and one soul. I pray that our loving God will continue to help me live out my life in this community with love, care and compassion for all.” ✕



MONASTIC IMMERSION EXPERIENCE

What kind of person would want to spend anywhere from several weeks to several months in a monastery? In the popular imagination monasteries are places of hair shirts, plank beds and silent meals of limited, unappetizing food. The reality of the monastery is a group of deeply committed, faith-filled people who live a life dedicated to seeking God in community (along with laughter, good food, and mattresses).

Popular misconceptions are part of the reason St. Gertrude's has begun to offer "monastic immersion experiences." Women have the chance to enter deeply into the experience of monastic life for a limited time. For the past two summers we have invited women to come for 8 weeks or 3 weeks to live our way of life. We have recently started welcoming women who want to stay for ten months. Immersion volunteers eat, pray, work, and play with the Sisters. The volunteers receive classes on Benedictine spirituality, participate in faith sharing, receive spiritual direction, and venture out to the surrounding area. In other words they become temporary monks.

In one of the classes on Benedictine spirituality the participants are told that monastic life is for people for whom ordinary faith and belief aren't enough. When someone is not content with praying once in a while, going to Church on Sunday, and having a vague belief in doctrine; if she experiences a deep hunger for God, for the sacred that is not being satisfied in her ordinary life, then perhaps she is a monk.

The monastic immersion participants learn a little bit of what this means. They experience Benedictine balance. When most people say they long for a life of "balance" they simply mean having a little more time for God, family, and leisure.

The monastic immersion volunteers learn that Benedictine balance means a life permeated with the sacred. God is integral to our whole way of life. Every part of monastic life is about transformation, about coming to know God in a way that radiates through our lives into the world. Everything from how we pray to how we treat belongings to how we relate to one another is centered in our relationship to God.

Being a monastic immersion volunteer can be a way to experience a life focused on God. It is also a chance to realize that monastic life isn't completely different from ordinary life! Being a monk, even for a few weeks, means: plenty of work to do, stacks of dishes to wash, and lots of personalities to contend with; the bell for prayer always seems to ring when you are in the middle of something. The monastic life is seldom about dramatic epiphanies but rather slow, gradual awakenings, realizing that to be a monk, inside or outside the monastery means a life structured around a deep desire to know God. Do you think you might be a monk? Learn more about upcoming monastic immersion experiences and volunteer opportunities by contacting Sister Teresa Jackson at volunteer@stgertrudes.org. ✕

PERPETUAL MONASTIC PROFESSION

On December 1 at 1:30 p.m. Sister Katie Cooper will make Perpetual Monastic Profession. A reception will follow and all are welcome.



Sister Katie is a certified Spiritual Director and a member of the Spirituality Ministry Team. She coordinates the stays of guests who come to Spirit Center for retreats. When asked what Benedictine Spirituality is to her, Sister Katie answered, "It is about doing the extraordinary in ordinary daily life; being able to have a personal relationship with Christ through prayer and serving others; following the monastic way of life; and integrating moderation, balance, simplicity, obedience, and peace-making within the community, the world, and myself."



A total of 19 interns will have participated in monastic life over the course of this summer and fall. Many of them have had the opportunity to learn about our region including the Nez Perce people. Above are Vanessa Newell, Miracle Ryder and Margo Mango standing with a young man about to compete in the dancing competition at the Chief Lookingglass Pow Wow that took place in August in nearby Kamiah.

SPIRIT CENTER RETREATS



FINDING THE SACRED IN LOSS

Our lives are an unending rhythm of loss and renewal. In “Losses of Our Lives,” retreat facilitator Dr. Nancy Copeland-Payton leads retreatants on a path of discovery in which they examine the various types of loss, how to respond to them and how to recognize the sacred balance of gift and loss.

Spirit Center offers “Losses of Our Lives” twice a year. Whether in the fall or spring, the retreat is consistently filled with people hungry for a time of renewal and a safe space to explore their innermost feelings of pain and loss.

“The entire workshop touched my heart and soul,” commented one retreatant. “It helped me to better understand the journey I have traveled, and to focus more deeply on the journey that lies ahead.”

Nancy Copeland-Payton, whose life’s callings have included being a physician, Presbyterian pastor, author (of *The Losses of Our Lives: The Sacred Gifts of Renewal in Everyday Loss*), retreat leader and certified spiritual director, is also an Oblate of the Monastery of St. Gertrude. “I hope to convey the need for people to walk through their losses,” says Nancy, “using their traditions in an intentional way.”

The next “Losses of Our Lives” retreat will be held November 13-15, 2012. For more information or to register, visit www.Spirit-Center.org, or phone 208-962-2000. ✕



Nancy Copeland-Payton: physician, pastor, author, retreat leader, and certified spiritual director.

MEET A MYSTIC

The rooms in Spirit Center are named for famous mystics and monastics. Each issue of *Canticle* features one of them.

There is more than one way to live a religious vocation. **St. Frances of Rome** proved that. As a wife and mother, she became sensitive to the needs of the poor through her grief of losing two children to the plague and living in 15th century war-torn Italy. Surrounded by devastation and despair, she began to organize charitable services, inspiring other women to join her. They fed the hungry, took care of the sick, and ultimately became a Benedictine order of oblates. St. Frances also turned part of her family’s country estate into a hospital.



Despite the civil chaos, St. Frances was a mystic, which allowed her to listen to divine guidance and hold a vision for her city of greater possibility. In her life, she demonstrated the transforming power of prayer propelled into action. ✕

*Upcoming
Retreats*
at Spirit Center



October 16-18 ~ Word of Light: The Art of Illuminated Manuscripts
With artist Mary Lorish Jahn.

October 19-21 ~ Introduction to Centering Prayer
Experience this contemplative prayer form that can transform your life.

November 2-4 ~ Exploring the Mystery of Dreams
With Dr. James A. Soliday, D. Min.

November 13-15 ~ Losses of our Lives With Nancy Copeland Payton.

December 31 ~ First Night: A New Year’s Reflection
Bring in the New Year with candlelight and bells, reflection and prayer.

January 25 - February 1 ~ Come to the Quiet Relax in God’s presence surrounded by natural beauty and supported by a praying community.

208-962-2000
www.Spirit-Center.org

GONZAGA UNIVERSITY CHOIR

The fall began with tremendous beauty when the Gonzaga University Choir gave a performance of sacred and secular music on September 9 following a weekend retreat at Spirit Center. The choir also went on retreat and gave an exciting performance last year — and since, as Sister Clarissa says, "anything that happens twice at the Monastery becomes a tradition," we are all already looking forward to next year's Gonzaga event. ✕



GROTTO GARDEN

This summer work began on the Grotto Garden, a memorial place for our major benefactors who have invested in the future of our Monastery. Beginning at the Grotto behind the main Monastery building, a path meanders up the hillside toward the cemetery, the resting place of the Sisters. Along the path will be engraved memorial stones.



The garden includes several spots with views of the Monastery and beyond to sit and reflect, remember departed loved ones, and deepen a spirit of gratitude for those who have invested in the future of the Monastery. The Grotto Garden acknowledges that while the Sisters of St. Gertrude have been praying and ministering on this land for more than 100 years, they have never been alone on this journey. ✕

ESSENTIAL IDAHO

On March 4, 1863 President Abraham Lincoln signed the act creating Idaho Territory. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the event, on March 4, 2013 the Idaho State Historical Museum will open the largest exhibit it has ever undertaken: "Essential Idaho: 150 Things that Make the Gem State Unique."

During the winter of 2011-12 the Idaho State Historical Society (ISHS) held a contest for Idahoans to nominate people, places, events, and memorabilia that best depict Idaho's special heritage and culture. From this list of more than 600 nominations, a group of historians and ISHS staff narrowed it down to 150. The Monastery was chosen to be among the 150 featured. The exhibit will also focus on interesting characters, ranging from Frank Church to Olympic champions; it will feature events from the 1910 Fire to the moving of the capitol to Boise. It will also include places such as Idaho's oldest town and the first fire lookout in the West.

The exhibit will have a special section called "Keepers of Idaho History" that celebrates five influential Idaho historians. Our Sister Alfreda Elsensohn — writer, educator, and founder of our Historical Museum — will be among the five.

"The Monastery means so many things to different people," wrote Idaho State Historian Keith Petersen. "I know people who speak highly of the education they received there; others who express reverence for the spirituality of the place. Some maybe go to the site only once a year — just for the raspberries. To me the Monastery is special in Idaho because of the Sisters' calling to stewardship. That, of course, reflects itself in the beautiful, sustainable land around the Monastery — but also in the call to historic preservation that is so obviously a part of the Sisters' community: from the Museum to the preservation of the historic Monastery itself, as well as in the tradition started by Sister Alfreda to preserve and interpret this history of Idaho County and beyond. I travel in Idaho a lot; thousands of miles a year. People always ask me, 'what is your favorite place?' I can never name just one, but I always mention the Monastery. (And now, I even recommend it as one of the outstanding bed and breakfasts in the state!)"

The exhibit, which will be at the State Historical Museum, 610 N. Julia Davis Drive, Boise, will be up through the end of 2013. It will be an opportunity for all Idahoans and visitors to learn just what it is that makes Idaho so special. ✕

ART AND MONASTICISM

Autumn seems to be a season for the arts at the Monastery. We are privileged to have ten artists, writers, and filmmakers joining us for the first ever "Artist Residency" program. We also welcomed back the Gonzaga University Choir for a concert in September. The arts are everywhere!

At first there doesn't seem to be much connection between art and monasticism. However, by bringing the arts into this sacred space the intersection between people living a life focused on God and the lives of those who are focused on creativity begins to become clear.

Those of us who are monastics live a simple, disciplined life focused on God. All aspects of monastic life are structured to allow us to make faith the focus of our lives. We order our lives in such a way that we can focus our energy on being open to God's re-creating, transformative power. We live simply, in community, sharing all our resources and creating structured, consistent time for prayer and contemplation.

Perhaps the life of the artist, writer, musician is not so different. For people serious about their creative work there is a monastic asceticism as they structure their lives around their discipline. To enter deeply into any kind of art means to sacrifice other things. An artist isn't one who dabbles



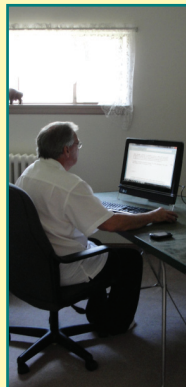
occasionally but is the person who is drawn, even driven to create, to bring something new to birth. The artist is a person of vision and vision requires discipline, sacrifice, and commitment to be made real.

Both monks and artists of all types are drawn, perhaps driven, by the transcendent. Whether the force that beckons them on is named God or is a more personal vision, it is always something beyond, something that transcends the complacent here and now where many people seem content to dwell. Both prayer and creativity are expressions of a primal feeling that there is something more, something that may be hard to express or articulate but powerful and compelling. In prayer and creativity we are drawn to enter the deep realization of trying to express our deepest longings, joys, fears, and insights. In prayer and creativity we take the risk of opening ourselves up, of listening, of being transformed and offering our gifts on behalf of the world.

So in these weeks the monastics of St. Gertrude's are given the gift of sharing our way of life. The musicians and artists join us for prayer and Eucharist. We are able to give of ourselves by offering space and the sharing of who we are. And in this mutual gift-giving something new is being born as together we are witnesses to what it means to live lives focused on the transcendent. ✕

A Monastic Studio Tour

Over the course of August, September, and October ten artists have been in residence for three weeks at a time, participating in monastic life and engaging in art practice. They have come from Washington, Montana, California, Oregon, and New Mexico and their projects have included paintings, books, sculptures, and films. One artist even worked on a spirituality and the arts curriculum for her church. Here are glimpses of artists at work.



"In prayer and creativity: A human being fully alive, seeking the Face of God... May we ALL seek and find Beauty, Harmony and Joy in the midst of daily confusion and struggle, I pray!" ~ Sister Benita Hassler

HEALTH CARE: A MATTER OF JUSTICE

Realizing that a Benedictine Community is always a growing, changing entity, in 2008 we adopted a strategic plan that would guide us in our decisions as we live into our future. One of these strategies states that we will “practice and promote justice as creative peacemakers.” A particular way we do that is by identifying and acting on a focus area in social justice.



Equal access.

After receiving input from both the Monastic and the Oblate Communities, the Social Justice Committee determined that for the next few years we would center our energies on health care as a justice issue. This reflects the emphasis that St. Benedict put into his Rule of Life when he wrote, “Care of the sick must rank above and before all else, so that they may truly be served as Christ” (Ch. 36). Based on our historical involvement in the ministry of health care, we now challenge ourselves to broaden our vision in order to confront structures that deprive many people of their right to adequate health care.

We recognize that equal access to health care is an extremely complicated issue that demands education on our part. The Affordable Care Act, the role of insurance in health decisions, end of life care, the impact of environment on our health, responsibility for our own health, the connection between poverty and health care costs — these are some of the topics of health care where we hope to deepen our understanding.

Catholic Social Justice teachings remind us that every human is endowed with certain rights one of which is fundamental health care. Our hope is that as we explore our new focus area we will discover ways that we can help make this a reality. Once again our vision statement gives us guidance: Prayer awakens, justice impels, compassion acts. **THY KINGDOM COME.** ✕



by Sister Carol Ann Wassmuth, Peace & Justice and Care of the Land Committees

HEALING OUR EARTH ONE BOTTLE AT A TIME

If you were one of our many friends who attended Raspberry Festival at the Monastery on August 5 you may have noticed that we were not offering bottled water for sale. Instead there were coolers filled with ice water at various locations around the campus where you could enjoy a free cup of cool water. Beside each cooler was a sign explaining why we weren’t selling bottled water.

The Monastery of St. Gertrude is a public water system and, consequently, all of our drinking water is tested according to regulations set down by the Clean Water Act. We do not sell bottled water because that product is not regulated and we cannot guarantee its safety. Contrary to the advertisements you hear from the bottled water companies, it has not been proven to be safer than tap water. So why should we charge you for a bottle of water when we can provide it for a fraction of that cost?

Another reason we have banned the sale of bottled water is that plastic bottles release highly dangerous toxic chemicals and contaminants into the environment while they are being manufactured. Fossil fuel is used both in their production as well as in their transportation to the distribution sites.

Most plastic bottles are not recycled but, instead, end up in our landfills where it takes 500+ years to disintegrate.

Plastic has become a normal part of our everyday life and we often forget the impact it has on the health of our planet. It would be impossible to eliminate the use of all plastic in our modern society but we can make conscious decisions to lessen that impact. Banning the sale of bottled water at the Monastery was a step we took in our efforts to be responsible for our earth. ✕

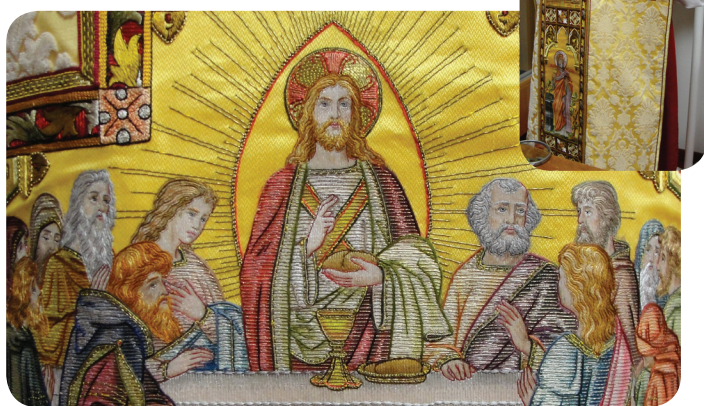


A creek that flows down the hill behind the Monastery.

art · i · FACT: Stories from the Collection

This hand-embroidered chasuble was made at the convent of St. Andreas in Sarnen, Switzerland and is on exhibit at the Historical Museum. The work is so detailed that there is a magnifying glass nearby so visitors can examine even the cuticles in the fingernails of the disciples.

Such beautiful handiwork is the hallmark of these cloistered nuns. It was from within those quiet convent walls that the decision was made to send three Sisters to the western states to found a new religious community. In 1882, on ship and then by train, the three made their way to the northwest and eventually established St. Gertrude's. Read more about our history in *On the Way: The Journey of the Idaho Benedictine Sisters*, available from the online bookshop at www.StGertrudesGifts.org. ✕



13th Annual Fall Lecture Series

7:00 p.m. at Spirit Center, FREE

October 4: Esther Barnett Goffinet, *Ripples of a Lie*

October 11: Vernon and Roxie Himes, *Idaho Mountains: Our Home: Life in Idaho's Back Country*

October 18: Dr. David Adler, *Presidential Greatness* *

October 25: Kathy Deinhart Hill, *Spirits of the Salmon River* *

*These programs are made possible by funding from the Idaho Humanities Council, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Get in-depth information about each lecture event at www.HistoricalMuseumAtStGertrude.org

INN IS A PEACEFUL GETAWAY



With her 65th birthday approaching, Mary Beth Jorgensen wasn't planning a party. In fact, she had already told her husband what she wanted for her present: to spend quiet time at the Monastery. Alone.

"This was his gift to me: to treasure this time, this place, and these wonderful hosts. The minute my car started down the road from Post Falls, my spirit became lighter; the drive through the Palouse is expansive and healing. The world just opens up."

Mary Beth had visited the Monastery before and so was able to see Sisters she knew, spend time in the Monastery library and work on a project. "It was great to spend time without interruptions," she says. "The hospitality is quiet and full of care. I look out over the Camas Prairie and its peace surrounds me."

To learn more about the Monastery's Bed & Breakfast, visit www.InnatStGertrude.com or call 208-451-4321. ✕

SACRED STOLES

Sister Miriam Mendez has turned her knitting gift to a whole new endeavor: sacred stoles. "They are colorful and don't slip around," says Monastery Chaplain Father Meinrad. Learn more by calling Sister Miriam at 208-962-5022. Find other creations by Monastery artisans at www.StGertrudesGifts.org. ✕



Handmade Gifts for the Holidays



With Christmas approaching, find artisan-made rosaries, knitted crafts, soaps, salve, lip balm and much more at our Book & Gift Shop. Call Sister Miriam at 208-962-5022 for gift ideas.

We hope you are enjoying our color Canticles! Thanks to an anonymous printing donation, we are now able to print in color for the same cost as black and white. We are so grateful for the opportunity to share our life with you in this way.