

# CANTICLE OF ST. GERTRUDE

## A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE



**2014 Theme:**  
**"Love one another as I  
 have loved you." John 13:34**

**This issue: Courage**

## THE COURAGE TO BE FIRE

### *A Message from Prioress Sister Clarissa Goeckner*

The story is told that Abba Lot came to Abba Joseph and said: "Father, according as I am able, I keep my little rule, and my little fast, my prayer, meditation and contemplative silence; and, according as I am able, I strive to cleanse my heart of thoughts; now what more should I do?" The elder rose up in reply and stretched out his hands to heaven, and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire. He said: "Why not become fire?"

I love this story! Yes, why not become fire?

The beginning of the New Year is a good time to awaken our lives to greater possibilities. Many times we approach life fearfully, dreading the dangers that might be awaiting us as the days carry us forward. We think too small, give into mediocrity and are content to live in a gray world where we keep our "little rule" and "little fast" and fail to see the potential of a bigger, bolder vision, thereby missing the opportunity to be transformed into fire!

Saints, mystics and modern day seekers resonate with this image.

Benedict describes the fire he wishes to create in his monasteries as "good zeal." "Good zeal (RB 72) commits us to the happiness of the human community and immerses us in Christ and surrenders us to God, minute by minute, person by person, day after day

after day." (Joan Chittister) Benedict wants his community to be characterized by the "fire of love" more than the ice of discipline. (Terrence Kardong)

Christine Valters Paintner says that "becoming fire means letting passion for life and beauty ignite me in the world. This pulsing... seeks expression in the world, whether through art, song, work, relationships, or in presence to others."



Pope Francis also invites us to become fire in his address to the priests, brothers and sisters of the globe when he challenges all to be part of "waking the world." Through embracing a countercultural way of life, living generously, simply and faithfully, he urges that we be real witnesses of a world doing things differently. He sees an inclusive church addressing people's needs with mercy, compassion, joy and love. Think of the many images he has given us of Gospel living. He leads the way in showing us the potential love has to awaken the world.

Now to ask the practical questions:

What would it look like for me to be fire? Where does my fire need to be rekindled? Where could my fire bring hope to the world?

What are the ways to live more vibrantly? What relationships need to be re-energized with deeper awareness, warmth, respect, unselfishness and generosity?

Let us work towards Teilhard de Chardin's vision: "Someday, after we have mastered the winds, the waves and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love. Then for the second time in the history of the world we will have discovered fire." ✕

"Help us never to forget the meaning  
 of our earthly journey:  
 May the kindly light of faith  
 illumine our days,  
 The comforting power of hope  
 direct our steps,  
 The contagious warmth of love  
 stir our hearts;  
 And may our gaze be fixed on God, in  
 whom true joy is found."  
 ~ Pope Francis

## SISTER MARY GEIS: TENDING THE SACRED

As sacristan, Sister Mary Geis is in charge of caring for the Monastery chapel and all its liturgical elements. “It’s the best ministry,” she says, “helping to make things beautiful, meaningful and powerful for everyone who comes for liturgy.”

This standard of care is implicit in the Rule of Benedict: “all utensils and goods of the monastery” are to be treated as “sacred vessels of the altar.” (RB 31:10-11) She prepares well ahead for every liturgical event, from daily Mass and prayer to Advent and Christmas to the intense three-day Easter observances (Triduum). She attends to the altar, vestments, choir and prayer books, and oversees the transitioning of the altar paintings and, along with others, helps adorn the chapel with the correct liturgical colors and decorations of the season. Past traditions are interwoven with the present to bring the liturgy to life.

“Liturgical life is different for us than other churches because this is our home,” she explains. “Most people don’t have the blessing of walking down the hall to church.”

Going to church, which now involves a simple walk down the hall, was not always as easy growing up – though always as grand. Her family lived in a remote area of the Camas Prairie called Icicle Flat. The long trip over frontier terrain did not diminish the importance of going to church in their lives. “I learned to especially love Christmas,” she recalls. “I loved the beauty, crib scenes, lights and trees brought indoors.” The family later moved to Cottonwood, with St. Gertrude’s nearby.

“My mother inspired my prayer life by example, ensuring that the rosary and other prayers were an important part of every day,” she says. “Her mother’s sister, Sister Mathilda, sent holy cards and I was always aware that, although we didn’t often see her, she was praying for us. Throughout my life, as a child and as an adult, prayer has been a powerful, sustaining presence.”



The Sisters at St. Gertrude’s were a strong influence in young Mary’s life, beginning with teachers in the first grade and continuing through high school. In the fourth grade, she announced that she was going to be a Sister. That desire never left and she entered the Monastery after completing high school at St. Gertrude’s Academy.

When she entered the Monastery, the Sisters were still in full habit and prayed the Divine Office in Latin. Changes in dress and praying in English came in her early years, so she had a taste of the traditional ways before Vatican II and then lived with the excitement of new life in the Church.

Her 50-plus years of ministry as a Benedictine Sister have been varied. Initially, she was sent to teach in grade schools in Boise, Cottonwood, Grangeville and Greencreek, before being called to hospital work in the area of medical records and as a unit secretary. St. Benedict’s Hospital in Ogden, Utah and Seattle University provided her education in that field. She worked at both of the community’s hospitals – St. Benedict’s Hospital in Jerome, Idaho and St. Mary’s Hospital in Cottonwood, Idaho.

Other ministries served at home in the Monastery included assistant prioress, procurator, treasurer, infirmary team member and presently house coordinator and sacristan. She also keeps the Community Chronicle, a record of the daily events of the Monastery.

“I appreciate the ordinariness of everyday which is never really ordinary – there’s always something new. We are a vibrant center of spirituality and hospitality and with open hearts we are faithful to our monastic calling of reflection, silence and prayer. There has been an underlying joy in my monastic life, serving and living in Idaho and touching the whole world through prayer and love.” ✕

### Sister Mary’s Favorite Altar Painting



The painting above the altar is one of eight that can be changed for various liturgical occasions. *The Holy Trinity* is Sister Mary’s favorite. “It’s the Trinity and to me that’s the central mystery of our faith,” she explains. “The Father is giving Jesus as a gift to us, to the world. The Spirit is present as a

dove. It encompasses the whole universe, not only our earth.” ✕



# MEMBERSHIP

## A COMMUNITY ANSWERING A CALL: HEALING HOSPITALITY

“Hospitality is born in us when we are well loved by God and by others. Hospitality is the overflowing of a heart that has to share what it has received. It takes a whole person to open up, it takes a secure person to be available, it takes a strong person to give yourself away.”

~ *Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love*

by Lonni Collins Pratt and Father Daniel Homan

**We are called to be a place of welcome to a world weary from disconnection with God.**

**We are called to uphold the light of Benedictine spirituality and hospitality, inviting all to an abundance of beauty and peace.**

**We are called to live the Gospel message through every aspect of our lives, in community with one another, in prayer and work.**

**We seek those who would join us in continuing to create a sanctuary of welcome.**

**To inquire about the process of becoming a Sister, email [membership@stgertrudes.org](mailto:membership@stgertrudes.org).**

**Oblates, volunteers, and interns also join us in answering the call.  
To learn more, visit [www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org).**

# SPIRIT CENTER RETREATS



## A ROOM FOR ART

*"If you hear a voice within you say, 'You cannot paint,' then by all means paint, and that voice will be silenced." ~ Vincent van Gogh*

Guests at Spirit Center are free to roam the forested hillside with expansive views of the Camas Prairie and surrounding mountains; they are welcome to attend prayer and Mass in the chapel with the Sisters; and they are at liberty to lounge throughout Spirit Center itself, taking in the sun and quiet rooms. Now retreatants have free access to an art room just for them, just for making art.

Since the beginning of the Spirituality and the Arts program in September 2010, the program team has been looking for ways to continually invite guests to deeper creativity. As the Spirituality and the Arts mission statement proclaims, "...we hope to foster an artistic environment and be present to the many manifestations of beauty in our world and to nurture new artistic possibilities."

With an array of art supplies, lots of space, and a broad view of the prairie, the space is already inviting many retreatants to new possibilities. "People are really using it a lot," says program assistant Krista Green. "There are pencils, paper, pastels, watercolor pencils, watercolor crayons, charcoal, felt markers, calligraphy sets, scissors, glue, a place to hang art, Mandala diagrams, books, art kits, and a jar of 'Art Sparks' – ideas to get you going if you don't know where to begin. Everything is labeled and clearly organized."



The art room received a big boost last year when a donation arrived specifically for art supplies. The Spirit Center team consulted with an artist and came up with a list of artistic mediums that would offer something for everyone. "It's a place to be quiet and dive into this visual prayer form," explains Krista. "It helps you clear your mind of other things, distractions, and to listen to God's voice."

In this way, everyone participates in fulfilling the final intention of the Spirituality and Arts mission statement: "By embracing the profound mystery of artistic experience, we aspire to the transformation of individuals and the world." ✕

*Read the full Spirituality and the Arts mission statement at [www.Spirit-Center.org](http://www.Spirit-Center.org) and click "Spirituality and the Arts."*

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



**Saint John of the Cross** (1542-1591) was a Spanish mystic who maintained a special concern for those who felt themselves out of God's reach. As a poet, spiritual director, and theologian he wrote several books including *Dark Night of the Soul* and *Spiritual Canticle of the Soul*. He described a difficult stage of the soul's growth that could include depression and dryness of the spiritual life, explaining it as a natural progression in the deepening of faith. It was a stage, he explained, where the usual habits of prayer fail to bring solace and the soul, in the absence of the feeling of God, must trust that God is indeed there and that joy will be refound in new ways.

"What more do you want, O soul!" wrote John of the Cross. "And what else do you search for outside, when within yourself you possess your riches, delights, satisfaction and kingdom — your beloved whom you desire and seek? Desire him there, adore him there. Do not go in pursuit of him outside yourself."

John of the Cross consistently taught that joy comes only from God and demonstrated this by writing his most ecstatic, mystical poetry while imprisoned by his own order. Along with Teresa of Avila, he worked to return the Carmelites to a more prayerful way of life. Although his life was filled with poverty and persecution, John of the Cross expressed deep compassion and creativity, sharing this promise: "Where there is no love, put love — and you will find love." ✕



## RETREAT HIGHLIGHTS

### Introduction to Centering Prayer, March 21-23



This introductory retreat will provide the fundamentals and background of Centering Prayer, a contemplative prayer form, and show you how to develop a continuing practice. With Darlyne Pape, Donna Kreiensieck, and Scott Pearhill.

### Leadership to Make a Difference, March 26-28



Develop confidence and learn skills needed to make a difference in our world, such as leading effective meetings, building great teams, conflict resolution, collaboration, and courageous leadership. With Mary Schmidt and Kathee Tift.

### God's Beauty: A Call to Justice, March 28-30



We are called to protect the beauty of creation, and create communities permeated with the beauty of justice. Beauty – in God, our neighbors and communities – calls us to love one another and practice God's justice. With Patrick McCormick, Professor of Religious Studies at Gonzaga University.

### A Woman's Call to Spirituality: Woman of Peace, May 2-4



"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Join this women's retreat in which we'll explore Scripture to discover how a woman of today can help to bring about a just and equal society. With Sister Katie Cooper.

### Centering Prayer Intensive, May 12-18



Enhance your contemplative prayer life through this intensive weeklong retreat in our beautiful space. Expand the fundamentals of your centering prayer practice and deepen your spiritual life in this quiet, transformative setting.

### Come to the Quiet, May 30-June 6



Come away for a silent, individually-directed retreat with optional faith sharing, creative expression, body prayer and ritual. Relax in God's presence, surrounded by natural beauty and supported by a praying community. Facilitators: Lillian Englert, OSB, and team.

Learn more about all of the upcoming retreats and register at [www.Spirit-Center.org](http://www.Spirit-Center.org) or call 208-962-2000.

## A BENEDICTINE CROSSWORD

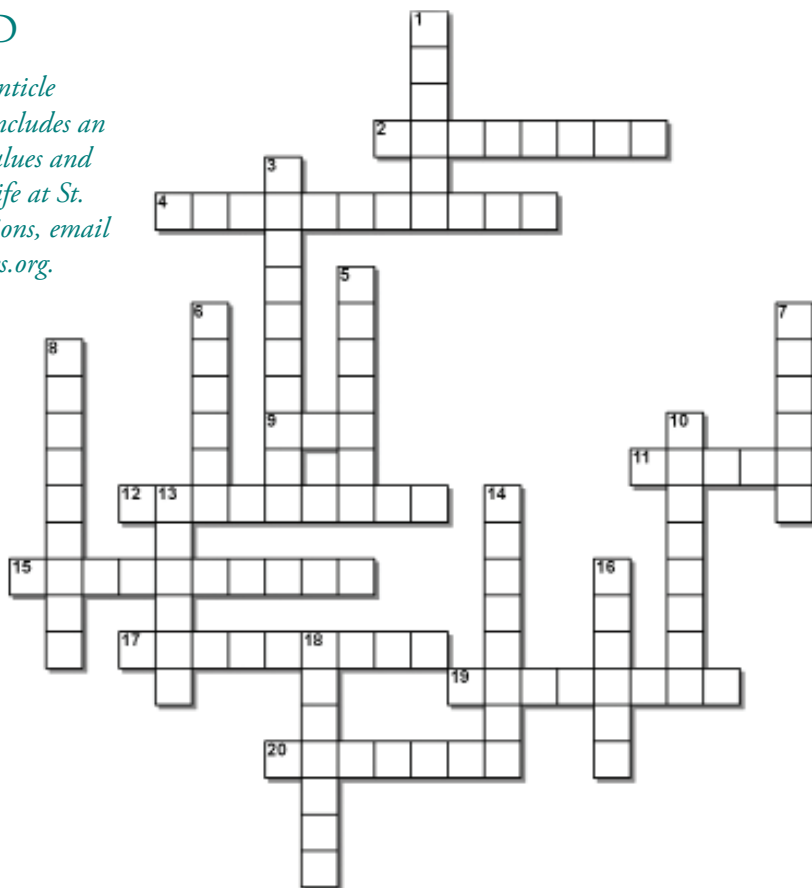
### Across:

- 2 Head of community
- 4 Benedict's sister
- 9 Our B&B
- 11 The absence of turmoil
- 12 One who gives work
- 15 A Benedictine way of life
- 17 Groundedness
- 19 Humbleness
- 20 Fairness

### Down:

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Center
- 3 To feel with
- 5 Equal and steady
- 6 Prayer place
- 7 Monastic focus
- 8 All of us
- 10 Knows monasticism
- 13 Member, not a sister
- 14 Herald of divine love
- 16 Chanted in the Divine Office
- 18 Worship

*It's the first ever Canticle crossword! This puzzle includes an array of Benedictine values and common words from life at St. Gertrude's. For the solutions, email [creative@stgertrudes.org](mailto:creative@stgertrudes.org). Blessings!*





## “AND GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD”



*Sisters process outdoors for a blessing of the orchard, garden, fields and forest on the Feast of St. Mark, April 25.*

The marvelous creation poem found in the first chapter of Genesis lays the foundation for the Jewish/Christian understanding of God's relationship to the universe. Through the eyes of faith we see all of creation as sacred and good. Together with Christians everywhere, we at the Monastery act out that conviction in ritual and word.

As we experience daylight slowly pushing back the darkness of winter, we celebrate Christ as our light. On February 2, the candles that will grace our chapel and dining room through the coming year are blessed. Rejoicing in their beauty is a celebration of the gift of light. On the following day we ritualize the sacredness of our bodies as we come forward to receive the traditional blessing of throats. This action reminds us that we have a responsibility to care for our body's life, health and energy which is God's gift to us.

We begin Lent with the visible sign of ashes on our foreheads. What a powerful way to acknowledge our dependence upon the earth for nourishment and well being. The same soil that will claim our bodies in death is the caretaker of our lives.



The week preceding Easter overflows with earthly symbols. On Palm Sunday we wave tree branches as we welcome Christ. We join the chorus of all trees and plants “exulting before the Lord”. (Psalm 96) The blessing and distribution of oils throughout the diocese calls to mind how essential oil is in our daily lives. The sacredness of food

is vividly illustrated by a community banquet feast on Holy Thursday evening followed by a joyous Eucharistic celebration. The presence of Christ is recognized as we share food in the dining room as well as in the chapel.

Water is at the heart of the Easter Vigil ceremony. Life exists on our planet because it contains abundant water. So also is our risen life in Christ made possible in the waters of baptism. Throughout the Easter season the bubbling fountain of water remains in our chapel lest we forget. On the Feast of St. Mark, April 25, we reenact the Catholic custom of processing to the outdoors and blessing the orchard, garden, fields and forest. In prayer we express gratitude for these many gifts and ask for a favorable growing season and abundant harvest.

These beloved rituals passed on by generations of Christians are much more than simply sweet customs. They are visible reminders of how closely our faith life is tied to the material world around us. Proclaiming a blessing over any part of creation, whether that be water, the fields, the trees or our bodies, is affirming them as sacred. Not just the small part that we bless, but all of creation is a reflection of the glory and goodness of their Creator. Destroying, polluting, wasting any part of our planet is totally contrary to our faith. Caring for the earth is part and parcel of being a disciple of Christ. ✕

*inn at st. gertrude*  
Bed & Breakfast  
at the Monastery of  
St. Gertrude, Cottonwood



Reviewed on **tripadvisor**

**Reservations: 208-451-4321  
or [www.InnatStGertrude.com](http://www.InnatStGertrude.com)**

We are an environmentally-friendly Bed & Breakfast. In order to live in harmony with the earth and to promote responsible stewardship, we employ a variety of resource conservation practices and recycling programs to create an experience of hospitality for our guests. ✕



## OBLATES ATTEND WORLD OBLATE CONFERENCE IN ROME

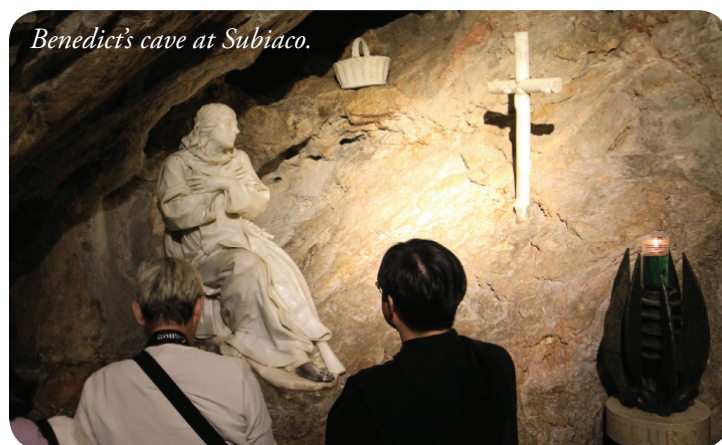
Last fall, oblates Lisa Radakovich and Alyse Cadez attended the World Oblate Congress held October 4-10 in Rome, along with nearly 160 oblates from 29 countries. The theme was “Obsculta – the Oblate Listening in the World.”

“It was such a rich experience,” said Lisa. “Coming from an isolated area, it really opened a new way of thinking to join people from around the world in learning how to be better children of God and keep answering that call. I was changed because I could feel our shared humanity, of wanting the same thing despite our differences.”

The week included visits to the Abbey of St. Anselmo (that included a dinner and concert by the monks), Montecassino – the first Benedictine monastery, and St. Peter’s Basilica that featured a joy- and music-filled audience with Pope Francis.

The Congress also visited the sacred cave at Subiaco, where Benedict lived for three years, removed from the world and developing his concepts for monastic living. “It’s such a special place. It’s the closest I have ever been to a pilgrimage,” said Alyse. “I was able to walk the trail Benedict would have walked and see the church dedicated to his sister, Scholastica. It made it more real: These were real people; they were alive right here.”

Each day, the group attended Lauds, Mass, Vespers, and Compline that were all conducted in Latin. In a large conference hall at the Salesianum center, where the Congress was held, talks were given by Sister Mary John Mananzan O.S.B., a missionary Sister from the Philippines active with women’s and ecological organizations, and Father Michael Casey, an author and teacher from the Cistercian abbey of Tarrawarra in Victoria, Australia. The talks were translated live into six different languages through headsets.



*Benedict's cave at Subiaco.*



“I understood my oblation as part of a whole world effort” adds Alyse. “It is as if Benedict’s vision went out like the rays of the sun.”

A document from the Congress states, “the Benedictine oblate is a lay or clergy Christian man or woman, who...donates their own being to God with oblation, infusing the values of the Holy Rule [of Benedict] according to the spiritual monastic traditions into their paths of faith. Like monks and with monks, [oblates] are called to unity (*monos*)...so as to be on an on-going reconciliation with God and with their brethren, to recuperate the cosmic order, to preserve it and to work for peace.”



*Oblates from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and the Americas walk together to the Abbey of San Anselmo.*

Meeting so many people from an array of countries helped personalize global conflicts and provide a variety of perspectives. Lisa explained, “Alyse and I learned we are quite a bit luckier than a lot of oblates, especially the European ones...many of them have little contact with their monastery or don’t have the support of a monastery at all. We feel really supported by our monastery and bonded with our oblate group: while some people experience their oblations more as a solitary thing, we get to share our joys and sorrows.” ✕

## art · i · FACT: Stories from the Collection



Like all of the artifacts in the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude, this rolltop desk holds a special story. It belonged to Father James L. Frei, who was pastor of the parish in Colton, Washington and a chaplain to the Sisters when they lived and taught in the area.

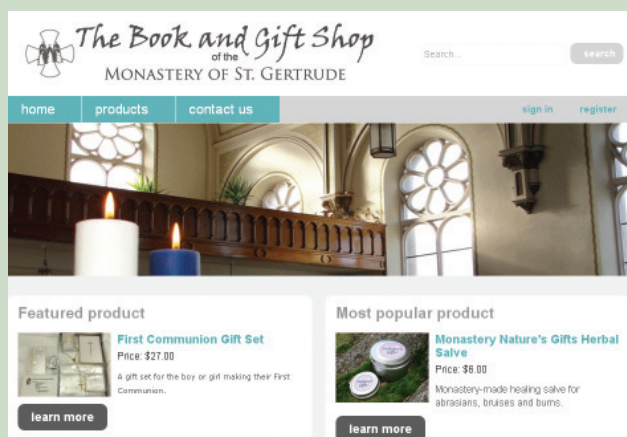
He arrived from Switzerland in 1891. However, a local priest became threatened by the capable arrival and turned on him. After a series of false allegations, Father Frei was removed from his ministries. A canonical investigation followed and the Swiss priest was

restored as chaplain and pastor in 1895.

He continued to serve the community when they moved to Cottonwood, Idaho in 1909, joining the Sisters in ministering to Camas Prairie families through the adventures and hardships of frontier life. Father Frei's desk came to the museum on April 19th, 1980, having been used by prioresses from his death until then. ✕

*Learn more about the Historical Museum at [www.HistoricalMuseumatStGertrude.org](http://www.HistoricalMuseumatStGertrude.org).*

## The online bookshop has a new look!



Visit [www.StGertrudesGifts.org](http://www.StGertrudesGifts.org)  
for sacramental gifts, Monastery-made  
herbal products, books and more!

## WE ARE A COMMUNITY...



...committed to prayer and bringing about the Kingdom of God. For over 1,500 years Benedictines have lived lives of prayer and service to the world. For over 130 years, our community has lived this legacy of continual prayer, service, and community life and seeks to pass it on. We move into the future knowing that our presence,

our ministry, our faith, and our prayer witness to the transforming power of a way of life centered on God.

### Participate

With early Christian communities as our model, we live out the values of praying together, living together, sharing all things in common, and serving the wider community and one another. There are many ways you are invited to participate:



- ✕ **Attend** prayer, Mass, or one of our Spirituality and the Arts concert events
- ✕ **Come away** to Spirit Center for a retreat
- ✕ **Visit** the Historical Museum at St. Gertrude and learn about our region's history
- ✕ **Experience** Benedictine hospitality at our bed and breakfast, the Inn at St. Gertrude
- ✕ **Schedule** an appointment at the Healing Center
- ✕ **Find** monastic-made crafts and sacramental gifts at the Book & Gift Shop
- ✕ **Live** in the Monastery as a volunteer or Monastic Immersion participant
- ✕ **Learn** about becoming a Sister or Oblate.

For more information, visit [www.StGertrudes.org](http://www.StGertrudes.org).

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.