

# CANTICLE OF ST. GERTRUDE

A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE

FALL 2023

## Discerning from the Center

The term “discernment” is most commonly used - in a religious context - to describe an individual’s decision-making process in regard to a vocation. To think about it, though, discernment is part of many people’s daily lives, without knowing it!

College students, for instance, must discern what their major course of study will be as they progress through years of higher education (and, sometimes, that discernment involves changing majors). Once the undergraduate degree is earned, discerning whether to continue toward a master’s degree or doctorate is another challenge.

For those contemplating retirement, discernment involves a variety of facets: what activities to pursue, where to live, whether to travel, and so forth.

At the Center for Benedictine Life, discernment is a prayerful constant. “The Holy Spirit helps everyone to discern what the gifts and qualities they have to offer,” explained Sister Rose Marie Nutsch.

For the staff of Spirit Center, discerning what programs to offer those seeking spiritual enrichment - and the ideal facilitators for those programs - brings together diverse voices with knowledge of many subjects, exchanging information and listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Carla Wilkins, manager of the Historical Museum, weighs many factors in her discernment of what exhibits to offer, to present the enduring message of St. Gertrude’s and this region of Northern Idaho.

Discernment was key this past spring when, following the death of Sister Mary Forman, the Sisters welcomed Sister Jeanne Weber, president of the Monastic Congregation of St. Gertrude, for a visit, sharing their thoughts and hopes, which were prayerfully taken to the Congregation’s council, leading to Sister Teresa Jackson being named interim administrator for the community.

As the Sisters, oblates, employees and volunteers continue to create the unique dynamic that is the Center for Benedictine Life at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, discernment plays a huge role in the evolution of the Benedictine tradition for the 21st century. On the Feast of St. Benedict, July 11, the Sisters gifted the employees and volunteers with t-shirts featuring the new logo, which are proudly being worn as they labor together.



*Sister Teresa Jackson presents Spirit Center director Tim Oberholzer with a Center for Benedictine Life t-shirt on the Feast of St. Benedict.*

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### 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.

# *A journey of grief, healing and hope at St. Gertrude's*

These last few months have been a time of profound grief and change here at St. Gertrude's. As you all know, we experienced the death of four sisters between March and July. The sudden passing of Sister Mary Forman, our prioress, also meant that there was unexpected change in leadership. In May, I was appointed the interim administrator until we hold an election for prioress in November. It has been a challenging time that shook us all deeply.

The entire St. Gertrude's community - sisters, oblates, staff, friends, and supporters - has come together in a strong witness of mutual support and true Benedictine community during this difficult time. We have demonstrated that together we are St. Gertrude's and together we will move forward as we become the Center for Benedictine Life at the Monastery of St. Gertrude.

Our vision for St. Gertrude's continues to unfold and flourish. While there is no longer the same need for teachers and nurses that impelled our founding sisters to come from Switzerland in 1882, there is now a powerful need for the witness of Benedictine spirituality. The hearts of many people long for a deeper spirituality and relationship with God that seems hard to find in many parishes and churches. Sharing the Benedictine way is St. Gertrude's calling in the new millennium. We share our way of life - the way of seeking God in community - through prayer and service as a path to transformation. Through the witness of our lives and ministries, we are actively planning our future as we continue to minister to the world.

Our vision for the Center for Benedictine Life at the Monastery of St. Gertrude means that we are creating a future in which all people are invited to explore Benedictine values and to adapt this ancient way of seeking God to their own life circumstances.



We are also changing how St. Gertrude's operates in order to continue to share our vision. Sisters, staff, oblates, and friends are actively planning new organizational and leadership structures to ensure the future of Benedictine life at St. Gertrude's. The Spirit Center is developing new programs to share how people outside of traditional monasteries can live a life centered on God. We continue to offer our healing hospitality through our many programs and ministries.

We invite you to partner with us as we move forward together in faith, and we thank you for your support. Please know that we keep all of you in our daily prayers.

*Sr. Teresa Jackson OSB*

**Sr. Teresa Jackson OSB**  
**Interim Administrator**



# spirit center

## Inviting You to the Center...

During a recent discussion, Spirit Center staff found this phrase intriguing: "Inviting You to the Center."

It has a variety of meanings, being not only an invitation to Spirit Center, but also an invitation to the Center for Benedictine Life at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, or an invitation to the "center" of one's own spiritual journey.

That last center can be nurtured through Spirit Center's many programs, or an individual retreat of whatever length matches a person's schedule.

I have been blessed in different ways every time I visit the monastery. Thank you for your Heavenly Hospitality!

As a follow up to that discussion, another change has taken place for Spirit Center: the series of online programs presented under the banner "St. Gertrude's L.I.V.E" (Living in a Virtual Environment) is now Diffusions: Wisdom from the Center. The reason for this change: In 2020, when COVID-19 caused lockdowns that lasted nearly two years, the Sisters at the Center for Benedictine Life collaborated with the Spirit Center staff to continue offering programs in a virtual setting. Thus, St. Gertrude's L.I.V.E. (Living in a Virtual Environment) was created.

Since in-person programs have resumed, those who cannot travel to Spirit Center have expressed an interest in keeping the virtual programs active, with Diffusions symbolic of the wisdom that will be shared... from the Center.

*(Insets are comments from recent retreatants.)*

The beauty and serenity of this facility was beyond anything I would require or dream of.



WISDOM FROM THE CENTER

This was my first visit to St. Gertrude's and it was a lovely experience.



Sept. 22-24

**Introduction to Centering Prayer**

Oct. 10-12

**Redefining Retirement:  
A Spiritual Practice**

Oct. 31-Nov. 2

**Grateful Simplicity**

Nov 7-9

**An Attitude of Gratitude Yoga Retreat**

Nov 13-17

**Deep Writing: Excavating the Inner Life**

Advent

**Silence the Christmas Noise**

**Upcoming Retreats**

Register at: [www.spirit-center.org](http://www.spirit-center.org)



# *A Busy Summer...*



Among the activities at the Center for Benedictine Life over the past few months, Sisters, oblates, volunteers and family got together for a Benedictine Trivia contest on the Feast of St. Benedict, July 11, and enthusiastic musicians came together for a Sunday afternoon concert in the monastery chapel.

Hundreds enjoyed the Raspberry Social on August 6, with music, the art show, raffles and, of course, raspberry shortcake! This benefit for the Historical Museum would not be possible without the dedication and willingness of so many volunteers!





# ...With a Big Project



Like an overnight miracle, in early August the new framework for the bridge between Spirit Center and the Inn at St. Gertrude was delivered and set in place.

Funded by generous donors, the bridge will be a definite asset to the landscape when the decking has been added and everything is complete!



In the meantime, the maintenance crew - Craig Hood and Walt Walker - removed part of the old sidewalk and poured new to match the difference in height.



# *rest in peace*

## Tributes to Sisters Gerry Marie Smith and Jean Lalande

It's quite impossible to know, in the course of one's life, how many people have been inspired or touched by the good deeds performed on a daily basis.



When Sister Gerry Marie Smith passed away on June 3, dozens of messages posted on our Facebook and Instagram accounts attested to the influence she'd had on many lives.

"Loved her so much. She had such a fun personality," wrote Vicki Jean Patton.

Former Spirit Center employee Marilyn Uhlenkott recalled, "I enjoyed her 'visits' at the Spirit Center."

"Sr. Gerry was a dear, dear friend whom I will miss very much," noted Kathy Wehage. "I loved my visits to the Monastery to see her. We always had such a wonderful time. She was a compassionate woman with a deep love of God."

Emily Woodham of the Idaho Catholic Register, newspaper for the Diocese of Boise, added, "She was such a delightful person. I really enjoyed talking with her a few years ago."

An overview of Sister Gerry's personality was provided by Spike Cunningham: "Gentle soul. Quiet listener. Peaceful spirit. Welcoming to all guests. Kid at heart."

Sister Jean Lalande, who died July 7, was also the

subject of numerous reflections and praise. Her ministry as a biology teacher was well remembered by Therese Clifford: "I remember volunteering in biology to let her use a drop of my blood to show our class how a simple blood test worked. I was amused at how excited she was when she saw I was rh negative. She was always nice and kind, and I appreciated that."



Miriam Hansen chimed in, "One of my all time favorite teachers!"

Sports ran in Sister Jean's blood, too: "Sister Jean taught me in the 5th and 6th grade. She also had the girls play baseball," said Gerri Miller Gillman.

Another former student, Fran Meyer Scott, posted, "Sr. Jean was like a mother to us Boarder Girls and we loved her! The best Biology teacher, kind, loving but trust me she made us accountable for our actions! She helped many of us deepen our faith."

While Sister Jean served as prioress at the monastery, she impacted the lives of many. Kay Totten, who works at Spirit Center, recalled, "She was the prioress when I made my oblation. I will always remember her support and her smile!"

Jeannette Kelley, another Oblate, wrote, "That beautiful smile, the twinkle in her eyes, warmed my heart."

Both Sisters' full obituaries can be viewed on our website: [www.stgertrudes.org/people-of-the-monastery/in-memoria](http://www.stgertrudes.org/people-of-the-monastery/in-memoria)



On August 22, the Oblate Leadership Triad - Jane Somerton, Nadine Grady and Deb McCoy - gathered with the leaders of the nine oblate groups affiliated with the Monastery of St. Gertrude and the Concilium (wise Oblate elders) at the Farmhouse across the road from the monastery campus for a day of prayer and meetings. The Sisters were glad to see them, and the Oblates were glad to have a chance to visit their spiritual “home ground.”

*Continued from page 1...*

Meanwhile, eight women from across the United States and Canada come together on a regular basis - by Zoom and in person - to discern membership as Benedictine Cohousing Companions, with the guidance of a dedicated steering committee. Their wide-ranging experience is blending to create formation materials, assorted policies, and a covenant that will establish them as a “community within a community” as they live and minister with the Benedictine Sisters from this historic structure on the Camas Prairie.

Sister Barbara Jean Glodowski finds inspiration in this quote: “As a discerning community we are called to seek to birth the World in new and creative ways with a global vision and a commitment to risk.”

The Sisters of the monastic community are, themselves, deeply immersed in a process of discernment at this point, with the election of a new prioress scheduled for early November 2023.

Unlike an election for public office, there are no set candidates from which to choose, no rallies, no debates. The Sisters lift up their prayers to the Holy Spirit, seeking wisdom as they make their decision and cast their votes for the individual who will be best suited to lead them over the course of the next six years.

“When I find myself discerning what approach would be best in a certain situation, I ask myself: how will this action help in living hospitality, simplicity, and peacemaking?” notes Sister Sue Ellen Drexler. “Praying throughout the day helps guide me onto the best path to take.”

Discernment, in whatever circumstances it is needed, is a moving experience. As the community at the Center for Benedictine Life continues their discernment in so many ways, they also pray for all those discerning in their own lives, that the Holy Spirit will be their guide.



# *museum musings*

## **Two Free Lectures on the Schedule for October**

The Museum Fall Lectures, which provide insights into the history of our region, will be held on two Thursdays in October. Light refreshments are provided. The events are held in the Johanna Room at Spirit Center at the Monastery of St. Gertrude located at 465 Keuterville Road, Cottonwood, Idaho.

**October 12, 3:30 p.m.**

### ***Flowers and the Visitors We Should Care About***

Presented by Nan Vance

Bees are not the only pollinators! This presentation is about local interesting and rare plants and insects' relation to plants. With the help of her field photographs, Nan will help listeners better understand and support of natural habitats and the processes that influence insects and their association with plants.



**October 26, 3:30 p.m.**

### ***Hear the True Charbonneau Story***

Presented by Garry Bush



Toussaint Charbonneau was hired by Lewis & Clark as a guide, cook and interpreter for the journey westward. Both Charbonneau and his Shoshone wife, Sacagawea, helped direct and provide for the men of the Corps of Discovery during this historic trek. In first person presentations with historically accurate gear and materials from the Corps of Discovery, Garry Bush provides insight into Charbonneau's arduous and eventful life prior to his encounter with Lewis & Clark, continues with Charbonneau's view of life along the route and follows his rich long life afterward.

*These two lectures are made possible by the generous support of the Nez Perce County Historical Society and the Idaho Governor's Lewis and Clark Trail Committee.*

Visit the Historical Museum website for more information:

<https://historicalmuseumatstgertrude.org>



*Find Benedictine hospitality  
in the natural beauty of the  
Camas Prairie.*

*inn*

at St. Gertrude

[www.innatstgertrude.com](http://www.innatstgertrude.com)

