

# CANTICLE OF ST. GERTRUDE



A JOURNAL OF OUR LIFE

WINTER 2025

## Creative Peacemaking: Uprooting the Seeds of Violence

One of our core values at the Center for Benedictine Life is creative peacemaking. It seems like an extremely worthy, lofty goal, doesn't it? Who could disagree with the idea of becoming a creative peacemaker? But I suspect the challenge is not in the goal, but in the means.

Most of us probably begin by thinking about the "big stuff" of peacemaking. How do we abolish weapons of mass destruction? How can we end conflict in war-torn countries? What should we do to push our governments to promote peace?

Those are incredibly important, worthy goals but, as Benedictines, we also know that peacemaking has to start much closer to home.

### *From the Prioress*

The lack of peace which results in violence and wars begins in each and every one of us. If we don't have peace in ourselves and those we live with, why do we expect we'll be able to achieve peace on a global scale? Benedict shows us that the deepest sort of systemic change begins when we change ourselves and how we live with others. To bring about peace, we have to start with peacemaking on a small scale, in order to bring it about on a large scale. If we don't change the violence in our own hearts, families and communities, why do we expect we will change it in other people?

St. Benedict, in his Rule (a guidebook for living a spiritual life) is nothing if not practical, and being practical, simple and personal are key elements to becoming a creative peacemaker. One entire chapter of his Rule is entitled, "The Tools for Good

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# Generosity and Creative Peacemaking

by Carrie Barton

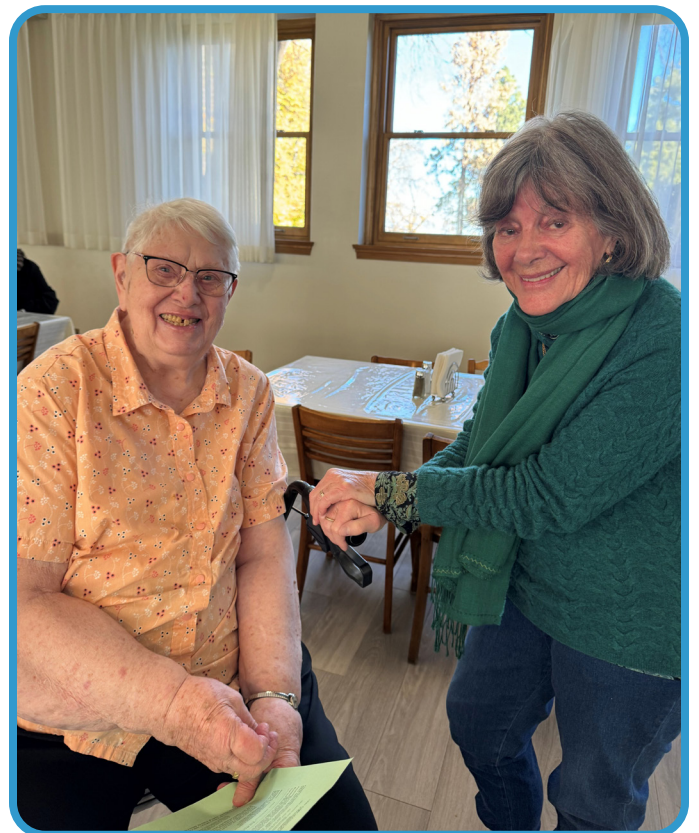
On a recent visit with us, Birgitta Ingemanson shared this story.

“My parents were not Russophiles, few Swedes are, but in my native city during the Cold War, I learned a lesson for life that in its humbling magnificence applies not only to Russia. My father was active in trade-union politics and was so often away from home that I recall few outings with him. But on a beautiful spring Sunday when I was about nine, he suggested that we take a walk together, and I was thrilled with joy and a sense of honor. To be out alone with my handsome Papa! As we walked along, my hand safely in his, we shared warm camaraderie and I smiled at everyone we met, showing him off. Crossing one of Stockholm’s numerous bridges, high above the water, I noticed two Soviet ships moored below, recognizable by their red flags, and in an instant, hubris overwhelmed me. I knew nothing about politics but had the impression that something was the matter with Russia—our newspaper headlines said so—and wanted to show how clever I was. With no understanding of impending doom, I pointed and exclaimed, “Look at those awful Russians!” My father’s reaction was swift, chilling, and uncharacteristically stern, and the passers-by noticed this, disturbed that our light-hearted mood was suddenly gone. He pulled his hand from mine, stepped away (my fear and shame mounting), and, punctuating each crucial word, said, “Do not speak like that again. There are good Russians and there are bad Russians, just as there are good Swedes and bad Swedes. Everything in life has two sides.” I remember nothing else from that day, but even in my shame, I recognized a good lesson. What I could not yet know was that my walk with Sud’ba (fate or destiny) had just begun.”

The lesson Birgitta learned that day set the course of her life. Curious about Russian culture and language, she earned advanced degrees in Slavic Languages & Literature and is a Washington State University Professor Emerita of Foreign Languages and Culture. Birgitta has edited and written books based on the correspondence of Eleanor Pray, an American woman who lived in Vladivostok, Russia, in the early 20th century. Through her work and time spent in Russia, Birgitta has established professional and personal connections with the people and City of Vladivostok.

Through a lifetime of generous acts, Birgitta built bridges between two cultures and peoples who didn’t understand each other. That, my friends, is what creative peacemaking is all about.

*Birgitta Ingemanson, right, visits with Sister Mary Marge Goeckner in the monastery dining room at the Center for Benedictine Life.*



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Works,” which consists of simple practices that lead to peace and holiness. Here are some examples we can all benefit from practicing:

**“Do not grumble or speak ill of others.”**

Obviously, this simple injunction is not the formula for a nuclear disarmament treaty, but it is a good example of getting to the deep roots of violence and injustice. It is our own negative thoughts, language and judgements that slowly

Blessed are the  
peacemakers,  
for they shall be called the  
children of God.

Matt. 5:9



morph into action and eventually into violence. By watching our speech, we are taking care not to plant seeds that will eventually grow into unstoppable violence.

**“If you have a dispute with someone, make peace with [them] before the sun goes down.”** How different would the world look if we took this seriously? Even our families and monasteries would look very different if

we adopted this practice! Like our negative words, our disputes and resentments are seeds that grow easily in our hearts and quickly choke out our ability to live at peace with ourselves and others. Multiply this dynamic by billions of people and we begin to see why we don’t have peace.

So, we absolutely need to keep working for peace in the world, to contribute our resources to the “big issues” of peacemaking. But at the same time - now, here, today in our ordinary lives - we can also become creative peacemakers when we “Do not grumble or speak ill of others” and “If [we] have a dispute with someone, make peace with [them] before the sun goes down.” In these small ways, our creative peacemaking becomes practical, and the embryonic seeds of violence are uprooted.

*Sister Teresa Jackson OSB*

Sister Teresa Jackson, OSB  
Prioress



  
*SpiritCenter*

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February 28-March 2

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March 17-23

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online programs  
[www.spirit-center.org](http://www.spirit-center.org)

# Music, Repairs...

*The Center for Benedictine Life community enjoyed the gift of music in recent months, with the Eagle Song Chamber Choir (left) from Nampa, Idaho, performing in the monastery chapel, as well as the Gonzaga University Concert Choir. The Idaho County Orchestra, and a special “Christmas Sextet” - featuring Sister Karen Martin on clarinet - also entertained!*



*With buildings, repairs come naturally, and both the CBL maintenance staff and intrepid contractors remedied some ongoing issues: the Sun Porch roof no longer leaks, the Spirit Center elevator is welcoming passengers, and the Historical Museum has new carpet!*

# ...Retreats and Holidays!



*During the Oblates' Fall Retreat in September, Linda Klind made her Oblation in the chapel (left), and Oblates from the Monastery of the Ascension, Jerome, Idaho, shared their wisdom on Benedictine spirituality (see Debbie McCoy's article on page 6.)*



*Having live Christmas trees is a tradition at the Center for Benedictine Life, with the trees cut on the hill above the monastery, then brought inside to decorate, as Sisters Rose Marie Nutsch (bottom left) and Betty Schumacher are doing.*



*Below: The four members of the Benedictine Cohousing Community were all in residence at the monastery in recent months - a first! Top: Wendy Weiger and Sylvia Bogner; bottom: Chris Roberts and Edrea Eisenhauer.*



# Creative Peacemaking at Spirit Center

by Sister Betty Schumacher, OSB, Spirit Center Director

When gazing out the lobby windows of the Spirit Center, one senses the peace and calm of creation that abounds. The snow is lying softly on the ground, allowing the brightness of the sun to give it a glistening glow. God's gift of creation reminds us that we, too, can experience the same inner peace as reflected in creation. This happens when we open our hearts and spirits to the peace of God that flows endlessly through our being.

One of my visions for the Spirit Center is that it will be a center of creative peacemaking, a place where one can come to again be reminded of the great gift of peace that Jesus promised. This gift of peace is not only for our own inner well-being, but it is also an invitation and challenge to be a peacemaker, a proclaimer of peace to all we encounter; a proclaimer of peace to those whose lives we touch; to be a proclaimer of peace to our world that hungers for a sense of oneness.

Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us, "Every breath we take, every step we make, can be filled with peace."



*Sister Betty Schumacher, OSB*

## Fall Oblate Retreat on "Facets of Benedictine Spirituality"

by Debbie McCoy, OblSB, McCall, Idaho

Our September fall formation retreat was presented by Oblates of the Monastery of the Ascension in Jerome, Idaho, with 58 people in attendance!

Lori Hudson spoke on the topic of Humility, Joanne Draper on Prayerful Reading, Robin Boies on Community, Diane Holley on Hospitality and, via YouTube video, Pete Espil on the topic of Peace. Fr Hugh Feiss, OSB, the Jerome community's Oblate Director, also attended, giving the homily at Sunday's Mass.

It was a great collaboration with fellow Oblates on the journey. As always, we enjoyed a social with the Sisters, prayer in the chapel, and sharing in our retreat sessions.

Barbara Aston reported on the Concilium's work regarding the meaning of oblation and renewal. Alyse Cadez, our Lead Coordinator,

recommended that no changes be made but formation on the meaning of those terms will be a focus in the coming months.

Linda Klind of McCall made her Oblation on Sunday morning.

Thanks to the many hands who made light work, assisting with music, body prayer, liturgy, greeting our guests and all retreatants, tech support, making coffee, cleaning up, and many other details too numerous to mention.

Blessings on all as we go forth to live the *Rule of St. Benedict* in so far as our state in life permits.



# Historical Museum's Spotlight Gallery Celebrates "The Artists Among Us"

by Carla Wilkins, Museum Director

The museum's Spotlight Gallery is currently featuring *The Artists Among Us*, a special exhibit showcasing the creativity of those who live and work at the monastery. From paintings and woodworking to crocheted items and quilting, the exhibit highlights the artistic talents of our community, offering a glimpse into members' hobbies and passions.



This exhibit is part of an intentional effort toward creative peacemaking. Seeing the creativity of colleagues fosters connections, sparks conversations, reveals shared interests and strengthens relationships. To ensure employees had a chance to experience the exhibit, the museum hosted an in-service event. This gathering allowed staff to explore the gallery together at work, engage in conversations about their projects and strengthen connections with one another.



The Artists Among Us will be on exhibit until March 1st. Stop by the Spotlight Gallery to experience how creativity can inspire connection and promote peace.

## Stormy Spills the Beans

**Editor's note:** Meet Stormy, the newest member of the Canticle staff. His beat is the Sun Porch floor of the monastery annex and he'll be covering life with the sisters who share his home there. Welcome, Stormy!

There's no place like the Sun Porch to celebrate the Christmas season. Advent is a quiet time to anticipate the birth of Christ and prepare our hearts to receive him. As Christmas day approached, festive decorations adorned the hallway and we enjoyed treats galore! Our neighbors joined us for Mass on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, sharing in our joy.

Our night owl, Sister Chanelle, literally rang in the New Year. At midnight, the monastery bells sang out across the prairie. Our prioress, Sister Teresa Jackson, blessed our clocks and calendars on New Year's Day. Then, we feasted!

Phew, those last days of 2024 were a whirlwind!

Happy New Year, everyone! Meow!



# Creative Peacemaking in the Monastery

by Tim Oberholzer, Executive Director

“Brother Charles,” calls Father Ben.

Charles had not noticed his abbot as he exited the chapel. He’d been lost in an inner monologue, responding to Brother Miguel’s latest correction.

Charles summons a feeble smile. “Yes, Father Ben.”

“What is bothering you, my son?”

“Nothing, Father.” The lie comes naturally.

The abbot raises an eyebrow. “Something is bothering you. Even Brother Edward commented on the dark cloud over you lately. It looks to me like a storm brewing.”

Charles hesitates before unleashing, “Brother Miguel finds fault in everything I do. I don’t work hard enough. I don’t pronounce words correctly when I read. I undermine his role when I help Brother Brian with his chapel books. And on and on. I think he would be happier if I weren’t here.”

Father Ben weathers the storm. He suspected as much, given the personalities of the two young monks.

“Child, you work harder than a novice should. That is why I instructed Father

Pachomius to reduce your tasks. And, you read exactly as I taught you.”

“Then, why is Miguel so upset with me?”

The abbot notices Charles’s omission of *Brother* but lets it slide. “More importantly, why do you let Brother Miguel upset you?”

Charles stands, stunned. Did Father Ben not hear him? He sees the old man’s gentle gaze and chooses silence.

The abbot smiles. “Brother Charles, I would like you to make a private retreat over the weekend. You may use Father Louis’ old hermitage. Be yourself before God. Take your Bible and your journal. I know *lectio* restores your soul.

“Next week you will work in the garden with Brother Maurus. Fresh air, sunshine, dirt, and sweat will rejuvenate you. Plus, he’s a great storyteller.

“I’ll also keep you off the liturgical schedule for the week so that you can pray the Divine Office without any responsibilities. Just listen to the Psalms speaking to you and for you.”

Seeing the young monk’s acceptance, Father Ben concludes, “Go in peace.”

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