



Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

Volume 7
Issue 26

OCTOBER 2021



The Associate Alliance

The New Allegany Franciscan Leadership Team

Being in leadership is a blessing from the Lord, but with that blessing comes an extra weight of responsibility that, at times, asks much of a leader. They need prayer to stay on track, to not become discouraged, and to hear the Lord speaking.

As we lift up and support our new Congregational Leadership team, let us pray for the following blessings:

1. for **wisdom** to do what was right in the eyes of the Lord and to lead the Congregation in righteousness;
2. that they **not grow weary** in doing what is good and necessary;
3. for **humility**, for openness to what the Lord and others are saying, and that they offer their hearts to God daily;
4. for **trust in God** that they will not become discouraged, but that they would be leaders who pray and wait upon the Lord even in the darkest times imaginable;
5. for **encouragement** by those around them, both in prayer and in words, as well as deeds;
6. for **Godly friendship and connection**. We were created as relational beings for the purpose of worship and fellowship of and with God, and part of this is a relationship with people.
7. for **boldness**. *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” – Joshua 1:9*
8. for **guidance and direction from the Holy Spirit** as they are charged with the responsibility of guiding and leading the Congregation in a direction that leads to deeper walks with God. Along with this, they are vision casters which means they set forth the goals and visions that we all aim to achieve. This is a big task that requires the wisdom and guidance of God, not just our human intellect;
9. for **growth** in skills, talents, and leadership and that they may be taken deeper each day in their walks with the Lord;
10. our last prayer is one of **blessing**. May they have abundance in all that they do and blessings and grace in all that they set their hands to do. *“Moreover, God is able to make every grace abundant for you, so that in all things, always having all you need, you may have an abundance for every good work.” - 2Cor 9:8*



Margaret
Magee OSF

Melissa
Scholl OSF

Josephine
Streva OSF

Gwen
Melhado OSF



Chapter 2021

Meet Christine Moll - Associate from South Jersey

This Philly-born, Jersey raised soul left home 50 years ago to enter the Allegany Franciscan Sisters. Her first year was spent in Tampa, FL working at St. Joseph's Hospital and the Franciscan Center. A summer in Allegany, was followed by a combined novitiate in Piscataway, NJ and studying at Caldwell College. After formation and until 1987, there was work in schools/parishes in Miami and Melbourne, FL, and Snyder/Buffalo, NY. After leaving the community, Chris remained in the Buffalo area to complete a Masters degree, which led to an opportunity to work for Canisius College as the Director of Counseling Services and then as a faculty member in the Counselor Education department after completing a PhD at Barry University in 1997. She remained with Canisius until 2018.



Chris Moll

Starting in 1987, Chris assisted with the creation of the FSA Associates and has remained active ever since. In Western New York, for over 39 years, Chris was active with the Canisius College Campus Ministry and in her parish, St. Joseph University Church in Buffalo. While not as involved in New Jersey (yet!), she did assist with the development of the "Meet and Greets" – Kathy Doyle's idea to help the Associate communities interact with one another. She enjoyed "meeting" everyone, re-connecting with friends, and hearing how all live out the Franciscan-Clarian calling.

Chris is active with her professional organization, the American Counseling Association, on regional and national levels. When travel is safe again, she plans to enjoy traveling around the US for professional and personal exploration. She particularly looks forward to visiting Western New York, not just to see friends and colleagues in Buffalo, but to spend quality time with the Sisters in Allegany and the Associates in the Allegany/Olean area. Happy travels, Dr. Chris!

News from the Allegany, NY Associates

Jeanette Turner

Since the pandemic changed all of our lives, we have been meeting virtually every month. We take turns starting with a prayer of choice and leading a discussion on a topic - usually, a book we are all reading. We have someone take notes at the meeting and email them out to the members.

There is a basket which is passed around for donations and we use the money for needy causes: the Food Pantry, Veggie Wheel, The African American Center for Cultural Diversity, and The Little Portions Friary. We also gave money to Sr. Lucy Cardet, osf and Associate Linda Dees when they went to Texas to help the immigrants at the border.

We have a wonderful group of Sisters and Associates. We are blessed.

Spanish Associate Community Activities

Alba Luz Mejia

The Spanish-speaking community will be participating in a Novena, starting on September 24 through October 2nd. The Novena is called "Renovando El Oikos" (Renewing the House of God). It consists of nine different topics from Laudato Si, all values that St. Francis experienced.

On October 3rd there will be a mass and after the mass, Father Antonio will be blessing the pets. There will also be a table set up as a "Come and See" invitation. On it will be Franciscan material, especially our Spanish brochure, inviting everyone to participate in the Spanish and/or English speaking Associate groups.

The community has been using Chat to share Franciscan reflections with the members in order to maintain the group motivated during this time of pandemic. We hope to meet in person soon.



During her presentation on the first full day of Chapter 2021, Margaret Mary Kimmins, osf, shared a poignant “Prayer for a New Time.” Its message was so apropos that it warrants being repeated here.

A reading from Isaiah 43:18-21: “Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not. See, I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I put water in the desert and rivers in the wasteland for my chosen people to drink, the people whom I formed for myself that they might announce my praise.”

Welcoming a New Time

A new time stands on our doorstep ready to enter our life’s journey. Something in us welcomes this visitor: the hope of bountiful blessings, the joy of a new beginning, the freshness of unclaimed surprises. Something in us rebuffs this visitor: the swiftness of the coming, the boldness of the entrance, the challenge of the good-bye. Something in us fears this visitor: the unnamed events of future days, the wisdom needed to walk love as well as the demands of giving away and growing. A new time stands on our doorstep. With fragile caution we move to open the door for its entrance. Our hearts leap with surprise, joy jumps in our eyes for there beside this brand new time stands our God with outstretched hand. God smiles and gently asks of us: Can we walk this time together? And we, so overwhelmed with goodness, can barely whisper our reply: **Welcome in!**

Adapted from Violet Grennan

A Return to In-Person Meetings!

Claudio Alves de Oliveira

On September 11, the Associate Community of Pires do Rio, met at the home of our LAC, Maria Ivonir. It was our first post-pandemic meeting! We had maintained contact throughout our isolation months using WhatsApp to pray together. It was a difficult and uncertain time, but also one of great faith, hope and solidarity. While physically absent from each other, we were together spiritually.

Our meeting was very festive. We discussed several subjects and made some decisions with everyone’s participation. We followed health guidelines with everyone wearing masks, using hand sanitizer and maintaining social distancing. Everyone has received their two vaccines.

Focusing on St. Francis and St. Clare, we meditated on a text from Frei Vitório Mazzuco:

“It is not just the need arising from the hunger for actual food that brings people together to the table. People who love each other very much need to celebrate any meeting where the only nourishment is harmony, inner inspiration, common spirituality, living the same life project and the same search for the Beloved.

Fraternity is nourished by presence; in the heart of the other lives a transcendent experience. There has never been a more intimate and harmonious union than between St. Clare and St. Francis; never have two souls been so much in agreement in their way of appreciating the things of earth and heaven. Sometimes you wonder who copied whom; their reflections are so similar that such resemblance seems to result from a kind of spiritual kinship. Francis and Clare teach us that any human is defined through relationships. To meet is to share and transmit an existential fervor that infects the heart. The pure and open meetings between Clare and Francis are part of a strong experience, which is why it is a gracious gift. The strong Love for the same Beloved deepens the encounter and places the two into daily events in greater depth. This is what inspires the silence, the speech, the table, the facts. The Flame of Love hovers over the scene to commemorate the experience of the encounter; it's not just an encounter that enlightens, it becomes a flame!”



A Dream Come True

Cláudio Alves de Oliveira



Do you have a dream? Everyone has a dream - what is your dream? What makes you happy? What do you expect from life?

For Tininha, associate from Pires do Rio, her recent dream was to pick coffee from her yard. And she has fulfilled that dream! She has three large, well-loaded coffee plants in her backyard and a lot of stamina and courage to harvest the beans, sort them and put them to dry, then roast, grind and prepare the coffee of her dreams. This will be the tastiest coffee she will ever prepare. It will smell of happiness and taste of love.

What a beautiful example Tininha gives us, she who is tenderness personified, who is sweetness, courage and strength!

Her baptismal name is Ernestina Ribeiro Rezende, but she is known as Tininha. At 91 years of age, she cooks, sews, and does her handicrafts every day. She was married for 68 years to Mr. José Matias (deceased), is a mother of seven

children and a foster daughter, has thirteen grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

Tininha is one of those people that God gives us as a gift. How good it is to live with her, learn from her simplicity, and share her intelligence. She is a talented artist, recites poetry, sews, knits, crochets and does cross stitch among other beautiful crafts. But it is her faith and her heart that makes her unique and special. She looks so fragile but she is strong and brave, a loving mother, a devoted grandmother and a blessed wife.

Time passed, as it does for everything - just as the seeds of the coffee plants were sown, grew, were pruned and fertilized until the day of the harvest ... the day to fulfill a dream! Surely she will serve this delicious coffee to her friends, as sharing is a gift from her hands.

Everyone has a dream. Mine? To drink coffee in one of Tininha's enameled cups, listening to her stories and learning that it takes very little to be happy.

Meet & Greet Meetings

Kathy Doyle

Chris Moll, the self-described “TechnoWizard,” provided support for all of the spirited sessions held between June 16 and August 31, with time out during Chapter. Her enhanced Zoom account has the capacity for small breakout groups which were integral to the eleven Meet and Greets.

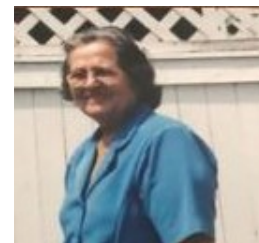
Every meeting followed the same agenda but as the participants were always changing, the experiences were unique each time. Kathy Doyle was the facilitator. Each gathering of two associate communities opened with a Mantra sung by Jeanne Williams, followed by readings from the TOR Rule and Life and the letter to Ephesians (3:14-20) which focused on being bound by love and family. After prayer, each person identified herself, stated how long she had been an associate or, in the case of sisters, how long they have journeyed with associates, and something about themselves that people might not know. Then all went into small groups of three to five people and addressed these questions: What attracted you to the Associate Way of Life and what impact has it had on you?

When we returned to the large group, interesting tidbits from the small groups were shared. Then each of the local communities spoke about themselves, their history, how they live the Allegany charism and what makes them unique. Remarks to what was heard then followed, which often led to lively discussions.

The overwhelming feedback was how positive and uplifting these gatherings were. Everyone agrees that the Associate program and Way of Life answered a longing in our hearts. The meetings really did get everyone to know one another. Now names have faces!

Although they were targeted to English-speaking associates, Sheila Vincent has offered to translate for possible meetings with our Brazilian associate communities. The Meet and Greets will continue periodically.

Associate Marilda Paulino da Silva of Quirinópolis passed away on August 1 due to complications from pneumonia. A simple woman with a true Franciscan heart and soul, she captivated all who met her with her humility. Her Franciscan family returns her to the God she followed through her faith to the Allegany charism and her living of Gospel values throughout her journey here on Earth. She leaves behind a legacy of Peace and All Good!



Tampa Bay lost long-time Associate Rita Wolfe on August 18 due to COVID. She was living in San Antonio, FL with her granddaughter Cristina. Rita was the sister of deceased Allegany, Sr. Catherine Sushil. There will be a community event when it is safe to celebrate Rita's life.

May Rita enjoy rest in the arms of God who was her light and strength.

Laura Grasso's dream was to visit the Motherhouse again before her battle with cancer was over. She managed to fulfill that dream in June, spending time with fellow Associates and sisters from the Motherhouse. She even managed to get the sisters of the Ritiro to sing the "Blessing of St. Francis," which was recorded to be played during her funeral Mass. A Tampa Bay Associate via Zoom (she was living in New Jersey at the time of her death on August 30), Laura's sense of humor and deep faith will be truly missed.



North Carolina Associate Bobby Ann Caldwell passed away at home on September 17. Bobby had been a Franciscan Associate for four years and the community's LAC for the past two years. She was knowledgeable about her faith, which she shared and lived. She was not only active as an Associate but she was also a catechist to young children, a member of 'Creative Spirits' (providing handmade knitted or crocheted items to the needy or those in mourning), she volunteered at the Senior Center, and was active with the homeless coalition, among other activities. She was always there to cheerfully help others. She is dearly missed already!

Miami Update

Marcia Gill

The Miami Community recently met via Zoom with guests Sisters Joyce Ramaga, Lucy Cardet, Michele Dolyk and Associate Linda Dees. We chose to view and listen to "The Camino of St. Clare," the video presentation which had been shared by Kathy Doyle. This documentary shared aspects of Clare's life that were new to some of us and we recommend it! We also discussed projects that we as a community can support this coming year: the Trailer Park in the North Miami area where Alba Luz Mejia Solis is working with a nurse practitioner to provide needed medications and other medical necessities for the residents. We also plan for financial support for areas of Haiti impacted by the recent earthquake.

Prayer for New Beginnings

God of this New Time, we are walking into mystery. We face the future, not knowing what the days and months will bring to us or how we will respond. Be love in us as we journey. May we welcome all who come our way. Deepen our faith to see all of life through your eyes. Fill us with hope and abiding trust that you dwell in us amid all our joys and sorrows. Thank you for the treasure of our faith life. Thank you for the gift of being able to arise each day with the assurance of your walking through the day with us. May we be faithful to your Word. God of this New Time, we praise you. Amen

by Joyce Rupp

It began in June with a trip to Michigan to meet my “new older brother” Michael. After my dad died, I found a letter in his files entitled “To be read upon my demise.” Apparently when Dad was 18 and in the Navy, he fathered a child. This was long before he met my Mom and my two brothers and I were not even thought of. Because he was being shipped off to Okinawa (World War II), he stated that due to all of the uncertainties that go with being in war, he didn’t want to commit to marriage but would provide financially for the birth of his child, who he later learned was a son. For reasons only he knew, he never contacted this woman or his son, nor did he tell any of us about him.

With the help of some friends, my brother David and I were able to find and contact him within two weeks of making this discovery. This was pretty much a miracle, since we didn’t know his first name and the census from when he was born had not yet been released.

Since finding and connecting with him, we have phoned each other and written one another on a regular basis, often exchanging pictures and answering questions about our Dad, as well as Michael’s family. After doing so for over a year, during which the pandemic prohibited travel, my brother David and I went to meet Mike this summer. Everything went really well and we had a wonderful visit! We spent a week sharing the better part of most everyday with Mike, exploring his area and meeting most of the rest of his birth family. It was a joy to meet his Mom - my Dad’s girlfriend of so many years ago. She is 97, living on her own and still very with it. After talking with her, I got the impression that Dad may have been her first true love. She was only 18 years old at the time when they dated and she has always wondered what had happened to Dad. I believe it was a very healing trip for both her and Michael, which made it a gift for us all.

We continue to stay in contact and look forward to him coming to Florida to visit us in April 2022. In the meantime, it has been a delight to meet and even spend time with one of Mike’s four children, my newly discovered niece, whose own Mom remarkably lives in nearby St. Petersburg!

At the end of June, Barbara Sousa, Laura Grasso, Paula Lyn, Cheryl Maggio, and I traveled to the Motherhouse in Allegany. This came about as a last request from Laura. She had made the difficult decision in late Spring to stop treatment for her cancer since it was no longer working and she just wanted us to “go home one last time,” to the place where our lifetime friendship first blossomed.

Knowing that her remaining time on Earth was limited to only a few months, we quickly began planning this trip even though we were aware that the Motherhouse was still understandably in COVID lockdown. We honestly weren’t sure if we would be sitting out on the front steps simply waving to the Sisters or if Laura would even physically be up to the journey, but we stepped out in faith and made plans anyway for flights and even found a nearby house where we could all stay in our own vaccinated bubble.

Miraculously, the Motherhouse not only re-opened just prior to our arrival, but thankfully we arrived just in time for the first Liturgy with music since COVID protocols were put into place. Together, we celebrated the life of Sister Charlotte O’Brien with loud and exuberant voices! The Sisters could not have been more loving or more welcoming to us. We even had a big ice cream social where all of the Sisters who were able came to the assembly room to visit with us. We also had a few visits and spent many hours laughing with our Ritiro Sisters, as well as sharing prayer with them. We visited daily with our Sisters, enjoyed a tour of the newly designed place, and always made a point to stop into the Ritiro.

Of course the journey would have not been complete without us including a couple of trips up to the cemetery, where we stopped to say hello, utter a prayer of thanks, and share more memories of our treasured mentors and dear friends who, although departed, are always kept close to our hearts. We talked and laughed well into the wee hours of the morning, shared photographs, and honored and remembered so many of those whom we have been blessed to know and share life with over the years!

- **continued from previous page**

God bless Laura for giving us the impetus to do what we may not have otherwise done had it not been for “her dream and last wishes.” It serves as a lesson for us all, to move beyond years of talk to the action of celebrating life lived and loved with those who remain such an intricate part of who we each have become.



L-R: Rev. Mark Cavagnaro, Sr. Toni Pellegrino, Sr. Chris Tenn, Barbara Sousa, Sr. Lucy Cardet, Sr. Carole Ann Hoppe, Sr. Carol Kenyon, Laura Grasso, Linda Dees, Paula Lyn, Sr. Mary Lou Lafferty, Sr. Odette Haddad

This wonderful “homecoming” trip to the Motherhouse perfectly prepared my heart for my journey to the border as a volunteer at the McAllen, TX Respite Center. When I traveled to the border, I carried with me all of the love, energy, affirmation and indeed the very spirit of the Allegany Franciscan Sisters and Associates. That was perhaps the best warm up that anyone could ever hope for as preparation. I loved, respected and prayed for all that I encountered while at The Respite Center. Truly it was all about LOVE. I don’t know how to speak Spanish, therefore my only language quite literally had to be love each time I volunteered or was interacting with the immigrants on a daily basis.

As volunteers, our primary task was to serve in support roles, while it was the role of the hired staff to take care of the travel arrangements and many of the details that require lengthy conversations with the immigrants. One morning, with the assistance of two immigrants from Guatemala, we made over 300 sandwiches. The lunches we were preparing were to be sent with each person as they left by bus or plane to meet up with their families and sponsors. To complete this task, I had to mime the procedure we were to use, before proceeding to work side-by-side, smiling and laughing together, without understanding a single word that each other said.

What was truly remarkable to me through my experience, was that no matter the number of people who came through the Respite Center each day, whether it was several hundred or even 3,000 which did occur while there, each and every one of these immigrants were always patient, gracious and happy for any and all assistance given to them.

When, God willing, the dangers of COVID finally decrease, I would highly encourage any of you who feel called, to consider going yourself to volunteer at the border. If you are unable to do so or do not feel called in this way, I would encourage you to educate yourself regarding the circumstances faced by immigrants and to consider standing up for and giving voice to the needs of those who are so desperately seeking a better way of life for themselves, their children and their families. Like many of our own ancestors, is this not ultimately a journey of hope and of love?

So as you reflect with me on all three of these life-changing experiences, I hope you too can see why I consider my summer to indeed be a “summer of love” in so many ways. Since we are all called to LOVE, knowing that is who God is, I pray that in some way your summer was love-filled as well.

Welcome to the New Associates' Co-Director

Joyce Ramage, osf



Linda Dees

I am very pleased to welcome Linda Dees as our new Co-Director. Linda has been an associate for many years as an active member of the Tampa Bay Associate Community, was its Local Coordinator for several years, and has served on the Associate Advisory Committee for the past year. Linda comes with great commitment and enthusiasm for leadership ministry with us.

Linda and I will be visiting all associate communities over the next couple of months so that she can get to know all of you and for you to know her. Both Linda and I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you to share ideas and dreams for the future of the Associate Program.

Peace and all good

Prayer for the Feast Day of St. Francis

Holy Father Francis, help us and all followers of Jesus to build a church today that has as its foundation the Gospel mandate of unconditional love, mercy, compassion, justice, peace and reconciliation.

Recognizing that the reign of God is at hand, help us and all followers of Jesus to build a church that seeks repentance and conversion and is committed to living and proclaiming the reign of God. Through your intercession, help the church to be a true sign of fidelity to the Gospel, renouncing wealth and power, and embracing voluntary poverty and simplicity. Help all followers of Jesus to create a church of true communion, recognizing that each person is a special member of the body of Christ. A church that embraces each person as equal in God's eyes; a church that acknowledges its sins and seeks forgiveness for any harm done to others; a church that denounces racism, sexism and all forms of discrimination; a church where the dignity of each person is revered and all are welcomed and cherished; a church of servant leaders.

Empower all followers of Jesus to embrace Gospel nonviolence and be a prophetic witness for peace and social justice, without counting the cost. Help us to make the church truly be a peace church, a church that renounces all injustice, violence, killing, weapons and war, and always advocates for the poor and the victims. As you loved peace and creation, help all people to protect and safeguard all life and our sacred earth and environment. Help all people who comprise the church to always stand for love, life and creation.

Amen.



The Associate Alliance is a publication of the Associates of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY.

Editor/Translator: Sheila Vincent

Contributors: Claudio Alves de Oliveira; Margaret Mary Kimmins, osf; Chris

Proofreader: Kathy Doyle

Moll; Nara Jaime; Kathy Doyle; Linda Dees; Jeanette Turner;

Joyce Ramage, osf; Alba Luz Mejia; Rita Canfield; Marcia Gill

Please send articles & photos to: svincent@comcast.net ♦ Deadline for next issue: Nov. 24, 2021