

Franciscan Voices

Living and Promoting Active Nonviolence and Peacemaking | June 2024

2024 Jubilarians

Six Clinton Franciscan Sisters will celebrate their Jubilee, the anniversary of entrance into religious life, this summer. Sisters Ruth Cox, Teresa Kunkel, Joan Theiss, Mary Lou Carlson, Gael Gensler, and Jacqueline Herrmann have a combined 390 years of service to God's people.

Additionally, Mary Ann Ryk of Naperville, IL, will celebrate 25 years as a Clinton Franciscan Associate.

Jubilee Mass will be held Saturday, July 27, at 10:30 a.m. at Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace Catholic Church in Clinton with Father Michael Schaab of the Diocese of Peoria presiding. The public is welcome to attend. A private luncheon will follow.

Celebrating 70 years...

Sisters Ruth Cox, Teresa Kunkel, and Joan Theiss entered the Sisters of St. Francis at Mount St. Clare Convent in Clinton in 1954.

A native of Sioux City, IA, **Sister Ruth Cox**, has served in the areas of nursing, nursing administration, nursing education, and congregational administration.



Top left to bottom right: Sisters Ruth Cox, Teresa Kunkel, Joan Theiss, Mary Lou Carlson, Gael Gensler, and Jacqueline Herrmann

Jubilarians continued on page 6

Clinton Franciscans to Present Clare Award

Marie Dennis, senior director of Pax Christi's [Catholic Nonviolence Initiative](#), will be the recipient of the 2024 Clare Award, which honors a woman who exemplifies the characteristics of St. Clare of Assisi and the values of the Clinton Franciscans. The public is invited to a reception on July 25 to honor and hear from Marie as she speaks on active nonviolence.



Marie Dennis

"In a world where violence is in every direction, whether it's looking out the window into our own community or watching the news unfold from other countries, we know that violence does not work. Nonviolence works! Investing in and understanding nonviolence will make our world a better place," noted Marie during a visit to Clinton on May 21.

Marie was co-president of Pax Christi International from 2007 to 2019 and was the 2022 Pax Christi USA Teacher of Peace. Marie worked for the Maryknoll Missioners for 23 years, including 15 years as director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. She is author or co-author of seven books, and mother of six children.

*Join us on Thursday, July 25, at 6:30 p.m. at Rastrelli's
Tuscany Special Events Center, 2417 Cleveland Street in Clinton!*



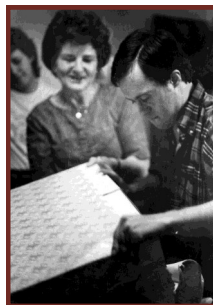
L'Arche Clinton Celebrates 50 Years

Founded by Jean Vanier, [L'Arche](#) is a community of welcome where people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities share friendship and life's experiences together.

The history of L'Arche started in the village of Trosly-Breuil in northern France, in response to the inhumane conditions of large institutions where people with intellectual disabilities had been placed.

Sr. Marjorie Wisor was studying French in Paris in 1968 and made a visit to the L'Arche community in Trosly. According to Sr. Marjorie, her visit "...left a great impression on me as I felt layers of me being stripped away as those with disabilities met me person-to-person. There were no barriers. Our 'persons' met at the deepest level."

After returning to the U.S., Sr. Marjorie participated in discussions on opening a L'Arche home in Iowa. The First Presbyterian Church of Clinton donated a house and on June 6, 1974, Gerry Potter became the first core member welcomed by [L'Arche Clinton](#).



Sr. Marjorie and Gerry P.

L'Arche Clinton was nicknamed "The Arch," symbolizing a bridge between two worlds.

Sr. Marjorie served as Clinton's first Community Leader from 1974 to 1986. Additionally, at least a dozen Clinton

Franciscan Sisters have served the community as employees, board members, spiritual directors, or volunteers.

Now, 50 years later, L'Arche Clinton serves core members in four homes, as well as core members living independently in their own apartments. The community is in the process of reinventing itself with a downtown dayhab and office space, expanded and diversified service offerings, and a push to modernize the homes.

In a [video](#) created for their 50th anniversary year, current Community Leader Devin Land shares, "We are launching a campaign to do two things - reaching out and leveling up. Reaching out is diversifying our services... The leveling up campaign is to get all of our houses to be either fully accessible or much more accessible than the older two-story homes... Our goal is to build another fully accessible home. We need over a million dollars to build a new home that has all the accessibility features we're looking for."

The Sisters of St. Francis have agreed to donate a very small portion — 0.64 acres — of prairie located at the far northeast corner of the The Canticle's property to serve as the plat for the new home. The transfer of ownership of this piece of land will not happen until L'Arche Clinton has raised sufficient funds and is ready to build.

L'Arche Clinton plans to celebrate its 50th anniversary throughout the year with various events and activities, and they invite the local community to celebrate with them.

Congratulations on 50 years, L'Arche Clinton!

Franciscan Peace Connection Farewell

The Franciscan Peace Connection was co-founded by Sister LaVern Olberding and Sojourner Julie Fawley in La Mesa, California, in 2012. An outreach ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis, the Franciscan Peace Connection initiatives focused on spreading what is known about nonviolence and peacemaking by connecting and collaborating with individuals, groups, nonprofit organizations, schools, and neighborhoods.



There have been many great connections made and programs offered throughout the years! As times continue to change though, as of June 30, 2024, the Franciscan Peace Connection will end and the office space will close.

Sister LaVern shares, "How things change with time! Twelve years ago, 8-10 women met regularly in person, communicated by phone, and were actively involved in events sponsored by our various churches. When we became the Franciscan Peace Connection, we began to sponsor our own outreaches to the larger community, such as the very popular Sister-to-Sister Accessories Party for women in treatment centers and half-way houses, day retreats, active nonviolence workshops, and ecumenical and interfaith partnering.

We continue to have a core group of ten, now including two men and four members who live outside of California. We meet regularly on Zoom, communicate by text or email, and are more likely to 'be' than 'do.'

We are confident that the energy and enthusiasm of the Franciscan Peace Connection will definitely keep evolving, even after its closure. We are most grateful for all who have invested in our outreach and self-help endeavors over the years, whether it be in person, financially, prayerfully, etc. Let us each continue to discover and be aware of ALL that we really are!"



Comments from Franciscan Peace Connection members:

"In my experience, the Franciscan Peace Connection is not a building. It is a community. One that extends unconditional love beyond southern California."

"I appreciate how blessed I have been to meet such interesting people and attend the diverse programs that help me to continue to evolve."

"This group has become an integral part of life. It has provided true friendships, moral support, and major growth in understanding who I am created to be."

"The Franciscan Peace Connection is a Christ-conscious Love Center where there is acceptance and room to grow in self-awareness."

"I am grateful for the eight years of opportunities, especially those regarding interfaith, and the reality that I now live in Tennessee and am still connected with everyone."



Sr. LaVern Olberding



Labyrinth Walk



"Who I Am"



Peace Booth



Sister-to-Sister



Youth Education



Interfaith

Franciscan Peace Connection event photos from over the past 12 years.

Laudato Si' Week Reflections

Laudato Si' Week encourages us to reassess our relationship to creation, our common home. Jennifer Kryszak, Director of Strategic Planning for the Franciscan Peace Center, offered daily reflections during Laudato Si' Week as a source of hope for a future where all people recognize their interconnection with all of creation. The daily reflections are available to read at www.clintonfranciscans.com. Below is the reflection shared on May 19, 2024.

Moving Beyond Climate Anxiety: Finding Hope in Those That Came Before Us

Climate change. Rising sea levels. Severe weather. Extinction of species. Drought. The realities of climate change are evident throughout the globe. Yet, the impact of climate change affects far more than the natural world. Famine. Loss of a way of life. Forced migration. Conflict. War. The impact on human communities is likewise evident. As Pope Francis notes in *Laudate Deum*, the ecological crisis increasingly affects human communities, especially vulnerable communities.⁽²⁾ Francis maintains, "This is a global social issue and one intimately related to the dignity of human life."⁽³⁾



Sr. Marilyn Huegerich

These interconnected crises call us to respond to the needs of the Earth and the needs of those most affected by climate change. And yet eight years after the publication of *Laudato Si'*, we continue to struggle with climate denial and a lack of sustained effort to address climate change. Why? How can we move forward to truly commit to caring for our common home

and all people? How can we move from a place of conflict and despair to a place of hope and action?

Hope is required if we are going to work to create a future where all of creation can flourish. Hope can nourish our efforts and provide reason for moving forward. And yet, our society lacks hope, lacks a reason for a future vision, lacks reasons to plan for the future. Two years ago, I taught several college courses that focused on theology and justice issues. In conversations about the environment, it was clear that many of these young people did not have hope for the future, their future. Several questioned why anyone would want to have children at this time. They saw no future to pass on to another generation. This sense of anxiety and lack of

hope is not unique to the young people I taught. [Research](#) published in *The Lancet* on youth and climate change reveals a prevalent sense of anxiety about the future. Surveying 10,000 youth from ten countries, researchers found that 59% were very or extremely worried and 84% were at least moderately worried about climate change. What will their future hold? How can they plan for a future that is so uncertain?

"To keep moving forward, to care for our common home and all vulnerable people, we need hope for a shared future."

This anxiety and even despair is not necessarily unique to young people. As people of faith committed to justice, we can be overwhelmed by social justice issues that do not seem to be resolved and decades-long commitments to movements that only slowly change our society. Political divisions and an inability to communicate with those who hold different views can stifle our vision for a future where all people flourish. Our impatience can get the better of us as we desire immediate solutions. We can lose hope and, with it, our energy for our commitments.

To keep moving forward, to care for our common home and all vulnerable people, we need hope for a shared future.

At a recent [Encounter for Our Common Home](#) meeting, people were invited to share where they found hope as they work for climate justice. An excellent discussion ensued that highlighted many projects and actions taking place at the local level, but what I found the most compelling was when a participant noted that we should turn to our heroes. Heroes can offer inspiration and direction for the work that we do. We can see how they overcame great odds to succeed, to blaze a new path, or to create change. Truly knowing the stories of our heroes can remind us of the challenges they encountered and the qualities they demonstrated

Laudato Si' continued on page 7

Movies That Matter: Informing Your Vote

The Franciscan Peace Center has launched a virtual film and discussion series titled “Movies That Matter: Informing Your Vote.” This innovative initiative aims to engage participants in critical conversations about pressing social issues ahead of the upcoming election cycle.

The series offers monthly access to thought-provoking documentaries addressing a spectrum of topics relevant to voters, including immigration, gun violence, overcoming partisanship, care of the Earth, voting rights, and more. Each film is available for streaming over a week-long period, providing ample opportunity for reflection and dialogue.

“[Building the American Dream](#),” the inaugural film streamed in May, sheds light on the exploitation of immigrant labor within the construction industry.

The next film, which participants can view online at their convenience between June 12-24, is “[A Tree of Life](#).” This film creates a deeply personal, trauma-informed portrait of the survivors, victims, and victims’ family members of



“A Tree of Life” is the featured film for June.

the 2018 Pittsburgh Synagogue attack, and brings into sharp focus the hate-based crisis that threatens our collective safety and the very social fabric of our society.

Participants have the opportunity to engage in post-screening discussions via Zoom,

providing a platform for reflection, dialogue, and community building. The discussion for June will be held on June 27 at 6:30 p.m. (CDT) and welcomes guest panelists Carol Black and Audrey Glickman, survivors of the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting.

There is no cost associated with viewing the films or participating in the discussion sessions. Interested individuals will need to register online and can find the registration link at clintonfranciscans.com.

Summer Family Movie Nights in Clinton

Summer FAMILY MOVIE NIGHTS
 2024
 SELECT FRIDAYS MAY-SEPT
 MOVIES START AT DUSK

THE LORAX MAY 31 7:30PM
 HAPPY FEET JUN 28 7:30PM
 FERGULLY JUL 26 7:30PM
 FREE WILLY AUG 23 6:30PM
 FINDING NEMO SEP 27 6:00PM

ACTIVITIES - FOOD TRUCKS - COMMUNITY AND MORE AT LYONS FOUR SQUARE PARK

BROUGHT TO YOU BY CLINTON PUBLIC LIBRARY SAWMILL MUSEUM SPONSOR SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS FRANCISCAN PEACE CENTER GROW CLINTON

Summer Family Movie Nights in Clinton have returned for a second season! Sponsored by Grow Clinton and brought to you by the Franciscan Peace Center, Clinton Public Library, and Sawmill Museum, the movie series features an outdoor film, fun activities, food trucks, community, and more!

Activities begin at 7:30 p.m. (CT) at Clinton’s Lyons Four Square Park with the movie beginning at dusk, approximately 9:00 p.m. (CT).

Friday, June 28 *Happy Feet*
 Into the world of the Emperor Penguins, who find their soul mates through song, a penguin is born who cannot sing. But he can tap dance something fierce!

Friday, July 26 *FernGully*
 The magical inhabitants of a rainforest fight to save their home, which is threatened by logging and a polluting force of destruction called Hexxus.

Friday, August 23 *Free Willy*
 A heartwarming family drama about a troubled young boy's touching friendship with an Orca whale who is the star attraction at his local adventure park.

Friday, September 27 *Finding Nemo*
 After his son is captured in the Great Barrier Reef and taken to Sydney, a timid clownfish sets out on a journey to bring him home.

Jubilarians continued...

Sr. Ruth has ministered at hospitals and clinics in Grinnell and Burlington, IA; Macomb, IL; and Freeport, Grand Bahama. She also served as an instructor of nursing at Loyola University, Chicago, IL; Barry College, Miami Shores, FL; and Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids, IA. She was the Administrator of The Alverno Health Care Facility in Clinton from 1977 to 2003.



Sr. Ruth Cox

She served on the General Council of the Sisters of St. Francis for sixteen years, and as a board member for healthcare institutions and universities for many years.

Sister Ruth retired from active ministry in 2012. She moved to The Canticle in Clinton in 2020 and remains a resident there. She serves on the congregation's *Laudato Si'* committee and Days of Reflection committee.



Sister Teresa Kunkel, a native of Granville, IL, has served in the areas of education, pastoral ministry, and congregational administration.

She has served as a teacher and principal at schools in Oak Lawn and Chicago, IL; Lidderdale, IA; and Chino, CA. She ministered for eighteen years at Mount St. Clare College in Clinton in the positions of Director of Admissions, Registrar, and Assistant Academic Dean.



Sr. Teresa Kunkel

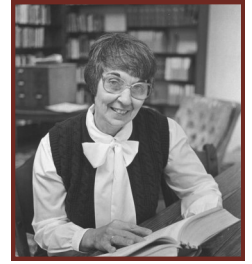
Sr. Teresa served for seven years as a member of the General Council of the Sisters of St. Francis. She was a pastoral associate for three years in Uniontown, KY, before returning to Clinton to serve full-time as the Assistant Treasurer of the congregation for twenty-five years. She continued to serve in this role on a part-time basis until her retirement in 2015.

She resides at The Canticle in Clinton, where she serves on the advisory committee, death penalty committee, garden planning committee, and is a part of a Wisdom Circle. Sister Teresa is also involved in prison ministry - writing and visiting an incarcerated gentleman.



A native of Sublette, IL, **Sister Joan Theiss** has served in the areas of education, pastoral ministry, and congregational administration.

She has ministered as a teacher and principal at schools in Clinton, Danbury, and Fonda, IA; Cameron, MO; and Chicago Heights, IL. She served as a pastoral minister in parishes in Sutherland, Primghar, and Royal/Every in western Iowa.



Sr. Joan Theiss

Sr. Joan served as the director of Mount St. Clare Convent for five years, the General Treasurer of the Sisters of St. Francis for eighteen years, and director of the congregation's Associate Partnership Program for four years.

She retired from full-time ministry in 2009. She presently resides at The Canticle in Clinton, where she serves on the garden planning committee and is involved in prison ministry by communicating with an incarcerated gentleman. Sr. Joan also enjoys participating in weekly Zoom gatherings with her family.



Celebrating 60 Years...

Sisters Mary Lou Carlson, Gael Gensler, and Jacqueline "Jackie" Herrmann entered the Sisters of St. Francis at Mount St. Clare Convent in Clinton in 1964.

Sister Mary Lou Carlson, a native of Fremont, NE, has served in the areas of education, pastoral ministry, and spiritual direction.

She was a teacher at schools in Cameron and St. Louis, MO; Oak Lawn and Joliet, IL; Maysville, KY; and San Diego, CA. She served as a pastoral minister in parishes in Kentucky and California. She was on the Retreat Team at Mission San Luis Rey in Oceanside, CA. She gave retreats and offered spiritual direction.



Sr. Mary Lou Carlson

Sr. Mary Lou retired from full-time ministry in 2020. She moved to The Canticle in Clinton in 2021, where she remains a resident. She has been facilitating "Exploring Scripture" for sixteen years and has continued the last four years via Zoom with people from California.



A native of Rochelle, IL, **Sister Gael Gensler** has served in the areas of education, pastoral ministry, vocation and formation ministry, and congregational leadership.

She has taught at parochial schools in Illinois and Iowa. She served four years at the Office of Religious Education in the Peoria, IL, diocese.

Sr. Gael ministered four years as the Director of Institutes for the North American Forum on the Catechumenate in Arlington, VA. She continued as a team member for the North American Forum for an additional twenty-one years. She has authored numerous books and articles on the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) process.

She served for many years as the Initial Discernment Coordinator for the Sisters of St. Francis, and for three years as a member of the congregation's Leadership Team.

Sr. Gael has worked in parish ministry since 1992 at parishes in Wichita, KS, and Mundelein and Tinley Park, IL. She presently ministers as a pastoral associate at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Orland Park, IL, and resides in Tinley Park. Sr. Gael currently serves on the Ministry Commission for Vicarate V. She served several years on the board of directors for the Mennonite Housing Project in Tinley Park.



Sister Jacqueline Herrmann, a native of Rochelle, IL, has served in the areas of education and pastoral ministry.

She has served as a teacher at schools in Reedley, CA; Chicago Heights, IL; Maysville, KY; Aurora, IL; Oak Lawn, IL; and Lisle, IL.

She also did mission work in Grayson, KY (Glenmary Mission), as well as parish ministry in Chicago, IL; Farmington, IA, and its mission parish in String Prairie, IA, for several years.

While residing in Aurora, IL, Sr. Jackie has served as a tutorial teacher in after-school daycare programs.



Sr. Gael Gensler



Sr. Jackie Herrmann

Celebrating 25 years...

Associate **Mary Ann Ryk**, of Naperville, IL, became acquainted with the Clinton Franciscans as an elementary student at St. Gerald School in Oak Lawn, IL.

She committed to the Sisters of St. Francis Associate Partnership Program on November 7, 1999. She was interested in becoming an associate because she felt very enriched and enlivened by the variety of social involvement within the group and the deep faith sharing.

Mary Ann has remained a member to deepen her prayer life, live active nonviolence, and endeavor to be a peacemaker. She enjoys sketching, singing, piano playing, and writing poetry.



Mary Ann Ryk

Congratulations to the 2024 Jubilarians!

Laudato Si' continued...

in the process. These heroes can help us better assess our own experiences and to realize that change does indeed take time. Moreover, they remind us to have hope, to believe in the movements that we are committed to.

Who are your heroes? How do they shape your own commitments and actions? How do they challenge you to take action to address the ecological and social crises? On this Pentecost, let us call to mind these heroes and draw on their spirits, their energy, their hope for a future where all of creation flourishes and lives in peace.

Want to join a community with hope for the future? Join the [Encounter for Our Common Home Campaign](#) meetings on the last Friday of the month from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. ET. Join the meeting at this [Zoom link](#).



— Opposing Iowa’s Senate File 2340

“We, the Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa, Sojourners, and Associates, stand in solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters. We support comprehensive immigration reform...”

- Clinton Franciscans [2011 Corporate Stand](#)

Vigils for Human Dignity

Community members and organizations gathered on May 1 across the state of Iowa to oppose the enactment of the controversial immigration bill, [SF 2340](#), signed into law by Governor Kim Reynolds on April 10.

Senate File 2340 makes it a crime to re-enter the state if a person has been previously denied admission to or has been excluded, deported, or removed from the United States. It also allows local law enforcement to arrest people who are in the U.S. illegally. The law, expected to go into effect on July 1, also lets judges order the person to be deported at their initial court appearance after the arrest.

In a collaborative display of unity, resilience, and resistance, vigils were held in four major cities in Iowa — Davenport, Des Moines, Waterloo, and Iowa City. The peaceful vigils served as a reference of solidarity, sending a resounding message that fear will not govern the lives and actions of the Latino community in Iowa.

Sisters Phyllis Morris, Ruth E. Westmoreland, Jan Cebula, and Teresa Kunkel were among the dozens of participants outside of St. Anthony Catholic Church in downtown Davenport.

“I went to show support because every person has been created in God’s likeness and deserves respect. It was a joy to be with the people at the vigil, people from various denominations, seeing their love and support for each other. It mirrored what America, a nation that was built by immigrants, should be about,” said Sister Teresa.

Sister Phyllis expressed, “Congress must act to pass a comprehensive immigration bill that will be just and compassionate. Our county and our state need



Sr. Phyllis Morris; Sr. Mary Bea Snyder, CHM; Sr. Ruth E. Westmoreland; Sr. Johanna Rickl, CHM; Fr. Bob McAleer; Sr. Jan Cebula; and Sr. Teresa Kunkel at Davenport’s Vigil for Human Dignity.

immigrants for agriculture. We need to support representatives who work for just immigration reform.”

The vigils were organized by Quad Cities Interfaith, Latinx Immigrants of Iowa, Escucha Mi Voz Iowa, Forward Latino, LULAC Iowa, Obreros Catolicos, and Iglesia Reina de la Paz de Waterloo Iowa. The organizers emphasize that America’s immigration system is in dire need of repair.

“In opposing Iowa’s SF 2340, we are asking for justice for those who want to work responsibly to better their life, especially for refugees from violent and oppressive governments,” added Sister Phyllis.

Statement from Iowa Bishops

On May 1, the feast day of St. Joseph the Worker, Iowa’s bishops issued a statement opposing the law and calling for a fair, compassionate resolution to challenges with migration. The statement is available in both English and Spanish on the [Iowa Catholic Conference’s website](#).

Lawsuits Filed Against State of Iowa

The [U.S. Justice Department](#) and [civil rights groups](#) (ACLU of Iowa Foundation, American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, and Iowa Immigration Council) filed separate lawsuits on May 9 claiming the state of Iowa’s immigration law violates federal law and the U.S. Constitution.



843 13th Avenue North
Clinton, IA 52732-5115
(563) 242-7611
www.clintonfranciscans.com