

# SEEKPRAYSHARE

SISTERS OF ST. BENEDICT OF FERDINAND, INDIANA

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 1 | SPRING 2024



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The word “groundbreaking” may be overused, but it certainly applies to our new partnership with Family Scholar House. As you’ll see in this issue, the FSH campus being built in Sellersburg will support single mothers while they pursue degrees and raise families. As a religious community founded to educate the children of German immigrants, we are so excited to take our tradition in education into the future.

You’ll also read about two of our Sisters who are hard at work in Indianapolis, learn about new ways to include the Sisters in your estate plans, see what our Oblates are up to, preview “A Day in the Dark at the Dome” (our total eclipse event), and much more.

As you read, I hope you’ll keep in mind that everything you read about is possible because of the generosity of our amazing community of donors and supporters.

You are the ones who bring our ministries to such vibrant life, putting hands and feet to the gospel. For this and so many reasons, you remain constantly in the prayers of our entire community. Please keep us in yours as well.

*Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB*

Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB  
Prioress



# Planning to Do God's Work.

One of the best ways to support the Sisters of St. Benedict and their ministries is with a planned gift — one that happens upon your passing.

Such a gift can offer you tax advantages, along with the satisfaction of knowing that your love for our Sisters and those they serve will continue even after God calls you home.

Planned gifts are often made with assets someone owns — like shares of stock or a piece of real estate — rather than from income they receive.

Everyone who remembers the Sisters in their will or estate plan becomes a member of our St. Hildegard Society, remembered in the daily prayers and work of the Sisters, and invited to join us on the last Sunday in April for Mass and dinner. (Members can choose to remain anonymous.)

Throughout this issue, we share a variety of ways to make a planned gift. For more information on any of these, or to get started, please contact Lydia Bolton at (812) 367-1411, ext. 2678 or email her at [lbolton@thedome.org](mailto:lbolton@thedome.org).



## Made by the Sisters.

Are you an Amazon shopper? Did you know that Amazon has items handmade by the Sisters? From art and home decor to scarves and jewelry, you'll find a variety of items made by hand. Scan the QR code at right with your smartphone or go to Amazon and search for Prayerfully Created to see it all!



### SNAP & SHOP

Scan this code  
with your phone  
to see what's  
waiting on  
Amazon from  
the Sisters



## Streaming Soon.

In 2024, thanks to funding from our Women of the Rule Philanthropy Circle, the Sisters will launch their own podcast! You'll hear interviews with Sisters, Oblates and people whose lives have been impacted by our work. You'll hear about our ministries, and get an inside look at life here at Monastery Immaculate Conception. Stay tuned — and follow us on social media for updates!

# Up All Night.

A hospital chaplain at 80,  
Sister Dorothy Graf shows  
no signs of slowing down.





If you want to spend time talking with Sister Dorothy Graf, you'd better bring a pair of walking shoes. The 80-year-old, who serves as night Chaplain at St. Francis Hospital in Indianapolis, rarely slows down.

Dorothy Graf was born in 1953 in Sellersburg, Indiana, one of twelve children. An older sister (Sister Mary Mark Graf) had entered Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand in 1941, two years before Dorothy was born. Although they only saw each other during family visits in the summer, her sister's example loomed large in her life.

She made her own First Profession on June 17, 1963 and her Perpetual Profession on June 18, 1968, by which time she had completed a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and begun teaching at Nativity Grade School. It was the beginning of a career in education that would span nearly forty years.

"I really didn't have student teaching," she recalls, "but I was sent out to the classroom. They needed us out there. I had a fellow teacher who was the lead teacher to help me the first year, and my principal did, too — she was a great help."

Sister Dorothy taught first and fourth grade over four years at Nativity Grade School in Evansville, and the same two grades for six years at Celestine Grade School, both in Indiana. During that same period, she earned her Master's degree from Cardinal Stritch College in Milwaukee with a Reading Specialist certification.



It was around this time that she began to be asked about becoming a principal. She was hesitant, but told her superintendent at Northeast Dubois County Schools that if she was going to take that step, she wanted to take time away from teaching to get her elementary principal certification. He agreed and she was off to Indiana State University in Terre Haute, where she spent two summers and a school year earning her Specialist Degree in Educational Administration and Supervision.

Armed with this new degree, she returned and served as Principal of Dubois Middle School for six years. She then spent the next twenty years in a variety of roles for the Northeast Dubois County School Corporation, including Administrator, Assistant Superintendent, Principal (at Celestine Grade School), Title I Coordinator, ISTEP Test Coordinator, Transportation Director, and Public Relations.

As her time in the school system drew to a close, she wondered what to do with the rest of her life. A sabbatical at the School of Applied theology in Oakland, California turned out to be life-changing.

"While I was out there, I met with a spiritual director who was a Jesuit, and he heard my story and said, 'Well, I think you need some retooling.'"

He suggested a CPE — Clinical Pastoral Education — to be a hospital chaplain. She warmed to the idea, and found a hospital in San Francisco with a full year program. But the expense was too great in California, so she returned home.



#### OPPOSITE PAGE

Sister Dorothy Graf in the chapel of St. Francis Hospital in Indianapolis

#### THIS PAGE

Sister Dorothy in 1962, entering the Monastery, and in 1979 as a principal

She was offered a choice of pursuing her CPE in Evansville, Louisville or Indianapolis, and chose the latter. Upon completing her first unit of CPE, she was hired by St. Francis Hospital on March 1, 2005, and has been there ever since.

“I kept hearing the scheduler say, ‘We need a night chaplain.’ So finally I said, ‘Jim, I’ve been hearing you say that for so long.

Don’t give that to anybody else. Give that night chaplain position to me!”

And so in 2012, she became the Night Chaplain, starting her shift at midnight and often staying past her scheduled 8:00 a.m. quitting time if there is more to be done.

“They say, ‘when do you sleep?’ Well, when I get home. I love what I do. I like my nights. I have a lot of friends here. I walk anywhere and they say, ‘Hi, sister!’ They’ve often worked with me as nurses at nighttime, and now they’re here during the day because a lot of night people switch off to day shifts.”

As the only chaplain in the house during the night, Sister Dorothy covers the entire campus. If a Catholic patient needs a priest during those hours, she makes the call. She and the nurses also arrange Lyft rides for people who come in by ambulance, then need to get home.

If anyone calls the charge chaplain through the night, Sister Dorothy takes that call. If a patient is dying, or has died, she always responds.

Similarly, she responds to every code blue, often when there is no family present during the night, and checks to see if staff members need some help or simply to see how they are.

As she begins each shift, she has the surgery schedule for the next morning in the two units. She visits all those patients coming in for surgery, most of whom want a prayer before their procedure.

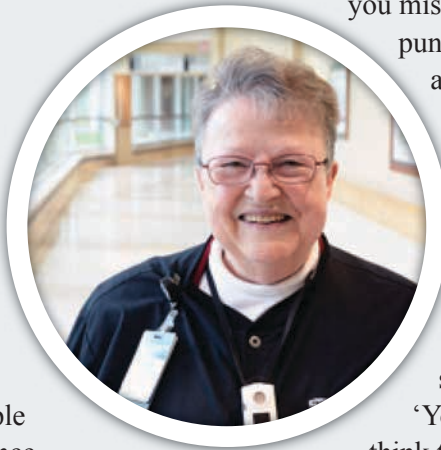
And there are many things Sister Dorothy does that fall outside the job description. She assigns all of the Eucharistic ministers. She’s also in charge of recycling in the business office, making sure that trash stays out of the recycling bin. And she collects the money from a box in the cafeteria for the employee emergency fund and one under the candles in the chapel, counts it and gets it to the proper person. And she cleans up the staff room after meetings. You get the idea.

“God has been good. I love my God. And the older I get, the more fun God gets to be. When you’re one of 12 kids, as I was, Mother would often say, ‘If you misbehave, God’s going to punish you.’ That’s kind of a fearful God. And that’s what we grew up with.”

“But now that I’m 80 years old, God and I are buddies. So I say, ‘Come on, God, you can do this.’ And sometimes I say to God, ‘You know what? I don’t think that’s funny.’ And you can just hear him laugh, because he thinks it’s funny. So we have a good time. We do well, we serve well. And we keep reminding every patient we meet that God loves them, no matter what. Those three little words, no matter what: ‘God loves you.’”



**ABOVE**  
Sister Dorothy dons the full habit for the 150th anniversary of the Celestine Church.



**RIGHT**  
Filling the halls of St. Francis with that wonderful smile

# Monastery Made Products from Our Gift Shop.



In addition to the delicious gourmet delights made right here by the Sisters, our Gift Shop offers items made by other religious communities and organizations. If coffee is your go-to, we offer a variety of choices from Catholic Coffee and Needmore Coffee Roasters, both of whom take great care to roast their fresh, ethically-sourced coffee beans to the highest standards possible.

Enjoy our selection of delightful Trappist Jams and Preserves made by the Trappist Monks of St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts.



Or pamper yourself with dozens of fragrances of handmade soaps from the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Each batch contains a few drops of holy water and a prayer for those who will use it. These and many more items are available in our Gift Shop or online.



**MONASTERY  
GIFT SHOP**  
*Sisters of St. Benedict*

## Remembering the Sisters in Your Will.

One way to support all of the work the Sisters have done and continue to do is to consider a legacy gift to them through a bequest in your will, a codicil to an existing will, or a living trust.

There are several ways to indicate what you wish to leave to the Sisters, from a specific dollar amount or a percentage of your estate to the residue remaining after other bequests have been made — or even a particular piece of property.

To help you get started, please contact our planned giving office by calling Lydia Bolton at 812-367-1411, ext. 2678 or email her at [lbolton@thedome.org](mailto:lbolton@thedome.org).

The Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana are an exempt organization as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, EIN 35-0953517.







# Love Languages

Sister Karen Durliat speaks Spanish in Indianapolis



Sister Karen Durliat was always drawn to the Hispanic people. She entered the religious community at Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand in 1974 with the hope of going to Peru or Guatemala.

Instead, she spent her early career teaching business education and religion to high school students in Washington, Indiana and then in Ferdinand at Marian Heights Academy, where she was also a proctor in the dormitories.

By the time she was ready for a change, the religious communities in Peru and Guatemala weren't looking for more people from the States. That changed when Guatemala had several Sisters leave, and needed to re-establish the community.

She volunteered and went to live with them for a year. Sister Joella Kidwell, who was Prioress at the time, asked her to stay another year, and she became the acting superior until a community from Mexico could come and get established with the Guatemalan Sisters.

Looking back, she laughs about her Spanish, or lack of it. "I knew present tense and 500 words before I went, so I was learning Spanish every day."

A pastoral Hispanic ministry course taught her about the different things that you encounter in the Hispanic community. She recalls that the people and the missionaries in Guatemala tried to incorporate Mayan culture into everything.

"They had catechism books for the kids that talked about Adam and Eve, but also that the Mayan culture talks about how we're formed from the corn. They would show a child coming out of the corn from the Mayan women working with corn. It was great to see how cultures enter into the Catholic Church and enrich it."

She welcomed the Mexican community when they arrived, and has bittersweet memories of the closing ceremony before she left.

"They incorporated the Mayan rituals, with lot of incense — so much I was afraid I couldn't see what I was reading. That was a very sad goodbye. I really loved and am grateful for that experience of living with the Guatemalan people, of accompanying them, of just learning the culture by immersion.

When she returned home from Guatemala after two and a half years, the Hispanic ministry was beginning in the Evansville diocese. She learned about it, and contacted Father Gene to express her interest in working in that ministry.

Following a semester at San Antonio Mexican American Cultural Center to learn more about adapting to the culture, she began to work in the Hispanic ministry for the Evansville diocese, eventually becoming the Director.

When that ministry was being restructured, Sister Karen looked north. Her mother in Ohio was in her last years of life, and she wanted to be closer to her. That led to a momentous interview nine years ago at St. Patrick parish in Indianapolis, just three and a half miles from Beech Grove.

The position was Director of Religious Education — with the added dimension, that 98% of the parish is Hispanic.



#### OPPOSITE PAGE

Sister Karen Durliat in St. Patrick Church in Indianapolis

#### ABOVE

With area children attending the Funshine Program in 1975

“I just really loved my interview. I thought, this is where it is! And I was singing on the way back — this is where I want to go. The salary’s not great. But I just really, really wanted to continue

working with the Hispanic community and be here while my mother was alive, so I could go visit her.”

“She passed away, but I’m still here because of the people in the parish. I’m almost 70. And I don’t know what else I might find that I really love.”

Every day, Sister Karen gets to use the Spanish she learned in Guatemala along with her love of the Hispanic culture.

“It’s a big parish. Although a lot of our kids are in Catholic schools for grade school, and some in high school, we have about 85 kids preparing for First Communion and 100 kids preparing for confirmation.”

The children attend doctrine classes for a year before they can enter first communion. There are currently 100 children in the doctrine classes, most preparing to enter the first communion classes.”

As Director of Religious Education, Sister Karen is also responsible for the OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults - formerly RCIA or Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). The program has about 15 adults, about half of those preparing for the three Sacraments of Initiation.

There are also 15 children over seven years old in classes with their parents, preparing for the three sacraments as a family.

“All of our candidates except one is Hispanic. Some need English more than Spanish. And all the classes, all the levels when I first came — almost everything was Spanish. So we need more English *and* Spanish.

Another big area of responsibility is finding and training catechists. Doing faith sharing and getting to know the catechist at that level of formation as they learn is one of her favorite parts of the position. She’s also a substitute English teacher for the 7 to 17 year olds being received into the church.

She lights up when she talks about the catechists she trains. “The spirituality of the people, their willingness to serve and their love of ritual and rites like the Day of the Dead altars and Guadalupe celebrations — it’s just such a rich culture with their Catholic faith and the way that they share it.

I’m just amazed at the depth of their faith. They don’t yet have the education methods, the methodology, but they love God and they’re teaching that love.”

That sounds like a pretty good description of Sister Karen Durliat as well.



#### ABOVE

Sister Karen surveys flood waters in Guatemala in 2000

#### RIGHT

With a Day of the Dead altar in Indianapolis







**TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE 04.08.24**  
MONASTERY IMMACULATE CONCEPTION FERDINAND

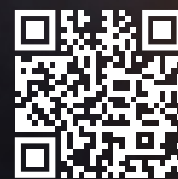
## Experience a Total Eclipse at the Monastery.

On Monday, April 8, you can join us at Monastery Immaculate Conception for a true once-in-a-lifetime experience. The Monastery is directly in the path of totality for a total solar eclipse — an event that won't be seen again in the United States for another twenty years.

You can come for the day, or camp out on the grounds of the Monastery and enjoy a full weekend of special activities and community events, all leading up to a silent observation of the total solar eclipse on Monday with over 3 minutes of total darkness engulfing the monastery.

Each attendee will receive a wrist band, water bottle and glasses. Meals will be available for sale daily from noon – 2:00 p.m. and 5:00 – 7:00 p.m., with Eclipse-themed snacks and refreshments for sale during the full weekend. Special souvenirs, including shirts and glow-in-the-dark Eclipse necklaces, will also be available for purchase.

Tent, RV/camper, and All Inclusive prices are for the full 5 days/4 nights. Single day passes are also available for Monday. Spaces are limited and all reservations are non-refundable. Find out more and register at <https://thedome.org/eclipse/>



*Scan the QR code  
above with your  
smart phone to get  
event details, pricing  
and more.*

# Breaking New Ground.

After 157 years, the Sisters of St. Benedict in Ferdinand are still breaking new ground. On Thursday, November 30, Prioress

Sister Anita Louise Lowe and a number of other Sisters took part in a groundbreaking ceremony for a new Family Scholar House campus to be located near Ivy Tech Community College in Sellersburg, Indiana — the state's first Family

Scholar House.

Family Scholar House works to end the cycle of poverty and transform our community by empowering families and youth to succeed in education and achieve life-long self-sufficiency.

“Our Sisters have taught in schools from Indiana to Guatemala and Peru” said Sister Anita. “This rich legacy of more than 150 years in education takes a large step into the future with our partnership with Family Scholar House. As women supporting women, our religious community is proud to be part of this exciting venture.”

Cathe Dykstra, Chief Possibility Officer, President and CEO at Family Scholar House, added, “We have a long-standing relationship with the Sisters and we know their hearts and their genuine concern for the single parents we serve.”



## ABOVE

Sister Anita offers remarks

## RIGHT

With Ivy Tech President Sue Ellspermann and Cathe Dykstra, Family Scholar House CEO



## Giving a Gift of Life insurance.



A gift of life insurance is one of the most flexible ways to support the Sisters of St. Benedict. There are a few ways you can use life insurance to make a gift.

The simplest way is to request a change of beneficiary form from your life insurance company. Then make the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana a beneficiary.

You can choose to make the Sisters a full beneficiary (the full value goes to the Sisters), a partial beneficiary (the Sisters share the proceeds with others), or a contingent beneficiary (the Sisters receive the value only if a certain condition is met; for example, only if a loved one predeceases you.)

You could also sign over a fully paid policy now, or make the Sisters of St. Benedict the irrevocable owner and beneficiary of a policy. Either may offer tax benefits.



# Oblate Update!

At the January 14th Oblate Monthly Meeting, our Oblates completed the process of moving from traditional leadership by the Monastic Community to shared leadership between the Monastic and Oblate Communities.

At that meeting, Prioress Sister Anita Loise Lowe welcomed a new leadership team for 2024 through 2027. Shown here, they are, left to right: Shirley France, Oblate Formation; Sister Betty Drewes, Sister Liaison; Stephanie Smith, Oblate Director; and Lynn Belli, Oblate Communications Coordinator.

Last September, Shirley France and Stephanie Smith represented Monastery Immaculate Conception at the 5th World Congress

of Benedictine Oblates at Sant' Anselmo in Rome.

Oblates from 23 countries shared Liturgy, Workshops, Islands of Silence, a concert, and trips to Subiaco and Montecassino — plus an audience with Pope Francis!

Our Oblates were responsible for pre-work, workshop content development, creating workbooks and the Congress Surveys.

The Oblates are grateful to their key partner, Oblate Director Janis Dopp of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, who passed away earlier this year.



**ABOVE**  
An Oblate audience with Pope Francis



**LEFT**  
The new Oblate Leadership Team

## There's No Place Like Home for a Gift.

Your home may be your single most valuable asset, especially if you've lived there for a long time. For some, their home will be passed down to children. For others, an executor will be responsible for selling the property. But there is another possibility.

Have you ever considered leaving your home to the Sisters of St. Benedict? The proceeds from its sale would help us care for our older sisters and support our many ministries.

You can even make a gift of your home while you are still living in it. With a "life estate agreement," you remain in your home, and care for it as you normally do. Then, upon your passing, we would receive your home for the benefit of our community.

There are tax benefits in either case, whether for you or your estate. And of course, the home you love takes on a new life as it provides for the good work of the Sisters of St. Benedict.



# In Memoriam.

God's promise has been fulfilled for our dear Sister.

**Sister Elnora Shidler** of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana, died at 1:14 p.m. on Tuesday, November 21, 2023, at Scenic Hills at the Monastery in Ferdinand.

Sister Elnora was born Elnora Mary Shidler on June 11, 1929, in Orlando, Florida, the youngest of eight children of Earl Edgar and Ursula (Gettelfinger) Shidler. She entered the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand in 1961 from St. Elizabeth Parish in Louisville, KY and made her monastic vows in 1963. Earlier in her religious life she was known as Sister Mary Gregory Shidler.



Sister Elnora attended St. Benedict's College from 1961 to 1963, served in the stitching room at Monastery Immaculate Conception for 5 years, then worked in education for 31 years, during which time she taught and worked as a librarian at St. Thomas School in Vincennes, Indiana and St. Mary School in Washington, Indiana, and worked in the library and volunteer services at Holy Family School in Jasper, Indiana. At Monastery Immaculate Conception, she worked as a chauffeur and in prayer ministry.

## Sharing Your Retirement Plan.



Did you know that your retirement plan can be a very simple, tax-efficient way of including the Sisters in your estate plan? On your plan's beneficiary designation form, just name the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana as a primary or secondary beneficiary.

If left to an individual beneficiary, distributions from most retirement plans are subject to income taxes – and potentially even estate taxes.

But if you name a charity like the Sisters as the beneficiary, they don't pay income or estate taxes on the distribution. That means the full value of the gift you leave goes to support the Sisters and our ministries.

And if you're age 70.5 or older, gifts to the Sisters from your IRA in the form of a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) can be a great tax saving strategy for your annual Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs).



**Sister Mary George Kissel** of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana, died at 8:00 a.m. on Sunday, January 21, 2024, at Scenic Hills at the Monastery in Ferdinand.

Sister Mary George was born Mary Barbara Kissel on September 18, 1923, in Evansville, Indiana, the second of seven children of George J. and Leona Barbara (Scheller) Kissel. She entered the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand in 1938 from St. James Parish and made her monastic vows in 1940.



Sister Mary George Kissel earned a Bachelor's degree in Education from St. Benedict College and a Master's degree in Elementary Education from Indiana State University. She also studied at the University of Evansville.

Sister Mary George Kissel taught elementary students at St. Benedict School (where she also served as a tutor), Holy Spirit School, St. Joseph School and Resurrection School, all in Evansville, IN; Christ the King School in Indianapolis, IN; St. Peter Celestine School in Celestine, IN; and St. Henry Elementary School in St. Henry, IN. She also served as principal at Christ the King School, Holy Spirit School, St. Joseph School and Resurrection School. She taught on two separate occasions as a foreign missionary at Colegio San Carlos in Bogota, Colombia. She taught special education students at Evansville Rehab Center in Evansville, IN as a reading therapist and tutor; and was a founder, director and tutor for The Reading Carrel, Inc., also in Evansville. She worked in supportive services at Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, IN, where she most recently served in prayer ministry.

## Build a Bond...with Savings Bonds.

Right now, about 32 million expired savings bonds, worth about \$12.9 billion, are sitting in drawers or deposit boxes, no longer earning interest. And that total is growing by about \$1 billion a year.

Most banks no longer cash U.S. Savings Bonds, so they have to be mailed to the U.S. Treasury to be redeemed. And when they're redeemed, tax is owed on the appreciation. But you can use those savings bonds to help the Sisters, and avoid that tax.

You can donate your savings bonds to the Sisters of St. Benedict now, or through a specific bequest in your will.

You could also cash in your bonds and pay the tax, but use the cash you receive to create a charitable gift annuity with our Sisters. You get a tax deduction to help offset the taxes from the savings bond, and a lifetime stream of income from the gift annuity — turning a "dead" asset into income!



