



FRANCISCAN
SISTERS
OF LITTLE FALLS
MINNESOTA

MAY 2015

The Well

A message from the Franciscan community at Clare's Well

The art of ending

Yes, we Franciscan Sisters are closing Clare's Well this summer of 2015. The end of our 27-year ministry here is colored with memories filled with love and grace as well as pain and sorrow. We are practicing the "art of ending" step-by-step with no previous experience that even begins to parallel this move.

Many of you have found new life during your visits here. You have also given us new life through loving friendship and support. It is one thing to pack up material things and move on; how do we take people and relationships along with us? It is possible we may never meet again during our lives here on Earth. Our new address will be Franciscan Sisters, 9080 Kennedy Ave NW, Annandale, MN 55302. We do not have e-mail addresses for most of you. Here are our Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls e-mail addresses: (Sister Carol) cschmit@fslf.org; (Sister Paula) ppohlmann@fslf.org; (Sister Jan) jkilian@fslf.org.

THANK YOU to everyone who has helped to make Clare's Well a reality for 27 years. You know who you are—if we were to list all of your names, this would become a very large book! We, Franciscan Sisters, will continue to rely on you. As you consider future giving, we humbly ask you to please support us through the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls. God bless you. We hold you in our hearts and in our prayer. You are always welcome to let us know your prayer needs.



People are asking us what we sisters will do when we leave Clare's Well. Will we retire? Probably not. We want to continue serving however God and our community will direct us. We surely don't feel ready to retire.

Our Franciscan documents say, "We serve God in our neighbor by service in charity and action on behalf of justice in the promotion of peace." Pope Francis asks us to be teachers in the "school of communion." In his Letter proclaiming the Year of Consecrated Life he said, "...the path of charity open before us is almost infinite since it entails mutual acceptance and concern, practicing a communion of goods both material and spiritual... it is the mystique of living together which makes our life a sacred pilgrimage." This communion is what we experience in our Franciscan community, the large community of Clare's Well, our parish community (St. Ignatius Church) and in our many interactions with people in and surrounding Annandale.

We are happy to continue to live in Annandale among old friends with possibilities of meeting many new people. We anticipate there will be opportunities for mutual growth in spirituality and service. We believe there are ways we can continue to serve and they will become clear to us after some time of transition. We will remember you and pray for you. Thank you all. God bless you.

Sisters Jan, Paula and Carol

Living the Gospel courageously... with energy, spirit, peace.

Roxy moves with the sisters



You see me here in my bed? I'm worn out from all the coming and going at the Well. March was so full of people who came for "one

room table. They say, "It is healing to know that no matter what your story is, this is a place of complete acceptance with no judgment." I've never had a guest I haven't loved or been able to accept unconditionally. "All are welcome."

more time before it closes." The sisters, Monica, Gail and Roxanne were going in circles—cooking meals, washing dishes, cooking meals, washing dishes, doing laundry, taking clean sheets to the hermitages and doing laundry—well you get the idea . . . putting clean massage sheets on the massage tables, doing massages, laundering massage sheets and on and on.

I can testify to the priority of an open welcome. Accepting me is a criterion for whatever new home the sisters will choose. They have said, "No, thank you," to prospective landlords who have to say "No" to dogs. So, off to a dog-inclusive new home for me! Life will be new to me; I wonder what it will be like. One thing I know, for my safety I have to learn to be on a leash when outside. My prayer is for courage to move from running freely on 38 acres to a smaller yard.

Every minute of that month was booked even if just for a brief overnight. I could hardly keep up saying hello and goodbye and hello again! The good-byes were especially tearful. Strong bonds of friendship have been built with dear friends who have come year after year. Our guests will be remembered with much love and gratitude. And we know they will remember us. A group of women friends wrote:

So, we all experience increasing physical limitations as years go on? Growth requires change. I hear the sisters say, "There is finality to this change as we close the door on yesterday, open a new door, cross the threshold into the mystery of a new day. We can't turn back. We will never again have what we had at Clare's Well." But, I believe, years from now they will look back and say (just as they are saying now about the farm), "Weren't those the good days, and was anyone ever so blessed as we to have lived in that beautiful new home?" I and the sisters will cross this threshold with grace. God is with us all.

"You may not realize, but you have been with us for so many moments in our lives . . . six pregnancies, two marriages and continuous relationship 'stuff,' job changes, moves, deepening friendships . . . The list goes on!"

I've heard it all from here in my bed by the dining



(Above): Sister Carol Schmit with Monica Rudawski, Franciscan Associate from Nicaragua. She took a leave from her work in Nicaragua to help us with the task of moving out of Clare's Well.

(Below): Full-time staff Sisters Paula Pohlmann, Jan Kilian, Carol Schmit and Karen Niedzielski; Sister Karen Niedzielski has helped over the summer for many years.



(Above): Roxanne Wagner, Sisters Carol Schmit, Aggie Soenneker and Jan Kilian with the totem pole created by friends and Julia Barkley for Clare's Well 10th anniversary in 1998.

Transition and Future

Joan and Dan Pauly Schneider

Many people have been asking the sisters about what will happen with this beautiful farm and ministry after they move. Below is a glimpse into who we are, what our relationship with the sisters and this land has been and what may be unfolding for the future.

Background

We moved to Maple Lake and were first introduced to Clare's Well and the Sisters—Carol and Aggie, in the mid '90s by a mutual friend who invited our young family at the time (Dan, Joan and our daughters Alizabeth and Emma) to a gathering. We recognized then that not only were we neighbors with Clare's Well but that there was a kinship of Spirit with them.

Our family values diversity, inclusivity and social-ecological justice. We have appreciated over the years not only how deeply connected to the earth the sisters have been as Franciscans but their commitment of hospitality to all and the global sensibilities they embody at Clare's Well.

As a neighbor and a friend, we like many, hoped that the ministry could continue in some capacity within the Franciscan community. And though we are not Franciscan Associates, (Joan is a Consociate with the Sisters of St. Joseph), we have a deep appreciation for women religious and the work they do in the world, as do many who are connected with this endeavor.

Emerging Foreground

Our desire is to honor the spirit of Clare's Well, yet well aware that there would need to be major changes in the way the ministry was run no matter who bought Clare's Well due to planning/zoning concerns and financial sustainability. Though our family will be the owners of "Wellsprings Farm" and homestead it, we are part of a local nonprofit called The Fields who will actually run the ministry. The Fields is a 501c3 who exists "as a pastoral sanctuary for contemplation, inspiration and the transformation of soul and world. Our call is to ethical stewardship of the land and to practicing relationships of compassion and justice."

In line with the above mission of The Fields and in the spirit of Clare's Well, the intent of Wellsprings Farm is to foster healing, learning and connection

for individuals, community and Earth.

The farm hopes to foster "sacred earth community," a term used by Thomas Berry to describe the recognition of our interconnectedness to all life and the need to live as spiritual community from this awareness. It is grounded in the ancient/new story of the universe as its largest frame yet honoring all spiritual traditions promoting compassion and the centrality of love.

Rather than imposing a rigid structure on the farm, we would like to create a community of listeners and supporters through a sustainable retreat cooperative or community supported retreat (CSR) model. The concept is similar to community supported agriculture, where individuals or organizations purchase a share for the year but instead of produce, annual members would receive a share of "stays" at Wellsprings Farm. Although the CSR shares will be limited in number for reasons of manageability, we hope to have a way for individuals to still be able to come occasionally to "drink from one's own well," as the sisters describe it.

We recognize that there are many who have loved Clare's Well over the years and feel a deep loss over this change. In many ways we share this. We don't take it lightly but hold this care as part of the sacred energy of the farm. If you would like to stay connected or become part of our e-mail list to receive updates, invitations, opportunities for support or volunteering, etc., or to share questions/insights, please feel free to contact us Joan and Dan Pauly Schneider at wellspringsfarm.mn@gmail.com.

We move forward trusting the Spirit's lead. Peace and blessings.



Joan and Dan Pauly Schneider



Sister Paula Pohlmann with Sister Aggie Soenneker's sister, Rita Primus, and one of Sister Aggie's brothers, Arnold Soenneker. Sisters Aggie and Carol's families have been vital members of Clare's Well family from the beginning.



The Wagner Family—Roxanne, Clare's Well massage therapist, with Richard who served Clare's Well in many capacities over the years, and their grandson Isaac.

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

- Maya Angelo

Gail Condon served at Clare's Well two days a week preparing food for our guests.



Reflection

In June of 1988 I took a right turn into the driveway of a 40-acre farm on a dead-end gravel road. I learned a lot of things. Morel mushrooms show up when the lilacs begin to bloom. A short fence does not prevent deer

from eating the beets. Turn on the oven in plenty time to have the squash ready for six o'clock supper.

But more, I learned the power of early morning prayer with my sisters and, at times, our guests. Sometimes it's good to talk and many times it's better to listen. Most of the time a walk with the dog on the sacred path trumps an afternoon nap.

I suspect that no other ministry will give me the opportunity to meet and share a meal with thousands, yes, thousands of persons on their own spiritual journey, a journey made more heart felt by spending a simple time at Clare's Well.

I'm not quite ready to take that left turn out of the driveway, but I know this thing, that the gift of my sisters, the guests, the animals and land has been forever etched onto the first page of the rest of my life.

*Sister Carol Schmit
Clare's Well, 1988-2015*



Most of the photos in this issue were taken by Eileen Erickson. Others were by Julie Surma, Mary Hartl and Clare's Well Staff.

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