



Inside

- Quilted With Kindness
- Implementing Laudato Si'

Greetings

From the Community Minister



Dear Friends,

Did you know that Mother Nature has the best box of crayons? We only have to look outside to see the various shades of green, orange, yellow, red-orange and brown changing and bursting forth right before our eyes. As you can see . . . miracles do and are happening! Of course, we all know that God is the master designer of this beauty. By claiming beauty as God's gift to us, it enhances every aspect of our lives. God has a beautiful design for each one of our lives. No detail is left out. We only need to stop, reflect and take the time to discover it as it unfolds.

In Ecclesiastes 3:11 we read, "God made everything beautiful." And yes, we are all part of that beauty. God works in mysterious ways. Sometimes so quietly that we hardly notice them, and at other times, God's work is evident. As you will see in this magazine, God's work is evident in our ministries because of you and your support. We hope you enjoy reading about how:

. . . the Tiffin Franciscans, through the guidance of their Mission Circle, implement the message of Laudato Si', the encyclical of Pope Francis

. . . St. Francis Spirituality Center hosted quilters making blankets for children in Foster Care to promote security and healing

. . . the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center has continued to raise money for the Seeds of Hope Farm and to move forward with adult programming, awareness and education.

What a privilege it is to be channels of Beauty! We are grateful to all of you, our benefactors and friends, who are helping us to continue ministries that bring God's beauty to others and demonstrate ways of caring for God's creation.

May your October days be filled with hope, love, sunshine, joy, and laughter.

Sister Joanne Lammers

Sister Joanne Lammers
Community Minister



With Hearts filled with Gratitude

Thank you for the many ways our Franciscan way of life and ministries have been enriched by your gifts of love, prayer, volunteer hours, and financial support during this past year. We are very blest to have all of you in our lives and ministries. We ask God to shower you with many blessings as you impact the lives of those in need and make a difference in our world.

On September 28, Sisters gathered for a Mass of Thanksgiving for our benefactors. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of God's people. We remember you with special gratitude in our daily prayers and ministry. Thank you for being Partners in Mission!



SISTERS OF
St. Francis

The magazine is published three times a year for friends of the Sisters of St. Francis Community by the Mission Advancement Office of the Sisters of St. Francis. Reader responses may be submitted to Sr. Rozanne Swope, Director of Mission Advancement, at rswope@tiffinfranciscans.org.

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On the Cover: Women from the Columbus area visited St. Francis Spirituality Center in August and spent the weekend making blankets/quilts for "My Very Own Blanket," a charitable organization based out of Westerville, Ohio. The blankets/quilts are gifted to children in the foster care system that are in need of a blanket, to give them a feeling of comfort, security and most of all, a SMILE! Thousands of handmade blankets/quilts are created through the loving care of volunteers annually.

Mission Circle Implemented Laudato Si' ³

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of Tiffin, Ohio, "... are a community rooted deeply in the Gospel and gifted with the charism of Francis and Clare. Transformed by God's love and guided by the Spirit, we continue the mission of Jesus wherever we serve, adhering to the words which inspired Mother Francis and Father Bihn: ... 'whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did to me.'

Engaged in the struggle for peace and justice, we speak the truth with courage. Cherishing all peoples and all creation as brother and sister, we live in a spirit of hospitality, simplicity and joy, celebrating our dependence on God, who is ever 'our Refuge and our strength.'

Our community has had deep roots in the Earth since its inception in 1869, and has maintained that connection in a variety of ways. The Tiffin Franciscan sisters and associates work to support the people of God in rural and urban areas of Ohio and Kentucky, and in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Together we continue the mission of Jesus in the spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare as we live in the 21st century.

The Franciscan Earth Literacy Center (FELC) ... "provides hands-on environmental education and serves as a demonstration facility designed to encourage sustainable living practices." FELC started the Seeds of Hope Farm in 2004, as "a chemical free operation raising vegetables, fruits, herbs and livestock for the general public, farmers' markets and wholesale customers in a sustainable agricultural system."

In June of 2022, the Mission Circle, as part of the community visioning structure, committed to developing relationships and working with its ministry partners "related to working for the common good" and to take "core actions to their circles of influence and urge participation." Coherent to this Mission goal is the longing to "live out the Gospel of Jesus in our church and our world."

The encyclical (letter) from Pope Francis, titled "LAUDATO SI', mi Signore" - "Praise be to you, my Lord," are the words Saint Francis of Assisi used to remind us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. It focuses on the care of the natural environment and all people, as well as broader questions of the relationships between God, humans, and the Earth. This document, and the Movement associated with its teachings, is a major platform for the Tiffin Franciscan Community to dialogue with those who care about our common home.

Pope Francis refers to this process as "synodality," which means journeying together. Laudato Si' is written to every person on the planet, united for concern about our earth and every living thing dwelling on it, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. The encyclical joins the body of the Church's teaching on social and moral teaching with scientific research; the result is a teaching with an ethical and spiritual itinerary based on scientific information.

In the words of Pope Francis, "I will then attempt to get to the roots of the present situation, so as to consider not only its symptoms but also causes. This will help to provide an approach to ecology which respects our unique place as human beings in this world and our relationship to our surroundings." (LS,15)

Laudato Si' outlines the following:

- The current state of our "common home"
- The Gospel message as seen through creation
- The human cause of the ecological crisis

- Ecology and the common good
- Call to action for each of us

It is from this call to action that the Mission Circle has committed its efforts to focus on spreading the message through activities in support of the Laudato Si' Movement (LSM). The encyclical was released in 2015, and the Mission Circle believes that expanding the circle through the process of participation, mission and communion is needed at this time. Our "sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her." (LS, 2)



"Every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged."

Pope Francis, Laudato Si'

There are three dimensions to LSM, described as:

- Ecological Conversion (the spiritual dimension) encouraging a more compassionate concern for our common home
- Prophetic Advocacy (the political dimension) raising a prophetic voice for climate and ecological justice, especially those who are poor and marginalized in the world
- Sustainability (the lifestyle dimension) shrinking our environmental footprint (Overshoot)

The Mission Circle was regarded the various practices in living out the message of Laudato Sí. Three questions were asked: "What are you doing to reach out to others in the encouragement to live Laudato Sí?" "What are some practices to help the environment and lessen plastic usage?" "What other environmental initiatives align with Laudato Sí?"

Responses to the questions were diverse, 63 in total. There were 19 specific responses to the issue of plastics in the environment. The Mission Core has received specific requests to pursue initiatives focused on limiting plastics, specifically "single use" plastics. "Some forms of pollution are part of people's daily experience. Exposure to atmospheric pollutants produces a broad spectrum of health hazards, especially for the poor, and causes millions of premature deaths." (LS, 20)

continued... Mission Circle Implemented Laudato Si'

Scientific studies show the prevalence of micro-plastics and forever chemicals and the impact they have on the environment. The oceans and marine life suffer greatly from the impact of plastics in this environment. Rivers and streams are inundated with multiple forms of plastic containers which do not entirely degrade in the environment. It is an example of "pollution, waste and a throwaway culture. The earth our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament the once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish." (LS, 21)

The Mission Circle listened to the request for action from its membership, and discussed the scope and appropriate response from the Mission Circle. Some members believed that recycling plastic was an appropriate response to the problem of plastics in our environment. Others thought that reducing the use of plastics would have to be done at the source, by finding alternative containers or not using containers. Of significance here was the movement to stop using laundry soap in plastic containers and to use laundry sheets instead. More will be revealed as we continue to dialogue and listen individually and collectively for the next action. "These problems are closely linked to a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish. . . Our industrial system, at the end of its cycle of production and consumption, has not developed the capacity to reuse waste and byproducts. We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production. A serious consideration of this issue would be one way of counteracting the throwaway culture which affects the entire planet, but it must be said only limited progress has been made in this regard." (LS, 22)

Other environmental issues identified that align with Laudato Sí include: 1) the use or modification of technologies that may provide a solution or lessen the environmental impact on our lifestyle, and 2) the fact that fresh drinking water demand exceeds the sustainable supply.

In the Tiffin Franciscan community, continual spiritual transformation is central to the way life is lived. "The rich heritage of Christian spirituality has a precious contribution to make to the renewal of humanity . . . I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of the world . . . a spirituality capable of inspiring us . . . where the life of the spirit is not disassociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them in communion with all that surrounds us." (LS, 216)

"...The ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion. It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they chose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. So what they all need is an 'ecological conversion' whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them." (LS, 217)

Second-Hand Scooters And Parts Needed

The elderly Sisters of St. Francis are in need of some used electric mobility scooters, any make or model. Our aged-out scooters are unsafe. We could really use some second-hand scooters that are in good repair. We can't find any wheels or replacement parts for the old ones we have now.



Please contact Heather Pollick, Director of Community Properties and Facilities, at 419-447-0435 if you can help.

Save the Date
Mardi Gras

VIRTUAL EVENT

Friday, February 9, 2024

More details coming soon!

**Proceeds benefit the ministries of
St. Francis Community**

SAVE THE DATE

Live Nativity ~ Sunday, December 3, 2023

The Mission Circle embraces the key themes of *Laudato Si*, and embraces actions to further the community's commitment to a deeper response to the cries of the Earth and the Poor. To date, the following actions have taken place.

On March 2, 2023, the Mission Circle sponsored a viewing and discussion of "The Letter," a documentary detailing the environmental crisis facing our common home, Planet Earth. The free program was hosted by Sister Judy Leibengood, OSF, and Sister Linda Scheckelhoff, OSF, at the Tiffin-Seneca Public Library. The documentary focuses on five environmental leaders who take a trip to Rome to discuss the encyclical letter *Laudato Si* with Pope Francis.

Additionally, the documentary was shown at: Elizabeth Schaefer Auditorium on the St. Francis Campus; St. Martin de Porres Church, Toledo, Ohio (shown by Sister Virginia Welsh, OSF); Holy Family Parish in Booneville, Kentucky; and Crosswaeh Community Based Correctional Facility in Tiffin, Ohio (shown by Sister Paulette Schroeder).

More recently, the Mission Core toured Rumpke Recycling in Columbus, Ohio, to learn more about the process of recycling and contamination issues. "We learned how to take better care of the earth," said Sister Paulette Schroeder, who is a part of the Mission Core.

Since then, Mission Core started a collection on the St. Francis Campus of writing instruments that would otherwise end up in a landfill. Once collected, these instruments are cleaned and separated by material type. The materials are recycled into raw formats that manufacturers use to make new products. All of the items collected are taken to a nearby Staples store that works in conjunction with Terracycle. According to Jerry Schmidt, an associate of the Sisters of St. Francis and part of the Mission Circle, "The Terracycle program gets the items back to the manufacturer and closes the loop."

Students at Bridges Preparatory School, located on the St. Francis Campus, have been collecting writing instruments in partnership with the Mission Circle.

A collection box is located at the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center (FELC). You are invited to collect writing instruments at your school, workplace or parish and drop them off at FELC. The collection will end on Earth Day 2024.

Sister Marge Eilerman, member of the Mission Core, said, "It's just another way to promote Care of Creation and recycling ... because every little bit makes a difference."

If you would like to learn more about recycling items through Terracycle or Staples, visit <https://www.terracycle.com/en-CA>. You can also view "The Letter" by visiting <https://www.tiffinfranciscans.org/the-letter-laudato-si-film/>.



Celebrating Sister Rita's 50th Jubilee

On October 1, Sister Rita Wienken celebrated her Golden Jubilee at the convent chapel of Sisters of St. Francis.

Sister Rita entered the community October 4, 1973, made her first profession October 6, 1974, and made her final profession August 16, 1981.

Sister Rita is the daughter of the late Leon Wienken and Rovena (Schwinnen) Wienken of Venedocia, Ohio. She has served as a teacher at Miller City and Edgerton, coordinator of Motherhouse garden and yards, founding coordinator of the Earth Literacy office, and co-director for projects and Franciscan Earth Literacy Center (FELC). She has also served as manager of Seeds of Hope Farm and FELC in Tiffin and coordinator of Urban Farm and Facilities for Toledo GROWS, a non-profit organization in Toledo, Ohio.

She has most recently been the outreach and facilities coordinator with ToledoGROWS and an Earth Care volunteer. Currently, she serves as a ToledoGROWS and FELC volunteer and teaches gardening classes.

Quilted With Kindness

In August, a unique retreat advertised as “fellowship among friends while feeding your soul with creativity” took place at St. Francis Spirituality Center (SFSC).

Jessica Rudolph, CEO and Founder of My Very Own Blanket (MVOB), is often referred to as “The Blanket Lady,” and rightfully so. She started the project 24 years ago while tending to her three small children, ages 1, 2 and 3. Jessica would sit in the nursery at bedtime, so they could see and feel her presence, and knit blankets. She made them each their own blanket and wanted to make one for a child who did not have a blanket of their own. Eventually, she mailed letters to 72 friends and family members inviting them to make a blanket too. Over the course of the next year, 84 quilts were completed and distributed to local children’s services in her area. “God gave me the idea to do it. I believe He knew I would be persistent enough to carry it on this long,” said Jessica.

The 501(c)(3) charitable organization, based out of Westerville, Ohio, is a ministry to children in Foster Care, and is always working to partner with new organizations where their supporters can deliver blankets to social workers and others who will place them in the hands of children.

Blanket Angels have delivered blankets to foster care organizations in every state in the U.S., as well as Alberta, Canada and St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

The SFSC retreat weekend was filled with laughter, snacks, cranial massages (upon request), delicious homemade meals, and lots of productivity. Quilters had the chance to get a craniosacral or therapeutic massage from a licensed massage therapist during their stay for an additional fee. The retreat also included a prayer circle with Sister Sara Aldridge, OSF, on Saturday and Sunday morning. The prayer circle focused on the women making the quilts and the children in foster care who would be receiving them.



“These retreats provide so many moms, aunts, and grandmothers an opportunity to continue sewing blankets in their later years,” said Jessica. “I try to make the retreats even more special by leaving roses in each person’s room, having door prizes and incorporating some games over the weekend,” she added.

According to Jessica, a special tag is stitched to each completed blanket or quilt, a tradition since 1999. This offers the gift of choice to each child...to pick out their very own blanket that “somebody” made just for them and allow them to write their name on the blanket to have some kind of ownership. There is also room on the tag for the person who made it to write a short note to the child. If the children relocate to another household, the blanket goes with them.

For Jessica, the biggest challenge is keeping in contact with case workers and agencies. “I advocate all of the time. They are the front line workers and their job is to keep kids safe while having to break up families at the same time. The turnover rate is so high...these individuals are overworked and underpaid,” she said.

She added, “Blankets help children and families. The first night is more peaceful for everyone when the child has a blanket from the first moment they arrive. Blankets help case workers help a child by breaking down barriers and helps build trust and relationships.”

On average, “no-sew” fleece blankets (made by simply tying knots around the perimeter of the fleece fabric) take about 40 minutes to make. Volunteers can also make a material blanket/quilt or a knitted or crocheted blanket to donate. **For more details, visit <https://www.myveryownblanket.org/get-involved.html>.**

On another note, if you would like to donate fabric, time, or a quilt to the local project on the St. Francis Campus, call Andria at 419-447-0435. **You can also visit <https://www.myveryownblanket.org/blanket-quality-guidelines.html> for all guidelines or <https://www.myveryownblanket.org/faq.html> to learn more.**

This year the goal of MVOB is to make and give away 35,000 exceptional blankets. At the end of August there were already 24,000 made according to the website, www.myveryownblanket.org. Jessica noted that the months of October, November and December are the busiest months of the year for making blankets.

Follow My Very Own Blanket on Facebook for other upcoming retreats, blanket auction fundraisers in November and more.

Beth Gabel of Westerville, Ohio, became involved with MVOB more than 20 years ago. "I worked at a craft store and Jessica would buy her fabrics for the quilts and fleece blankets from us. I also used to take my women's group from our church there to volunteer as one of our meetings each year. Eight years ago, Jessica helped me to start my own business, and now I own the business next door to MVOB and love spending time with Jessica," said Beth.

"My favorite quilt is a pumpkin quilt that I saw in a magazine and absolutely fell in love with it," she explained. "I started gathering fabrics for it that day. It has over 2,000 1" squares in one of the borders, and each pumpkin is made up of about a dozen different orange fabric strips," said Beth.

"The greatest part of the retreat weekend was having our own individual rooms with sinks in them. I have never been on a quilt retreat that offered this luxury. It was great to be able to go to bed whenever I wanted and wake up wherever I wanted without waking someone else up," Beth added.



Becky Lance of Gahanna, Ohio also enjoyed having the opportunity to explore the campus while on retreat. "I loved the grounds and the architecture of the buildings," said Becky. Although Becky is not directly involved with MVOB due to other commitments, she enjoys helping while attending retreats. Her favorite quilt that she recently worked on was a baby quilt for her first grandbaby due in October.

Karen Whiteside, of Delaware, Ohio, enjoyed how calm and peaceful it was during the weekend retreat. She became involved with MVOB several years ago. "I love what Jessica is doing for these young kids that need someone to show them someone cares," said Karen. Her favorite quilt was one that she purchased in the form of a kit from her favorite designer. Karen explained, "My goal was to get it done this weekend! Over 800 pieces — and it's done! I couldn't have done it if I would have had to cook or leave to eat. This is now my new favorite retreat place!"

"St. Francis Campus is a beautiful setting for any type of retreat. I enjoyed walking the grounds, having the spiritual connection during the weekend, and the welcoming atmosphere from the staff and the sisters," said Gretchen Brooks of Gahanna, Ohio.

Gretchen continued, "MVOB is a wonderful ministry. I hope the blankets provide physical comfort as well as positive messages that were written on the tags. I received so many ideas about quilting from the experienced quilters. I am in awe of their talent and vision. I made my first I SPY quilt and I am pleased with the end result."

When asked why she became involved in MVOB and how she hopes it impacts the children in foster care, Reyna Watson of Grove City, Ohio, responded, "I'm all for spreading love and joy. Hoping the blankets give comfort to the children."

Reyna explained, "My favorite quilts are the ones I make for people from their deceased loved one's clothes (memory/memorial quilts). There are some people who, every time I see them, thank me for making the quilt for them. One quilt in particular is most meaningful. My husband had asked me to make a memorial quilt for his boss whose daughter had been brutally stabbed to death by her husband. My husband's boss was most grateful for the quilt."

According to Elaine Euwer of Columbus, Ohio, "The foster system is in need of organizations like MVOB. To gift children their own blanket during a time of huge turmoil is the very least we can do to help them. We sign them with loving thoughts and hope this very small gift will help them through the night. A hug from many people who care."

The one thing in particular about the St. Francis venue was the beauty of the grounds and the beauty of the sisters who would visit with us. I believe they bloom together in beauty.

When asked about her favorite quilt Elaine responded, "The one that brings a sense of wonder that I finished it was the one I started creating while being treated for breast cancer, the second time. While trying to challenge myself, it was a difficult pattern, and many mistakes were made. When I was unable to sleep at night, I would retreat to my studio and try to put the pieces together. There was a lot of trash created those days due to all the mistakes. I finally had to admit my brain was not letting me create this beautiful quilt. A year and a half later, I did finish the quilt. It was a lesson for me that we can persevere through difficult times."



For some quilters like Nancy Smith of Grove City, Ohio, making quilts is therapeutic. She has made two "favorite" quilts. "The first is a large "pink ribbon" quilt made up of T-shirts from Komen Races for the Cure and other special T-shirts gifted to me while I was being treated for breast cancer in 1999 and 2011. I made that in 2017. My other favorite is made of 25 orange and orange/yellow friendship stars as a birthday gift in April 2023 for my sister-friend, Tara, who began chemotherapy the week after receiving the quilt. It kept her warm as she recovered at home through both chemotherapy and radiation," she explained.

Nancy became involved with MVOB because of Jessica's passion for the blanket mission. "It is contagious! Also my niece was in foster care for three years before being placed for adoption at age four. She was deeply affected by disruptions and loss of her belongings. She would have benefited greatly from having her very own blanket."

Jan Rond of Westerville, Ohio, enjoys working on simple designs. "My teal king-sized quilt I was able to get the binding on... that was my mission for the retreat! I also worked on 2 quilts for MVOB and tied some." She added, "I enjoy helping others!"

Jan really enjoyed the home-cooked meals throughout the retreat weekend. "Since my husband died three years ago, it's just me & my dog... eat sandwiches every night! I don't know how they prepared the meat..., it was fork-tender, even the pork chops and chicken!"

During the summer months, Jan enjoys gardening/landscaping. In the winter, she enjoys making quilts for MVOB. "I know I'm helping someone else feel loved and special! I can't imagine being ripped from my home in the middle of the night! I know Westerville police have them in their trunks for difficult situations," explained Jan.

The St. Francis Community Magazine is published by the Mission Advancement Office for the St. Francis Community.

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“Hold back nothing of yourselves... so that he who gives himself totally to you may receive you totally.”
— St. Francis of Assisi



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Please Recycle

Christmas 365 Raffle Supports SFSC

Support St. Francis Spirituality Center by purchasing a ticket for the **2024 Christmas 365 Raffle!** Raffle drawings for cash prizes on the **25th** day of every month in 2024 giving away **\$4500** in cash prizes with up to 13 chances to win, including an extra **\$500** drawing on Christmas Day 2024. Each winning ticket goes back into the drum for a chance to win on the next drawings. **Tickets are \$10 each or 6 for \$50.** As an added incentive, purchase 6 tickets and receive 3 FREE entries, 12 tickets and receive 6 FREE entries, or 18 tickets and receive 9 FREE entries.

Tickets can be purchased online by visiting <https://franciscanretreats.org/christmas-365/christmas-365-2024-affle/> Tickets will be on sale through September 1, 2024. Winners will be notified by phone, and names will be posted on St. Francis Spirituality Center’s Facebook page and website: www.franciscanretreat.org.



Find us on Facebook

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Thank you to everyone that donated, sponsored or attended the 16th Annual Summer Harvest Gourmet Gala on August 11!

