



FALL 2025

Tidings

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF

ANNUNCIATION MONASTERY

Sister Marena Hoogland Makes Perpetual Monastic Profession



Sister Marena sings the suscipe, "Receive me O Lord, according to your promise and I shall live, do not disappoint me in my hope."

On July 11, 2025, Sister Marena Hoogland made her perpetual monastic profession (final vows), as a Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery. The equation in her formation process is complete, but deepening her faith as a sister is ongoing. Sister Marena is currently teaching math at St. Mary's Academy in Bismarck which gives her an opportunity to blend her two favorite subjects—faith and math!

Sister Marena Hoogland reads her profession promises.

Story continues on pages 3–5



MESSAGE FROM THE

Prioress

In his declaration for the Jubilee Year of Hope, the late Pope Francis said, "In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring." Our sisters recently expressed those desires and expectations of hope in a meeting when we listed the variety of items that give us hope:

- our faithfulness to community life, particularly prayer and our common life
- our hospitality to each other and to guests
- Sister Marena's perpetual monastic profession and the University of Mary students living at our monastery

I appreciate the fact that we hope together in our community. Theologian Paul Waddell stated that: "Hope requires companions, people who want our good and who help us along the way." For us Benedictines, that comes naturally. We are companions in hope for one another. Over our community's history, we have hoped together. With Sister Idelle, we "hoped" her and Stepping Stone Ministries through their setbacks and their early October opening. With a number of sisters, we have hoped for a cure, a healing, and relief from pain as they suffered with

illness. We help each other to trust in God's promises, especially in times when faith may waver or when the future feels heavy with uncertainty. I believe all 140 founding sisters of Annunciation Monastery hoped for good things to come. What else did they have to hold onto during the years they waited for the Vatican decree of approval? We continue to hope together each day. Saint Benedict tells us to place our hope in God alone (RB 4:41). To hope doesn't mean we know what will happen, but that we trust God to be a part of it. Father Kevin O'Brien said, "Hope is the way God encourages us. It stirs up memory of God's abiding faithfulness. Hope expands our vision beyond the immediate horizon. It breaks open our heart to dispel fear."

An online reflection I recently read said, "The question isn't 'Do you have hope?'" The question is "What are you putting your hope in?" And so, I ask you to reflect on that question regularly to make sure you are placing your hope in God alone. God is the one who never disappoints. May each of you continue to walk in hope.

Sister Nicole Kunge



Sister Marena Hoogland

Cont'd from pg. 1

Sometimes Monastics and Math just add up!

Numbers and equations are a part of her DNA. Sister Marena Hoogland's logic and passion for mathematics wasn't initially what led her to becoming a Benedictine Sister of Annunciation Monastery, but as she looks back over the past years, experiences along the way just added up!

While growing up on a dairy farm in northern Wisconsin, Sister Marena and her six siblings attended Mass every Sunday with their parents Jeff and Lori Hoogland. The children were altar servers, Jeff was a Eucharistic minister, and Lori taught catechism. A car drive that lasted over 20 minutes was "an automatic rosary," recalls Sister Marena. Her encounters with sisters stem back to third grade when her catechism teacher brought the students to visit the Servants of Mary (Servites) to join them for Mass and dinner. Perhaps it was their joy and spirituality that made an impression, but Sister Marena doesn't rule out the possibility of the delicious spaghetti dinner followed by s'mores that may have attracted her. "I knew that religious sisters held a unique role in the Church, and I had a fleeting thought that maybe I should become one, too."

Time and adventures led Sister Marena on other paths that brought her to attend a public university in Wisconsin to get a degree in elementary education. She soon realized this was not her calling. She took a break from college and worked full-time at a library. She recalls being drawn to a plaque in the office that had a prayer on it about "letting God use you." She prayed that she would be open to however God would use her to serve Him. She gave the library a year and discerned about what to do next. She considered volunteering, returning to school to complete her degree, or continuing in the workforce. Wherever she was called, she wanted to do something that had meaning.



Sister Marena Hoogland with parents, Jeff and Lori Hoogland--a cherished part of the Annunciation Monastery family.



Sister Marena is surrounded by many of her students from St. Mary's Academy who attended her perpetual monastic profession.

Through a conversation with a friend and a Google search, she was introduced to the “Benedictine Volunteers Program” at Annunciation Monastery and reached out to the program director. It sounded like something she might want to try in a year or so. During that year, she followed her father’s suggestion to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering. After all, her brother was an engineer, and she also excelled at math and critical thinking. She even did trigonometry problems for fun.

A few months into the engineering program, she received an email from the sister she had talked to earlier about the Benedictine Volunteer Program. Through prayer, discernment, and asking God to help her trust in His plan for her life, Sister Marena left the engineering program and sent in her application to volunteer at the monastery for six months.

She smiles as she remembers, “I made it very clear to the sisters that I was not discerning religious life. However, I did want to make the most of my experience, so I engaged with every aspect of community life that was open to me.” In a message to a friend, she said, “I’m still amazed at how normal monastic life is. I guess nuns are normal people, too.” She recalls her surprise at learning about the diverse ministries among community members. “Some sisters were teachers, others were nurses, some were artists, and some preferred gardening. There were sisters who earned their doctorates, and sisters who completed their education in a one-room country school. Some sisters had been presidents of the University of Mary and CEOs of St. Alexius Hospital, and others spent their lives serving as cooks, bakers, and working in the laundry.” As she pondered the unique types of individuals in community, she realized the call to religious life wasn’t limited to one type of person, and maybe God was calling

“My call was not like a lightning strike or a clap of thunder, like one might think,” she explains. “It was more like a feeling of rightness in taking each next step.”

her to become a sister. Her openness to God and the prayerful women who supported her and each other, was becoming part of her personal equation.

One day she tiptoed around the steps to become a sister with the vocation director, inquiring “for a friend.” Realizing that the “friend” was Sister Marena herself, the vocation director shifted the conversation, and Marena's journey through the formation process began.



Sisters JoAnn Krebsbach, Idelle Badt and Marena Hoogland enjoy an afternoon on the river.

Sister Marena approached each step of formation with careful consideration, like she does when solving a math problem. She prayed for trust and openness to where God was leading next. “My call was not like a lightning strike or a clap of thunder, like one might think,” she explains. “It was more like a feeling of rightness in taking each next step.” In the fall of 2019, Sister Marena made her temporary vows, which is a period of three to six years. Upon professing temporary vows, she attended the University of Mary, eventually graduating with a degree in mathematics education. Following in the ministry of many sisters before her, Sister Marena currently teaches math at St. Mary's Academy in Bismarck. She was deeply touched to see so many of her students in attendance when she made her perpetual monastic profession on July 11. She marvels, “I have a new relationship with Christ as a teacher, and I would have never imagined how much I love my students and the joy they bring into my life. Every day I teach is a constant reminder of God's providence and how His ways are better than my own ways.”

Sister Marena expresses a growing sense of gratitude. “I am so blessed by the support I've received throughout my time of formation. To know of the prayers of so many is truly humbling, and I know those prayers have sustained me through difficult times. I am especially thankful for my parents and family, and my Benedictine sisters, who inspire me by their lives of service, love, and faithfulness. As I listen for God's call at each step of discernment, they continue to walk with me, pray for me and encourage me.” Sister Marena says with appreciation. “God is so good, and I pray that we all may respond to His call as He bring us all to everlasting life.”

Distributing the Body of Christ

Sister Agnes Reinert and Sister Rosemary DeGracia distribute Holy Communion to patients at CHI St. Alexius Health



As Catholics, receiving the Holy Eucharist is a gift that is key to our faith. In instances where people are hospitalized and unable to attend Mass, Eucharistic ministers bring the Body of Christ to the patients who wish to receive it. Sisters Agnes Reinert and Rosemary DeGracia distribute communion at CHI St. Alexius Health in Bismarck.

The sisters explain why this ministry means so much to them:

Sister Agnes Reinert

“I need to reach out, and I feel I need to do something more. Pastoral care is my education and experience for over 20 years. It’s something I feel I can offer. It is a gift to bring communion to patients in the hospital. Often, when I leave, I feel like I’m the one who has been enriched. When I make my rounds, I silently talk to God and ask for the ability to offer the words and prayers the person needs. I carry a palm cross with me each time I visit patients, so I can offer it to someone who is suffering in pain or anguish. The palm crosses are made by a local man, Don Shearer. When I offer the blessed cross to a patient, I explain that it’s the Lord’s cross, and remind them, ‘Jesus is carrying your cross with you, too.’ And I give them a copy of a prayer. Being present to the person as I offer them communion is an opportunity to visit more closely and intimately with them. I’m there to pray with them or for them. I have the time to visit. As a former nurse for 20 years, I was often too busy and had tasks to do. Now, as a chaplain, I have that privilege and time to hear their story and be there for them.”

Sister Rosemary DeGracia

“Serving as a lay minister of Holy Communion over many years has been a humbling encounter with Christ in the Eucharist. I remember being in the first class of extraordinary ministers in my parish—too long ago to count the years—late 1970s, I think. I have served in diverse settings—parish, homes, jail and hospital, and, although the settings may differ, the sense of performing a sacred mission does not. I am there to bring Christ to others and minister to their spiritual needs. Depending on circumstances, my time with a patient can vary from a few minutes to nearly an hour. God speaks to me through these visits whether long or short. I currently am commissioned to exercise this ministry at the monastery and at CHI St. Alexius. I have served at the hospital for about eight years and currently spend several Wednesday mornings a month, but I always receive more than I give in the confirmation of this calling. I also knit prayer blankets for patients who are on comfort care.”

Sister Hildegarde Urlacher

Celebrates 70th Anniversary of Monastic Profession

Sister Hildegarde Urlacher celebrated her 70th anniversary of monastic profession on July 13 in a private ceremony with Sister Rosanne Zastoupil, who celebrated her 60th Jubilee, and the monastic community.

Sister Hildegarde grew up on a farm in Hettinger County. She is the eldest of six sisters. Her deep-rooted faith began in childhood, nurtured by regular Sunday Mass at a small country church.

At the age of 14, Sister Hildegarde started thinking about a religious vocation. She describes experiencing a profound sense of peace whenever she thought about becoming a sister. When she pushed the idea aside, the feeling of peace was gone. She shares, "I enjoyed the sisters I met at vacation Bible school and admired their joyfulness and sense of humor. At the age of 18, Sister Hildegarde joined Annunciation Monastery and never looked back.



*Jubilarians, Sister Rosanne Zastoupil (60th Jubilee) and Sister Hildegarde Urlacher (70th Jubilee), hold their Jubilee candles. *Sister Rosanne Zastoupil's Jubilee story can be found in the previous issue of Tidings and online at www.annunciationmonastery.org*

When Sister Hildegarde entered the novitiate, her first assignment was in the St. Mary's Convent kitchen at 304 Ave. A West in Bismarck. She learned, not only cooking skills, but the importance of etiquette and hospitality. She says, "I still pay attention to etiquette at the dining room table."

Her next assignment after making her first profession was as a cook at St. Joseph's Church in Mandan with Sister Francis Schweitzer. Sister Hildegarde recalls living in the school at the time, saying 18 sisters slept in one classroom!

After serving for a year in Mandan, she was sent to St. Patrick's in Dickinson where she joined Sister Carmelita Schlosser as cook, laundress, and housekeeper. She was in Dickinson for eleven years before returning to Annunciation Monastery. Sister Hildegarde brought with her a spirit of reverence for all tasks, rooted in her farm upbringing and the Rule of St. Benedict. Whether working in the kitchen, in the garden, at the pottery wheel or in the art room, she approached each task as sacred, saying, "I saw my tools as vessels of the altar." Silence, work, and reading have been key components of her contemplative life.

She reflects on the past 70 years of monastic life as a blessing. She encourages women to "come and see" what this life is like. "It is a gift to work with a variety of people who come together with different personalities and backgrounds. We pray together, we grow together, and we support each other. Our prayer life is very important. It is a beautiful and fulfilling life."

A LEGACY OF FAITH:

Three Generations of Benedictine Oblates

When Lorie Seeger attended her first oblate meeting with her friend, Sharon Elsworth, she didn't realize the impact it would have on her. It would become a cherished way of life—one that would later span three generations of her family. "I enjoyed the meetings and relationships with the sisters and other oblates so much. My experience at the meetings drew me closer to God every time we met. It felt so peaceful," she said. "It felt like heaven." She attended meetings for a year before deciding to become an oblate. Now, at the age of 77, she has been a Benedictine Oblate of Annunciation Monastery for 22 years.



Sisters Nicole Kunze and Rosemary DeGracia flank three generations of oblates: (second from left) Cindy Weigum with daughter Kate Schon (with baby Augustine Leo) and mother, Lorie Seeger. The faith-filled family has always sought opportunities to deepen their faith.

Lorie's daughter, Cindy Weigum (55), says she observed a transformation in her mom that made her think the oblate program must be something special. "Mom would mention she was going to an oblate meeting, and I would ask her questions about what she was learning. She'd light up when she talked about what she had learned and invited me to join her at some of the meetings."

As a mother with two young children, Kate and Ben, at home, it was difficult for Cindy to commit time to outside activities. She recalls bringing Kate to an oblate meeting when Kate was just two years old. As her children got older, Cindy decided to enter the oblate formation program. She became an oblate in 2023, with her mother as her mentor.

Kate (24) saw how the oblate program was working in the lives of her mom and grandmother. Inspired by their commitment and prayer lives, she decided to enter the oblate formation program herself, with her mother as her mentor. Kate became an oblate in the fall of 2024.

A nurse for two years, Kate is now a stay-at-home mom to her infant son, Augustine Leo. She noticed how her mom, Cindy, valued silent prayer time in the morning, so she also began setting aside time in

the morning to start the day in prayer. “If the first thing you do each day is turn to God, it brings a sense of peace and calm to life. I lean on God.” Kate feels that the Benedictine value of humility has more meaning as she cares for Augustine. “I feel the small simple tasks of each day are humbling,” she says. “It is very Benedictine to invite God into the details of every day, no matter how small.”

All three women recognize a sense of inner peace and deepening faith within themselves and each other since becoming oblates. Cindy says, “Being an oblate has taught me to pray more intentionally, in silence and in adoration.” Lorie, now the spiritual matriarch, says she doesn’t worry as much as she used to. She has a particular devotion to Saint Padre Pio who encouraged others to pray more and trust in God. When Cindy or Kate are worried about something, they often turn to Lorie—through a phone call or text—and she reminds them, “It’s in God’s hands. Everything will be OK.”

What started with a single meeting blossomed into a legacy of prayer, peace, and Benedictine values passed from mother to daughter, to granddaughter. They are living proof that a “yes” to God can echo through generations. Perhaps baby Augustine will follow in their footsteps.

For more
information on
the Oblates of
Annunciation
Monastery



Congratulations to our new oblates who made their oblation on October 5, 2025!



(lt. to rt.) Sister Rosemary DeGracia, oblate director; Gay Contiangco Gray, Kristi Mahrer, Laura Helbling-Schaff, Becky and Bob Sauter, Milissa Price, and Sister Nicole Kunze, prioress.

Sister Rosemary DeGracia Answers Questions About the Oblate Program

»» What does it mean to be a Benedictine Oblate of Annunciation Monastery?

The Oblates of Annunciation Monastery are Christian women and men who have associated themselves with a Benedictine Community in order to enrich their Christian way of life through living the Gospel values as interpreted by St. Benedict.

By deepening their relationship with God and others, oblates integrate their prayer life with work, and the tasks of daily life. An oblate's prayer life flows from this awareness, as does their willingness to offer themselves for the service of God and neighbor.

Oblates promise to lead an enriched Christian life according to the Gospel as reflected in the Rule of St. Benedict. In this way they are in the spiritual benefits of the women and men of Benedict who are dedicated to the monastic life by vows.

»» What kind of time commitment is required from individuals wishing to attend oblate meetings?

Oblate gatherings occur monthly from September through May—usually on the first Sunday of each month from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. We read resources, listen to speakers, and hold special retreats during Advent and Lent. Oblates are not required to attend every meeting. However, our oblates say they benefit from attending the regular meetings and from their relationships with other oblates.

Each year the monastic community follows a topic for ongoing formation. This program recognizes that we are always beginners, always learning and being open to God's formation in our lives.

»» What is the formation process to become an Oblate of Annunciation Monastery?

The Oblate Formation cohort meets one Saturday morning a month for about three hours in person. If an individual has to miss a meeting, sessions have been recorded. Once the individual has watched the missed session, they can discuss the content with their oblate mentor (someone who is already an oblate in the program).



The Oblate Formation program is one full year, although we don't meet in person during July and August due to busy summer schedules. This is another time we utilize the recorded sessions.

When we meet in person, we have a set curriculum of Benedictine spirituality topics that were developed by the formation team—notably Sister Agatha Muggli. It follows a similar pattern to how a sister is being formed. We cover the basics—lectio divina, hospitality, liturgy of the hours, Benedictine leadership, respect for persons (12 topics in total). There are no tests, just sharing and conversation. We use a translation of the Rule of St. Benedict that has discussion questions. About half of the time on Saturdays is discussion.

»» What is the benefit of becoming an oblate?

The oblate program is not intended to replace involvement in a church community. However, several oblates say the deepening of their faith and commitment to this way of life encourages them to look for more volunteer opportunities within their church and in the larger Bismarck-Mandan community. The oblate program enhances their approach to daily life in service to others.

Our sisters value our oblates and the contributions that they make to the monastic and civic community. We see our oblates as part of us. We appreciate how oblates respectfully take the Benedictine charism out into the world. We appreciate the willingness and generosity of our oblates who often join us for prayer and volunteer at the monastery.

I was an oblate before I became a sister, so I enjoy sharing from my experience over the years. Together, we share how to implement the Rule of Benedict which is something we sisters do all the time. The prologue of the Rule sets the tone for a life of listening with “the ear of the heart.” It's not just about hearing words—it's about being attuned to the Spirit, to one another, and to the rhythm of grace in daily life. Chapter 72 reminds us to “prefer nothing whatever to Christ,” and to show the kind of love that promotes community, humility, and mutual obedience.



Oblates and volunteers helped clean and set up living spaces to get Stepping Stone Ministries ready to welcome its first clients.



The Powerful Practice of Lectio Divina



By Sister Agatha Muggli, OSB

Lectio Divina is a facet of our rich monastic tradition that helps us Benedictine Sisters of Annunciation Monastery be a prayerful presence on the prairie. *Lectio divina* is an element in our mission statement: “We strive with others to respond to the challenges of the times and further the mission of Jesus through prayer, **lectio** and service.”

Lectio divina is best translated as “sacred reading” because what we usually read is Scripture, which contains the words that are the bedrock of our life as Catholics. We share this foundation with other Christian faith traditions. The Scriptures proclaim the story of God’s creating and saving us human beings over the centuries. We believe that God’s work reached a high point in Jesus, God’s own Son enfleshed in our humanity and sent into our world to tell us by word and deed that we are loved people, called to return home to God from whom we have come.



Benedictine Roots

In his Rule, Saint Benedict gave us a vision for daily living. He said that one who seeks God needs to give time regularly to prayer and worship with others, to service in our families and communities, and to reading for our own conversion and growth in faith.

Lectio divina is a prayerful process which includes several moments gently alternating with one another. Traditionally these moments have been named: reading, meditating, praying and contemplating. We leisurely move back and forth among them, relying on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and, above all, being content with whatever happens.

Lectio divina begins with the decision to give time to being with God present in the Scriptures. A consistent time and place and a comfortable, alert posture facilitate the practice of *lectio*. If we feel anxious or upset, we simply acknowledge these feelings and breathe deeply. We hand over our concerns to God while we give ourselves to reading.



Reading

The reading that begins the process of *lectio divina* is slow and gentle. Reading aloud or shaping the words silently help us slow down and get the words into our bodies; we see the words; we hear them; and we feel them. In *lectio* we limit ourselves to reading a few verses from any book of the Bible. We linger over the words, trying to understand their meaning. Perhaps we re-read the text a number of times, paying attention to each word so it can seep into us. As we do this, we will likely become aware of words or phrases that catch our attention. These can be the morsels on which we meditate.



Meditation

The Latin term *Meditatio* has roots in the Jewish practice of reciting the Torah in low, murmuring tones in order to learn it by heart. In *meditatio* we repeat the word or phrase given to us over and over, gently committing it to memory so we can take it with us after our reading.

Meditatio means considering how God's word might affect our lives; we ponder the word like the Blessed Virgin Mary did; we. The Gospel account of the Annunciation can be a model for us. Mary was troubled by the angel's message; we let the words of Scripture disturb us as did Mary who wondered what it all meant for her. Mary was afraid; what we hear may provoke fear in us; Mary knew the live-giving Spirit was at work in her; we can also sense God's Spirit moving in us. Feelings, memories, concerns, insights, and hopes spring up inside us as we reflect on the words we've read. This is good; the process is working. We allow God's word to mix and intertwine with our own life experience. In this overlap, God speaks to us. We are called to listen.



Prayer

From listening to God's word, we begin to speak in prayer. Perhaps we express surrender as did Mary, "Let what you have said be done to me." Or we plead, "O Lord, make haste to help me," or exclaim, "Thanks be to God." We talk with God in our heart; we dialogue as friend to friend; one offers a word and the other receives it. The words we use may be our own; they may be a line of a song or a poem we love; or they may be from Scripture.

We can use Scripture when our own words fail. The psalms express human experience ranging from lament to trust, from anger to jubilation and many things in between. The psalms can provide exactly the right words to express our prayer.

We have described *lectio* as prayerful reading to show that prayer is woven through the whole process and not limited to the time after reading and *meditatio*. Just as we may be moved to pray at any point in the process of *lectio divina*, we should also feel free to resume our reading or to go back and mull over what the word is evoking inside us. If, at any point, we become distracted, we just accept this fact with no fuss and return to the text to read it again or to ask, "God, what do you want me to hear?" In all circumstances, we are advised to be gently present and let God give us what God wills.



Contemplation

After we have knocked on the door in prayer, God may open it and invite us to come in and simply be quiet in God's presence, to rest there without word or thought. This is contemplation; it's a gift given gratuitously by God. We relish God as we would enjoy a loved one in a favorite and completely safe place; we give ourselves fully to God's loving embrace.

RB 72 Retreat



Retreat participants display their prayer journals.

“Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ.”

– Rule of Benedict 72

We were happy to welcome these young ladies to our summer RB 72 retreat. Sister Marena Hoogland planned and hosted a weekend of fun activities—scavenger hunts, games, prayer and meals with the sisters, walks and talks, and making prayer journals. The group attended the Saint Serra Club picnic. The RB72 participants spent an afternoon learning about Ministry on the Margins and spiffing up the ministry for guests. God bless these girls who are making a positive difference and deepening their faith. May they always remember Chapter 72 of the Rule of Benedict, “Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ.”



Sisters and retreatants spent an afternoon cleaning Ministry on the Margins.



In Loving Memory of Jane Greer Friend, Oblate, Volunteer, Poet

A beloved friend, oblate, and volunteer of Annunciation Monastery, Jane Greer entered eternal life on July 22, 2025, after a brief illness. Jane faithfully volunteered at the monastery switchboard and generously supplied our sisters with a stock of “emergency candy” at the switchboard. A particular favorite was Albanese gummy bears. Before her hospitalization, Jane had ordered candy for our sisters. Her dear husband, Jim, delivered them to the monastery as a final gift from Jane. We are ever grateful for her generosity. Jane helped Vietnamese sisters with their studies while they lived at the monastery and attended the University of Mary. Jane’s command of language and patience in teaching others was an absolute gift. She also volunteered to teach inmates at the N.D. State Penitentiary and brought others closer to Christ through her deep faith and meaningful spiritual discussions. Jane’s legacy lives on, not only in the lives she touched, but also in the world of poetry where she is highly regarded for her published works.



Stepping Stone Ministries Offers Medical Respite Care for the Homeless



A ribbon cutting ceremony was held with the Bismarck-Mandan Chamber of Commerce September 29.

The long-awaited grand opening of Stepping Stone Ministries was held over the last weekend of September with a blessing and a series of open houses for the public and service providers in the community.

Sister Idelle Badt, CEO, shared these comments at the ribbon cutting ceremony which was held with the Bismarck-Mandan Chamber of Commerce ambassadors.

“On behalf of Stepping Stone Ministries, we want to thank you for joining us today to celebrate this ribbon cutting. This moment represents more than just opening doors—it represents hope, healing, and the strength of community.

‘We believe that every person deserves dignity, care, and the opportunity to heal. Our mission is deeply rooted in the belief that God calls us to see the worth in every human life. At the same time, this ministry has been built through the dedication of neighbors, businesses, organizations, and volunteers who share a vision for a healthier and stronger community.



‘Today, as we cut this ribbon, we aren’t just marking the start of a program—we’re stepping forward together in faith, compassion, and collaboration.

We are grateful for God’s guidance, for the generosity of so many, and for the opportunity to serve those who need a place to rest, recover, and be renewed.

Thank you for standing with us in this mission. May God continue to bless the work we do together.”

**Stepping Stone Ministries is a place of healing and hospitality for those who are without housing and qualify for medical respite care following illness or injury.*



Sister Idelle Badt, MSW, CEO, stands ready to welcome those who enter the doors of Stepping Stone Ministries.



Father Anthony Baker blessed the building and those in attendance. Craig Schaaf has been instrumental with the business aspects of the ministry.



Sisters and friends attended the grand opening events.



Ministry on the Margins Community BBQ

Ministry on the Margins hosted its first Community Cookout on August 27, and it was truly an evening filled with fun, food, and connection. The Ministry welcomed the individuals they serve, neighbors, local businesses, donors, and volunteers to celebrate community. Around 300 people gathered to share a meal and enjoy burgers and hotdogs grilled by Dakota Community Bank and Trust. Guests had the chance to tour the Ministry's facility, learning more about the programs and services offered at the Ministry. "The cookout was more than just a meal, it was an opportunity for people from all walks of life to come together, build relationships, and strengthen the bonds that make our community so special," said John Dolbec, community development specialist at Ministry on the Margins. "We'd like to thank the many gracious sponsors who contributed: Walmart South, Walmart North, Cash Wise, Dakota Community Bank and Trust, and volunteers from House of Prayer Lutheran Church."



Mission Week at CHI St. Alexius Health

THANK YOU!



Sisters Nancy Miller, Rosanne Zastoupil, Janet Zander, Madelyn Louttit and Rosemary DeGracia offer sweet smiles and a smorgasbord of ice cream and toppings to CHI St. Alexius Health staff.



Our sisters always look forward to Mission Week at CHI St. Alexius Health, a sponsored ministry of the sisters. It is a chance to acknowledge, and thank those who carry the mission and values forward through caring, compassionate service to others.

Sister Agnes Reinert, an Ordinary Person with an Extraordinary Heart

Congratulations to Sister Agnes Reinert, OSB, for 50 years of membership in the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC). She and other chaplains were recently recognized in the story "Chaplains are Workers of Hope" in the association's newsletter.

The NACC celebrates its 60-year anniversary with the theme, "Ordinary People, Extraordinary Hearts." The association advocates for the profession of spiritual care and educates, certifies, and supports chaplains, clinical pastoral educators, and all members who continue the healing ministry of Jesus in the name of the Church.



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Thank you!

Thank you to the University of Mary
students who spent their "Day of
Service" at Annunciation Monastery
cleaning indoors and clearing out the
garden! You are a blessing!

