

LAURELS

Ursuline Sisters of the Central Province

Fall 2025



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Sisters mission new leadership team

The Ursuline Sisters of the Central Province missioned a new leadership team with a prayer service on June 19 at the Ursulines' provincial offices in Kirkwood. Serving for the next five years are Sister Peggy Moore, OSU, provincial; Sister Susan Kienzler, OSU, councilor; and Sister Lois Castillon, OSU, councilor.

Sister Peggy Moore is a graduate of Ursuline Academy in Springfield, Illinois. She has served as a high school science, math and theology teacher as well as in high school campus ministry, most recently at Ursuline Academy in St. Louis. She also has served the Central Province in leadership as a local prioress and the provincial prioress. She returns to the role of provincial prioress after serving the past five years as a provincial councilor.

Sister Susan Kienzler is a graduate of Ursuline Academy, Springfield, Illinois. Previous ministry experiences included teaching high school chemistry, math and religion. Later she served as a guidance counselor and a principal. After 10 years as vocation director, she

served in Rome as the director of an international renewal program for the Ursuline Sisters. She also has served in leadership roles at the local and provincial levels.

Sister Lois Castillon is a graduate of Ursuline Academy of St. Louis and has ministered in Illinois, Missouri, Louisiana, Texas and California as a teacher and in leadership positions at parish schools, Ursuline secondary schools and in the Central and Western provinces. She also served as director of Ursuline Education Services for Ursuline schools in North America. She returns to St. Louis after serving at Ursuline Academy in Dallas, Texas, for the past 22 years.



Serving on the Ursulines' 2025-30 leadership team are, from left, Sister Susan Kienzler, councilor; Sister Peggy Moore, provincial; and Sister Lois Castillon, councilor.

T*hank you to all of our generous donors.
Your faith and support of our mission
fill our hearts, and we are grateful
for your presence on our journey.*

A Message from the Provincial

The call to be an Ursuline of the Roman Union challenges me daily to expand my mind and heart, witnessing to Gospel values and St. Angela's relational spirit.
(Sister Jean Hopman)

This Nov. 28, we join with our sisters from around the world to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Roman Union, our branch of the many Ursuline congregations who live the charism and spirit of St. Angela in various parts of the world today.

At this time in history, surrounded by so much division: between countries, between political parties, and sometimes even within families, it is a great joy to celebrate a decision for unity made in 1900. Late that year, Ursuline Sisters from Montana to Brazil, as well as from countries in Europe, and even from what is now Indonesia, gathered in Rome to consider giving up their independence to become one congregation. Their decision to unite has been lived out for 125 years by us, their successors, with a commitment to our international community that has not wavered in the face of differences of language, culture or theology.

On Nov. 29, 1900, the first General Chapter began. We can only imagine what it was like to be at that chapter, as each delegate no doubt started to realize what might be asked of her home monastery in order to adapt to the changes that this new way of being a community would require.

In September 2024, the Roman Union held our most recent General Chapter. It is unlikely that the sisters who gathered in 1900 would recognize the diversity in the group gathered in 2024, but they would recognize the

spirit of St. Angela present there. Those sisters, and their successors, gave us, in this 21st century, a gift for which we are very grateful. Here are some comments from our Central Province sisters about what the Roman Union means to them.

For me, being in the Roman Union is belonging to a worldwide community that shares the spirit of St. Angela in following Jesus. When significant things happen in this world, we know real people who are affected, which deepens our solidarity and compassion.
(Sister Elisa Ryan)

As I get older, it is significant for me to have ways to relate to the younger groups in the Roman Union who are deeply involved in active ministry. I am enjoying my weekly meetings online with a young sister or two in Senegal to help them learn English, and for them to help me learn about Ursuline life and the exciting energy that is happening in a part of Africa.
(Sister Chabanel Mathison)

My time in Indonesia after my tertianship enriched my appreciation of the Roman Union. The sisters were diverse in language, ethnicity, language and cultures. Yet they were so joyful and united in mission, their love of community and of Angela. (Sister Theresa Davey)

Some of us have had, over the course of our Ursuline life, the opportunity to live interculturally. Some of us have served the Roman Union as general councilors, general treasurer, or director of ongoing formation. Most of us have been able to visit Ursuline communities in other parts of the world, to have acquaintances and even friends from other cultures.

In recent years we have seen the expansion of this gift of internationality to include lay colleagues and students. It is a joy for us when our students



experience sisterhood with Ursuline students from other parts of the world, when our province finance officer mentors a treasurer in Kenya and one in Mexico, when a staff member from one of our schools is able to participate in an Angela pilgrimage with other lay collaborators and Ursulines from around the world. We are so grateful for the women who took the risk to do something new, blessing us in ways they could not have imagined.

The Roman Union has contributed significantly to my sense of our global reality, the oneness that encircles Planet Earth. Being at home for nine years as a member of the Caribbean Province was a personal enrichment of belonging to the Roman Union. (Sister Glenda Bourgeois)

The Roman Union stretches me—it keeps other cultures and ways of life right in front of me. I find myself challenged to listen to stories, to respect different cultures, to find ways to communicate, to keep in touch.
(Sister Elizabeth Susan Hatzenbuehler)

Peggy Moore, OSU

Sister Peggy Moore, OSU
Provincial

Ursulines offer enrichment activities at Mother of Perpetual Help

Slowing down is one thing for the Ursulines Sisters living at Mother of Perpetual Help assisted-living residence in St. Louis, but stopping is quite another. Ursulines living there remain active and engaged. And true to form, these lifelong learners and teachers share their interests and experiences with those around them. Here are the ways some sisters have found to add enrichment to their new environment.



Sister Mary Jacqueline Pratt

Although she had hosted a few earlier gatherings, Sister Mary Jacqueline began facilitating Scripture sharing at Mother of Perpetual Help in earnest on March 17, 2020—the day after the assisted-living residence went into lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdown ended many months later, but Sister Mary Jacqueline never ended what she, along with the activity director at the time, had begun.

“During the lockdown, priests could not come in so there was no daily Mass,” she says. “We started the Scripture sharing/prayer to help fill the void. The activity director helped me get things set up, and the chapel was almost full each day. Franciscan Sisters, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Ursulines and many other residents all came. It was a grace-filled time of sharing. We had music, the daily Scripture reading and sharing. Afterward, we fielded questions about the Scripture

or other things about the church. We called it ‘catechetical chitchat.’”

Nine months into the pandemic, Sister Mary Jacqueline cut back on the sessions but continued them three times a week until Mass started again. Scripture sharing is now held once a week on Friday afternoons. “We were moved to a smaller room, so we have a smaller group, but two of the lay people who started with us still come.”

Recently she has enlisted others to take turns leading the Scripture readings. “It was getting to be too much for me. I’m old and I’m tired,” she says laughingly. “I asked the group if somebody else would help but initially got no takers. Then more of our sisters moved here and they agreed to help.”

These Fridays you will find Sisters Glenda Bourgeois, Madonna O’Hara, Sue Ann Cole or Pauline Lorch rotating with Sister Mary Jacqueline in leading the sessions. Lay co-workers Linda Borchardt and Sharon Hartman, who visit the sisters at Mother of Perpetual Help regularly, often attend and eventually will lead a session. “It has been a good experience to have the others help,”

Ursulines and others fill a small meeting room at a Friday prayer service at Mother of Perpetual Help.

Sister Mary Jacqueline says. “There is such enrichment in how people approach prayer time.

“Every time I do it, I feel I’m being probed by the Scripture. The whole purpose is to share how Scripture speaks to us. It’s a way to get to know others and find out how much we have in common.

“It’s been a growing experience,” she adds. “Ursulines have always been blessed with encouragement to continue to study and grow.”

Sister Glenda Bourgeois

When Sister Glenda Bourgeois moved from Dallas, Texas, to Mother of Perpetual Help in St. Louis, Missouri, she brought her passions for learning and service with her. Not one to be idle, she thought about what she wanted to focus on at this point in her life and decided it was engagement as a citizen.

“Why do I want to be engaged?” she asks rhetorically. “The answer is to understand deeply the issues of today.” After deciding on this path for herself, the former history teacher thought about engaging her fellow residents in her pursuit.

“When I arrived here in March, I told the event planner I would like to

invite any interested resident to become an engaged citizen. Eighteen residents responded to the invitation. I investigated resources and found two great ones in Kathleen Farrell with the League of Women Voters and Marie Kenyon with the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

Beginning in April, a speaker from the league comes once a month to talk to the group. "They are non-political and explore the issues in depth. They have worked with us on the steps of how to be engaged, names to contact, and plans to follow up on calls," Sister Glenda says.

Likewise, a representative from the archdiocese began sending someone once a month to speak on issues such as racism, immigration, the environment, money and politics, the injustice of greed and the death penalty. "The focus is on how people of faith can impact injustice," Sister Glenda says.

Over the months, the program has evolved, with as many as 40 people now attending the sessions, Sister Glenda says. "I feel strong unity within the group. The interest is palpable. We open the floor to questions, and there is lots of back and forth."

Having shown her skill at developing a robust enrichment activity, Sister Glenda recently was asked by the activities director to plan a prayer for peace. And that's just fine with this 87-year-old. "I feel like my motor is still running," she says.



Sister Glenda Bourgeois

Sister Pauline Lorch and Sister Sue Anne Cole

When Sisters Pauline Lorch and Sue Anne Cole found they shared an interest in the history of Native Americans, they collaborated to offer a series of talks on their studies as an enrichment activity for their fellow residents at Mother of Perpetual Help.

"My motive for beginning the study of Native Americans was to try to understand the history of Missouri," says Sister Pauline. The multi-award-winning book, "Indigenous Missourians: Ancient Societies to the Present," by Greg Olson was her entryway into the world of Missouri's Indigenous people dating back centuries.

Meanwhile, Sister Sue Anne, who says she has great respect of long standing for Indigenous peoples, had been reading the New York Times bestseller "An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States" by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz.

What the sisters learned was not the white-washed version of the history of Native Americans and their relationship with colonists commonly taught in schools. They say there was much information they did not know, and that they thought others might not know either, so they offered to share what they had learned as an enrichment program at their residence.

"The truth of how Indigenous people were treated in Missouri and throughout the United States is painful," says Sister Sue Anne. "An example is the rampant destruction of the mounds in Missouri that were Native Americans' burial grounds and places of worship in St. Louis, which was known as Mound

City in pre-colonial times up to the 19th century. Urban development led to their systematic destruction. Native peoples would come to places the mounds had been and weep."

As they explored the history of Native Americans in Missouri and beyond, the sisters discovered many harrowing stories of their mistreatment by the white settlers, including by William Clark of Lewis and Clark fame, who in his role as head of Indian affairs for the



Sisters Pauline Lorch and Sue Anne Cole

Louisiana territory treated the Indigenous people like animals.

"We didn't know how many residents would be interested in learning about all of this, but they were very responsive," Sister Sue Anne says. "Thirty-four people came to our first session in March, and they said they would come to hear more." Due to the positive response, the sisters held two more talks. They say they have no immediate plans to do more but have not ruled it out for the future.

Of the experience, Sister Pauline says her first joy was in discovering the information herself, the second in the reception she and Sister Sue Anne received in sharing it. As to its relevance, she adds: "Think about what's happening today. Do you see any of this now?"

St. Louis Catholic Sisters express solidarity with immigrants

The Ursulines have joined with 13 other St. Louis area congregations of Catholic sisters in encouraging tolerance and compassion for immigrants through two awareness and prayer campaigns.

In June, the “Welcome the Stranger” campaign was launched with four billboards in prominent highway locations in the St. Louis metro area. The campaign compares the welcoming of Jesus to the welcoming of immigrants. ***“I was an immigrant and you welcomed me.”*** The message, based on the words of Jesus, is taken from the Gospel of Matthew. The four-week campaign will be repeated in new locations later this year.

“Our hope is that the billboards will cause people to reflect on their attitude toward immigrants in light of their religious beliefs,” says Sister Mary Ann Dooling, justice promoter for the Ursulines. “We also want to show solidarity with our immigrant neighbors and let them know we support their just treatment.”

In August, the 14 St. Louis area congregations launched a social media prayer campaign in support of migrants and refugees. Called “Take 2 Today,” the campaign features a two-minute

I was a ~~stranger~~ *an immigrant* and you welcomed me. Matt. 25:35
stlcatholicsisters.org *Jesus*

video of a sister offering a prayer for immigrants each week. Sisters Diane Fulgenzi and Susan Kienzler offered prayers on behalf of the Ursulines. A new video will be posted each Tuesday throughout the fall and

can be viewed at www.facebook.com/ursulinescentralprovince.

You can read more about the St. Louis Catholic Sisters’ stance on immigration at <https://stlcatholicsisters.org/welcome-the-stranger/>.



Sister Susan Kienzler offers a prayer for the “Take 2 Today” video series.

Sisters transition sponsorship of academies to foundation

The feasts of the Ursulines' foundress and her patroness were fitting occasions for the transition of two Ursuline academies from the Ursuline Sisters to the Ursuline Education Foundation (UEF), a lay-led organization formed by the sisters to carry their education mission and ministry into the future.

On Oct. 18, 2024, a mass was held in the 79-year-old Ursuline Academy of Dedham's gymnasium to mark the transition of sponsorship from the Ursuline Sisters to UEF and celebrate the Feast of St. Ursula. Representing the Ursulines were Sister Elisa Ryan, then provincial; Sister Ann Barrett, UEF administrator; Sister Mary Ann Dooling; and Karen Mortillaro, director of mission and identity.

"For most of the school's history, Ursuline Sisters were the administrators and teachers for all of the students of Ursuline," said Elisa Ryan in remarks to those gathered for the ceremony. "In the last 15 years, as there were fewer sisters, sponsorship was transferred from the Northeast Province to the Central Province in 2014, and leadership of the school was passed on to strong, faith-filled lay leaders who have continued to carry the torch of Ursuline education. They have been true servant-leaders, keeping the spirit of St. Angela and the legacy of the Ursuline sisters alive while the sisters have continued to sponsor the school.

"On this momentous occasion, the Ursuline Sisters, who have had the true privilege of nurturing the legacy of Ursuline education, will hand the torch of sponsorship to the Ursuline



John Grimes, UEF canonical steward; Sister Peggy Moore; and Dr. Andrea Shurley, president of Ursuline Academy of Dallas, light candles representing the foundation, the Ursulines and the academy during the sponsorship transition ceremony.

Education Foundation which will ensure Ursuline Academy, Dedham continues to provide quality Catholic education in an environment that challenges the students to grow in faith, knowledge, and respect for self and others, in service with compassion, joy and charity."

On Jan. 29, the 151-year-old Ursuline Academy of Dallas celebrated the transition of sponsorship from the Ursuline Sisters to UEF with a ceremony during the Feast of St. Angela Mass. Sister Peggy Moore, then provincial councilor and now provincial prioress, addressed the crowd amassed in the school's auditorium. She was joined by Sisters Ann Barrett, Lois Castillon and Mary Troy.

"Today we gather to formally acknowledge the sponsorship of

Ursuline transitioning from the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union USA Central Province to the Ursuline Education Foundation. This group of dedicated lay leaders will continue to cultivate the vine of Ursuline education and ensure the Catholic and Ursuline identity continues in a deeply authentic way," she said.

"In gratitude to our foundress, St. Angela Merici, and to Jesus Christ for having been given and granted such grace and gift as to be able to serve according to God's will and to provide for the ministry of Catholic Ursuline education, which we have been privileged to provide at Ursuline Academy, we now transfer our sponsorship, entrusting it to the Ursuline Education Foundation. May you who are found worthy to be true and loving leaders, continue to cultivate the vine of Catholic Ursuline education to ensure the heart of Ursuline education, the Gospel call to mission, and the living spirit of St. Angela Merici is developed and nurtured."

Lay caregivers enhance lives of elderly sisters

It is no secret that religious communities in the United States are growing older and becoming smaller. That holds true for the Central Province Ursulines. When most of our sisters professed their vows, there were enough younger sisters to provide any support needed by the elderly. And up until a few years ago, our sisters still provided much of the care our elderly sisters required.

Today we are blessed to have a small team of devoted lay staff to assure the well-being of our sisters living in assisted-living and skilled-care facilities. They coordinate health care and provide pastoral care. Their roles are varied: you might find one in the emergency room with a sister at midnight and taking another sister to buy a new pair of shoes the next day. They'll tell you more about it. Meet them here:

My name is Sharon Hartman

and I was introduced to the Ursuline Sisters when I started high school in Springfield, Illinois. A change in my dad's work necessitated a move to St. Louis, where I finished my high school education at Ursuline Academy

in Kirkwood, Missouri. My path has crossed with the Ursulines many times over the years.

I have been working for the sisters for almost three years as a medical/pastoral delegate for the St. Louis area. I need to offer a disclaimer before I begin to describe my job. I absolutely believe that God led me to this job. I call the work my avocation!

I'll share with you the various facets of my job. I am a registered nurse and have worked in various health care settings: community, hospital (primarily in psychiatric nursing), and lastly in private duty nursing before becoming part of the Ursuline family with focus on caring for the sisters as they age and their needs and living situations change.

I have developed a great respect for the Ursuline Sisters and their foundress, St. Angela Merici. I have been a part of the ACT II (Angela's Company Today) group learning more about the order's charism and wanting to keep "serviam" front and center in my life.

In my position, I try to visit each of the sisters that I'm caring for one or

more times a week as needed. These sisters live in several different assisted-living and skilled-care settings in the St. Louis area.

One of the things that I love about this job is that no two days are the same. There are some repetitive tasks

I absolutely believe that God led me to this job. I call the work my avocation!

such as shopping for the sister's various needs—food, snacks, personal care items, clothing, etc. There are also diverse needs such as trips to the

emergency room where I advocate for the sisters' needs, explaining procedures and helping with providing after-care plans. When there is a marked change in a sister's health due to hospitalization, surgery or a marked decline necessitating hospice care, I contact family members to keep them updated regarding all changes. When a sister dies, family members are notified, and I maintain communications to update them regarding funeral plans.

As for the spiritual needs of the sisters, I'm very comfortable praying with them, arranging for a priest to visit, talking with sisters regarding their desires, plans for their funeral. I also take some of my sisters for spiritual direction and transport them to their retreat site if needed. There is also a weekly scripture class which I try to attend as often as possible.

I also try to keep the sisters informed about what is happening in the province. I strive to let them know that they are valued and that I love them for their devotion to God and to each other.

My name is Linda Borchardt

and I am the pastoral delegate for the sisters living in Mother of Perpetual Help, an assisted residential community on the grounds of the Archdiocese of St. Louis. I also work with the sisters living in a skilled residential care home



Sisters Pauline Lorch, Nancy Vandever and Ginger Cirone with Sharon Hartman



Sisters Glenda Bourgeois, Madonna O'Hara and Mary Troy with Linda Borchardt

at St. Andrews at Francis Place in Eureka, Missouri, which is about 20 miles from the Provincialate.

I am divorced with three grown sons, two of them twins, and four grandchildren. I live in a home in Sunset Hills but will soon be downsizing to a nearby retirement community. I grew up in South St. Louis, married at 22, had my children at 23 and 25 and was a stay-at-home mom for 25 years.

When I was 46, I decided to pursue a degree in theology, so I have a master's in pastoral studies from Aquinas Institute of Theology. Soon after graduation, I felt that my degree needed to include a bit more emphasis with pastoral care, so I continued with classes in spiritual direction and clinical pastoral experience for chaplaincy at Deaconess Hospital.

Just after I finished my education my husband left, so I went into the work force.

God is Good! My first job was for five years at St. Alban Roe Parish as a pastoral minister focused on adult faith formation. Then I worked at

St. Anselm Parish as a pastoral minister for 16 years. While there, I gained much experience in pastoral care as it was an elderly parish.

After 16 years I felt it was time to move on. As I was browsing the archdiocesan website,

I saw a posting for a part-time position with the Ursuline Sisters. My first thought was this is great as it is just down Sappington Road from my home, no more driving in traffic. Little did I know that I would be driving to Eureka!

It was a frightening decision to leave full-time ministry. I spent quite a bit of time in prayer and discernment and was blessed with the best decision to work with the Ursulines. I began my ministry with the sisters in December 2019.

I cannot begin to describe the abundance of blessings and grace that I have experienced. I am most grateful that many of the sisters refer to me as 'friend.' I spend many days and hours visiting with the sisters, and I learn so much about their families and their life's journey as an Ursuline.

Over the years, my job has included many tasks besides visiting sisters: physically moving the sisters' belongings;

handling admissions for residences, hospitals and hospice care; taking sisters to visit their families; creating a stay-at-home retreat; shopping;

planning liturgies for funerals, memorials and burials; taking sisters to obtain voter identification and to some doctor visits—whatever is needed!

I view my work with the Ursulines as my ministry. When asked how long I would continue working my response was, "until I can no longer do it, because I love what I do."

My name is Debbie Christopher

and I am the health navigator for Illinois and Missouri. I live in Rosewood Heights, Illinois, which is about seven miles from Alton. I have been a nurse since 1982.

I started working as a floor nurse in Bethalto, Illinois, and later was promoted to treatment nurse and assistant director of nurses. With no opportunities for further advancement, I left 25 years later. I worked briefly in a new staff



Debbie Christopher

development position in a long-term facility after which the administrator, who I had worked with at Bethalto, called to let me know there was a position for director of nurses at the Ursuline

Convent in Alton. I was unsure of this, but she urged me to apply. I applied, was interviewed by Sister Pauline and was hired.

I am most grateful that many of the sisters refer to me as 'friend.'

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Lay caregivers continued from page 9

This was a tough job, but oh so rewarding. I had never been around religious sisters, but I was welcomed with open arms. I worked at this position until the convent closed in 2014. This was devastating to so many of us; many tears were shed.

I next went to an Alzheimer's unit and became unit coordinator. I handled staffing and schedules and set up daily activities, but my favorite part was taking the patients out for lunch, bus rides, etc. I held a monthly support group for families dealing with caring for a loved one with dementia. I enjoyed being with them, but I was on call 24/7. Doing this and trying to have a family life became nearly impossible.

In 2018 I got a call from a person asking if I was happy with my current job. I said that it was a 'yes and no' thing. "The Ursulines are looking for a nurse and you should apply," she said.

I called that day to apply and set up an interview. It seemed almost immediately that I was hired as the health navigator for Illinois and Missouri. I started with St. Andrew's as an agency worker just for the Ursuline Sisters. While with them I received two awards for Missouri's nurse of the year. Then the Ursulines hired me directly and I am still here today.

I love this position. I am not a 9-to-5 person, I don't think I could do that again. My office is my car. I set up appointments for the sisters and drive them back and forth. I visit with them and provide education on various health issues. I have shared so many precious moments with the sisters who I get to be with. We have laughed and cried. We have shared some very personal moments together. I feel like we are family sometimes and this is not a job.

I know many people dread getting up and going to work every day. I don't feel this way. Every day is different and sometimes a bit challenging, but when I lay my head down at night, I can truly say that I am blessed to have such an inspiring group of women to care for and be with.

My name is Jessica Morris. I'm originally from Southern California but have lived in Dallas for the last 20 years. I attended Catholic schools from

kindergarten through 12th grade and was taught by the Salesian Sisters and Sisters of Mercy. I went to nursing school and worked mostly in a hospital setting. I sent my three children to Catholic schools from preschool through high school, and I was a nurse in their school for five years.

My daughter attended Ursuline Academy in Dallas where one day I read the newsletter and saw a note about needing someone to help as a health navigator for a couple of the Ursuline Sisters. I was drawn to this work because I did something very similar for my grandmother when I had just finished nursing school and I really loved the quality time I had with her.

I've been working with Sister Ann Mangelsdorf and Sister Mary Troy since October, mainly accompanying them to doctor appointments, visiting and providing pastoral care. I've loved getting to know both ladies, who have been so friendly and kind to me, just a stranger to them. I learned of their request to move to St. Louis in March and traveled with each sister to help them on the trip and in getting settled in their new city. Both sisters are Dallas natives and leaving their families was hard.

I feel like the world doesn't understand or appreciate the commitment that religious people make. They give up a lot to serve their communities for life, and doing this job is for me a small way to show my gratitude for how they have served us in so many ways. They are very special people.



Sister Ann Mangelsdorf with Jessica Morris

Congratulations to our Jubilarians

In 2025 we celebrate the jubilees of 13 of our sisters who have ministered to God's people a total of 835 years. Throughout their years of commitment to Ursuline life and ministries, these daughters of Angela have made a profound impact on the lives of countless individuals.

60th



Sister Paula Hartwig
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Chabanel Mathison
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Elisa Ryan
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Magdalita Roussel
St. Louis, Missouri

50th



Sister Adele Brennan
St. Louis, Missouri

75th



Sister Kevin Ritterbusch
Springfield, Illinois

65th



Sister Carolyn Marie Brockland
New Orleans, Louisiana



Sister Louis Marie Carter
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Ann Mary Hasting
Eureka, Missouri



Sister Nancy Vandever
St. Louis, Missouri



Sister Madonna O'Hara
St. Louis, Missouri

70th



Sister Maria Goretti Hotop
Alton, Illinois



Sister Maria Goretti Bernier
Lewiston, Maine
(died Aug. 24, 2025)



Sister Marcella Savoie
Lewiston, Maine

Reading Roundup

Read a good book lately? Some of our sisters share recent favorites here:

Sister Elizabeth Susan Hatzenbuehler

My favorite book this summer is actually a reread! Some time ago I read “Remarkably Bright Creatures,” by Shelby Van Pelt (2022), a novel about an unlikely friendship between a woman and a highly intelligent octopus named Marcellus. The hidden messages of the novel stayed with me—the mysteries of how our lives are interconnected and the overwhelming richness of what happens if we trust the unfolding of our lives.

Why am I back listening to Marcellus, my octopus friend? Summers have been a rich time in my life, and a most special one was the summer of my entrance into religious life in 1961. I love each summer to sit with the memories of how an 18-year-old from Dallas, Texas, got on a train to St. Louis with a bag of cherries and Agatha Christie’s novel “And Then There Were None.” Final destination: Crystal City, Missouri.

What possible connection is there to Marcellus, you ask? Over and over in succeeding years, I have stumbled across the hidden people on that long but successful trip who were gifts in my life.



Listening to Marcellus encourages me to be ready to recognize the gifts of the hidden people in my life now.

Sister Brendan Jacoby

Imagine yourself as a twice-a-week volunteer in a religious media resource



center where your job is to pull books from shelves, fulfill orders, package and mail desired books, enter returns in the online catalog, and put the media back on the shelf for circulation. The United Methodist churches in a five-state area are served by the resource center where I work on Wednesdays and Fridays.

I had my eyes on a book: “50 Women Every Christian Should Know,” by Michelle DeRusha. Guess what? No online order came in for it, so it was mine to read from July through September, mine to be informed and inspired by these Christian heroines whose well-researched stories span about 900 years. Every one of them, to quote the author: “... turned out to be fallible just like me.”

Sister Adele Brennan

Since I don’t have much time for reading, I have managed to find one



book to enjoy this summer. A few years ago I saw the film “Where the Crawdads Sing.” I saw it with two other sisters who had read the book by Delia Owens, and they told me that the book ends differently. So, I spent a couple of years being curious until I found it at the library in audiobook form. Yes, I’ve taken up “reading” with audiobooks. They allow me to do other things while listening to the story. I really enjoyed this story of an abandoned child, and now that I know how the book ends, I plan to start another audiobook.

Sister Theresa Davey

A favorite book, “Sing for Your Life,” by Daniel Berger, has kept me riveted to my chair, whoops, to my recliner. I am interested in opera, and this book is about Ryan Speedo Green, a world-renowned, African-American bass-baritone singer whose early life was marked with poverty, abuse and instability.

As a preteen, Ryan spent time in a juvenile facility because of his rages. Twelve years later he won a national competition for young singers. Many challenges still confronted him. A shining



light was Mrs. Hughes, an elementary school teacher whose wisdom still guides him. There are heroes and villains, heartbreak and grace. The book explores the culture Ryan grew up in, and the culture of the world of opera and its singers. The subtitle is significant: “A Story of Race, Music, and Family.”

I love to read. Reading transports me to diverse worlds without leaving home.

Sister Jean Hopman

My favorite summer book this year is “The Choice: Embrace the Possible.”



The author, Dr. Edith Eva Eger, is a nonagenarian, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and Holocaust survivor who, after emigrating to the United States in 1949, went on to earn a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and go into private practice.

“The Choice” weaves Dr. Eger’s personal story with case studies from her professional work as a psychologist, where she helps to treat patients experiencing trauma, grief and fear, with a particular focus on military veterans and clinicians.

While it was not light reading, it was most definitely inspirational. I found that her testimony and passion to consistently choose healing helped me see humanity—myself included—through the lens of reconciliation, resilience and freedom that her life exhibits. I recommend this book to anyone who seeks greater insight into their own life choices or simply to expand their appreciation of the human spirit.

Sister Mary Ann Dooling

Father Greg Boyle’s most recent book, “Cherished Belonging,” struck a deep chord in me. It may be that recently I worked on a “culture of belonging” that helped me recognize how important it is to believe you belong and to treat others so they know they belong.

I actually wrote some quotes that really struck me (not the sort of thing I do). I’ll share three of them. “The United States has only five percent of the world’s population but one quarter of its prisoners.” That is a frightening statistic, and I believe the proportions will get worse. The others are affirmations we all need to be reminded of for ourselves as well as for those we disagree with. “God

isn’t hoping for our goodness, since we are already good. God longs for us to see it.” And “Everyone is going to heaven, but God hopes you know heaven is also here and now.” If you never read the book those are good ideas to hold on to.

Another book, “The Sirens’ Call,” by Chris Hayes, who anchors MSNBC’s



“All In with Chris Hayes,” is in many ways very scary but also serves as a wake-up call for all of us. The subtitle, “How Attention Became the World’s Most Endangered Resource,” provides the premise of the book.

Beginning with the story of the sirens in “The Odyssey,” the author traces elements that have been used to distract our attention. Studies have shown that our ability to remain on a particular thought or idea has degraded. Hayes also notes the way that our attention has been monetized. He speaks of an attention capitalism in which what the resource producers are willing to pay for is our attention. In the final chapter, he offers some solutions, but they depend on our willingness to take back our part of the digital world.

Springfield sisters host armchair tour

Last fall the Ursuline Sisters happily participated in a reunion of sorts with two other congregations of Catholic Sisters who have had a major impact on the city and residents of Springfield, Illinois. The Ursulines teamed up with the Dominican Sisters of Springfield and Hospital Sisters of St. Francis to present the “Springfield Sisters Armchair Tour,” a whirlwind trip through the history of the city’s Catholic heritage.

The Nov. 7 event, held at the Dominicans’ motherhouse during National Vocations Week, welcomed the community to join in a celebration of the many ways Catholic Sisters helped shape the city through the institutions they founded and the people they educated. The evening was both nostalgic and inspiring.

Each congregation shared a short video they had produced highlighting

their history and impact on the city and its residents, after which two of their sisters and a person served by that community gave brief presentations and answered questions from the audience.

Springfield natives Sister Rita Ann Bregenhorn and Sister Peggy Moore represented the Ursulines, along with alumna Marianne Stremsterfer.

Although the Ursulines have only three sisters in Springfield now, their legacy is large. Following their arrival in 1857, they founded Ursuline Academy of Springfield and Springfield College while also staffing the parish schools for Blessed Sacrament, St. Joseph, St. Aloysius, and Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic churches. Over the course of 150 years, hundreds of Ursulines educated thousands of Springfield residents whose education helped them to become outstanding citizens of the

world and serve their community in numerous ways.

A special focus of the evening was discussion of the interconnectedness of the three communities and the ways they had supported each other, dating back to 1873 when the Ursulines offered housing to the Dominican Sisters who were just arriving.

Following a lively Q&A session with the audience of sisters, alumni, local dignitaries and other community members, the Dominicans served homemade pies—playing on their vocation theme of “Pray, Invite, Encourage”—to a group who lingered until late to tell stories and share memories of their times with the Springfield sisters.



Sisters Rita Ann Bregenhorn and Peggy Moore chose the former Springfield College as one of the sites for the Ursulines “Springfield Armchair Tour” video.

International Serviam Day

Serviam was alive and well on Jan. 25 as Ursuline schools throughout the world—and the Central Province—participated in the 10th annual International Serviam Day by serving their local communities.

Ursuline academies in Dallas, Dedham and New Orleans and St. Louis planned service projects that enabled students, faculty, alumnae and others to share in meaningful activities of compassionate care in support of their local communities and beyond.

The Central Province Ursulines in St. Louis teamed up with Ursuline Academy-St. Louis for a morning of service at the province offices coordinated by Sister Diane Fulgenzi and academy staff and alumnae Katie Kempf, Nikki Morton Weston and Madi Corsi. More

than 70 volunteers, including nine Ursuline Sisters, made 640 sandwiches and inspirational notes for the St. Vincent de Paul parish sandwich window, more than 100 Valentine cards for residents of Mother of Perpetual Help (including Ursuline Sisters) and 200 bookmarks for Books for STL Kids, in addition to collecting 50 cozy blankets for St. Louis Children's Hospital.

It was a joy-filled day for all Ursuline communities who were carrying on the Ursuline tradition of service among friends old and new.



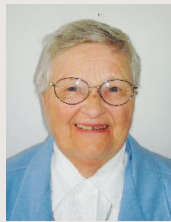
Serviam Day volunteers in St. Louis made 640 sandwiches for the St. Vincent de Paul parish sandwich window.

In Remembrance

“For in heaven a new crown of glory and joy is prepared for all of them, one by one.”

—St. Angela Merici

We remember with gratitude the lives of our sisters who have passed into eternal life since July 2024.



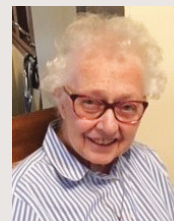
Sister Maria Goretti Bernier
May 7, 1935 –
Aug. 24, 2025
Professed July 16, 1955



Sister Jill Jaeb
July 2, 1942 –
Jan. 16, 2025
Professed Jan. 20, 1963



Sister Margaret Mary Cain
Dec. 6, 1931 –
June 9, 2025
Professed Jan. 16, 1953



Sister Mary Denis Lessard
March 8, 1932 –
July 21, 2025
Professed Jan. 16, 1954



Sister Mary Bridget Haase
June 30, 1942 –
Nov. 19, 2024
Professed Jan. 16, 1962



Sister Ann Marie Owen
Oct. 30, 1938 –
Sept. 5, 2025
Professed Jan. 6, 1959

You can read the sisters' obituaries at www.osucentral.org.

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Sister Susan Kienzler, OSU

***Laurels* Editor**

Susan M. Whelan



St. Angela Icon by Fabio Nones,
Trent, Italy

As Ursulines of the Central Province, members of a worldwide community of Catholic sisters, we are women whose lives and mission are rooted in the gospel of Jesus and the spirit of our foundress, Angela Merici. Grounded and empowered by our relationship with God and with one another, in prayer and community, we seek to be a compassionate, reconciling presence of God in our world.