

TIDINGS

Saint Bede Monastery and Center

A Newsletter from The Sisters of Saint Benedict
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Eau Claire, Wisconsin
FALL 2009

Monastery's Sale Efforts Gain With Realty Firms' Agreement

(Editor's note: The following submitted update by real estate professionals based in Eau Claire and Minneapolis reflects the expanded efforts of the Sisters to find an appropriate buyer for their distinctive buildings and grounds.)

On July 13, 2009, agreements were put in place to proceed with the roll-out of a national scale marketing campaign for the Saint Bede Monastery property at 1190 Priory Road in Eau Claire. Over the course of the next several weeks, various marketing initiatives will be introduced as part of the re-energized effort to secure a buyer and close on a sale, including listing and marketing the property on a local and national basis.

"We all appreciate the wonderful history of Saint Bede Monastery," said David Mickelson, the exclusive listing broker from Century 21 Metro Realty in Eau Claire. "While this property is an important part of the history of Saint Bede, finding and securing a buyer is a step toward the future. Our team will explore all possibilities for a potential buyer while showcasing the property's attributes, potential, and availability locally and nationally."

In June this Benedictine Community, through its local listing broker, David Mickelson, engaged Frauenshuh, Inc., a Minneapolis-based commercial real estate firm, to complete a real estate assessment of the Monastery property. The assessment aimed to develop a more thorough understanding of market conditions, constraints, and opportunities in the process of selling a special-use property. It also identified potential strategies for marketing the property, both locally and nationally.

"The assessment provides a useful framework to guide the sale process," said Sister Michaela Hedican, Saint Bede's Prioress.

Century 21 Metro Realty and Frauenshuh, Inc. have joined forces in a co-brokerage arrangement to add commercial expertise and bolster the creativity, depth, and reach of the monastery sales effort. David Anderson and Sherry Hastings of Frauenshuh's commercial real estate group bring extensive experience to the assignment.

"We believe the sale process will ultimately be a success," said Frauenshuh's David Anderson. "The potential is there for a business, public entity, or institution with a vision similar to the Sisters, to acquire and use this property for a productive venture or service."



*David Mickelson
Century 21 Metro Realty*

The firm's Sherry Hastings added that "We are honored to team with Century 21 Metro Realty and the Benedictine Sisters to facilitate and complete this important sale."

Century 21 Metro Realty and Frauenshuh, Inc. will provide periodic marketing updates and reports to the Saint Bede leadership team to track the progress of their combined efforts.

"We are prepared and excited to begin the team effort in this very important process," said Sister Michaela.



*David Anderson
Frauenshuh's
Commercial Real Estate*



*Sherry Hastings
Frauenshuh's
Commercial Real Estate*



Sister Michaela Hedican,
OSB Prioress

TIDINGS

Saint Bede Monastery
1190 Priory Road
P.O. Box 66, Eau Claire, WI 54702
715-834-3176
sisters@saintbede.org

Editor: James A. Schwartz

Contributors:

Writers: Sisters: Michaela Hedican,
Judith Kramer, Dale Wollum

Others: James A. Schwartz,
Mary Traynor, Dr. Ronald Warloski

Photography: Sisters: Karen Streveler
Judith Kramer

Other: James A. Schwartz

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Monastic Musings — Sister Michaela Hedican, OSB

“Obey your thirst!” This slogan for the soft drink, Squirt, demonstrates how well advertisers know human nature. We all want to fulfill our desires. Listening to our wishes is strongly encouraged by our culture. How fascinating it is that “to listen” is the Latin root word for our English word “obey.”

“Obey” is a word that carries varied overtones and feelings for people in our society. Military obedience is the image many have when the word “obedience” is used. A command is given and is immediately fulfilled. We chafe at the thought of having to respond that way, but the majority of people view obedience in this manner.

St. Benedict broadens and deepens the view of obedience and deems it “a blessing for all” (*Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 71:1*). As described in ***Wisdom from the Tradition, A Statement of North American Women in Response to Our Times***, obedience for St. Benedict has definite characteristics. It is communal, consultative, relational, mutual, and reasonable. For Benedict, we go to God together; therefore, we listen as community, under the guidance of the prioress and the *Rule*, to what God is asking of us. Decisions for St. Benedict are always made in consultation with the prioress, who “holds the place of Christ” in the monastery (*Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 2:2*). The bond between a sister and her prioress is based on mutual respect, the appreciation of gifts and talents, and mindfulness of the common good. If a sister is asked to do what she deems impossible, St. Benedict provides the process by which she is to share this reality with her prioress (*Rule of St. Benedict, Chapter 68*). Together, they review the task, and listening respectfully to each other, they determine what is best for the person and for the common good.

Convinced of the centrality of community, Benedict even includes a chapter in his *Rule* on how mutual obedience to each other is to be practiced (*Chapter 71*).

Most likely, Benedict would agree with the slogan, *Obey your thirst*, since for Benedict, the one and only thirst that matters is the thirst for God. Benedictine obedience is the way to slake that thirst.

PONDERINGS:

What is your view of obedience?

For what do you thirst?

Community Retreat: “Going to God Together”

— Sister Judith Kramer, OSB

During one of the very cool weeks in early June, the monastic community gathered for our annual retreat. Directed by an animated Sister Christine Vladimiroff, Prioress of Mount Saint Benedict Monastery in Erie, PA, and guided by her insights into the Rule of Saint Benedict, we heard her repeat often her mantra, “We go to God together.”

A sacred silence settles in upon a monastery during retreat. Sister Christine reminded us that silence is not so much a discipline as an invitation to listen personally for the voice of God. Silence is a gift that we give to each other. We prepare for a constant flow of conversation with God so that contemplation is something we become, not something we do. Benedict saw God as a community in relationships and that community of God guides and forms us all our lives.



Sister Christine
Vladimiroff

Continued on Page 4

Visit us at: www.saintbede.org

Reaching Out

— Sister Dale Wollum, OSB

□ **Sister Marjorie Hill** and **Jan Dworschak**, liturgy director at the monastery, attended the Benedictine Musicians of America and Monastic Liturgy Forum 2009 during July 13-17 at St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN. Sister



Jan Dworschak

Marjorie, who directs religious education for St. Raymond of Penafort Parish at Fall Creek, WI, also continues to serve as the vocation contact for Saint Bede Monastery.



Sister Marjorie Hill

□ **Sisters Lucy Miller** and **Barbara Weiland**, long-time friends from La Crosse, in June celebrated their 50th Jubilees with Sister Lucy's parents. Sister Lucy in September will begin her tenth year as a substitute teacher in Eau Claire public schools.

□ **Sister Bridget Donaldson**, who also celebrated her Golden Jubilee, was honored by parishioners of St. Elizabeth Seton Church, Holmen, WI, where she serves in pastoral ministry and other areas.

□ **Sister Judy Kramer** again served as a Spanish translator for the Congregation of St. Agnes Sisters for ten days when they gathered during July 15-18 for chapter meetings at Fond du Lac, WI. The order's membership includes about 25 members from Latin America.



Sister Judy Kramer



Four Sisters Celebrate Golden Jubilees

Sisters (from left) Bridget Donaldson, Lucy Miller, Barbara Weiland, and Patricia Ostrander gathered after Mass on Sunday, June 6, in Saint Bede Chapel. Father Tom Donaldson, Sister Bridget's brother, was the celebrant and Sister Michaela shared a reflection.

Students Today, Leaders Forever

— S. Judith Kramer, OSB

On June 24, the Center's large conference room served as a dormitory for 25 recent high school graduates and adult leaders. The weather was wet and stormy, but the "tour group," with the fast growing youth service group, STLF (*Students Today, Leaders Forever*), kept dry and cozy with sleeping bags on the carpeted floor. In the morning, the leaders stirred up a mound of pancakes for breakfast. A wonderful cross section of Hmong, Caucasian, African American, and Native American students ate and shared their hopes for the "tour" of duty. After completing a project in Eau Claire, our guests were headed for work in Chicago.

STLF originated in Minneapolis a few years ago and has rapidly branched to most upper Midwestern states. Their "tours" hook up with pre-arranged local service projects and assist in many different facets of service, including building, repairing, and packing food and supplies.

Funded by grants, gifts, and support from the parents and friends of the participants, they live a simple community life for a week to ten days while putting in full days of service. To date, *Students Today, Leaders Forever* boasts of 131 completed "tours" of service involving 5,073 participants.



Snapshot: Sister Ruth Feeney, OSB



Sister Ruth
Feeney

(Editor's Note: Sister Ruth, who completed her first year as sub-prioress and secretary in June, described her work in those roles and other activities that enable her to reach out to others.)

The sub-prioress assists the prioress in the work of administration and in sharing her care for the community. Along with other staff members she meets regularly with the prioress to discuss immediate concerns and the broad scope of future planning. Maintaining harmony in a monastery is a consequence of respectful relationships. The staff and Monastic Council always consider the common good and involve the total membership in decision making.

The sub-prioress serves on the Monastic Council, Development Committee, and the Development Advisory Council. As secretary, I am also present for the Worship committee. I appreciate the shared wisdom and collaborative work involved with each group. The broad perspective and the multiple details involved in every aspect of leadership energize me.

In a small community, the sub-prioress often assumes other leadership roles. It can be as house coordinator, vocation director, care of the infirm, center director, vocation director, or any other responsibility. As mentioned above, I currently serve as community secretary. I also appreciate work with strategic planning, assisting the elderly at Clairemont Nursing and Rehabilitation, and accompanying Sisters to medical appointments. Holidays and holy days provide opportunities to share artistic skills in helping to arrange chapel environment and do table decorating.

With the above responsibilities I have a limited number of people that I see for spiritual direction. It is a privileged ministry which requires faithfulness to personal reflection and professional preparation. I appreciate some time each day for prayerful pondering of the Scripture, for quiet, and reading. It helps me to be receptive to grace and become a more sensitive listener to others.

Years ago as a primary teacher, and later as director of religious education, I enjoyed creative fun of any kind. Mime and clowning, little productions, and artwork were as much a pleasure for me as for the youth. Age has subdued that energetic creativity. In free moments today I enjoy writing letters and doing reflective journaling, and some poetry. The changing seasons excite me year after year and I never tire of weaving them into my writing. I also appreciate time for reading.

As I consider the challenges that face us in preparing to sell the monastery property and planning for relocation, I am struck by the inherent strength of community members. There is courage, resiliency, and resourcefulness evident in all the Sisters. Mostly there is a quality of prayer that fires hope and carries us forward with confident assurance that God is with us.

As sub-prioress, I am happy to be moving through this time of transition, doing whatever I can to nurture that faith, and assist in whatever capacity is needed.

Community Retreat: "Going to God Together" *Continued from Page 2*

Sister asserts that monastic hospitality, where strangers become friends, is our sacred hallmark because guests are first received and welcomed in community prayer. Hence, Chapter 53 in the Rule of St. Benedict, which deals with welcoming guests, comes immediately after the chapter on the oratory or chapel of the monastery. Only after prayer together are our hearts opened and strangers become friends. We are told that often a guest or stranger may bring a message to us; the stranger may have something to teach us.

On the final days of retreat, Sister Christine gave an insightful reflection on Chapter 72 of the Rule pertaining to good zeal. This next to the last chapter she labeled, "Reading the Rule Backwards!" In the prologue to the Rule the patriarch asks, "Who of you seeks everlasting life?" and in Chapter 72 he writes this blessing, "and may he bring us all to everlasting life." Here is the design for a new society, a new pattern of relationships, where good zeal is propelled and sustained by love. Curiously, in this original chapter from Benedict, all three Latin terms for love appear: filios, eros, and caritas. Filios is the devotion and full dedication to God our Father. Eros is the heartfelt love and affection members have for the abbot/prioress and for each other. Charity is the resulting action poured out when we realize how deeply we are loved and cherished by God. These are the elements of good zeal "which keep one from vice and lead to God and eternal life."

A refreshing, prayerful week it was! May our call to a Monastic Vocation continue to comfort and challenge us all who seek this God who awaits us in everlasting life.

Book Talk — Dr. Ronald Warloski



It has been a long adjustment, living in the secular world. But with time and help, the adjustment was made. Then in the recent past, something basic changed. Earlier Catholics could expect tolerance at least, just a few rantings about the evils of Church. What was new was a crusade against religion and the Catholic Church in particular. The DaVinci Code, The Golden Bough series, Christopher Hitchens, Stephen Hawkins, and some TV personalities are a few examples. How large a crusade I don't know. But it is very loud in popular culture. (By the way, the DaVinci Code is not just a novel. The author publicly stated that the fundamental corruption of the Catholic Church was fact and based on research his wife did.)

Ignoring it all is a way of coping. But there are times that my mind and spirit get weary of it all and need some assuaging. At first, I could only find books refuting the assertions being put forward about no God and evil church. I wanted a book to reinforce my ability to function in a secular world and not get paranoid. Such a book is: **The Shattered Lantern: Rediscovering a Felt Presence of God** by Ronald Rolheiser (Crossroads, 2004). He analyzes our American culture, which has little or no sense of the presence of God, and offers insight into how to deal with it. A bit heavy, this tome.

On a different note, Randy Pausch, a man dying of pancreatic cancer, wrote **The Last Lecture** (Hyperion, 2008). It was written by a man with awareness of who he is and what really matters in life. It's a "this is what I learned by living fullest and these are the lessons I want to leave my children" book. It's a love story of life with his wife and children, his profession and students. It is deeply spiritual in the best sense. I was very moved. I would have loved to have known him.

Travel and adventure books are a passion of mine. Joyce Rupp's, **Walk in a Relaxed Manner** (Orbis Books, 2005) is the story of a 37-day pilgrimage along the Camino de Santiago in Spain to the alleged tomb of St. James. It's a well written tale of adventure and self-discovery, the joy and misery of the Camino trek. For my taste, it was a bit too preachy about lessons learned. But I still enjoyed walking the Camino with her.

Registered Nurses Seek Degrees With Sister Margaret Michaud

Multi-tasking and time management have always marked the activities of Sister Margaret Michaud, who spent 20 years as prioress for her community. Since 2008 she has worked at the Sisters' Unit at Clairemont and also been coordinator of the Benedictine Lay Associates Program.

This fall she will begin her 15th year as an instructor in the Diocesan School of Biblical Studies, a rigorous four-year course which meets at Saint Bede Center and other sites in the La Crosse Diocese.

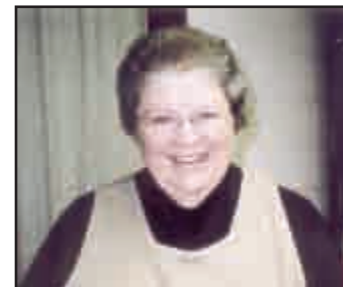
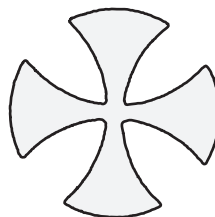
During spring, Sister also began teaching a philosophy course for registered nurses for Viterbo University, La Crosse. The Returning Nurse Program provides practicing nurses with an opportunity to earn a degree. To accommodate their work schedules, that course, titled "Philosophy of the Human Being," is taught on Tuesday mornings for seven weeks at the Chippewa Valley Technical College in Chippewa Falls.

In July, Sister Margaret continued the nurses' studies by beginning a course titled "Religions of the World."

Sister Margaret, who celebrated her Golden Jubilee in 2004, spent three years teaching primary grades in diocesan schools. She also taught mathematics for ten years at Regis High School in Eau Claire. Sister holds a bachelor's

degree from the College of St. Benedict at St. Joseph, MN, where she later taught summer courses. She also holds an MS in mathematics from the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN, and completed all but dissertation requirements toward a PhD in philosophy at Marquette University, Milwaukee.

Sister later won a Bush Leadership Fellowship that she used to complete a master's degree in theology at St. John's University, Collegeville, MN. A former president of the Federation of Saint Benedict, Sister Margaret has studied or done research at other universities, and from 1993-96 taught courses in philosophy and religious studies on Viterbo's La Crosse campus.



Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB

A Sacred Six Years

Reflections on serving the Federation

— Sister Michaela Hedican, OSB

Kind and generous friends made it possible for me to successfully complete two graduate programs without ever typing a graduate paper. A number of years ago, a friend suggested a trip to Ireland, and I turned it down since I am a homebody and the thought of traveling brought me much anxiety. Then a phone call came about 9 a.m. on March 10, 2003, asking if I would consider allowing my name to be included in a list of prospective nominees for Federation President. Thus began an amazing journey of broadening my horizon as I traveled around the world. It also began a journey of accruing new skills, as I learned to type, use a computer, work with budgets, and wend my way through office routines.

By far, the greatest gift of these six years as President of the Federation of St. Benedict was the inspiration that came from getting to know the Sisters of the Federation. Spending time with them, learning from them, praying with them, and growing closer to them with each visit, was a profound experience of what it means to have Benedictine Sisters all over the world who share a love for an ancient

heritage. The bonds between the 12 monasteries of the Federation attest to its purpose as stated in our document, **With Hearts Inclined**: “To provide mutual support and to maintain and extend the Benedictine charism among contemporary Benedictine women.”

Visiting all of the communities at least three times for a visitation, election or installation, provided the opportunity to celebrate with each community. It was a delight to experience the similarities we share as we live by the *Rule of St. Benedict*. On the other hand, it was a joy to realize the strength of our autonomy, as each community had a variation on how they celebrated similar events.

Often, as I visited one of the monasteries founded by Saint Benedict’s Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota, I was overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude for the heritage that has been handed on to a variety of cultures. There are many ways of being Benedictine, even as we share the same *Rule* and the desire to seek God.



Sister Michaela Hedican, OSB

Center Invites Overnight Stays For Funeral, Hospital Visitors

In seeking to expand their charism of hospitality, the Sisters are offering use of Saint Bede Center to those needing overnight accommodations while in town to attend funerals or visit loved ones in local hospitals and hospices.

A new brochure, prepared by Administrative Assistant Mary Traynor, cites the Center’s “simple, peaceful” atmosphere and “supportive, caring Sisters and staff” in welcoming overnight stays by individuals and families. Among amenities:

- Accommodations for up to 30 persons in comfortable, modestly priced single and shared rooms.
- Meals and snacks (optional)
- Meeting rooms of various sizes
- Use of the Center’s library, the Monastery’s chapel, and the network of walking trails on the property.

Bob Lesniewski, among planners for expanded uses of the Center, says the brochure has prompted positive reactions from local funeral directors and health care organizations that he has visited.

“Accommodations at the Center work especially well for families not affiliated with a church to spend time together,” he said. “They also can pray in Saint Bede Chapel, share a meal – even have a picnic on the grounds.”

For more information, or to make arrangements, contact the Center at (715) 834-8642, e-mail at center@saintbede.org, or visit the Sisters’ website – sisters@saintbede.org.



Developments

— James A. Schwartz, Director of Development

God Provides Many Hands In Guiding Sisters' Decisions

As Wisconsin's colorful autumn season approaches, the Sisters look toward their future as a monastic community with prayer, hope, and thankfulness for the various gifts of many friends. Although older and fewer today, the Sisters continue their Benedictine tradition of prayer and work, and extending hospitality to others as though they were Christ.

The Sisters continue to take an ecumenical approach in extending welcome to others who join them for prayer in Saint Bede Chapel or enjoy the comforting serenity of Saint Bede Center, a welcoming site for group or individual spiritual and learning activities. As conditions permit, the Benedictines also continue to be active in ministries and services that touch lives in this area and beyond.

As the Sisters seek God's guidance in planning their future, they count among their blessings the sharing of many friends – donors, Lay Associates, volunteers, advisers, and others.

The cover story in this newsletter marks the most recent major transition for this community, which established a permanent Benedictine presence in Eau Claire in 1948. Through the years the Sisters have owned and operated schools, a hospital, and a care facility for women. They have pursued learning and provided leadership in a variety of professional fields.

Today, this 29-member community, once numbering about 112 Sisters, again seeks God's guidance as they prepare for the next phase of their Benedictine vocations. Among blessings already received are their many friends, who in various ways, continue to journey with them. Thank you!



James A. Schwartz
Director of
Development

Advisory Council Members Offer Perspectives on Planning

As our new fiscal year unfolds, it is appropriate to recognize the efforts of many friends in the ministries and services of the Sisters. The following Council members, including those who have stayed on beyond their normal terms, are continuing sources of caring friends. Many others also have contributed as Lay Associates, event and mailing volunteers, donors and in other capacities to another successful fundraising year at Saint Bede's. Among them are members of the Development Advisory Council. They also are sources of generosity, participation, and encouragement to us all. During these challenging times for the Sisters, their listening ears and helpful suggestions have made a difference here. Their advice often is linked to knowledge and experience gained from their professional and personal backgrounds. We greatly appreciate their service and offer thanks to the following members:

- **Mary Kay Bissell** – Retired English Teacher, Regis High School; Coordinator of the Meal Ministry for Newman Parish.
- **Sue Chilson** – Co-owner Chilson Motors whose family actively supports Regis High School.
- **Rev. Bill Dhein** – Current pastor of Sacred Heart/St. Patrick's Parish.
- **Matthew Hubler** – Retired chief executive of Sacred Heart Hospital, Eau Claire.
- **Joann Klink** – Active in Land Stewardship Group; Phoenix Park Labyrinth; Commissioned Minister-Spiritual Guidance, First Congregational Church, UCC.
- **Tom Koziol** – Co-owner of Thomas Video Studio with wife Terry.
- **Dan Langlois** – Asst. Director, UW-EC Recreation Department; Leader in Diocesan Round Hill Project.
- **Jane Mueller** – Cantor at St. Raymond's Penafort Parish, Fall Creek; Member, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors.
- **Jane Pichler** – Active at St. Joseph's Parish, Rock Falls, Co-owner of Pichler Family Farms & Construction Co.
- **Mary Rosolack** – Employee at Eau Claire County Court House, Saint Bede mailing volunteer.
- **Drew Ryberg** – Attorney, Ryberg & Happe, SC, Eau Claire.
- **James Smith** – Former Owner, Smith Insurance Agency, Inc., Eau Claire.
- **Diane Spinucci** – Property Manager, Packer Mini Storage; Executive Committee, United Cerebral Palsy.

UPCOMING CENTER EVENTS

- **Sept. 11-13:** Diocesan Deacon Retreat
- **Sept. 18-19:** Annual Fall Continuing Education for Deacons
- **Sept. 26:** Diocesan School of Biblical Studies
- **Oct. 3:** Diocesan Writing Workshop for Deacons
- **Oct. 6:** Religious Education Teacher in Service/Certification Evening
-- **Fr. Tom Krieg, presenter, "The Eucharist"**
-- **sponsored by the Chippewa Valley Deanery Directors of Religious Education**
- **Oct. 17-18: Marriage Encounter Weekend**
- **Oct. 24 and Nov. 21:** Diocesan School of Biblical Studies
- **Dec. 4-5: Advent Retreat**
-- watch for details!

Are you part of an organization, committee or support group looking for a place to hold your meetings, workshops or retreats? Consider Saint Bede Center - peaceful, private accommodations in a natural setting - perfect for accomplishing the task at hand. Let us be your host. **Call us at 715-834-8642**



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FALL 2009

BITS AND CENTER PIECES



– Sister Judith Kramer, OSB

“A plan to be carried out in the fullness of time” – Ephesians 3:10. Scripture often refers to a future event which will take place when all things fall into place as “the fullness of time.”

Though there is no “for sale” sign staked in our front yard, we have the gears in motion to sell our property and buildings. With undeniable facts, solid numbers, and our current reality, we have bolstered our decision to sell with years of daily prayer. This decision has created a challenge for me and the staff of Saint Bede Center – one we undertake with gratitude for all that has been and with hope as we enter an undetermined future. How long can we continue to operate as a retreat and conference center? We have been told that the process of sale and transfer could take a couple of years or longer. Hence, our plans are to proceed as usual through 2009-2010 and perhaps beyond. We are very grateful for all of our patrons and supporters and we are already looking forward to an active year with a healthy

variety of programs booked into the fall and winter. As we wait for “the fullness of time” we will continue to welcome our friends with returning programs and assist in developing new programs. We are moving ahead with business as usual, sincerely hoping that our legacy of “open doors, welcome to our space” will continue at 1190 Priory Road.

Guests often comment on a spirit of quiet, respect, and even sanctity, that they sense here at Saint Bede Monastery and Center. Over the years, many guests who have attended a structured program return for a time of personal enrichment. Women’s groups, especially the quilters, sewer, and knitters, often book their next session before they leave.

One frequent facilitator says rather directly, “We’ll keep coming as long as you let us come.” And we will indeed host you and your group at Saint Bede Center as long as we can. When the fullness of time does arrive, we will communicate that to you, but in the meantime, our doors are open and you are welcome! See you soon!