



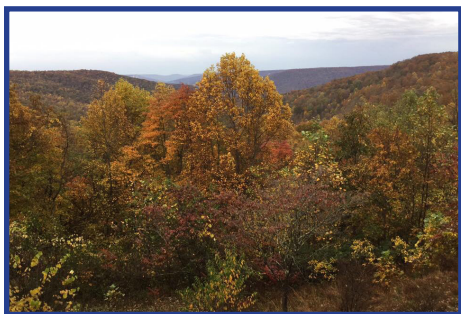
THE COMMUNITY OF ST. MARY
SOUTHERN PROVINCE
THE MESSENGER



Volume XXVII, Issue 2

Advent 2018

Fall is well on its way. The leaves are colored rust, gold, and scarlet. The fog, the winds, and the changing temperature tell us that fall is coming to an end and winter is soon to begin.



How appropriate for Advent, when we ponder endings and beginnings, life, death, the end of time and the beginning of God's kingdom on earth! Just recently we've also celebrated Thanksgiving, a day when families celebrate together and give thanks for all that we have been given. Perhaps that, too, is something we should think about as we begin Advent and our journey towards Christmas and New Year's.



Undoubtedly, some people are mourning losses; others are inspired by hope for the future, and still others are caught in the middle, uncertain about their futures. Where are we on that spectrum? What do we have to be grateful for? What losses do we mourn? What uncertainties haunt

us? Advent is a time when we should reflect on our lives and consider in whom or in what our hope depends. We should assess our commitments and our priorities and how those things are aligned with our desires.

Often times in Advent, we envision a better world, a world of justice and love, where natural enemies- like wolves and lambs- live in harmony, and where weapons like swords are refashioned into tools for growth and nourishment- plowshares.



Given who we are now, how can such a vision be possible? We know that it cannot be realized without God's grace, but it also cannot be realized without our participation. We have been called, through our baptism and Jesus' incarnation, to work for the reconciliation of the world to God. That reconciliation begins with us, with our desires, our willingness to work for peace within ourselves and with our neighbors.

Bonhoeffer might challenge us today to go beyond "cheap grace" and to accept the costly participation that re-creation requires of us: conversion of life, seeking peace as one of our deepest desires and commitments, and learning to love even our enemies.

Where will such actions lead? We will never know that until we invest in God's desire for all of us, a desire that we are invited to usher in by becoming God's hands and feet in the world that he so loves.

May our meditations help us to see our lives and the lives of others more clearly. May we so align ourselves with the grace and love that God showers on us daily that we may become a blessing to all we encounter, and await Christ's coming with open and grateful hearts.

"So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heav'n. No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin, Where meek souls will receive Him still the dear Christ enters in." ("O Little Town of Bethlehem" #78 in the 1982 Hymnal).

Sr. Madeleine Mary, CSM



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Associate News

Dear CSM Associates,

Advent blessings!

September was the month when we remembered our Sisters and Associates, along with other saints, who offered hope and help through caring for others in Memphis during the yellow fever epidemic. Sr. Madeleine Mary and our Oblate, Karen DeBruler, were at the Cathedral in Memphis this year, representing "all of us", and offering hope and help through participating in the health fair across from the Cathedral on September 8. We admitted four new Associates on the Feast of Constance and Her Companions, September 9. They are: Gerri Endicott, Laura Gettys, Celia Jeffrey, and Maureen Woodruff.



Celia Jeffrey, the Rev. Dr. Jo Ann Barker, and Sr. Elizabeth, CSM

We have been blessed to have Associates who live nearby join with us to offer hope and help through: the daily round of prayer, the making of jams, the harvesting and planting of lavender, the polishing of brass, ... I know that each of you is offering hope and help in the world through living your rule based on love.

Our Contemplative Prayer Service in November focused on "The Progress

made in Tennessee for The Care of all Creation." The Community also offered a workshop earlier in November on "Caring for the Caregiver." I encourage you to examine your Associate's rule this Advent; don't forget during this busy holiday season to love and to care for yourself, along with all creation.

I'd like to share with you some words from Sister Mary Anselm, CSM on the coming of our Lord: "And when he cometh in his joy, the hills begin to sing; the bluff and all the mountains near break forth unto the King. The little trees of field and hedge will clap their twisted hands and follow on to meet him with the joy that Love commands. For all creation travaileth until on Christmas night, The Lowly Christ is born again—each heart his manger bright."

May you be filled with the joy that comes from the Son of Peace—Sister Elizabeth, CSM

Please send me your email address, if you have one. Mark your calendar for our Silent Retreat June 13-16, 2019.



Sr. Elizabeth Grace, CSM

Continuing Service



Sr. Ines CSM

graves at the cemetery. They also had an early morning memorial service the following day for all the faithful departed. Attendees brought candles which were lighted in church during the service.

On November 1st, at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in the Philippines, Sr. Ines attended the necrological service and the blessing of the

St. Matthew's Church, Banga'an has a new priest, the Rev. Milagros Ordinario. Sr. Mary Zita's family is from Banga'an.

Father Constancio Na-oy was re-elected as the rector of St. Mary the Virgin in Sagada. He was installed on July 21st. He will serve this church for another five years.

Sr. Ines participated in an outreach meeting regarding how to use funds from Australia donated to the Sisters. They chose to buy some groceries and distribute them to families with handicapped children living around Sagada.



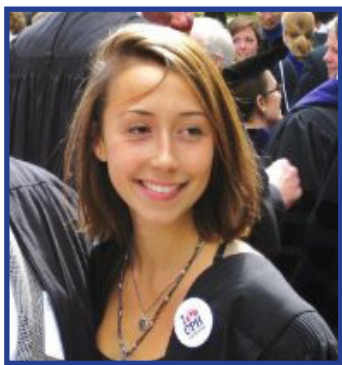
Sr. Mary Martha, CSM

Sr. Mary Martha is adjusting well to Assisted Living in Whitwell, TN. Two Episcopalians, one Lutheran and one Methodist live among mostly Baptists at Valley View Assisted Living. Sr. Mary Martha and these three attend a weekly Eucharist at Valley View, thanks to the outreach of Christ Church, South Pittsburg. A room near Sr. Mary Martha has been set aside as a chapel. Residents can go to the chapel when they need some quiet time with God; the weekly Eucharist is also held in this chapel. Sr. Mary Martha attends Christ Church one Sunday each month.

Sister uses her hands as instruments of outreach: to paint cards, to help feed some of the residents, to knit and to crochet. She uses her conversation to bring humor and laughter to her new community of brothers and sisters.

She recently spent three weeks, including Thanksgiving, with her son and his family in Maryland.

Reflection on St. Mary's by Eileen Schaeffer



Eileen Schaeffer

"What are you going to do after graduation?"

This question plagues seniors their spring semester, and I was no exception. As an academic who loved school and didn't want to stop learning, the end of my undergraduate career at Sewanee was a trying time for me. All my professors warned me to be careful about going straight to graduate school without some sort of assistantship lined up. Others encouraged me to start job applications in the winter while others still advised me to live in the moment during this bittersweet time.

As a timely student and one who thrived on a schedule, I thought that finding a career or assistantship well before graduation would be "a piece of cake." However, as May approached I found myself paralyzed with the abundance of possibilities for my post-grad life. I waffled. I wondered. I froze.

I was a mess. Life was moving too fast and all I wanted to do was slow down and smell the roses. I remember on one particularly confused senior Sewanee day, I took a drive down 41A. For whatever reason, I turned onto St. Mary's Lane, found a place to pull over, and walked out towards the bluff. In striking contrast to the scattered, anxious thoughts that had been plaguing me, peace swept over me. I remember that moment so specifically. Clarity amidst the confusion. Definitely God speaking to me in his gentle, patient

way... well, He had been speaking to me all along- I was just too consumed with fearful thought to listen.

There is no rush. There is nowhere you need to be but right here now. Quite literally, in fact, for right there at St. Mary's Benedictine Convent, I would find my home for the next year.



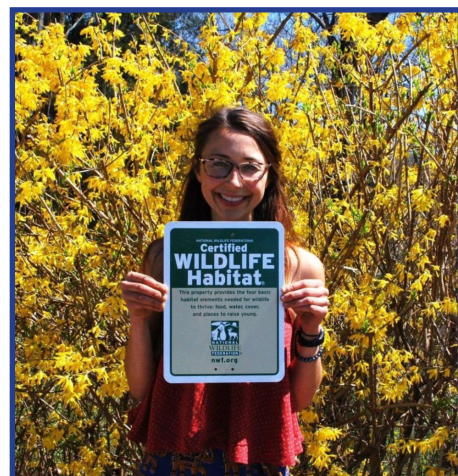
Convent chapel

I suppose you could say I was one of the founding members of the Organic Prayer Program (OPP), but it took many adventurous, inspired folks to make it all happen. Shortly after finding that moment of clarity on the bluff, things began to fall into place for me. I knew that I had a passion for gardening and I knew I needed to slow down and reconnect with God. That's all I really needed to say yes to an experimental year of developing an internship program centered around the Benedictine motto of work and prayer.



Eileen cooking at St. Dorothy's, the interns' house

It brings me so much joy to know that the Organic Prayer Program is going strong 5 years after its creation. I still draw upon my experience with the Sisters and attribute my (mostly) calm, stable demeanor despite life's inevitable turbulence to my time there. I also attribute my work ethic, my spiritual connection to plants, and seemingly limitless sense of wonder for God's creation to the OPP. I currently work as an Herbalist, Nutritional Therapy Practitioner, and am receiving my Masters of Agribusiness at the University of Georgia as I research medicinal herb production at UGA.



Eileen Schaeffer

In conclusion, I'll share a snippet of an article I wrote to promote the OPP a few months into the program. It pretty much sums up what time has confirmed:

"The unifying element to all of our duties is earthly stewardship. When we slow down, work outside all day and then happily eat the fruits of our labor, both literally and figuratively, our entire life becomes a prayer. This is the lifestyle we are striving for, and the Organic Prayer Project is giving us the tools to achieve that goal."





The Rev. Diane Moore with Subdeacon Penny, The Convent Dog

Photo credit: Dr. Victoria Sullivan

When I first moved to Sewanee, Tennessee eleven years ago, I had to decide about a place of worship—an Episcopal place, of course. On alternate Sundays the first year, I attended Otey Episcopal Church in Sewanee and Epiphany Church in Sherwood, Tennessee. At the latter church, I met Sr. Lucy, prioress of St. Mary's Convent at Sewanee who, upon learning I was a deacon, promptly said, "You read the Gospel." Oh, I thought, here is a formidable authority.

Shortly after this encounter, a friend told me about a trip to Iona, an island off the coast of Scotland, that Sr. Lucy had organized and led. It seems that the friend's priest husband, who had Parkinson's Disease, was nearly mute when he and my friend decided to make the trip. He, who had once been able to project sermons and readings in a booming, eloquent voice, had been unable to participate in religious services for several years. However, at a service in the chapel on Iona, Sr. Lucy turned to him and repeated the same words she had said to me: "You read the Gospel." The priest's wife was mortified, thinking he'd step up to the lectern and be unable to say anything. She hid her face in her hands and was startled to hear her husband begin the reading in

his former booming voice. Without a pause, he read through the entire Gospel in that same timbre, then sat down to resume silence. His wife said that thereafter he never read again. "It was a miracle," she said, "and Sr. Lucy brought it forth."



"Perfect Love Liberates"

Photo credit: Dr. Victoria Sullivan

That story of this miracle, called forth through Sr. Lucy, led me to the chapel at St. Mary's Convent, and I've worshipped there for ten years now—serving as deacon at times, preaching once a month, raising money for outreach to Haiti, participating on the Board until this year when my term expired, and remaining in relationship with the Sisters. Sr. Lucy and Sr. Margaret have died; Sr. Julian and Sr. Miriam have moved to Ecuador; Sr. Mary Martha is now resident in assisted living quarters, and only Sr. Madeleine Mary, Sr. Elizabeth, and Sr. Mary Zita remain, along with the junior professed Sr. Hannah. People at Sewanee often ask me why I worship at St. Mary's, and I tell them "because it's a 'thin place', and I need to be in a thin place." And the next question they pose: "What's a thin place?"



"A Thin Place"

Photo credit: Dr. Victoria Sullivan

A thin place is a Celtic term meaning a place in time where the space between earth and heaven is thin, and we're

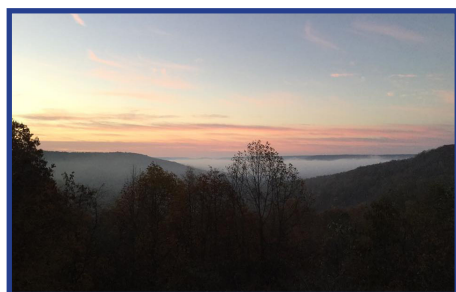
able to encounter the sacred more easily. And, of course, it's a place where we see the discipline of prayer enacted through the Sisters, where we can cleanse the "devices and desires of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" daily. At St. Mary's I'm able to contemplate the concept of Co-inherence that I've pondered for 58 years, since my first child was born and I was given a copy of Charles Williams' *Descent Into Hell*.

Co-inherence is a compelling concept that embraces 1) Exchange, or the process of living with each other by sharing tasks and responsibilities; 2) The Doctrine of Substituted Love in which people literally bear one another's burdens through actions of love; and 3) romantic theology in which all worldly aspects of love reflects heavenly love and directs the lover toward God.

In 1989 I was reading Julian of Norwich and came across the sentence: "You are the ground of my beseeching," and by some transmittal of what I called a peak experience, the words were altered in my mind to: "I am the ground of your beseeching." I got up, went to my desk, and wrote the only rhyming poem I've ever written that became a song composed by a good friend in New Iberia. It was my call to practice Co-inherence...as a deacon. The poem: "O Lord, I am the ground of your beseeching/ the mind of your parable and teaching,/ O Lord, I am your miracle clearly seeing/ the Truth written in faithful being,/ I am the arm of your healing,/ the song and poem of your feeling,/ the heart that suffers ever sharing,/ your will inflamed to ever caring;/ O Lord, in your love I am/ wondrous part of the great I am." Somehow, that rhyming verse enters my mind each time I'm at St. Mary's, and I can only conclude that it is the thin space that calls forth this canticle of faith.

At 5 a.m. many Thursdays during my sojourn on The Mountain at Sewanee, I'm reluctant to get out of bed, grouching loudly and dressing in

darkness so that I can attend Morning Prayer and Eucharist at St. Mary's Convent...yet hoping that I can enter into that thin place and moments of visions of God at the altar while experiencing a better mood than the one with which I got out of bed. Once I arrive at the chapel and see Penny, the sub-deacon dog, I'm chastened by her show of faith, curled in a basket at the side of Sr. Madeleine Mary, the prioress. Through the chapel window, I look at a heavy mist swirling above the valley below and envision it as the cloak of God about to be taken off so he can reveal himself to us drowsy worshippers inside.

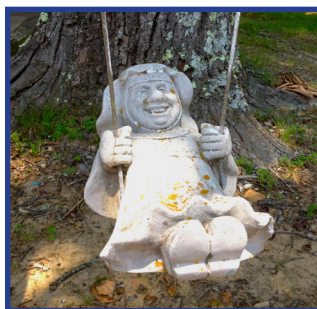


Sunrise at the convent

Within moments, I'm engaging in the services where the "boundary shattering work of inclusion," as Bennett Sims calls it, takes place... where I continue to learn to expand the circle of compassion that is practiced in this place. I again realize that at the heart of all worship at the Convent is prayer, the experience in which God draws us into the whole world to participate in its transformation and the idea that perfect love liberates.

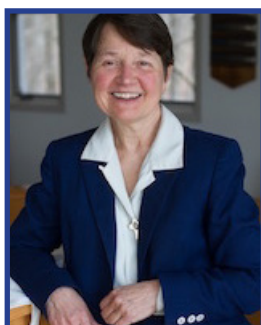
This reflection is perhaps an odd way of bringing the mind into the heart — and from that heart continuing my financial and spiritual support of St. Mary's Convent here at Sewanee, but whatever form the reflection has taken, I share it with you, hoping that you'll consider or continue supporting the work and worship in this thin place on The Mountain where ordinary lives are so transfigured. I invite you to open your hands — in prayer — and support — to join others at the altar, hoping that by surrender

and selflessness, all of us can come closer to becoming, not an ascetic or pietist or mystic, but a part of the goodness needed in our oh-so-broken world today.



Sisters of Convent of St. Mary Swing
Photo credit: Dr. Victoria Sullivan

Sr. Madeleine Mary Shares News from CSM



Sr. Madeleine Mary, CSM

Since July we have been on an intentional mission to help the Episcopal Church know that religious orders do exist in our church and that we can be a spiritual resource for them. Too often we have heard people say, "Oh, I didn't know that the Episcopal Church has religious orders." Some people will not even believe it when you tell them the truth- too much fake news? Who knows, but please spread the word. Almost every weekend, in addition to our regular services here, we have reached out to churches and other groups to increase awareness, help us grow, and improve support for communities, especially our own. You may not know it, but we are the oldest Episcopal religious order in the U.S., and we hope to continue our mission and witness for some time to come.

Sr. Hannah helped that cause July

14-15 at All Saints Episcopal Church in Franklin, N.C. where she made a presentation on Episcopal nuns, preached on Sunday and spoke about monasticism at their adult forum. Later in August, she also preached at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Asheville, N.C.



Sr. Hannah, CSM at All Saints Episcopal Church

Sr. Elizabeth, similarly, led a quiet day for the women of St. Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church, Fayetteville, TN.



Sr. Elizabeth, CSM, Sr. Madeleine Mary, CSM, with some of the women from St. Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church

Sr. Elizabeth later introduced new college students to the Community at the Interfaith Fair at the University. In September, we again introduced the Community to new Bonner leaders, when 50 of them came to work in our convent and gardens.



Bonner leaders volunteering in the garden

Again in November, we welcomed the Alpha Delta Theta sorority to our property and enjoyed working with them in our lavender fields.

September, of course, is also when we have our annual pilgrimage to Memphis, which thanks to our Associate, Dr. Susan Nelson, the cathedral, and other organizations, turned out to be a wonderful experience of ministry in the local community.



Elmwood Cemetery, Memphis, where Sr. Constance and her companions are buried

Remembering the Sisters' work with those suffering from the yellow fever epidemic, we participated with over 300 people in a health fair in the park across from the cathedral.



Sr. Madeleine Mary, CSM volunteering at the health fair in Memphis

The cathedral also offered a wonderful concert on the Martyrs of Memphis, held an adult forum dealing with moments of compassion and how they were "paid forward," preached a moving sermon on modern martyrs, and hosted a picnic and a service at the grave of the Martyrs; Sr. Madeleine Mary and other Associates were happy to play roles in all these activities.

Carol Snowdon Morris, another Associate, even hosted a lovely dinner and reception at her home in which Sr. Madeleine Mary was able to introduce other members of the cathedral to our ministries, Associate rules, OPP internship, and other program offerings. On Sunday, three new Associates were received during the service.



Sr. Madeleine Mary, CSM receiving the new Associates at St. Mary's Cathedral in Memphis

Later that month, Sr. Hannah and Sr. Madeleine Mary attended the DuBose Lectures, and Sr. Hannah managed an informational table in order to share information about the Community and its ministries with visitors. In October, Sr. Elizabeth led a workshop on the Anglican Rosary at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Shelbyville, TN, and Sr. Madeleine Mary gave a presentation on Mary Magdalene for the ECW of St. Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, TN.



Sr. Elizabeth CSM leading a workshop at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer

All of these visits to parishes helped Episcopalians become more familiar with the Sisters and their work. Hopefully, they also benefited the parishioners by the Sisters' ministry.



Sr. Madeleine Mary, CSM leading a presentation at St. Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church

In addition to these visits, the Community also offered a number of programs at the convent: contemplative prayer services dealing with water justice, how exposure to nature improves mental health, and how some local environmental achievements are being made in Tennessee. Sr. Hannah led a workshop on health concerns that can be caused by sleep issues and what habits can improve one's sleep.

In November she also partnered with Wall Wofford of "Folks at Home," Dr. Cynthia Crysdale, Dr. Lane Price, and Fran Gray, to offer a program focused on caring for caregivers in long-term care situations, especially caring for elderly and dying family members. By such programs, we hope to help and support people in our region who are suffering with health issues themselves or caring for those who do.



Dr. Lane Price, Sr. Hannah, CSM, Dr. Cynthia Crysdale, and Fran Gray

Of course, the Community is particularly known for its hospitality and this ministry frequently takes different forms: welcoming visiting groups to our property, like June Mays' group that toured our labyrinth in July or the women's groups from St. David's Episcopal Church in Roswell,



*Sr. Hannah, CSM with a group from
St. Philip's Episcopal Church*

Georgia, and St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Nashville that toured the convent and listened to presentations on the Community's ministries given by Sr. Hannah.

In October, the Companions of the Holy Cross held their monthly meeting at the convent. And in August and November respectively, the Sisters prepared farewell parties for Eva Bogino, our summer intern, and for Alice Ramsey, our Oblate.



*Summer intern
Eva Bogino*

*Kayla Deep with
Alice Ramsey*



They, likewise, in September, expressed their thanks to three Advisory Board members - the Rev. Diane Moore, Dr. Victoria Sullivan, and Dr. Bill Davis- at a dinner party, as they retired from the Board. We wish them well as they enjoy a little more time for personal rest and relaxation.

All of these events indicate the on-going ministry of the Community. But

of course, it's steady work of prayer and service is only possible because of the many ways people engage with us.

We were grateful to Bishop John Bauerschmidt's visitation with us on October 23rd, and for his offer to help us in the ways we then mentioned.



*The Rt. Rev. John Bauerschmidt
with the Community*

We also rejoiced when Sr. Mary Zita's family visited us and showed their obvious love and support of Sister Mary Zita as she moves closer to her homecoming with God.



Sr. Mary Zita, CSM with family

In November, we, likewise, welcomed Holly Hayes as our newest Organic Prayer Intern; already we are impressed by her intelligence, cooking, and dramatic reading of scripture.



Holly Hayes

Similarly, we are grateful for the five

new members of our Advisory Board: the Rev. Dr. Stuart Higginbotham, the Rev. Suzanne Warner, Eva Moss, Eileen Schaffer, and June Mays.

Each of these individuals has had a relationship with the Community and now brings new ideas and new gifts in support of the Community's life and outreach. Together, we are now exploring better ways of holding board meetings, sharing information, and grounding our work together in the Community's contemplative practices.

We, likewise, are beginning to explore ways of securing the Community's life and ministry into the future by updating our website, making on-going posts on Instagram and Facebook, by developing a strategy for better communications, writing grant proposals, and encouraging others to partner with us by supporting the Community in various ways. Recently, you all received one of those invitations: our annual appeal letter. You may have noticed that we placed emphasis both on an annual operating fund and on starting an endowment for future growth. I invite you to prayerfully consider how you might play a part in those endeavors. If you are in Sewanee on December 1st, we would, likewise, invite you to refresh yourselves and prepare for Advent by attending a quiet day, eating a meal with us, and participating in the first vespers of the Advent season. As we light that first Advent candle may we remember the light that is coming into the world and may we gain strength from that grace to reflect that light in our troubled world.

Blessings to you all!

*Ever consider putting St. Mary's
in your will?*

Want to help St. Mary's ministry?

*You can make a tax-deductible gift
by check or by an online donation to
"The Sisterhood of St. Mary"*

St. Mary's Chronicle

July 3-5: Sr. Mary Zita's family came to visit from Texas

July 13: Some of the youth from St. Gregory's Episcopal Church in Boca Raton, Florida came to volunteer in our garden and learn about the Community

July 14: June Mays and a group she led toured our labyrinth

July 14-15: Sr. Hannah led a presentation on Episcopal nuns at All Saints Episcopal Church in Franklin, North Carolina on Saturday evening. Sister preached at both Sunday services and also led an adult forum on monasticism.

August 2: We had a farewell party for our summer intern Eva Bogino.

August 5: Sr. Hannah preached at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Asheville, North Carolina.

August 18: Sr. Elizabeth led a quiet day for the women of St. Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, Tennessee.

August 23: The FYP (Finding Your Place) group from the University of the South came by to learn about the Community

August 25: The Sewanee chapter of the Companions of the Holy Cross met at the convent.

August 26: Sr. Elizabeth attended the InterFaith fair at the University of the South to let incoming students know about the Community.

September 1: Bonner leaders came to work at the convent and in the garden

September 7-9: Sr. Madeleine Mary participated in the annual pilgrimage to Memphis. She volunteered at the health fair. She received 3 new Associates.

September 14: Sr. Madeleine Mary led a contemplative prayer service entitled "It's Just Water."

September 26-27: Sr. Hannah represented the Community at the DuBose lectures and had a table with information about the Community and our ministries.

October 5: Sr. Hannah led a contemplative prayer service entitled "Nature and Mental Health."

October 13: Sr. Hannah gave a presentation on "Understanding Sleep" at the convent. A

women's group from St. David's Episcopal Church in Roswell, Georgia came for a tour of the convent and to learn about our ministries.

October 23: Bishop Bauerschmidt came for the annual Bishop Visitor's visitation.

October 27: Sr. Elizabeth led a workshop on the Anglican Rosary at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Shelbyville, Tennessee

October 28: Sr. Madeleine Mary gave a presentation on Mary Magdalene at St. Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, Tennessee. Sunday Eucharist was offered up in thanksgiving for longtime friend and Oblate Alice Ramsey. Alice moved from Sewanee to Chattanooga in November. A festive breakfast followed.

November 3: Sr. Hannah led a "Caring for the Caregiver" retreat day. We had volunteers from Alpha Delta Theta come work in our garden with Sr. Madeleine Mary.

November 10: SWEET volunteers came to work in the chapel and convent groups. A group from St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Nashville came for a tour of the convent.

November 15: Sr. Elizabeth spoke about the Community at the Monteagle Sewanee Rotary Club.



The Community of St. Mary
Southern Province
1100 St. Mary's Lane
Sewanee, TN 37375
Ph. 931-598-0046; Fax. 931-598-9519
Website: stmary-conventsewanee.org
Facebook: Community of St. Mary, Southern Province
Instagram: StMarysConvent