



# 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

A shared journey of the heart & spirit.

As the 70th anniversary of the sisters' arrival in Wisconsin is celebrated, it is important to share the history and culture of the Benedictine Women of Madison. What brought the sisters to this area? What influences shaped the mission, vision and values? Who played key roles in what eventually became Holy Wisdom Monastery?

Highlights of the growth, change and stability of the Benedictine Women of Madison are reviewed in this booklet. These highlights only reflect the history of the sisters after their move to Madison in 1953.





## 1953

- In December of 1952, Bishop William P. O'Connor of the Diocese of Madison invited the Sisters of St. Benedict of Sioux City Iowa to establish a high school for girls. In response to that invitation, Mother Monica Black and Sisters Annunciata Byrne and Martha Glaser, arrived in Madison on March 11, 1953. Temporary housing was located near St. Bernard's parish.
- The Articles of Incorporation for the Sisters of St. Benedict were recorded on July 10th.
- After a lengthy search, the sisters purchased 43 acres of land adjacent to Bishop O'Connor's residence from Dr. Grover Kennedy and his brother, Thomas.
- Sister Joanne Kollasch recalls, "The site was just some hilly pastureland with two old oak trees at the entrance. We walked to the top of the hill and saw Lake Mendota just across the road. On the other side of the lake was the city of Madison, home of the state capital and the University of Wisconsin. The view was panoramic. The search for property was over!"

## 1954

- Groundbreaking ceremonies for the new high school and priory were held on August 9th. Present were Mother Monica Black, Sisters Edward Seidler, Clare Kelly, Gerard Honings, Alphonsa Riley and Bishop O'Connor and Reverend Joseph J. Cox. The building would serve as both the high school and Motherhouse until a second building was constructed.



## 1955

- The sisters moved into the second story of the new building in April. The new priory was dedicated by Bishop O'Connor on August 15th.
- Retreats for lay women began and the sisters began teaching a catechism class to approximately 130 students in St. Mary of the Lake Church.

## 1959

- Fourteen girls began their high school education when the Academy of St. Benedict opened on September 9th. The school served both day and resident students and the curriculum was designed to prepare students for college. Religious training consisted of daily religion classes, an annual retreat and daily Mass and Compline for resident students.



## 1960

- An additional 90 acres of land was purchased from neighboring farmer Henry Brausen. This brought the total number of acres owned by the sisters to 133 acres.
- After the school opened in 1959, the focus turned to the construction of the motherhouse which was built on a hill overlooking Lake Mendota and the city of Madison. The motherhouse, as well as the school, was designed by local architect, Lewis Siberz. The new building included additional classrooms.



- Groundbreaking ceremonies for the motherhouse/novitiate were held on August 15th with Mother Monica Black turning over the first shovelful of dirt. Bishop O'Connor was also present as were Monsignors Edward Auchter, pastor of St. Mary of the Lake Church in Westport and Ferdinand Mack, pastor of St. Bernard's Church in Middleton; Reverends Justin Sion, OSB, of St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kansas, and chaplain for the Community and the Academy; Joseph Brechtel, pastor of St. Andrew's Church in Verona; and Wilfred Tunink, OSB, of St. Louis.



## 1961

- The move into the newly completed motherhouse began in August and the building was dedicated by Bishop O'Connor on November 1st.
- Equestrian skills were first offered at the Academy of St. Benedict in the 1961-1962 school year, with summer classes open to the general public. Sister Mary David Walgenbach was in charge of the riding stable.



## 1962

- The Academy's first class began their senior year in September. The student body had grown from 14 to nearly 70. Extra-curricular activities now included athletic events, school societies and organizations.





1963

- The community celebrated the graduation of the first Academy of St. Benedict class on June 3rd.

Mother Mary Gerard, O.S.B. and the Benedictine Sisters  
 invite you to attend a lecture-discussion  
 presented by  
 Reverend Kenneth A. Friou, United Church of Christ  
 and  
 Sister Mary Benedict, O.S.B.  
 on their personal experiences with  
 the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama  
 on  
 Sunday, April 25, 3:00 P.M.  
 St. Scholastica Auditorium  
 Refreshments will be served  
 R.S.V.P.

1965

- The sisters took a strong stance against segregation. Sister Joanne Kollasch (known as Sister Mary Benedict then) joined 19 other individuals from Madison and traveled to Montgomery, Alabama on March 16th to protest. This was in response to a call from the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Sister Joanne continued her outreach by sharing her experiences in Montgomery with many groups and established relationships with campus ministers. The respect that grew from these relationships was one of the experiences that influenced the ecumenicity at St. Benedict Priory.

- Monks from the Protestant ecumenical community of Taizé, France, began bringing students from the University of Wisconsin-Madison to the Academy of St. Benedict for retreats.
- Collaboration with campus ministers during the civil rights movement, reflection with Protestant clergy, and numerous retreats led to discussions regarding the future direction and work of the sisters. Included in the discussions were members of Madison Interfaith Dialogue, a local group of religious leaders who met at the Academy. Through this discernment process, the sisters' community decided to close the school and concentrate on their ecumenical work.



May 31, 1966





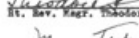
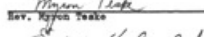



Be it resolved that:

As the result of Vatican Council II, the atmosphere of Dialogue with proper study, contemplative prayer, and increasing understanding of each other, seems to indicate the need for an Ecumenical Center near this city of prominence in higher learning. The Catholic tradition of conducting retreats is unique, and seems to indicate that we Christian brethren of other communions, could benefit from sharing in this experience. Our city is a cultural, theological, and ecumenical community. The help and advice of a community established in prayer and contemplation, can make a contribution to the whole Christian world.

Through the news media, we have become aware that the Benedictine Sisters are undertaking, as their Christian Apostolate, conducting retreats for Catholic people in this area. We would propose that the facilities and services of St. Benedict Priory and the Benedictine Sisters, be made available to us also for the purposes of retreats, prayer, and ecumenical studies; that would advance the cause of Christian charity and understanding and unity, as suggested by Vatican II. We would ask that Your Excellency see fit to respond graciously to this resolution. Be assured, Your Excellency, that you will be kept informed of developments in our efforts toward ecumenical understanding. We would owe an eternal debt to you, Our Christian Brother and Servant of Jesus Christ.

Respectfully submitted,

Executive Committee of the Madison Interfaith Dialogue

-   
Rev. A. C. Schumacher, Chairman
-   
Rev. Father Andrew Breines
-   
Rev. Andrew C. Davison
-   
Rt. Rev. Mgfr. Theodore F. Thome
-   
Rev. Myron Teske
-   
Rev. Earle Hochwald
-   
Rev. Paul Hoornstra
-   
Rev. Erwin M. Ruklic
-   
Rabbi Manfred Swarsensky

6/28/66  
Decree and Approved  
William P. Connor

1966

- On May 31, Madison Interfaith Dialogue petitioned Bishop O'Connor to approve the community's opening of an ecumenical retreat and conference center. The resolution was signed by Reverend A.C. Schumacher, St. John's Lutheran Church, Madison; Reverend Andrew Breines, St. Francis Xavier Church, Cross Plains; Reverend Andrew Davison, First Baptist Church, Madison; Monsignor Theodore F. Thome, St. Bernard's Church, Madison; Reverend Myron Teske, Lutheran Campus Ministry; Reverend Earle Hochwald, Middleton Community Church (United Church of Christ); Reverend Paul Hoornstra, Grace Episcopal Church; Reverend Erwin Ruklic, Westminster Presbyterian Church; and Rabbi Manfred Swarsensky, Temple Beth El, Madison.
- Bishop O'Connor signed and approved the resolution on June 28.
- The sisters closed the Academy and reopened their buildings as St. Benedict Center for Christian Unity in September.

- Beginning in June, Madison Interfaith Dialogue held monthly meetings at St. Benedict Center, and joined the sisters at midday prayer and at the noon meal. The monthly meetings continued through June 1973.
- The sisters began offering a residential summer camp for girls ages 7 to 14 called Camp St. Benedict. The camp consisted of four sessions of 40-45 participants. Three of the sessions were for day campers and the fourth was for resident campers. Sister Mary David was the coordinator and camp manager.
- The years after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) were filled with many changes for communities of women religious. The Sisters of St. Benedict and other communities spent their summers studying The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy; the Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life; the Decree on Ecumenism; and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. These documents along with the Renewal Chapters of the Federation led to much experimentation in every facet of communal life, but particularly in the area of prayer. The following statements from the Decree on Ecumenism had a significant impact on the Madison Benedictines: "Today, in many parts of the world, under the inspiring grace of the Holy Spirit, many efforts are being made in prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires. The sacred Council exhorts all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism."
- The first in-house prayer book was printed. The sisters regularly invited people to join their community in the Liturgy of the Hours (daily prayer), and there were always a small number of people who participated. After the Second Vatican Council, and with the advent of St. Benedict Center for Christian Unity, more people—guests at the Center and neighbors in the surrounding area—joined in the community's prayer. To facilitate the sharing of their prayer life with non-community members, the sisters experimented with simplifying the prayer book used for the Liturgy of the Hours.

1967

- On June 8 at the age of 36, Sister Joanne Kollasch was elected prioress for a six-year term.



1970

- In January, the sisters hired Father Philip Kaufman, OSB (pictured above) for the new position of theological consultant for Saint Benedict Center (now Holy Wisdom Monastery). Father Kaufman had been the associate director of the Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research at Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota.
- One of his first projects was to help the sisters adapt the Liturgy of the Hours (daily prayer), implementing more inclusive language. This project continued for several decades. He adapted the Rite of the Eucharist that is still used.
- He also celebrated the Eucharist at St. Mary of the Lake, a nearby parish. Though the sisters believed he was an excellent homilist, occasionally his sermons concerning social justice were not well received by some parishioners. Eventually his services were terminated by St. Mary of the Lake. However, he continued to speak at many Protestant churches.
- Father Philip's work at St. Benedict ended in 1976.
- In February, the sisters hired Reverend Robert Raymond (pictured below) for the new position of Saint Benedict Center's director of ecumenical development. Reverend Raymond was the former Christian education director for the Wisconsin Synod of the Presbyterian Church and had been to St. Benedict's with church groups. The sisters referred to Reverend Raymond as "Sister Bob" and he always joined the community in prayer. His quick wit and ability to make others feel at ease was an asset to St. Benedict's Center. Reverend Robert Raymond's work with St. Benedict's ended in 1973.



**Should**

Come and meet

Dr. Douglas Steere

Quaker leader in

Contemplation  
and  
the inner life

Haverford College, Penn.

be a great weekend  
at St. Benedict's  
Saturday & Sunday  
March 14 & 15

Dr. Steere  
will lead us in a series  
of talks on

• prayer

• meditation  
(east and west)  
• true unity

Program begins  
Saturday, March 14  
at 10:00 a.m.  
and ends  
Sunday, March 15  
at 1:00 p.m.

?? cost ??

20.00

IF YOU SLEEP at home

25.00

IF YOU SLEEP 'on the hill'

Send in registration now

watch for our next mailing

- In March Douglas Steere, ecumenist, Vatican II observer and emeritus professor of philosophy at Haverford College in Pennsylvania, held a weekend retreat at Saint Benedict Center (see flyer to left). The retreat focused on prayer, meditation, and true unity.

*St. Benedict Center  
cordially invites*

*to a reception and dinner in honor of*

*The Most Reverend John Gran  
Bishop of Oslo, Norway*

*Member of The Vatican Secretariats for Christian Unity  
and for Unbelievers*

*on Wednesday, the third of June*

*reception at five o'clock*

*dinner at six o'clock*

*a public meeting will follow the dinner at eight o'clock*

*R.S.V.P.*

*Dinner tickets: \$3.50*

- In June the sisters held a reception and dinner honoring the Bishop of Oslo, Norway, the Most Reverend John Gran, a member of the Vatican Secretariat for Christian Unity.



1971

- Camp St. Benedict (the summer camp for girls ages 7–14 which began in 1966) was closed because the space was needed for expanded programming offered by St. Benedict Center for Christian Unity.
- The equestrian portion of the camps had become so popular that the sisters offered a day program for girls ages 9–15. St. Benedict Center Riding Academy students traveled a short distance to Lake Mendota to participate in swimming and camping activities at the YWCA's Camp Maria Ulbrich. YWCA's campers came to St. Benedict Center to learn care for and ride horses. The sisters closed the riding academy in 1975.

1972

- Six years after the opening of Saint Benedict Center, the sisters had welcomed more than 20,000 guests. Programming was open to the Christian community and people of all faiths. Some of the more notable speakers who either led or participated in programs at the Center in the 1970s included Reverend Henri Nouwen (pictured top right) and Sister Joan Chittister, OSB.
- From June of 1972 through 1988, the Lutheran Summer Institute held its six-week program at St. Benedict Center. The Institute was designed to provide pre-service orientation for those called to one of the Lutheran missions throughout the world. Up to fifty participants came each summer, representing a range of ages and backgrounds. When the Institute first began holding its program at St. Benedict Center, participants worshipped separately from the sisters' community. Soon the sisters were praying with Institute members, and they were coming to the sisters' Liturgy of the Hours. Three branches of the Lutheran Church were represented in the Institute—the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Missouri Synod. Spouses and children accompanied program participants, which led to another first for the Madison Benedictines. Sister Mary David Walgenbach stated, "We are the only celibate community in this area with highchairs in the dining room and playpens in the basement."



1973

- Sister Joanne Kollasch was elected to a second term as prioress of the Community in April.

1977

- Sister Mary David Walgenbach was elected to a four-year term as prioress. She was 38 years old.

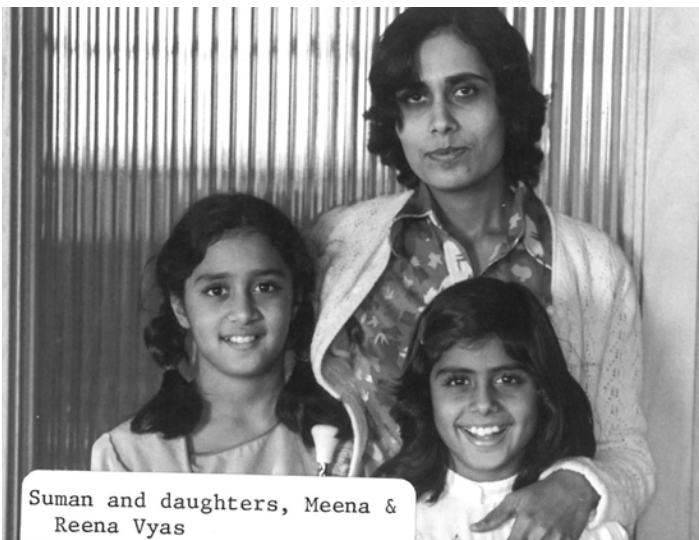


1978

- In March, leaders of Benedictine sisters from 28 states, Canada, and Mexico, gathered at St. Benedict Center for the Conference of American Benedictine Prioresses. The 51 women who attended were the leaders of autonomous religious communities which included more than 6,000 sisters. Meetings of the conference were led by Sister Joan Chittister, OSB (pictured above on the left with Sister Mary David Walgenbach). The focus of the conference was the development

of principles to guide these Benedictine communities in their post Vatican Council experimentation with new forms of the Liturgy of the Hours. The result of the conference was "Of Time Made Holy," a statement on the importance of the Liturgy of the Hours in the lives of American Benedictine sisters. It described American Benedictine women as communities of worship, placing high value on praying in community. It stated that, "The daily times of prayer, or Liturgy of the Hours, are the center of Benedictine prayer life and spirituality."

- Joanne Heggen was hired in May as conference coordinator. She extended hospitality to the groups doing the work of ecumenism who came to St. Benedict Center.
- The sisters opened their home to Suman Vyas (left) and her daughters Reena (age 4) and Meena (age 5) after they arrived from Nagpur, India in the summer. Suman's sister, who worked at St. Benedict Center, told the sisters about Suman who was a widow and had no means of support. Soon the sisters were driving the girls to school, attending PTA meetings and arranging summer holidays with their own families. Suman became a US citizen in 1984.



Suman and daughters, Meena & Reena Vyas

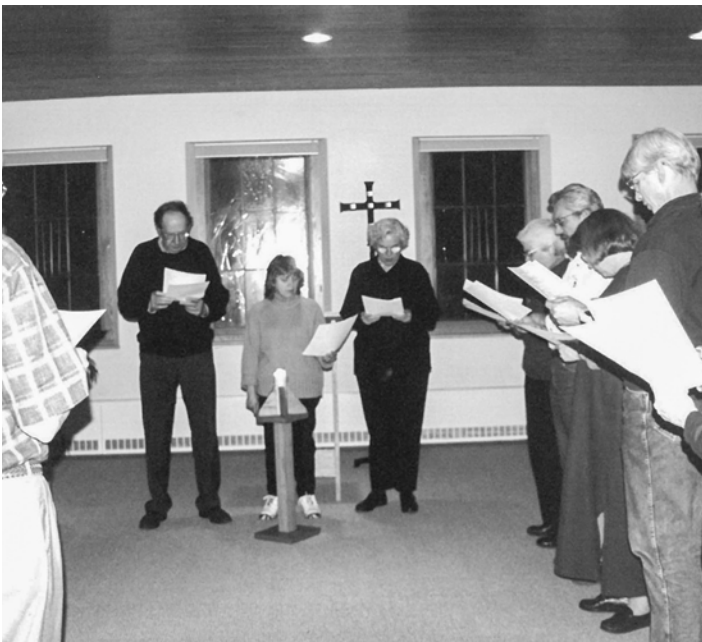
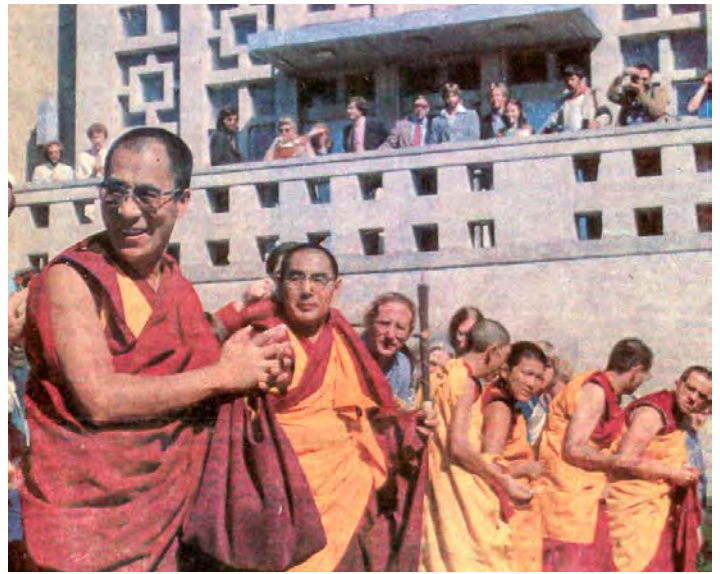




1979

- George Hinger (on the left in the photo), a former diocesan priest, joined the Center staff in January as administrator. George's contribution to St. Benedict Center was in ecumenical programming, including the relationships he developed with other churches and members of world religions. George retired from the staff of St. Benedict Center in January of 1993.

- The highlight of the year occurred in September when the Dalai Lama visited. George Hinger, who also served as program director, recalled that the religious service first intended for Buddhists, soon grew until the only space large enough for the event was our chapel. Upon his arrival, the Dalai Lama expressed his appreciation that the 500 Buddhists in attendance could worship in the same space where there had just been a Catholic service. George commented, "He was a man of faith and a man of compassion. The experience was a symbol of what happens every day at the Center in terms of people coming in and out and worshiping here together, and the value we get from them as well as the value we share toward them."



1980

- During a weekend in April, Sisters Mary David Walgenbach and Joanne Kollasch began a dialogue with a diverse group of Christian friends to share experiences, ideas and dreams for building community in the 1980s. At the conclusion of the weekend, the sisters called together a core group composed of Al Heggen, George Hinger and John Conway to formulate with them the vision that would become the Community of Benedict. Sister Joanne recalls that this core group determined that the sisters would be one of the many households that would make up the Community of Benedict. Christ would be the center. Leadership would be rotated from one household to another. They invited others to explore life in the Community of Benedict and self-select whether they wished to join.



- Reverend Al Heggen (left) was hired in June as the planning and process consultant, a resource person for St. Benedict Center programs and to the sister's council regarding development of networks of people and organizations interested in community building. His wife Joanne Heggen (right) joined the staff in 1978. Joanne and Al left the staff of St. Benedict Center in August of 1988 to join the pastoral staff of Mt. Hope Lutheran Church in West Allis, Wisconsin.



- From October 9-12, more than 200 women and men attended a symposium celebrating the sesquimillennium (1500th anniversary) of the birth of St. Benedict of Nursia. The symposium, entitled *Benedict and Scholastica: Then and Now*, was sponsored by the three Benedictine women's communities in Wisconsin (St. Benedict's in Madison, Holy Family Convent in Benet Lake, and St. Bede's Priory in Eau Claire), in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin Medieval Studies Program.
- The program emphasized the importance of

St. Benedict's rule for monastic life, which laid the foundations upon which Christian monasticism had flourished in Western Europe and the New World. The inclusion of St. Scholastica, Benedict's sister in both flesh and spirit, in the title of the program stressed the important role of women in monasticism.

- Presentations ranged from the historical and cultural background of monasticism in Western Europe to the contemporary theological and spiritual dimension of Western monasticism. Presenters included Benedictine scholars: Joan

Chittister, OSB of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, PA; Demetrius Dumm, OSB, of St. Vincent Archabbey; Mary Collins, OSB, of the Catholic University of America; Giles Constable, professor of history at Harvard University; and Jean Leclercq, OSB, of the Benedictine Abbey of Clervaux in Luxembourg.

- The symposium also featured a display of contemporary monastic arts and crafts and a concert of monastic music through the ages.

## 1981

- In May, Sister Mary David was elected to a second four-year term as prioress.

## Benedict and Scholastica: Then and Now



AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM  
COMMEMORATING THE  
SESQUIMILLENNIUM OF THE BIRTH OF  
ST. BENEDICT OF NURSIA  
480-1980 A.D.

sponsored by the St. Benedict Center, Madison, St. Bede's Priory, Eau Claire, Holy Family Convent, Benet Lake, and Madison Campus Ministry, in cooperation with the Medieval Studies Program of the University of Wisconsin—Madison

THE ST. BENEDICT CENTER  
MADISON, WISCONSIN  
OCTOBER 9-12, 1980

## MONASTICISM THEN

### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9

All activities take place at the St. Benedict Center unless otherwise specified.

- A.M.  
9:00 Registration (until 10:30)  
10:30 Plenary Session  
Words of Welcome: *Mary David Walgenbach*, OSB, Prioress, St. Benedict Priory  
Keynote Address: "The Development of Persons in Community," the *Most Reverend Rembert Weakland*, OSB, Archbishop of Milwaukee and former Abbot Primate of the Benedictine Order
- 12:00 Coffee Break
- P.M.  
12:30 Lunch  
2:00 **Section I: ST. BENEDICT OF NURSIA** (Moderator: *Dick Ringler*, University of Wisconsin—Madison)  
2:00 "Saint Benedict and the Virtue of Religion," *Maurus Ohligslager*, OSB (St. Meinrad Archabbey, St. Meinrad, Indiana)  
2:30 "Benedict and the Sixth Century—Fact and Fiction," *Joel Ripinger*, OSB (Marmion Abbey, Aurora, Illinois)  
3:00 "The Life of Benedict in the *Legenda Aurea*," *Sherry L. Reames* (Department of English, University of Wisconsin—Madison)
- Section II: WOMEN IN MONASTICISM** (Moderator: *Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg*, University of Wisconsin—Extension)  
2:00 "Not Separate and Not Equal," *Janemarie Luecke*, OSB (Oklahoma State University, Stillwater)  
2:30 "The Desert Mothers: from Judith to Juliana," *Margot H. King* (University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon)  
3:00 "Benedictine Women: the Order of Deborah," *M. Colman O'Dell*, OCSO (Mt. St. Mary's Abbey, Wrentham, Massachusetts)
- 3:30 Coffee break  
8:00 "The Authority of Superiors in Religious Institutions in the Middle Ages," *Giles Constable* (Director, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, and Professor of History, Harvard University); Auditorium of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin



### 1982

- The sisters hosted the historic meeting of the 70-member Commission for a New Lutheran Church at St. Benedict Center in December (pictured above). The Commission's task was to meld the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches into one Lutheran body.



### 1983

- Sunday Assembly (pictured on left) became the official name of the sisters' worshipping community. The sisters consistently invited people to join their community in the Liturgy of the Hours (daily prayer), and there were always a small number of people who participated. After the Second Vatican Council, and with the advent of St. Benedict Center for Christian Unity, more people – guests at the Center and neighbors in the surrounding area – participated in the community's prayer and worship.

### 1985

- In May, Sister Mary David was elected to a third four-year term as prioress.
- In August, following an invitation from Sisters Joanne and Mary David in 1985, Sally and Parker Palmer from Pendle Hill arrived at St. Benedict Center to live and work. Pendle Hill was a Quaker adult study center and living-learning community near Philadelphia. The Palmer's were attracted to the sisters' vision of a new ecumenical monastic community. They hoped to explore with the sisters the possibility of a residential community. This would become known as The Resident Program and would be a center for study, reflection and renewal in which people could share the community's life for three, six, or nine-month periods. 'Students' could be of all ages and backgrounds, married or single, with or without dependent children.



## 1986

- Neal Smith was hired as the director of asset management in July. He brought an impressive array of gifts and skills to the monastery. Educated at the University of Wisconsin with a degree in business administration, Neal was accomplished in accounting, construction, development, finance, sales, manufacturing and more. Neal's history with the sisters started in 1973 when he was introduced to Sister Mary David, who took him horseback riding. The sisters became one of Neal's clients while he worked part time at a CPA firm while attending college.



- Discussions regarding the Community of Benedict (pictured to the left) had continued. When membership in the community coalesced, a covenant was written which included the statement: "We are a group of persons from different religious traditions, living in different places, of different ages, sexes, marital status and family commitments. We believe that God is calling us and others to create an environment conducive to the awareness of God's presence in ourselves, in one another, and in the sacredness of creation. We commit ourselves to be in community with one another, so that we might be empowered to live out our

vocations within the places where we live and work. We seek a simple and integrated life as a sign of God's peace in our fragmented world."

- For 32 years the Community of Benedict thrived, but as members moved away or were unable to attend because of poor health or aging, the remaining members decided it was time to end the group. In December of 2013, the Community of Benedict held a closing ritual.

## 1987

- The first term of The Resident Program began on October 3 with 15 women and men enrolled. They ranged in age from their early twenties to their late sixties and came from Arkansas, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Wisconsin and Finland. Their religious affiliations were just as diverse – Lutheran, Episcopalian, Quaker, Methodist and Roman Catholic. The curriculum included studies in spirituality, scripture, peace and justice. Students and community members would join in study and worship, physical work, community meetings and common meals.
- The sisters purchased a home which bordered their acreage. They named it Bingen House.



## 1988

- The sisters continued their experimentation with new forms of monastic community. The Bingen Monastic Community (pictured above on the right, Neal Smith in center) grew out of this experimentation. It was an intentional Christian community of women and men with varied lifestyles. Lifestyle changes for Bingen members led to conversations about the feasibility of the community's future.
- Bingen members decided to dissolve the community in September of 1992.

## 1989

- The Resident Program was discontinued in the spring. As the community and the program progressed, it became apparent that the Palmers' vision of the new ecumenical community differed from the sisters' vision. With the help of a consultant and dialogue the two visions were articulated – the Palmers viewed the school as the main focus and the community secondary, whereas the sisters saw the community as the focus and the school as secondary,
- In June, Sister Joanne Kollasch was elected to a four-year term as prioress.
- Neal Smith was appointed director of administration and eventually executive director of the monastery, responsible directly to the Sisters' Council. He was a member of the National Association for Treasurers of Religious Institutes at a time when few non-religious served as community treasurers. The sisters recognized Neal's abilities and offered his skills to the Federation of St. Gertrude as a consultant to the Finance Committee, a position to held from 1993 to 2010.
- Neal's presence touched nearly every aspect of the monastery's life. His work was integral to the sisters' accomplishments, especially in caring for the land and the construction of the new building, Holy Wisdom Monastery. Neal retired in June 2011 but continued as the sister's financial consultant for many years.

Some of the more notable speakers who either led or participated in programs at St. Benedict Center in the 1980s included Thea Bowman, Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA), Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Evelyn and James Whitehead, James Finley, Eugene La Verdere, Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (SSS) and Henri Nouwen.



Dr. Walter Brueggemann



Henri Nouwen



Thea Bowman



## 1990

- In June of 1990, Paul Boutwell came to the monastery as the groundskeeper. Until his retirement in 2020, he worked tirelessly to preserve the monastery land. Paul worked with individuals and groups who volunteered on the land. He gave tours of the grounds and taught people about the plants and animals at Holy Wisdom. Paul worked closely with Greg Armstrong, our former director of land management, and the Friends of Wisdom Prairie.

- In October, Sister Mary David Walgenbach and staff from the retreat and conference center attended the first session of the Development Education Program for Religious, sponsored by the Lilly Foundation. Sister Mary David hoped to adapt what they learned there to the ministries of St. Benedict Center. Instead, it became the catalyst for the sisters' planning process – providing them with a framework to look at community life and a process in which to do long-range planning.
- Sisters Barbara Dannhausen, OP (pictured below in flowered dress), and her associate, Michelle Olley, OP, with Consultants for the Empowerment of Organizations, were the main presenters at the Lilly Foundation development program. Sisters Mary David and Joanne Kollasch approached Sister Barbara to serve as a planning consultant for both the retreat and conference center and the sisters' community. One question that arose from their consultation with Sister Barbara was, "What are the future options for Sisters of St. Benedict?" This question needed to be answered before the planning process could continue.



## 1992

- In February, Sisters Mary David and Joanne began a visioning process with other religious leaders to discern their future life and ministries. The Visioning and Feedback Group generated 18 different options for the sisters' consideration, from ecumenical vowed members to a lay monastic community. Sisters Mary David and Joanne took the vision to the retired members of the community, who enthusiastically endorsed the work and options generated by the planning committee.
- After a second meeting of the Visioning and Feedback Group in April, the sisters chose the future option that spoke to them – to become an

ecumenical community of vowed Benedictine women. With the assistance of Sister Barbara and a consulting group, they articulated their vision as: "We will become an ecumenical monastery of publicly professed Christian women, following the Rule of Benedict and fulfilling the mission of the Sisters of St. Benedict, Madison, Wisconsin by continuing the Benedictine charism of prayer and worship, community and hospitality in an ecumenical environment; by developing and sustaining mutual relationships with monastics in Africa; and by being open to opportunities as they arise."

- The Visioning and Feedback Group included: Sister Jeanne Schweickert, SSSF, one of the founders of Convergence; Sister Ruth Fox, OSB, president of the Federation of St. Gertrude; Reverend Robert Raymond, former St. Benedict Center staff member and a Presbyterian minister and futurist; Sister Mary Collins, OSB, author and lecturer at Catholic University of America's School of Religious Studies; Sister Anselm Hammerling, OSB, former president of the Federation of St. Gertrude; Sister Margaret Michaud, OSB, former president of the Federation of St. Benedict; Reverend Theophane Boyd, OCSO, St. Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado; Roy Anderson, retired attorney and current librarian at St. Benedict Center; Robert Bright of the Community Dynamics Institute, University of Wisconsin Extension, Madison; Sister Michael Marie Rottinghaus, OSB, a Missionary Benedictine Sister from Norfolk, Nebraska; Sister Paula Larson, OSB, prioress of Assumption Abbey, Richardton, North Dakota; Neal Smith, director of administration at St. Benedict Center; and Lucy

Kester, also on staff at St. Benedict Center.

- During the 1992 Visioning and Feedback program, one of the participants, Theophane Boyd, OCSO, shared an idea the sisters had been contemplating – restoring their land to its native state. Care for the earth had concerned the sisters since their arrival in 1953. From the beginning the sisters fended off multiple attempts by developers to purchase portions of the monastery lands. In consultation with the architectural firm of Rafferty and Rafferty and Brother Frank Kacmarcik, oblate, St. John's Abbey, work began on developing a master plan to protect and restore monastery grounds. Again, Sisters Mary David and Joanne visited the retired sisters in Sioux City, IA monthly to keep them informed about the master planning process and consulted with them about the options.

### 1993

- Sister Mary David assumed leadership of the Madison Benedictines when she was elected to a six-year term as prioress on May 21st.



Ecumenical Board (pictured from left to right): Lucy Kester, coworker; Very Rev. P. Linwood Urban; Sister Mary David Walgenbach, OSB; Sister Donald Corcoran, OSB Cam.; Sister Joanne Kollasch, OSB; Rev. Jude Weisenback, SDS; Robert Bright; Carolyn Bailey; Neal Smith.

### 1994

- An Ecumenical Board (pictured above) was established in February by Sisters Joanne and Mary David to advise them in making the transformation from a Benedictine monastery of Roman Catholic women to becoming a non-canonical "ecumenical" Benedictine monastery of women.
- The original members of the board included: Richard Bell, author and professor at the College of Wooster in Ohio; Robert Bright, member of the University of Wisconsin's Family Living Program; Reverend P. Linwood Urban, Episcopal priest and professor emeritus from Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania; Reverend Jude Weisenbeck, SDS, director of the Office of Ecumenism in Louisville, Kentucky; Sister Donald Corcoran, OSB Cam., Transfiguration Monastery, Windsor, New York; and Neal Smith, director of administration for St. Benedict Center.

- According to Richard Bell in his history of the ecumenical board (unpublished, 2007), “Early board meetings could be a bit of a puzzle to many of us as we were finding our way with a multitude of ideas about ‘ecumenism’ and the degrees to which it flowed both to and from the Roman Catholic communion. Persistent Protestants along with the community members kept ‘pushing the envelope’ to consider a fully open invitation to community – not to mention the Eucharist – as well as equal/full profession to the Rule of Benedict and to a unified Christian faith. This was not to subvert differences, but to share traditions and encourage diversity that would be compatible with the Benedictine charism.”
- The work of the Ecumenical Board was concluded in January of 2010 after writing foundational statements.
- As part of the visioning process, the sisters decided to renovate the old school building (now the retreat & guest house) as the monastery. Remodeling began in April. The new monastery would house offices, the community kitchen and refectory, the library, an oratory for Liturgy of Hours (daily prayer), the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, rooms for monastery guests and personal retreatants, and space for spiritual direction and Benedictine program offerings. Most important, this renovated space would provide greater visibility as the Monastery of St. Benedict Center.



- The sisters had started raising funds for the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing in Kenya, Nigeria, and China. Sisters Mary David and Joanne traveled to Seoul, Korea in May to meet with Mother Edeltrud Weist, Prioress General of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing. With the growing relationship between the two communities, the Sisters of St. Benedict hoped to receive sisters from Korea who would temporarily live with them and add to their monastic presence (see photo above). Sisters Catherin Cho and Asella Kim arrived in Madison in the fall to live at St. Benedict’s while they attended WESLI (Wisconsin English as a Second Language Institute) to learn to speak and write English. Over the next 14 years, more than 25 sisters from Brazil, Africa, the Philippines, Spain and Korea came to stay at the Monastery of St. Benedict Center while they furthered their education or took much needed breaks from their missionary work.



- Father Ken Smits, Capuchin (pictured below on left), Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order, Detroit, Michigan, was hired as director of Benedictine life ministries in August. Father Ken held a Master of Theology degree from the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada, and a Master of Liturgy degree from the Catholic Institute in Paris, France. He taught liturgy at St. Francis Seminary, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and had extensive experience working as a staff person at retreat centers.



## 1995

- In May, the sisters held a special rededication and blessing ceremony (pictured above) to celebrate the completion of the renovation of the school building into the Monastery of St. Benedict Center. In the rededication program Frank Kacmarcik, OblSB, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota, wrote the following: "The building is a meaningful sign of Benedictine community life and worship. The



- planning has helped to achieve an atmosphere of peace and quiet, conducive to prayer. Its simplicity and order are characteristic of Benedictine life."
- The sisters completed their first master plan to care for the earth in June, which mapped out a bold new direction at the Monastery of St. Benedict Center. The master plan served as a catalyst to explore the history of the sisters' land and return much of it to its natural state which consisted of oak savanna and prairie grasses. The plan called for the sisters to accomplish certain goals: restore Lost Lake (the nine-acre 10,000-year-old glacial lake on the sisters' property), restore an upland prairie; create a wetland preserve, expand and enhance walking trails, establish a natural buffer between the conservation project and developing areas and provide for ongoing stewardship of the land.
- In July, Sister Mary David traveled to Meihekou, China to visit the Missionary Benedictine Sisters and see first-hand the progress being made on their 400-bed medical facility. While there, Mary David met Sara (Quin Xiang Hu), who was teaching the Missionary Benedictine Sisters to speak Chinese and acting as a translator for the sisters.
- Sister Michael Marie Rottinghaus was a good friend to both Sara and the Sisters of St. Benedict Center in Madison. Upon Mary David's return from China, she and Mary David began the process to help Sara obtain a visa to come to the United States to further her education.
- Sara was granted a visa and arrived at the Monastery of St. Benedict Center in December. Sara started attending WESLI (Wisconsin English as a Second Language Institute) with the Missionary Benedictine Sisters to learn English.
- Sara (pictured on the left) had left her husband of six months, Abraham (Ren Zhi Chi, pictured above on the right), back in China. Sisters Mary David and Michael Marie worked on obtaining a visa for Abraham so he could join Sara in Madison. In March of 1996, Abraham arrived at the monastery. He also became a student at WESLI and worked part time in the maintenance department at the Monastery of St. Benedict Center. On April 1, 1998, the couple welcomed the arrival of their son, Daniel (En Hu, pictured in the stroller).
- The Benedictine Life Foundation was incorporated in September to "[provide] ongoing support and development for the program and capital needs of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Madison, Wisconsin, Inc."



## 1996

- In July, the Lost Lake preservation and new wetland project was approved as one of two demonstration projects of the Lake Mendota Priority Watershed. Neal Smith, director of administration, spearheaded these efforts and established links with Dane County, Westport Township, Fox Bluff neighbors, the (Wisconsin) Department of Natural Resources, the Audubon Society, Goose Pond Preserve, waterfowl experts, university and college researchers and interns and prairie and wetland restoration specialists.
- The Fox Bluff neighborhood and upland farmland drain into Lost Lake. Years of farming and urban development had accelerated the silting over of Lost Lake, reducing it in size by 75 percent.
- Dane County provided the engineering expertise, while the DNR assisted with funding for filtration devices for both the wetland and Lost Lake, and creation of the new wetland. During wet seasons, water from Lost Lake overflows into Lake Mendota. Any actions taken to improve the water quality of Lost Lake would have the ripple effect of improving the water quality of Lake Mendota.

- The new wetland preserve was completed by mid-October. In addition to providing nesting areas for birds and other prairie life, the structure could hold and slowly release 10.5 acre-feet of water, an integral part of runoff protection for the north side of Lake Mendota.
- Sisters Mary David and Joanne attended the nineteenth Chapter of the Federation of St. Gertrude at Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton, South Dakota, in July. The previous year, Mary David approached the Federation of St. Gertrude (to which the sisters' community was a member) and requested a resolution for the affiliation of the Madison Benedictine's Ecumenical Community be placed on the July 1996 Federation Chapter agenda.
- During the Chapter, Sister Mary David spoke to members about the Madison community's desire to establish a non-canonical ecumenical community. She asked for two specific actions by the Chapter: 1) a resolution of support for the proposed undertaking and 2) the establishment of a committee to study the affiliation to the Federation of monasteries not canonically eligible for membership. The Federation of St. Gertrude Chapter unanimously passed a resolution of support and established an Ad-Hoc committee to explore the meaning of the affiliation and drafted an Adjunct Document of Affiliation.
- Father Dan Ward, OSB (pictured on left), St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota, a distinguished canon and civil lawyer, guided the sisters through the labyrinth of canon law to establish a dependent ecumenical monastery (now Holy Wisdom Monastery). This new ecumenical monastery, sponsored by the Monastery of St. Benedict Center would allow Christian women of any denomination to join the new community.



## 1997

- The sisters, Monastery of St. Benedict Center staff, and volunteers started the process of replacing cropland with upland prairie by planting four acres with native grass and wildflower seeds in July. The Audubon Society provided the native upland prairie seed for the new areas.
- The sisters held a dedication program for the wetland on September 3rd (pictured to the right) honoring their major partners in the project, including the Bruce Company, Merrill Lynch & Company Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, Madison Community Foundation and Yahara Lakes Association.
- More than 100 volunteers, the sisters, and Monastery of St. Benedict Center staff seeded 15 acres of the new wetland in November. Sarah Sirios, Benedictine Life Foundation assistant, commented, "Why would 120 people come to toss prairie seed out of a plastic bucket when they could be watching the Badgers trounce Iowa on Homecoming Saturday? Watching the undulating wave of people roll slowly over the freshly tilled earth, I imagined the rich plethora of grasses that will one day take their place. What satisfaction, I thought, to be able to say, 'I am a part of this....'"



- The sisters received the Manfred Swarsensky Humanitarian Service Award from the Madison Rotary Club. The award was established in 1982 and honors those who have made outstanding contributions to humanitarian service in the realm of race relations, women's health, conservation or public service in the greater Madison community. Rabbi Swarsensky was a member of the Madison Rotary Club until his passing in 1981. The sisters were nominated for the award by a team that included Rev. Ace Schumacher, Bishop of the Southern, Wisconsin District of the American Lutheran Church (pictured to the left with Sisters Mary David and Joanne).
- One of the sisters' goals was to establish an oblate community. In December, Susan and Charlie

Carlson, Anne Edwardson, Deacon Joan Smoke, Reverend Jan Summers, Father Ken Smits, Capuchin, Sister Mary David, Neal Smith and Jody Crowley-Beers held their first meeting as a steering committee. Sister Mary David, Father Ken Smits and Jody Crowley-Beers designed the oblate program, then opened it up to another five people.

## 1998

- On June 4th, Reverend Lynne Smith (pictured on right), an ordained Presbyterian minister, was accepted as the first candidate of Benedictine Women of Madison, the Madison community's dependent ecumenical community. She would spend three months as a candidate, living and working with the sisters, and two years in the novitiate, learning the Rule of St. Benedict while living the Benedictine life in community with the sisters.



- On December 23rd, Benedictine Women of Madison, Inc., became a legal entity with the filing of articles of incorporation. The purpose of the corporation was to receive Christian women of any denomination as monastics into the new ecumenical monastic community (Benedictine Women of Madison).

- Over a period of three winters, from 1998 to 2000, the Bruce Company of Middleton dredged Lost Lake, returning it to nearly its original size of nine acres and depth of 14 feet.

- Father Ken Smits, Capuchin, (pictured on right) continued to serve as the liturgist and program director at the Monastery of St. Benedict Center. In 1998, he started dividing his time between the liturgy department (prayer and worship) and the spirituality department.



- He worked with the prayer and worship committee

and the sisters in the continuing effort to make the Liturgy of the Hours (daily prayer) more user-friendly, changing the ordo (Latin: order, rank) to include feasts and anniversaries of women saints and church reformers, and writing new intersessions and prayers in inclusive language.

- He assisted Sunday Assembly with the preparation of an identity statement and collaborated with the sisters on the expression of their monastic rituals.

- He readily endorsed the sisters' work in ecumenism. He authored a paper on the meaning of ecumenism in which he wrote the following: "The ecumenism of the Benedictine Women of Madison is a practical ecumenism, grounded in hospitality, inviting development of community, which is fostered by sharing spirit and life. It is grass roots ecumenism. It is the kind appropriate to a monastic community."

- Father Ken left the staff in October of 2008 to serve as chaplain for the Sisters of St. Agnes in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

## 1999

- In April, Sister Mary David was reelected prioress for a term of 6 years.
- On July 6th, the Federation of St. Gertrude Chapter adopted the Ad-Hoc committee's Adjunct Document on Affiliation on an experimental basis until the Federation Chapter of 2005, at which time the Chapter would evaluate and reconsider the document. It had been three years since Sisters Mary David and Joanne had attended the nineteenth Chapter of the Federation of St. Gertrude in South Dakota and asked them to support the creation of a non-canonical ecumenical community and form an Ad-Hoc committee to study the affiliation of monasteries not canonically eligible for membership to the Federation.
- The Chapter approved the implementation of the adjunct document which permitted a member monastery to establish a non-canonical dependent monastery.

- An intentional ecumenical oblate community of women and men was established with a class of 11 including Charley and Susan Carlson, Julie Weaver, Joan Smoke, Gail Lamberty, Bill Beers, Jody Crowley Beers, Anne Edwardson, Marge Nixon, Sue Schoenbeck, and Jan Summers (pictured below).



## 2000

- On March 25, 2000, Sister Joanne Kollasch recommended to the Sisters' Chapter that Lynne Smith be accepted to make her first profession in the ecumenical monastic community. Lynne had completed two years of novitiate formation. She became the first professed Protestant member of the Benedictine Women of Madison on June 2nd. "In junior high I told my mother I thought I wanted to be a nun. She told me that was ridiculous because I wasn't Catholic. But here I am, a Benedictine sister," explained Sister Lynne. She served as an ordained minister in Presbyterian churches in Iowa and Kansas for 16 years before coming to the monastery in 1998 in search of an ecumenical Benedictine community where she could become a sister.



## 2002

- The sisters received the Virginia M. Kline Award for Excellence in Community-based Restoration, one of two new Leopold Restoration Awards sponsored by the Friends of the University of Wisconsin Arboretum. The award recognized groups that dedicated their efforts to returning and preserving natural communities. Sisters Mary David Walgenbach, left, and Joanne Kollasch, right are pictured above with Virginia Kline.

## 2003

- Sister Mary David accepted the Dane County Business Forum's Athena Award. The award honors both women and men who have achieved excellence in their profession or life's work, devoted time and effort in their communities to improve the quality of life for others and actively helped women realize their full leadership potential.



## 2004

- On October 4th, Sister Lynne made her final profession, having completed four years of first profession. At the ceremony she promised stability, obedience and fidelity to the monastery way of life for the rest of her life. Present at the ceremony were members of the Ecumenical Board, Sunday Assembly, Oblates, staff, volunteers, neighbors, family and friends.

## 2005

- On July 6th, the Federation of St. Gertrude Chapter, comprised of two delegates and the prioress from each of the 14 autonomous monasteries, met at the Monastery of St. Gertrude, Cottonwood, Idaho, and established a category of affiliation for monasteries that were noncanonical, in anticipation of Benedictine Women of Madison becoming an ecumenical noncanonical monastery.

## 2006

- In February, the Benedictine Women of Madison became an independent, ecumenical monastery, the first of its kind in the United States.
- The sisters renamed their monastery Holy Wisdom Monastery. The name was chosen in part from what Sister Donald Corcoran, OSB, Cam., member of the sisters' Ecumenical Board, wrote in 1995: "Wisdom hath built herself a house..." – here in Madison, in order to give a place for the growth of a Christian interdenominational monastery, a place of shared life, worship and spiritual discipline – inspired by the ancient and living wisdom of the Rule of St. Benedict."
- Because of their new non-canonical status, the Bishop of the diocese would no longer allow a Roman Catholic priest to preside at the Eucharist.



## 2007

- After years of struggling to find creative uses for the aging, energy inefficient Benedict House (formerly the main retreat and conference building), the sisters decided to replace it with a building that would better suit their space needs, mission and vision.
- The sisters contracted with Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction of Appleton, Wisconsin, to decommission Benedict House and construct a new Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) designed building that would utilize geothermal heating and cooling, solar energy generation and reduce water usage and site runoff.

- Offices were relocated and a decommissioning ritual of the chapel was held in September.
- Sunday Assembly found temporary space for worship at the Waunakee Community Center.
- Hoffman started the deconstruction process in October of 2007 and concluded in March of 2008, saving as much construction materials as possible for reuse in the new building. In all, 99.75% of Benedict House was diverted from the landfill. The subbasement of Benedict House remained intact for use as the maintenance building.



## 2008

- The ground blessing ceremony for the new eco-friendly monastery building was held in June.
- Because the sisters' land had once been part of the Ho-Chunk Nation, they felt it appropriate to invite Tom Hopinka (pictured on left), an elder of the Thunder Clan, to bless the land.
- Construction officially began in September.
- The 2008 Federation of St. Gertrude Chapter meeting was held at Our Lady of Grace Monastery, Beech Grove, Indiana, in July. The membership accepted Benedictine Women of Madison as an affiliated ecumenical monastery of the Federation.



## 2009

- The new monastery building was finished in August. Sunday Assembly worship services resumed in the new building on August 30th.
- The sisters, Sunday Assembly members, Oblates and guests celebrated the dedication of Holy Wisdom Monastery on November 14 and 15. Events on Saturday, included a public reception, concert by Father Robert Koopman, OSB of St. John's University, and a presentation by Sister Joan Chittister, OSB of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, PA (pictured to left with Sisters Mary David, Lynne and Joanne). On Sunday, Sister Joan gave the homily at the dedication service. Nearly 500 people attended the two-day celebration.





## 2010

- On June 24th, the U.S. Green Building Council awarded Holy Wisdom Monastery a platinum rating – the highest level of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification available.
- The monastery earned 63 out of a possible 69 points under LEED-New Construction (NC) version 2.2, making it the highest-rated LEED-NC building in the United States at the time. Punit Jain, U.S. Green Building Council board member, presented the award to the sisters.

## 2012

- On February 26th, Sister Mary David Walgenbach was elected to a six-year term as prioress.
- In August, Pleasant Rowland, neighbor, and long-time supporter of the sisters' ministry, donated \$1 million to the community. This donation along with additional funds raised, made possible the purchase of 53 acres of farmland adjacent to the monastery grounds. The purpose was to restore the land to prairie and oak savanna and protect the north slope of Lake Mendota from runoff. The additional acres were given the name Wisdom Prairie.

## 2013

- Dane County Executive Joe Parisi announced the purchase of 60 acres of the sisters' land on July 18. The land, later named the North Mendota Prairie Unit Wildlife Area, became part of the Dane County Park system, with Holy Wisdom Monastery continuing to maintain the prairie on these acres. Conversations with Dane County about purchasing a portion of the sisters' property for use as a county park/refuge in started in 2011.



## 2014

- An additional 463 solar panels were added to the monastery and retreat and guest house. When the new monastery building was constructed in 2009, solar panels were installed on the assembly room roof to generate 13% of the monastery's total energy cost. With the additional panels, 60% of the monastery's energy is provided.
- The sisters' goal is to eventually operate with a zero-carbon footprint, meaning they create as much energy as is used.





- Greg Armstrong became the first director of land management and environmental education. Greg founded the Friends of Wisdom Prairie. (Greg is pictured to left with Sister Joanne Kollasch on an educational field trip to Sinsinawa Mound.)
- Friends of Wisdom Prairie was established to help maintain and restore the land at Holy Wisdom Monastery through donations and volunteer activities.

## 2017

- In July, Sisters Mary David and Joanne travelled to Cartagena, Colombia, to accept the Society for Conservation Biology's first Assisi Award for Faith-based Conservation. Holy Wisdom Monastery was nominated for the award by Professor Jame Schaefer from Marquette University for more than 60 years of environmental conservation at the monastery.



## 2018

- The sisters received a \$1 million, 5-year grant from the Lilly Endowment Foundation to create the Ecumenical Center for Clergy Spiritual Renewal (ECCSR) at the monastery. The ECCSR offers spiritual renewal for early and mid-career Christian pastors through immersion experiences into the life of Holy Wisdom Monastery. The program also offers participants an ongoing community of monastic resources and support that extends beyond the walls of the monastery. The first immersion consisted of 19 pastors from around the country and represented six Protestant denominations.
- On March 3rd, Sister Mary David was elected to a six-year term as prioress.

## 2019

- Everline Jeruto arrived on July 1 from Kenya to explore community life with the sisters.



# PRESENT & FUTURE

The monastery continues to grow and evolve as individuals and collective action from our communities guide our beautiful and exciting future together. We are grateful every day for the people that help shape this place and share their joys and aspirations for creating a space with us where all are welcome. Our mission of prayer, hospitality, justice and care for the earth has inspired the important work we do here, and will continue to inspire that work into the future - being a spiritual home, a safe and welcoming place for all of our guests, living in right relationship with our communities and taking care of this sacred land.

*Thank you for being here  
and for being part of our journey.*

#### CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

[HolyWisdomMonastery.org](https://www.HolyWisdomMonastery.org)



4200 County Rd M, Middleton, WI 53562 | 608-836-1631

[hwm@HolyWisdomMonastery.org](mailto:hwm@HolyWisdomMonastery.org)

