

WEAVINGS

IRELAND // ENGLAND // UNITED STATES // AUSTRALIA // NEW ZEALAND // KENYA

VICTORIA

Signs of Hope

In the midst of quite severe Covid restrictions in Melbourne, hope continues to live on in our hearts. Four of our younger sisters offer their reflections and the Albert Park garden bears witness to Spring's arrival.



Doris Testa csb, Ged Lannan csb, Celie Nihill csb, Margaret Fyfe csb

Doris Testa csb

Hope for me is noted by T.S Eliot: *'At the still point of the turning world, there is a dance'*. It is that still point that dances my Brigidine hopes – that invites daring to lead despair, which moves Brigidine dreams amidst Brigidine diminishment, that invites Brigidine wisdom to restrain convenient pragmatism and that glides Brigidine charism alongside emerging Brigidine legacies.

Ged Lannan csb

Justice and education – hope-filled legacy.

Within my work with the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc., I was invited last year to engage in a staff consultation in a 'Brigidine' school.

While initially unaware of my association with Brigidines, a teacher proudly announced to me: *"We are a Kildare Ministries School – we strive to offer inclusive education and we welcome All!"* Her colleagues echoed with many enthusiastic statements of agreement!

These people with whom we journey in partnership – they are carrying the Lamp into their future.

Celie Nihill csb

Signs of hope for me are the continual invitations to heed the gospel invitation to 'Love one another as I have loved you...' (Jn 13:34). It is being with people in the ordinariness of life. I see hope is being able to be present in the here and now

My Brigidine community is leading by example to be a sign of hope, so I am invited to continue that gospel invitation in my ministry at Sacred Heart parish school in inner city Melbourne. The families are mostly new arrivals, living in densely populated high rise flats adjacent to the school, coming from multicultural, multilingual and multifaith backgrounds.

Margaret Fyfe csb

With the beginning of spring we celebrate emerging new life with the abundant bird song and the bursting of colour in the gardens around the neighbourhood. I am greeted by the rising sun, a day of promise, the opportunity to choose life. What will I choose? As the sun sets each evening I ask myself have I lived out the words of Daniel Delany to "do ordinary things, extraordinarily well".



Assisting women religious offering health services to the poor and marginalized in remote areas of Kenya



Sr. Tabitha and the sonographer.

Recently I was talking with the Provincial of the Dimesse Sisters, Jane Mwangi whose women run dispensaries in fairly isolated areas of Kenya. As travel restrictions are eased it is only a matter of time before the virus that has been spreading through the major cities reaches the remote areas. Jane was concerned that the women had little protective gear when attending to the patients. They also provide food as many people have lost their low paid jobs due to the pandemic. The sisters are young and highly motivated and have no intention of abandoning their patients because of lack of protection for themselves. As one remarked: "We would rather die than leave the people." This statement is made on a strong belief that God will take care of them. However this doesn't stop Jane from worrying about them.

Sr, Margaret Nederitu, who is the counsellor responsible for the Health care units of the Province, wrote the following account of their ministry.

People with chronic conditions fear to attend their monthly clinics for fear of contacting Covid-19 from the facility or as they travel through public means or long distances on foot. The only option remains to use mobile clinics to meet them where they are. All these health facilities are in the rural areas which are yet to encounter Covid-19 cases. Meanwhile we feel the urgency of being prepared because we care for a very vulnerable population and just to hear of a single case being reported would cause great alarm.

RUMURUTI CATHOLIC DISPENSARY

Rumuruti is a semi-arid area in Laikipia West County in Kenya. Most of the people we serve here were nomads who faced the challenge of cattle rustling and so they are poor, illiterate and lack basic needs especially water and food. They experience a lot of infections and illnesses, due to poor hygiene and lack of the necessary nutrients. We therefore have a lot to worry about this pandemic time in case we start to record any Covid-19 case.

NYAHURURU CATHOLIC DISPENSARY

The dispensary has a catchment population of 4,000 and catchment area of 15 Km radius. Nevertheless, the Dispensary receives patients coming from far distance villages of between 10 to 44 Kilometers away seeking for healthcare services. In a day, the dispensary serves 130 to 200 patients. A high number of patients prefer to seek services from the facility as early as 5:00am in order to return in time to catch up with the scarce means of transport to the interior village.

NJABINI CATHOLIC DISPENSARY

Njabini Catholic Dispensary was started in 1983. It is located on the slopes of Aberdare ranges. The most prevalent illnesses are diabetes and hypertension rendering the people very vulnerable to Covid -19. Currently there are 556 HIV cases. Many patients prefer staying at home without attending their clinics for fear of contracting the disease, for this reason health workers go to the villages for follow up.

OL-JORO-OROK CATHOLIC DISPENSARY

Due to the harsh conditions brought by the Covid-19, about 70% of the people who live in Oljoroorok have lost their jobs working on flower farms. The facility serves around 25 to 40 patients per day and runs a diabetic and hypertensive clinic monthly ranging from 40-50 patients.

In order to provide protection for the sisters and their clients, I asked our Brigidine CLT if the Project Fund would be able to assist in purchasing much needed Personal Protection Equipment and fortunately we were able to meet their request for KSH 456, 699 which equated to €4,500.

Loretta Brennan csb



Sr. Hellen examining a patient in Olj dispensary



Dental procedure being done in Nyahururu dispensary



Lab technician drawing samples from a patient in Ol-joro-orok clinic

QUEENSLAND



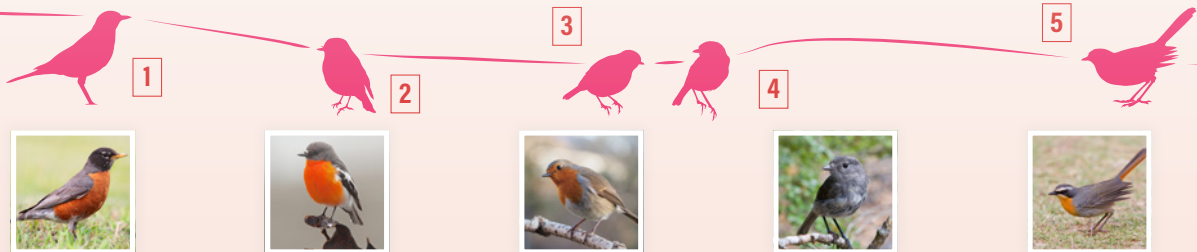
Birds of a feather

This contribution is by Clare Locke who is the graphic designer for Weavings. Clare has also woven the designs for our new Constitutions, Handbook, Forum Prayer and book of Readings for the Preliminary Gatherings. We deeply appreciate her sensitivity to our story and her artistic ability which gladdens our hearts.

A large family of wood ducks on Minjerribah

Our family's first proper holiday this year is a welcome week away on Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island), traditional land of the Quandamooka people, just off the coast of Brisbane. We drive down the local road to our cottage, pointing out the osprey's nest still aloft the dead gumtree. Lapwings (plovers) pace quickly off to the side, squawking with annoyance. Wood ducks idle in the grass. The island is full of breeze and birdsong. Kookaburras, friar birds, lorikeets, galahs, ibis, and at night the mournful cries of bush stone curlews. There's such pleasure in the leisure of watching birds. And although we're experiencing this on a beautiful island, it's much the same in our Brisbane suburb back home.

As 2020 has limited our movement and interaction with other people, we've found a simple joy in taking a walk around our neighbourhood, nodding a respectful hello to the magpies and the butcher birds along the way. Down by the creek—a glorified drain—we watch the swamp hens and the Eurasian coots, occasionally spot a visiting Royal Spoonbill and once an Intermediate Egret. My bespectacled eight-year old, his mind a steel trap, reads bird books and absorbs facts which he recounts like a small ornithologist. He was the one who recognised the egret before it flew away. Birds, in the midst of this strangest year, have been an endless source of curiosity and consolation for our family. Feathered signs of hope.



The Weavings footer depicts silhouettes of birds that inhabit various countries or continents. Most are red-breasted, with the exception of the delightful South Island Robin. The red chest relates to the flame of St Brigid, to her warmth, courage and passion. A line 'weaves' from one bird to the next near the beak, suggesting a shared song, a shared story.

- 1. American Robin – found widely throughout North America
- 2. Flame Robin – found in cooler parts of Australia, especially Tasmania
- 3. European Robin Redbreast – found in Ireland, England and other parts of Western Europe
- 4. South Island Robin – found in New Zealand
- 5. Cape Robin-chat – found in high parts of Kenya and other African countries

Setting The Sails

The cover of a recent Patrician Brothers' publication is a picture of tall yachts with colourful sails. The book's title is "Setting the Sails" and the introduction begins with this: *Each year about 100 yachts leave Sydney harbour, bound for Hobart, in the spectacular Boxing Day event. Though a gale may be blowing north, all yachts turn south on emerging through Sydney Heads. The setting of the sails, the teamwork of the crew, and the leadership of the skipper, all combine to project the yachts towards their southern destination.*

Most Religious Orders, indeed the whole Church, are hopefully employed at this time in setting their sails wisely, courageously, creatively, prophetically. Because, if the sails are not set right then even the best of captains and the most hard working of crews will not succeed in setting the right direction. NSW Brigidine Community has, over the past years, made many small and several big decisions as numbers began to decline, and as the future for the whole church seemed to call for radical change. For many years we have been accustomed to working beside lay people in our schools and other ministries. We now turn to them again, this time to take up positions of authority and trust among us.

The future Church will look, and hopefully will be, very different from the Church of the present and of the past. Future Religious Orders will be and will look very different from those of the present and the past. Only a careful setting of the sails will ensure this happening in ways that we would all hope for. We would like to introduce to you our 3 co-workers who hold positions of trust in our Community and in so doing are helping us set our sails in this time of diminishment: Rosemary Cochrane, Community Secretary; Christine Fletcher, Healthcare & Wellbeing Coordinator; Angela Kremastos, Business Manager.

As preparation for this Weavings article, I spoke to the three of them and also gave them a short list of questions all relating to their work with us asking them how they approach their work. Here are just a few examples of their responses.



It was important for me to work with a faith-value based organisation so my decision to work at Brigidine was therefore made with my heart and my head. I find all aspects of my job satisfying and rewarding especially at the end of a day I feel I have completed all to the best of my ability "doing ordinary things extraordinarily well."

After working in the corporate world for 32 years I began looking for an association that would allow me to contribute in a value based environment, utilising my technical experience and the interpersonal skills acquired during my working life. The ethos and mission of the Brigidines closely resonated on a highly personal level in the next journey of my life. PS And I love the Morning Teas!

I would change nothing about my job. No day is the same and all are satisfying and rewarding. As we go forward into the future my desire is to continue to work with these tremendous women of St Brigid and be as supportive and caring as I can with strength and kindness. I am sometimes overcome with a feeling of great sadness at the diminishing Community.

**A Church forever starting out afresh,
a Church in perpetual state of reform,
a Church where the spirit is free and
not in chains ... religious life is, or
at any rate ought to be, an essential
manifestation of these things.**

Karl Rahner

Anita Murray csb

News from San Antonio

U.S. Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)

Margaret and Mary T. were able to participate virtually in the three-day August LCWR Assembly with close to 900 people, from across the US, and 13 other countries, on the theme "God's Infinite Vision: Our Journey to Borders & Beyond." We know that Cathy was one of those from other countries as she too tuned in from Dublin.

Margaret shares a few of her reflections here: The presentations focusing on present challenges, especially COVID19 and systemic racism were both educational and helpful. I especially found that the sharing across congregations created a wonderful atmosphere of compassion, understanding and gratitude for so many blessings at this time. I missed the prayerful rituals of past years which are difficult to create virtually. The leadership group emphasized that this is a 'crucial moment' for all with the pandemic, racism, climate change, and the uncertain future of religious congregations, all converging to create a daunting challenge. On the final day initiatives were shared to address these challenges with plans for working to dismantle racism, and a designated fund was set aside to work on, and address concerns relating to the future of religious congregations. Margaret found reading the written material, available on the web site, reinforced the message of the assembly.

The New Normal for Ministry

In this time of the pandemic, Agnes reflects on, what many are calling the 'new normal' and especially its impact on her volunteer involvement. For her, learning to cope with new challenges is now part of the 'new normal.' In the past Agnes had been teaching some English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the Presentation Ministry Center (PMC) but now that the Senior Nutrition Program at St. Timothy is reduced to pick-up, she has volunteered for additional classes at PMC. There is the additional challenge that this year it will be all virtual. Mary T. has joined her there, and will be leading citizenship classes for those preparing to make application for US citizenship. One of our Associates, Carol Maloney Reyes, is also involved. Both of us are having fun learning how to use zoom effectively and we have found that it takes a lot of practice to master the process with students and this will keep us 'on our toes' for the next few



months. Regarding her ministry with the RCIA at St. Timothy Parish, Agnes reports that it was a strange and different experience to go to the sacramental celebrations with everyone wearing a mask, six feet apart in the pews, and no hugging! On a more positive note, the participants were delighted and rejoiced to finally have completed that part of the initiation process. Agnes wonders what will happen with this year's RCIA process which is still in the early stages but she feels blessed to be alive and well and to know that God walks with us in this 'new normal'!

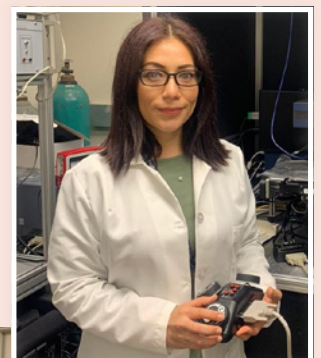
Celebrating with Daniela

Daniela Monje Reyna, has been with us for the past year, while she worked as a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) studying autism. Recently, Daniela got word from the Mexican Government that they had awarded her a full year scholarship to continue her research here. This is wonderful news for her, and all of us can attest to how deserving she is, and how hard she has worked as a researcher. She treated us to a nice meal in honor of this occasion. It is interesting to note how often things come full circle in life since many years ago, her mother, Dr. Gisela, assisted our sisters who ministered in Xalapa, with their work at Caritas. This photo and ours too, appeared in the Xalapa Newspaper recently. Congratulations Daniela!

Mary Teresa Cullen csb

Right: Daniela Monje Reyna at work at UTSA

Below: The community celebrating Daniela's scholarship



Geraldine Moore (right) reflects on the experience of Solas Bhride where she is employed on the Management Group and on BloomHQ, now established in the former Mountrath Convent, where she is secretary of the BloomHQ Forum.

Solas Bhride 2020

Sitting here in an almost empty Solas Bhride it is difficult to put into words the events of the last few months. In late February still euphoric after a wonderful Feile Bride we watched with concern the almost hourly news of the spread of coronavirus and wondered what impact if any it would have on us here.

Within weeks the impact became evident; on opening our emails each morning the rescheduling of international pilgrim groups booked to visit in Spring and early Summer began. New dates were allocated and we started to explore gatherings for Irish pilgrims. March brought a new reality when the Irish Government announced a temporary lockdown, although we rightly suspected that this would be extended. Our doors closed to the public on March 13th and would not re-open until July 6th. In this period the rescheduling of pilgrimages turned into cancellations and our diary for the remainder of this year is now blank.

During the lockdown, protocols and policies were developed to deal with the now pandemic Covid-19. Deep cleaning was carried out and staff training was delivered. On the upside bookings for hermitages increased, July and August were fully booked. On August 8th in response to a rise in cases a lockdown was declared in Laois, Offaly and Kildare. This was to last until August 22nd, subsequently the lockdown was extended in Kildare until September 6th. The impact for Solas Bhride has been considerable; bookings cancelled and guests already in situ advised to return home. Plans are now dependent on an exit from lockdown on September 6th, we can only wait and see. However, out of adversity comes opportunity and we have used the periods of lockdown to develop our strategic plan: Solas Bhride 2020-2023. We are also reflecting on methods



of delivering our programmes remotely as it has become evident that people are crying out for spiritual connections.

On a personal level this time of uncertainty has been difficult, isolation from family and friends has tested us and it was all too easy to become despondent. Our need for the human touch and connection has never been more evident or more missed. We have suffered periods of fear of the unknown, fear for our loved ones and ourselves. There has also been an anger that not all in society have been as careful as they should, and that our older citizens have carried the greater burden of isolation. Equally there has also been a searching, a yearning for the Divine and a hope for better days ahead. But throughout our suffering both personal and financial we are conscious of the greater sacrifice so many have made.

May we all be sheltered under the mantle of Brigid.

Bloom HQ, Mountrath 2020

This has been a very mixed year for Bloom HQ. We started the year on a positive note with the decision to employ a part-time manager; the co-ordination of the centre had become too great a task for a volunteer committee. It was thought that to maximize our opportunities we needed a dedicated worker who could co-ordinate office and hot desk bookings and keep track of future development. After advertising the position and conducting interviews, Regina McGinley was appointed to the position. Within two weeks of her appointment the country was in lockdown as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Community spaces, the gym and all non-essential use of office space were suspended.



Above: Brigidine Convent, Mountrath
Below: BloomHQ

We did have some use of hot desks as some clients were deemed essential workers and allowed to continue work and to facilitate them we remained open.

Although essentially in lockdown we continued to plan the next phase of development. The tennis/basketball courts were relined and fenced, the garden space to the rear of Bloom HQ has been further developed and the dream of setting the paths in the shape of a St Brigid's cross has been realised. Preparatory work has been carried out on the chapel and the old domestic science room to allow for phase two of development. This phase was held up due to the local lockdown of Laois, Offaly and Kildare but will now begin within the next couple of weeks.



Bloom HQ has been impacted by the coronavirus in terms of delays to further development but has also been fortunate in that a stream of income has continued albeit reduced somewhat. An unexpected bonus to having office and boardroom space plus the gym and St Philomena's hall is the amount of bookings received from corporate groups for training days. Bookings for hot desks and office space continues to grow and Laois PPN (Public Private Network) has run courses for senior citizens in St Philomena's hall and made use of the newly renovated tennis courts, running junior tennis camps in July. Scouts, Foroige, Camera club and Artists co-op have all returned after the lockdown. It is wonderful to see the tennis and basketball courts in use free of charge by the local community.

Looking to the future, Mountrath Community Forum will continue to work with local and national authorities to develop and deliver services to the local community. Talks are at an advanced stage with two third level colleges to use Bloom HQ as an outreach facility to deliver part time courses. This is an exciting prospect for us as we have always envisioned an educational dimension continuing in this venerable old building. Times may be uncertain and it is impossible to predict what the next twelve months will hold for all of us but we look forward to the challenges ahead.

See more of the great work at BloomHQ at www.bloomhq.ie

Geraldine Moore

The Trace Elements and The Living Books

Our Brigidine Story is continuing to be told and lived through our Past Students, our Old Girls and our Alumni, now circling the Globe.

Recently some of the St Bride's Old Girls Committee and Sister Monica gathered at Chanel College for a special occasion. Along the front Corridor we were greeted by a large set of professionally reframed photos of Brigidine Sisters, Past Students, Significant Events and Buildings.

The restoration was the 'Brain Child' of Mrs Claire Hills PHD former teacher at St. Bride's and St Joseph's Colleges, now Chanel College. A great tribute to the presence of



L-R Maruyn Bouzaid, Peggy Ruback, Nola Graham, Elaine Beck, Debbie Marshall-Lob, Sr Monica, Mary Buick, Judy Hooper

St. Bride's College in Masterton from 1898 – 1977, its achievements and contribution to Catholic Education in the District. Mrs Fran Stewart, nee De Schot, a Past Student of St. Bride's, donated the resetting and reframing of the whole display.

A special thank you was expressed to both women for time and effort given to the preservation of our history. Mrs Marshall-Lob, Principal, spoke about the importance of remembering our Roots and welcomed the history

displayed along the Corridor. Sister Monica then blessed the Memorial Wall with water from St. Brigid's Well in Kildare, Ireland. "This is our wish today, our constant prayer, may Brigid bless Chanel College and the Corridor that shelters you all now, and into the future. Amen".

Morning Tea and hot scones followed in the Staff room, where many a story was told.

Monica Landy csb



Signs of Hope

Labour is promising to make Matariki a public holiday, the first based on Maori culture. The rising of Matariki, (Pleiades), heralds the start of the Maori New Year and invites us to reflect, remember and look forward. Matariki literally means the "eyes of God".



SPRING: Lambs are dotting our fields, the willows are showing the soft green of new growth and blossom trees are laden with beauty. These spring flowers come from a few bulbs given to Anne by Clothilde.

Anne Phibbs csb

