

# Benet Hill Monastery The Review

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# Letter from the prioress

Two areas of awareness merge for me during this season of shorter days and longer nights. The first is the sacredness of holidays, holy days, and traditions. We celebrate some sacred holidays, some determined by the moon phases, and some that invite deeper reflection and meaning (ex. the mystery of an incarnate God). We give thanks as a nation and affirm our interdependence with all creation, especially Indigenous people who lived here long before settlers arrived. We remember that all creation is a gift from the Divine. We recall, as Adrianne Alexander says, "that we are connected to all the saints and their witness of proclaiming faith in the world." At the monastery, our tradition is to burn a candle before the pictures of all our deceased sisters throughout November to recall their giftedness and presence that still surrounds us.

The other awareness is what I call cosmic wonder. In the northern hemisphere, we see so many more stars during these months. As a teenager I enjoyed the wonder and quiet of stargazing as I reflected on the mystery of the universe. I still remember a song that would pass through my thoughts: "far beyond the stars my soul is longing to go, there beyond the sun to a better place I know, far away beyond the stars." For thirty-two years we have seen magnificent images of space from the Hubble Telescope. Now, our reality is being stretched as we contemplate the pictures from the James Webb Space Telescope. Today we see stars and galaxies beyond our imaginings!

L. Robert Keck writes in Sacred Eyes, "The first step in empowerment is to love our uniqueness, and the second is to love our depths, the third is to love our heights and reach for the stars." He continues, "The original root of the word 'disaster' meant to be out of touch with the stars. It may be that at least part of the solution to the many disasters dotting the transition landscape we live in would be to reclaim our astronomical heritage and get back in touch with the stars."

I believe that this cosmic wonder is inviting us to consider our original blessings, to increase in spaciousness for the Christ, and to surrender to the mystery of blessings and losses that call us into greater communion with the communal soul. We are invited to discover and reaffirm our genetic predisposition that is our natural inheritance from the stars. Imagine the empowerment of returning "home" by daring to love our heights and overcoming our fears of cultivating the seed of divinity within us!

I pray that we discover our uniqueness and divine love and integrate all dimensions of ourselves. In so doing, the healing power of the Holy Spirit would be professed to a world longing for deep peace. This perfect peace is promised in the Christ that was present at the beginning of time, manifested in the historical Jesus and other great prophets through the ages, and carried through each of us who believe in Emmanuel – God with us.

As we journey to the end of this year, may we be nimble and filled with hope as we trust God in moving toward greater diversity where all are welcome. May we become a living bridge from "I to we." May we reach for the heights and truly see the vastness and depth of our blessings. Shalom friends. May every good gift of our God be yours: peace, harmony, completeness, and fullness of life.

S. Main There Summer DB

Sister Marie Therese "MT" Summers, OSB Prioress

# Sister Kathleen Cogan, OSB

S ister Kathleen Cogan, OSB died peacefully August 6, 2022, at the Mt. St. Francis Nursing Center in Colorado Springs. Kathleen is preceded in death by her parents John and Elizabeth (Esser) Cogan, her siblings Sister Leann, OSB, John, Jerry, and Joseph Cogan. She is survived by Mary Margaret Eggleston and Sister Elizabeth Cogan, OSB.

Sister Kathleen was born on February 4, 1929, in Salida, Colorado to a large and tightly knit family. Her parents owned a working ranch near Buena Vista, Colorado. Kathleen's mother was a schoolteacher before marriage, so education was a high priority for the family as was forming their children in the Catholic faith. Three of their daughters became Benedictine sisters.

After graduating from high school, Kathleen went to Mt. St. Scholastica College earning a Bachelor of Science. While there, she heard God's call and entered Monastic life as a Benedictine at Mt. St. Scholastica in 1949. She taught in Kansas, Missouri, and Colorado. In 1968, Kathleen completed a Master of Science from St. Mary University in Minnesota. She continued to teach in various places until the early 1970s. When she felt the call to enter nursing, she studied at the University of Colorado, graduating in 1974 as an RN. She worked at Penrose Hospital in intensive care, obstetrics, and rehab. Kathleen became a Hospital Chaplain, caring not

only for patient's physical needs but also tending to their spiritual needs. She was a Chaplain at Mercy Hospital in Iowa and St. Thomas More Hospital in Canon City, Colorado.



Sister Kathleen would often return to her family's ranch to read, pray, and fish. In retirement, she wrote the book Three Nuns from the Ranch in which she relates hilarious family stories and adventures of the three Benedictine sisters.

Along with teaching and nursing, Sister Kathleen loved to sing. She was a member of the Benet Hill Schola and a cantor for the Liturgy of the Hours. Later in life, she became disabled but her trust in God never wavered. She took very seriously her mission of prayer. Sister Kathleen's passing reflected her living, an unwavering trust in God and deep love and concern for all around her. She truly lived to love God, her family, community, students, and patients.

A Vigil and Celebration of Life was held August 16 at 6:00pm with a Mass of Resurrection on August 17 at 10:00am, both in Our Lady of Peace Chapel at Benet Hill Monastery. Donations may be made in Sister Kathleen's memory to the monastery.

# Bridging to the Future

#### Update from the Benet Hill Monastery Monastic Council

Inlike many American communities of women religious, Benet Hill Monastery is not moving to closure. Rather, we have committed to continuing as a contemporary Benedictine monastic presence, locally at 3190 Benet Lane in Colorado Springs and globally on the internet for the world.

We trust that exactly what our future presence will look like will emerge as we live into our first Bridging to the Future plan and God continues to work through divine love. Because you are our family, friends, colleagues, and supporters, we will keep you updated on our progress through our Review publications.

Those of you who have lived through the planning and implementation of a strategic plan know that it's not easy. In fact, many of you have probably had the experience of working on a plan that is simply shelved after it's been printed and never looked at again!

That isn't happening at Benet Hill, but we have learned the benefit of "chunking up" our bridging plan initiatives into a single, short-term thematic goal so that we don't feel overwhelmed. On the following pages, we've described the progress we've made.

#### Vision Framework

Our Charism Our Spiritually Infused Giftedness

We, the Sisters of Benet Hill Monastery, journeying together, are called to seek God in the daily celebration of life. Recognizing our giftedness, we listen and respond through creative prayer and life-giving service

Our Mission
Our Core Purpose

We exist to be a contemporary Benedictine monastic presence.

Our Values
What We Believe and How We Behave

We provide sacred space of hospitality to create hope and healing

We revere all creation

We are radical signs of God's love and compassion

We use our resources in service with all God's people



Scan the QR code to watch a video on the Bridges of Meghalaya, the living model for our plan. **Strategic Priority #1** 

Create a technology infrastructure to support Benet Hill Monastery's work



A huge shout out to Sister Mary Colleen Schwarz and employees Regina Allor, Barb Lynette and Ruth Roland for their progress in improving the technology infrastructure!

When the aging phone system needed rebooting several times a week and then daily, Sister MT knew that the monastery couldn't wait any longer to upgrade the telecommunications system. Regina jumped into action to research the best technology and has persevered "like a bulldog" (Sister Mary Colleen's words) on troubleshooting the updated system with unflagging support and troubleshooting from our friends at Sensible Systems. A special thank you to our friends Walt and Toni Pleimann who made a generous and timely gift when the phones had stopped ringing.

Sister Mary Colleen, Barb, and Ruth wrote content,

uploaded new images, and streamlined registration and payment processes so that a beautiful, user-friendly website could launch in October. Chris and Jenny Schell of Design Rangers in Colorado Springs handcrafted the new website to replace the one designed almost eight years ago. We are grateful to CHRISTUS Health for their memorial gift in memory of our dear friend Father Bob Lampert that made this possible.

Finally, thanks to Sister Mary Colleen, Ruth, Barb, and all the sisters and oblates who work to provide thoughtful reflections and posts to Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn and email to launch kindness and Benedictine values into cyberspace on a regular basis.

Explore the new website!





### **Strategic Priority #2**

Share monastery leadership

When the Council discussed which Bridging Plan initiative to rally around with focused time and energy, we quickly concluded that building stronger relationships with oblates was the highest priority. Oblates are individuals who have already associated with the monastery to share in the community's spiritual life, prayers, and work. We decided to focus on the initiative to "Empower the Oblate Advisory and Action Team (OAAT)" to work side-by-side with the oblate leadership team in this short-term goal.



So many "firsts" to celebrate! Work continues as well to re-connect with oblates who are no longer able to engage and to re-visit oblate leadership job descriptions and leadership norms and expectations.

Over the next several months, this laser focus created all manner of "firsts":

- Dr. Ellen Haroutunian, Ph.d., OblSB led the Benet Hill sisters in a week-long spiritual retreat – first ever retreat led by an oblate lay person.
- » A group of oblates from Pueblo visited, lunched, and learned about Benet Hill to evaluate transferring their monastery association from Chicago to Colorado Springs – first ever visit of Pueblo oblates.
- The OAAT assumed leadership for training a new class of eleven oblate novices, including managing remote learning for three – first ever oblate training led by oblate leaders.
- » Oblates were invited to celebrate the Feast of St. Benedict with the community by attending Sunday mass and brunch followed by an afternoon oblation of the new oblate novices and dinner – first ever joint celebration of the founder of Benedictine monasticism.
- The OAAT and Monastic Council met for a joint retreat for an Enneagram workshop led by Jerry O'Hare, ObISB – first ever joint retreat of leadership teams.
- The OAAT and Monastic Council participated in a joint training on leadership and facilitation skills led by Kimberley Sherwood, our friend and consultant since 2019.

Read about our work with Kimberley by scanning the QR code - the monastery is her featured Case Study!





Learn more about becoming an oblate by scanning this QR code.

## **Strategic Priority #3**

Practice intentional inclusivity and support social and environmental justice







We have begun our inclusivity work by looking critically at our current practices. How are we unintentionally excluding oblates from our community gatherings? How do we make it difficult for our elder sisters to offer their wisdom in our gatherings? How are we failing to welcome the larger community into our mission? How are we communicating to our staff the Bridging to the Future plan?

And we've adapted! We are planning the schedule and agenda for community meetings to accommodate the busy lives of oblate leaders (OAAT). No more community gatherings over the Thanksgiving weekend – that fit the old monastery model, not the emerging model of shared leadership.

We have also done away with full day meetings so that our elders may participate fully and the daily operations of the monastery may continue. Information is shared ahead of time when possible, large font size presentations are prepared, and audio enhancements are used to assist those with vision or hearing impairments.

The Care of Creation Covenant Group continues to lead the initiative to practice our land ethic and grow in our social and environmental justice efforts through the Laudato Si' Action Platform. They have organized several days of forest workdays to mitigate fire danger and tend to paths and prayer sites. They also scheduled a day to introduce new folks to the forest around the monastery. A big shout out to the oblates and their family members, neighbors, friends from Sunday mass, and young elders from the local Latter-Day Saints (LDS) community who have worked so hard and of course, to Sister Jan Ginzkey, OSB. The sisters report that their dinner conversations with the young LDS elders have been fun, enlightening, and mutually beneficial!

Learn more about the land by scanning the QR code.





### **Strategic Priority #4**

Steward resources

# **Strategic Priority #6**

**Transition to 21st Century Monasticism** 



This summer was all about maintaining the monastery buildings and roads. Thanks to Sister Mary Glenn, OSB who oversaw the two big summer projects of painting and gutter repair, and repaving and striping parking lots and roads. She would be the first to give all the credit to Facilities Manager Gilberto (Gil) Vasquez who manages day-to-day maintenance, large and small. Gil is pictured here with an example of his fine woodworking craftsmanship in Our Lady of Peace Chapel.

We want to thank Cathy and Mike Chebuhar who made a generous gift to move the painting project forward, and to James and Peggy Dawley who provided the asphalt services and made a substantial In-Kind donation of their professional services.

Less visible work happened this summer in the Mission Advancement office as Ruth Roland and Kimberley Sherwood finalized a three-year action plan for fundraising and communication. Much more to come about what this means soon!

Benedictine Sisters from seventeen autonomous monasteries across the United States and Mexico gathered at Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kansas, in June for the Federation of St. Scholastica Chapter. During the chapter meeting (held every four years), they discussed matters of concern, set directional statements for the future, elected new federation leaders and renamed their union as the Monastic Congregation of St. Scholastica. The sisters also celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Federation's official approval by the Vatican on February 25, 1922!

Representing Benet Hill Monastery were delegates Sisters MT Summers, Prioress, Jan Ginzkey and Margaret Meaney. Sister Ana Cloughly also attended as part of the 100th anniversary committee. Sister Margaret noted, "This chapter was my first and was a great opportunity to renew and make new acquaintances. I found the caliber of the sisters who participated, as well as the direction statements a great reason for increased hope, particularly this directional statement; 'To strengthen our Benedictine identity and mission through radical hospitality."

A few highlights: Sister Judith Sutera, OSB, of Mount St. Scholastica, facilitated a discussion on the role of the portress – traditionally, the sister who greeted monastery guests – in radical hospitality. The image of the portress was created by Sister Mariana Olivo Espinoza, OSB of Monasterio Pan de Vida, Torreon, Mexico. Sister Maricarmen Bracamontes, OSB, also of Monasterio Pan de Vida, spoke on radical hospitality in the context of Pope Francis' Fratelli Tutti.

Postulant Dorothy Herring of Mount St. Scholastica remarked, "Seeing what these women have done in the past 100 years gives me hope for what impact my generation and future generations of women religious will have not only in the Church but in the world."

# **Strategic Priority #5**

Strengthen daily operations to support future growth

The Council has selected daily operations as the next short-term goal to rally around with focused time and energy.

You may have heard about the "tyranny of the present" which can keep small non-profit organizations like Benet Hill from moving forward into a future vision. What this means is that it doesn't matter what our vision is for the future if the kitchen isn't fully staffed, and the ovens don't work right now! We've identified six action items to improve daily operations, some small and some truly exciting and innovative. We'll be sharing much more about what results from these action items soon!

Do you need to update your email address or other contact information?





# Ministries: Benedictine Spiritual Director Training & Certification

S ister Mary Collen Schwarz OSB and Dana Cossey OblSB coordinate this ministry that helps people discover how to lead others towards a deeper connection with the Divine. Over two years of online study (individually and in small cohorts) and one year of supervision, people around the world are transformed and become certified as Benedictine spiritual directors. These are stories and photos from recent students and graduates.





#### Jacob Jacob, Current Student

Originally from Nigeria, Jacob Jacob currently lives in Leeds, England. He is a second-year student in the Global Online program and has a Ph.D. in Communications. He recently sent Sister Mary Colleen this photo with the news that he has secured a three-year commitment from the United Nations to fully fund a graduate degree in Communications in Conflict Areas in Nigeria. Jacob considers this new educational opportunity his life's legacy. He is pictured here (far right) at the contract signing which took place back in his homeland of Nigeria.

#### Linda Blincow, Graduate

Benet Hill provides... a safe place...healing... That's what is posted on the website about this program.

At first reading, the descriptions of a 'safe place' and 'healing' don't really help you understand and grasp the program. But as a graduate of the program, I can say that the program offers this and so much more. It leads to transformation. It leads to healing because this sacred compassionate space is necessary to learn self-compassion for one's own self to grow and mature. I now know that I am God's beloved! As a spiritual director and compassionate listener, I can now support others on that same path to wholeness and healing.



This program is a two-year pilgrimage that is transformative for a lifetime. During the first year I grew to know myself in ways I never did before. The journey of uncovering the mystery of self leads to the profound recognition of the Divine in the other. Benedictine Spirituality is an invitation to encounter.

After being immersed, and led by Sister Mary Colleen and Dana, as well as your companion instructor, you are not the same. Your neighbors are not the same. Life is not the same. God is not the same. It is a journey that leads you to the depths of what can be. It is truly a glimpse of Eternal Life. Your classmates bring their heart wisdom and perspectives from their journey, and you grow. During the second year, this self-realization allowed me to listen more deeply and then understand on a different level what it truly means to accompany another in their journey.

Words of this Catholic hymn that I have sung and prayed throughout my life during mass are now being actualized:

Open my eyes Lord, help me to see your face.

Open my ears Lord, help me to hear your voice.

Open my heart Lord help me to love like you.

After two years of journeying together in this program, our cohort understands the next verse of this song:

And the first shall be last.

and our eyes shall be opened,

and we'll hear like never before,

and we'll speak in new ways,

and we'll see God's face in places we've never known.

Listen to this bilingual version of "Open My Eyes" by scanning the QR code.



There is a profound joy that has always been present in my life and this program has helped give me a vocabulary in which I can better share that joy with others. Once you have seen it, felt it, described it, you can't go back. Why would you want to? God is always calling deeper. Deeper still.

### **Graduate Photos**



Lisa Atkins, RSM (Arkansas)



Kevin Burney (Kentucky)



Patrician Ann Dillaway (California)



Caitlin Douglas (Australia)



Joseph Garkovich (Colorado)



Mary Heintzkill (Michigan)



Tyler Hill (Colorado)



John Hurley, CSP (California)



Lenore Kater (Colorado)



Kim Lu (Florida)



Elizabeth Mathai, OSB (Florida)



Brandy Miller (Virginia)



Lucrecia Mobbs (Tennessee)



Bruce Morgan (Georgia)



Jean Pawlink (Florida)



Naomi Pryde (Thailand)



Richard Qualls (Kansas)



Deborah Rillos (Colorado)



Carol Rohloff, CSJ (New York)



Molly Roth (Colorado)



Keely Taylor (Colorado)



Lawrence Taylor (Ohio)



 $\pmb{Maria\ Vinton,\ SSM\ (Wisconsin)}$ 



Theresa Winn (Arizona)



Hill Monastery was an amazing experience for both me as the group leader and for all our high school and college coaches who attended from around the country. The location in the Black Forest has some amazing peaceful energy. It's a wonderful spot for reflection, growth, and community building. The facilities are great, and the grounds are beautiful. We shared our meals and closing circle with all the sisters in the community, and these were some of the highlights of our time there.

Everyone made us feel so welcome, the coaches loved it and if I do this program again, we will be heading back to Benet Hill Monastery!

Learn more about individual or group retreats at Benet Hill by scanning the code.







Ruth Roland, Director of Mission Advancement

## The Ripple Effect

The Christ-like love and hospitality that the Sisters of Benet Hill Monastery have shown others over the years affects the world like small pebbles tossed into still waters – the ripples go on forever. This truth came to me recently when I learned the full story behind a recent gift for the care of retired sisters.

The story began in 1963 when Sandra Rockers (pictured here) enrolled at the newly opened Benet Hill Academy. Sandi loved going to Benet Hill! Latin with Sister Clarita, Math with Sister Paula and later Sister Naomi, Biology with Mother Liguori, and English Literature with Sister Alice Marie. They had classes wherever the sisters could find a spot on the Academy grounds before the main building was completed. She fondly remembers the first Dad-Daughter shows that became a tradition. Sandi graduated in the Class of '67, the first class to have attended the Academy for all four years. Sandi was the first of her class to marry (Bill Sherwood, deceased) and most of her classmates attended the wedding, including Kathie Vidmar and Libby Murray who were in the wedding party. Sandi still cherishes these friendships, memories of the sisters, her class ring, and valedictorian medal.

Of course, time marched on. Benet Hill Academy closed in 1984 while Sandi was living out of state. The sisters refocused their mission to adult spiritual education in the Academy building. Many sisters began or continued working in Denver-area parishes including Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church in Lakewood. The sisters became well-known and beloved in the Archdiocese parishes as liturgists, educators, directors of ministry programs for seniors, and on, and on.

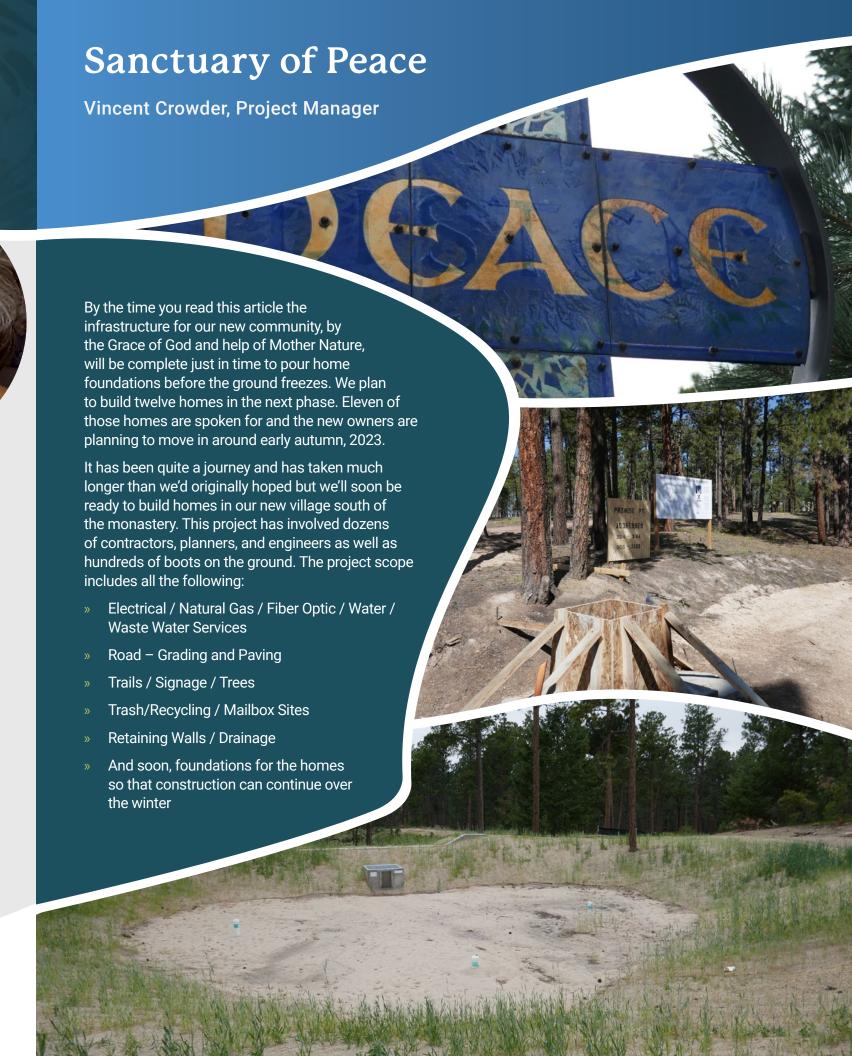
And time continued to march on. Most of the Benet Hill sisters retired after years of loving service. Sandi and her husband Jack Erfurdt moved back to Colorado, began attending mass at Our Lady of the Canyon, raised their family, and made many friends at their parish.

And then God stepped in earlier this year when Sandi was talking to a parish friend, a probate attorney. The friend shared that she had a client, a Catholic who had volunteered in many parishes, who had left the residual of their estate to infirm priests and sisters who had

served in the Denver Archdiocese. The attorney had been rather shocked to learn that the Archdiocese was happy to accept the estate gift for retired priests but had no responsibility for caring for retired sisters who had served in the parishes. She wondered aloud how she could fulfill her client's final wishes as to caring for retired religious women.

You can guess the rest of the story. Sandi told her friend about her experience with the Benedictines. A short Google search and voicemail messages later, I was talking with the probate attorney and affirming that yes indeed, the Benet Hill sisters had served for many years in the Denver area. A few months after that, Benet Hill Monastery received the largest gift in its history from this estate. Remarkably, when the client's name became known to the sisters, several remembered her from Our Lady of Fatima.

Thank you, Sandi. Thanks to this generous parishioner. And thanks be to God who is so good.



# We pray for those who have lost loved ones

Compiled by Sisters Lucile Hartmann and Mary Jane Vigil, OSB



Sister Elizabeth Cogan, OSB and the Cogan family Sister Kathleen Cogan, OSB "Nourished by prayer, people, and creation, Kathleen freely shared her abundance of joy."



Sister Therese O'Grady, OSB and the O'Grady family Brother, John (Jack) O'Grady "My brother Jack was a faith-filled husband and father of 6 children. As my older brother he teased me incessantly!"

Almeida and Randall Families
Dr. Valorie Ann (Almeida) Randall BHA '74

Mary (Drew) Houchin BHA '73 Sister, Patty (Drew) Evans

Hall and Chittenden Families Katherine (Hall) Chittenden BHA '68

Michele (Haddock) Pring BHA '83 and Jeanette Haddock BHA '83 Father, Philip Haddock

Maureen (Sheehan) Jackson BHA '80 and Melinda (Sheehan) Kernkamp BHA '83 Parents Jane and John Sheehan Sister MT Summers, OSB and the Summers family Aunt, Alice Balleweg and Grand-niece, Emma Kerr

"She was a young woman ready to stand with the marginalized with a vivacious energy of service to others in need."



Sister Mary Colleen Schwarz, OSB and the Schwarz family Brother, Wendell Schwarz "We used to ride around in his Ford Mustang with the top down, singing our hearts out to all the oldies."

Camille (Coleman) King BHA '84 Mother, Bonniegail Coleman

Mary (Friel) Blais BHA '74, Nancy (Friel) Wronski BHA '77, Colleen Friel BHA '78, and Kathy (Friel) Newell BHA '83

Father, John Friel

Kathleen Shea BHA '76

Sister, Bridget Shea BHA '74

Bridget's Mass of Resurrection was held at the monastery in September, 2022.

Carol Hansen BHA '71 and Laura (Hansen) Delfeld BHA '77 Parents Herman and June Hansen



# Community Life



# We invite you to receive... breathe...give...breathe...repeat...

#### Receive

- » Walk the forested grounds and linger at prayer sites
- » Allow us to pray with you
- Worship in Our Lady of Peace Chapel,
   Sundays at 10:15 AM
- » Make a contemplative retreat (Guided retreats available)
- » Inquire about mental health or grief counseling
- » Journey with a Benedictine Spiritual Director
- » Explore the Online Benedictine Spiritual Director Training & Certification Program

#### benethillmonastery.org

#### Give

- Mail your check to: Sisters of Benet Hill Monastery,
   3190 Benet Lane, Colorado Springs, CO 80921
- » Securely give online at benethillmonastery.org including gifts in memory or honor of a sister, family member, or friend
- » Recommend a grant from a Donor Advised Fund
- » Include the Sisters of Benet Hill Monastery in your Required Minimum Distribution and reduce your taxable income by making a Qualified Charitable Distribution
- Inquire about making a bequest through your will or transferring appreciated shares of stock or mutual funds: Ruth Roland at rroland@benethillmonastery.org, or call (719) 355-1633



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The Review

For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; It will surely come, it will not delay.

Habakkuk 2:3