

Community Notes

News of the Community of St. John Baptist

Spring 2019



Photo by the Rev. Cynthia Black

Box 240, Mendham, NJ 07945 + 973-543-4641
www.csjb.org + csjb@csjb.org

Renewing Our Ministry

Capital Campaign and Construction News



Photo by Mark Hillinghouse

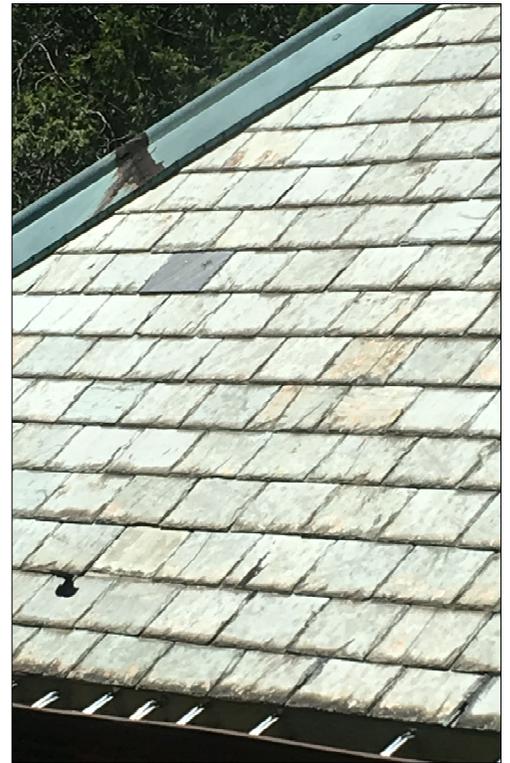
St. Marguerite's Roof to be Replaced

St. Marguerite's House, a Retreat House for groups of all ages from the Church and the wider community, is now in its 110th year. The cornerstone was laid in 1908 and construction was completed in 1909. The purpose of the house was to be an orphanage, and girls of all ages who could not live at home were referred there. The house held about 30 girls along with the Sisters and housemothers.

After World War II, New Jersey cut off funding to orphanages throughout the State, and this hardship proved to be too much for the Sisters to manage financially. With great regret, the orphanage was closed in 1950. However, a new chapter opened for the Sisters, who decided to move across the lawn into the former orphanage and make it their home, while renovations were underway in the Convent building. This project continued from 1950 -1960. In June of 1960 the Sisters, under the leadership of Sr. Margaret Helena, moved back into the newly-renovated Convent. Almost immediately, new vocations began to appear and a new era for the Community was begun.

The first venture into new ministry at St. Marguerite's was a retreat for college girls during the Christmas holidays of 1960-61. Sisters Margaret Helena and Waldine Lucia laid the groundwork for the retreat work that has continued and grown. Today, St. Marguerite's House hosts over 50 groups a year.

The estimated cost for the restoration of the original slate roof is currently \$380,000. Of that amount, \$56,000 is already set aside. Because the building is on the State and National Register of Historic Places, the tiles must be replaced with slate.



Retreat House Roof Donation

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____

Phone number _____ Cell _____

Amount donated: \$ _____

Please make your checks payable to:
St. John the Baptist Foundation
P.O. Box 240, Mendham, NJ 07945.

Why I chose Religious Life

From Sr. Victoria Michelle and Sr. Monica Clare



Bishop Herbert Donovan received the Final Vows of Sr. Victoria Michelle on September 29, 2017

Sr. Victoria Michelle's Story

I came here from Georgia, my home state, where I worked in a hospital as a nurse's aide. I also had a job at the Christian Women's Center, a shelter for women and children in crisis.

I felt called to do mission work, and when a Christian drama group, the Covenant Players, came to my town I joined them on their tour.

Our tour around the country brought us here to St. Marguerite's House, where we performed in churches in the area. While here, I read the brochures about the Community and its work, and kept them. Several years later, I came for the Search Program, which the Sisters hold every year in August. I decided then to try my vocation. I am presently in charge of the Convent chapel and I serve at the Church of the Messiah in Chester.



Bishop Allen K. Shin received the Final Vows of Sr. Monica Clare on June 8, 2018

Sr. Monica Clare's Story

I came here from Los Angeles in 2012, where I had worked as a photo editor in movie advertising. Prior to that, I had wanted from early childhood to be a nun. When I learned that the Episcopal Church had convents, I felt the call to join a religious order.

After some time I finally was able to realize my dream, and entered the Community of St. John Baptist as a Postulant that year. I wished to do something meaningful with my life and to follow God's plan for me.

I am very happy that now I can devote my whole life to prayer and ministry. At the present time, I am a student at Drew University Theological School and I have part-time ministry at All Saints Church in Millington. In the Convent, I co-manage our website and Facebook page.

The monastic life is a way chosen by some who are seeking a closer walk with God. Several world religions include religious orders. In the American Episcopal Church, there are thirteen orders for women, five for men and two for men and women. There are Anglican religious orders in all of the countries where the Church of England has a presence.

The Community of St. John Baptist was founded in England in 1852, and the American branch began in 1874. Our ministry has included inner city missions, teaching, nursing, childcare, spiritual guidance, and most recently, priesthood.

Getting to Know the Sisters

Sister Eleanor Francis



Sister Eleanor Francis has been the Superior since 2010. A native of California, she is now a priest in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark. Before coming to Mendham, Sister Eleanor Francis belonged to a Vedanta Community in California. Vedanta is an Eastern religion with deep spirituality. Sister is a spiritual director and enjoys leading retreats and conferences, especially for interfaith groups.

Sister Deborah Francis

Sister Deborah Francis is a native of New York City and Long Island. In her early years her family belonged to a synagogue, and later she found Christianity as an adult. While working as a paralegal in New York, she attended an Episcopal church, where she learned about CSJB and visited here. Sensing a call, she applied and was accepted into the Novitiate, and today she is our Assistant Superior.



Sister Monica Clare

Sister Monica Clare made her Final Vows in 2018. She presently is the Novice Director of the Community. Originally from Georgia, she found the Episcopal Church while working in California. Sr. Monica Clare is presently studying at Drew University Theological School and assisting with the ministry at All Saints Church, Millington. She also shares in the management of our website.



Sister Suzanne Elizabeth

Sister Suzanne Elizabeth, a nurse, served as Superior from 1983-1997. In her earlier years she was House Sister and school nurse at St. John Baptist School (now Daytop.) She is a graduate of St. Luke's Hospital School of Nursing. She presently offers spiritual direction, having been trained in directing 8-day Ignatian retreats. She also serves on the Community's hospitality team and loves gardening.



Sister Barbara Jean

Sister Barbara Jean came to the Community after teaching in an elementary school. In her early years here, she worked at St. John Baptist School (now Daytop). Later, she studied for ordination and has served part-time in several churches. She also was Superior of the Community from 1997-2010, and presently helps part-time at St. Mark's in Mendham. She is the editor of our newsletter, "Community Notes."



Sister Laura Katharine

Sister Laura Katharine came to the Community about two months after Sr. Barbara Jean and was professed in Final Vows in 1970. A graduate of St. Louis School of Music, Sr. Laura Katharine has taught many new members how to read the Gregorian Chant in our service book. She also has served in several branch houses, most recently at St. Mary the Virgin in New York City, where she worked in the sacristy.



Sister Pamela

Sister Pamela came from our English convent for a year, and asked to stay in America. She received training to become a hospice chaplain and worked for several years visiting patients for the Morris County Visiting Nurse Association. When our Community began the Capital Campaign, Sr. Pamela was invited to participate, and she has done her part by organizing a series of concerts to help raise funds for the restoration of our buildings.



Sister Mary Lynne



Sister Mary Lynne is from Lawrenceville, NJ. Her Presbyterian pastor discerned that Religious Life might be her vocation, and suggested that she visit here. She joined the Community, and when Sr. Jane Mankaa from Cameroon came to visit, she was invited to go back with her. She has gone many times and keeps in close touch with Sr. Jane and the children. Sr. Mary Lynne also makes beautiful jewelry for the Nun Better Shop.

Sister Margo Elizabeth

Sister Margo Elizabeth came to the Community seeking a more contemplative life. One of the gifts she offers is spiritual direction. Sr. Margo felt a call to found Celtic Journeys, and leads groups to holy places in the British Isles three times a year. The most recent addition to the journeys is a retreat in February on Holy Island (Lindisfarne.)



Sister Linda Clare



Sister Linda Clare's first visit was with a friend, and she became a regular visitor. She sensed her call and applied for acceptance into the Novitiate. One talent she brought with her was her experience with horses, and she has been a great help with Pony. She is in charge of buildings and grounds, and works with our maintenance staff and contractors who are brought in. She also helps in the chapel.

Sister Victoria Michelle

Sister Victoria Michelle came from Georgia on a tour with the Covenant Players, a drama group that performs in churches around the country. When she returned home, she began writing to us, asking for information about our life and ministry, and later attended a Search Program. After entering the Novitiate, she found joy in working in parishes, and presently is active at the Church of the Messiah in Chester.



COMMUNITY NEWS

Celtic Journeys



In February, Sr. Margo Elizabeth led a Celtic Journey group to the island of Lindisfarne in England, known locally as “Holy Island.” This is an annual event, during which the retreatants have quiet time to reflect, meditate, and take walks on the quiet paths.

The spring Celtic Journey to Ireland is held May 15-26, and in the fall, there will be a journey to Scotland September 6-14.

The journey to Scotland will include the island of Iona, the Highlands, and several days in Edinburgh, visiting Stirling Castle, the Church of the Holy Rude, and Melrose Abbey.

The Celtic Journey group visiting Holy Island (Lindisfarne) in February

A Retreat with the Rev. Barbara Crafton



On April 6, the Rev. Barbara Crafton gave a retreat here entitled *Forgiveness: What it is and what it Isn't*. She spoke about human relationships in the family and society, and the hurt we sometimes feel when there are misunderstandings.

Barbara and her husband will soon be relocating to Colorado to be near their daughter. She will be missed by many friends and retreatants, who have benefited from her spiritual guidance to groups and individuals for many years.

Sister Deborah Francis celebrates

On April 25, Sister Deborah Francis celebrated her 25th Profession anniversary. A native of New York City, Sr. Deborah Francis was employed as a paralegal before entering the Community. Most recently, she was active at the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in New York, where she worked for several years. She is now in charge of the Convent kitchen, and works with Leo Zelaya, our cook, and Maureen Woods, our business manager.

Sr. Deborah Francis enjoys art and cooking, and creates special entrees when it is her turn to be in the kitchen. She also helps at All Saints Church in Millington.



COMMUNITYNEWS

Getting Perspective

By

The Rev. Cynthia Black



Photo by the Rev. Cynthia Black

I value what little time I am able to get at the convent in Mendham, the home of the their beautiful grounds and even have been known to let me use my aerial camera there. So much of what I experience on the grounds of the convent is a lesson about the importance of getting a different perspective.

If your life is at all like mine, it's easy to get caught up in the minutiae of things—the sometimes-ugly daily details (grocery shopping, laundry, bill paying or desk-cleaning, diocesan requirements and figuring out the answer to the perpetual ‘where-will-the-money-come-from?’ question) that often require far too much of our attention and sap way too much of our energy. It's nice to have a place so close by to get a different perspective—literally!

I know that the Community has as many property worries as we do—for roughly a dozen nuns, they have a lot of buildings and real estate and

staff to maintain. But I also know that God provides, and has for that order exactly as long as she has for Redeemer—since 1852 (just as Redeemer was incorporated in Morristown in 1852, the Community of St. John Baptist was founded in England in 1852).

When I wander into the cemetery at the convent and see what appears to be some walls in less-than-perfect repair, I know what that burden is like. But I can also get some perspective when I'm there by flying above all of the cracks in the walls with my aerial camera (some call it a drone, but that has too many military implications for me...) and seeing the big picture. From the perspective of someone driving by or even walking in the cemetery, it may not be obvious how it is laid out. But as soon as you see it from the air it becomes obvious—a reminder that a change in perspective is always a good thing!

Good Shepherd Home News



The vegetable gardens and fields are a lifeline for the GSH children. Everyone helps with planting and harvesting.

In a recent phone call with Sr. Jane, we heard about the uprising that is happening in the western part of Cameroon, which includes Bamenda, where the Home is.

Although the orphanage has not been disturbed, services to the people, such as public school, have been intermittent. The Sisters and the children have been able to farm, affording adequate food for all, but education has been sporadic. One college-age young adult has gone to neighboring Nigeria to study.

The Batibo and Kuflu houses have been closed, and most of the children are in Bamenda, which is a big city. A few of them are in Yaoundé, the capital, with two of the Postulants. At the present time, Sister Jane has six new Postulants in the religious order that she founded, the Benedictine Sisters of Bethany. A Postulant (one who

asks) is in the first stage of the Religious Life.

Sr. Jane has been taking in people who have been displaced by the war, so families are scattered around them. This is possible due to the year-round mild climate, and also, she says, because of the financial aid they are receiving from supporters of the Home in America.

Thanks to our friend the Rev. Elizabeth Geitz, the new school building has been completed, and Sr. Jane hopes that it will be possible to start school there in September. There is room for 350 children.

Father Richard, the priest at All Saints Anglican Church in Bamenda, comes once a month to give them Communion. Father Emmanuel Yuh came on Easter. Sr. Jane is grateful to the Anglican Church for their support at this difficult time.

Remembering Mother Harriet From a sermon by Sr. Eleanor Francis

Harriet Monsell, Foundress of the Community of St. John Baptist, is now remembered in the Church of England's book of Anglican saints on March 26, close to her death date, March 25, 1883.

In her early years she was married to the Rev. Charles Monsell, who passed away leaving no children. After his early death, she dedicated her life to God and answered an invitation to help administer a home for women rescued from the streets of Windsor. This led to the founding of the Community of St. John Baptist by Mother Harriet and the Rev. Thomas Theluson Carter on November 1, St. Andrew's day, 1852. Over time the Community spread to many houses, doing rescue work that later passed to government social work agencies.



Continued on page 9

Sermon by Sr. Eleanor Francis, continued

Mother Harriet's call came almost by accident. A House of Mercy for homeless women, founded by Mariquita Tennant in Clewer, near Windsor, England, was in need of an administrator and the Rev. Charles Harris knew that Harriet would be the right person.

Although she had no experience, Harriet offered to help. When she dedicated herself, opened herself to what might come along, what fell to her was social ministry that would be called "cutting edge" today. At first, she helped only on a daily basis, but gradually it seemed this was the work to which God had called her and accordingly, on Ascension Day in 1851, she was admitted and clothed by Carter as a Sister of Mercy. Over time, other women joined her and they chose John the Baptist as their patron, seeking to follow his call to repentance.

What stands out for me when I read Mother Harriet's letters is that she didn't seem to necessarily favor one ministry over another. She had a keen eye for each Sister and how that Sister might be of service.

From the beginning, the Community of St. John Baptist was what we call a "mixed" community, meaning that both the active and the contemplative life would be followed. Mother Harriet's focus was on the inner life of the Sisters, and she drew a picture of a wreath of shamrocks with Christ at the center to demonstrate this vocation. One of her last messages was to "live the life, not merely do the work." If Mother Harriet were alive today, she would encourage different kinds of work according to our individual gifts, with Christ at the center.

St. John Baptist School Alumnae News

- 1941** *"Kit" King Rockwell* phones us regularly. She attends church & enjoys writing poetry. One poem is below.
- 1952** *Charlyn Crandall Heidenreich* wrote of her memories of singing in on Ascension Day in our chapel.
- 1961** *Joyce Bearden McGirr* is a priest in our diocese, and serves here when needed. She attends our events.
- 1969** *Pamela Finn Nelon* plans to attend our picnic, and hopes to see friends there.
- 1972** *Chris Brodeur MacClellan* & husband Don went to FL in the winter. She is active at church & enjoys the gym.
- 1976** *Louise Bowyer Hebert* is an attorney, now retired in FL. She & husband Dexter have 3 grown children.

*The small stream in my ravine
Slips silently, swiftly by.
To what rendezvous do you,
small stream, so speedily fly?*

*What force of magnet draws
you So inexorably onward?
Is not the ocean the one
To which you wish to belong?*



*Learn, oh my soul, from the stream
Just how you must seek your Lord
Rapidly run o'er rough rocks
Run swiftly over smooth sand.*

*Be drawn as to a magnet
To the ocean of His Love
Run always toward your Savior
Until joined to Him above.*

Katherine King Rockwell '41

Come to the SJBS Alumnae Picnic!

Saturday, June 29

12-4:30 pm at the Convent

Bring a dish to share

RSVP: Pam Finn Nelon nelonpc@gmail.com>

Last minute? Just come anyway!

News from The Animal Kingdom

A Word From Jennie

Hello Everyone,
Now spring is here and summer is around the corner, I am enjoying the sun and chasing the wild-life when I see them on my walks. Just over two months ago I had major surgery for bladder stones, which were oh, oh, so painful!



My vet was so good, removing all the stones and she presented them to my caregiver in a large pill container! I also had a broken tooth removed. Mercifully, that has not stopped me eating! So I really have been in the wars, so to speak. Now I am on a special diet for ever and ever and ever! No treats, no human food, which is hard for my Sisters, who like to give such things to me! So, now I eat special kibble. Funny, but I like it!

Pony's Point of View

It's so good to be in touch with you all again. Doesn't it seem ages since we connected? Hm... those cold winter months are behind us now, when all seems dormant, asleep. We've gone through Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Passion week together, and then that glorious morning when Christ broke the chains of death into life!



Yet Eastertide is still with us, and every day there are new signs of life. Each year I am so aware of the miracle of Spring! Resurrection can be seen and felt everywhere. I can almost hear God's voice resounding loud and clear, "Behold, I make all things new!" Take time to watch clouds, listen to the rain, smell the flowers... Love, pONy

Clara's World



Hello everyone!
You see me here sitting in my favorite spot, where I can watch everything going on out front. My friend and I have so much fun up here in our apartment. I like to run up and down, and I have so many great toys! My favorites are the springs! I love pushing them around from room to room, and sometimes I can bat them down the hall and chase them.

Another thing I enjoy are my play dates with Jennie, who comes up to see me. I reach out my paw and tickle her, and she loves it! She jumps up and down, and crouches, waiting to see what I'll do next.

One thing that gets me very excited is thunder storms. I run up the cat tree (a post that I climb) and look out the window. I can see all the trees blowing in the wind, and it makes me want to blow in the wind too! In a way I do, because my tail fluffs out, feeling the energy.

It's a great feeling! Do you like thunder storms too? Next time we have one, come up and watch them with me.

Kookie's Story

This time Kookie is letting her 'pawer', tell her story. Cats seem to understand a very few words. "NO" often takes a while, but does sink in. I've read that they do know their names. If it's trying to get something they want, they may not



come up with the same solution that a human watching a mouse hole would. In another instance, when there is an issue of jumping, she stares at the height, makes an initial push, then jumps. It is quite an amazing feat. She has three consecutive jumps to the top of the desk, which about eight inches below the window sill. Exercise in whatever form has never really been her thing, but getting attention is!

Love, K

Coming Events

CONVENT OF ST. JOHN BAPTIST: *Summer - Fall 2019*

82 West Main Street, Box 240, Mendham, NJ 07945
973-543-4641 CSJB@csjb.org www.csjb.org

CENTERING PRAYER Thursdays 7:15 - 8:15 p.m. Join us for a quiet hour and learn a new way to pray. Centering Prayer is a method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, prayer in which we experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself. For info, call Sr. Barbara Jean 973-543-4641 ext. 1 or srbj@csjb.org.

LABYRINTH WALKS June 2,16; Sept. 8,22; Oct. 6,20; Nov. 2,16: 2-4 p.m. Walk our labyrinth and learn about this ancient way of prayer. Phone Sr. Barbara Jean at 973-543-4641 ext. 1 or e-mail srbj@csjb.org Meet at the white Convent building.

YOGA AT THE CONVENT at St. Marguerite's Retreat House. Join us Mondays from 4:45 - 6:00 for gentle Yoga. Experience how Yoga can benefit your overall well-being. \$12.00 per class ~ *Classes are subject to change.* Contact: Jill—973-271-8952. Give us your email address and we will add you to the class.

BEING CHRISTIAN IN AN INTER-RELIGIOUS ERA 3rd Saturdays February thru May, with Robert Corin Morris. Nurture your spiritual journey with a year of prayer, study and community. Tuition of \$1300 includes lunch and one retreat. Register: information@interweave.org or 908-277-2120.

CULTIVATING COMPASSION A Multi-Faith Conversation Sunday, June 2, 2:00-4:00 at the Retreat House. Facilitators: Sr. Eleanor Francis, Rabbi Debra Smith, Dr. Shabiha Sheik. Contact Sr. Eleanor Francis sref@csjb.org or 973-543-4641 ext. 3

DANCES OF UNIVERSAL PEACE Harmony and Healing in Movement. Sat. June 15 & Oct. 5, 10 -12 In the Convent Main Chapel. Rejuvenate your spirit and open your heart with sacred circle dancing and joyous group singing honoring the world's mystical traditions. 908-277-2120 or www.interweave.org

COMMEMORATION DAY Sat. June 22, 2019 at 10:30 a.m. Mark the date now for our Community's annual celebration with Associates and friends. Celebrant and Preacher: Bishop Robert Ihloff. Solemn Eucharist, lunch and fellowship on the cloister. RSVP-Sr. Eleanor Francis 973-543-4641x3, sref@csjb.org

SUMMER SEARCH PROGRAM August 16-25, 2019 For those seeking God's Call in their lives. A Live-in with the Sisters to experience the Religious Life and the opportunity to learn about any vocation in the Church. Write or e-mail Sr. Monica Clare 973-722-3197 or sistermonica@icloud.com

ASSOCIATES' RETREAT "From Commotion to Contemplation" November 23, 2019. 9-3. Conducted by Sr. Josita Marks, SCC

Celtic Journeys

SCOTLAND: Sept. 6-14, 2019 www.celticjourneys.org
For more information: Contact Sr. Margo at srmargo@gmail.com or 973-543-4641 ext. 4
2020: Holy Island Retreat Feb. 21-29; Ireland: May 6-17; Wales: Sept. 8-18

Spiritual Intensive Monthly with Interweave:

THIRD SATURDAYS, November - May, 9-3. Nurture your spiritual journey with the Revd's Robert Corin Morris & Peter Savastano. Tuition: \$1300 includes lunch and retreat.
CONTACT: information@interweave.org or 908-277-2120

GOOD SHEPHERD HOME FOR CHILDREN

Sr. Jane and the children of the Good Shepherd Home depend on you to continue with your support and donations. We have several children entering college and we need sponsors to help with tuition. If you can help in any way please contact our business office for more details:

973-543-4641 ext. 0 or email: office@csjb.org

**100% of all donations go to Sr. Jane and the children of the
Good Shepherd Home**

All donations are tax deductible

Thank you for your continued support.

www.csjb.org
csjb@csjb.org

Spring 2019
NEWSLETTER

Coming Events

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>Commemoration Day</i> | <i>Saturday, June 22 - 10:30 am
Luncheon following</i> |
| <i>SJBS Alumnae Picnic</i> | <i>Saturday, June 29, 12-4:30
Bring a dish to share</i> |
| <i>Centering Prayer</i> | <i>Every Thursday, 7:15-8:15
at the Convent</i> |
| <i>Search Program</i> | <i>August 16-25
Friday evening thru Sun. 25th
noon: learn about monastic life
(For those exploring Religious Life)</i> |