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Also Featured: News of the Sisters, Recent Events, Calendar, and Pets!

82 West Main Street Box 240, Mendham, NJ 07945  +  973-543-4641
Our “Nun Better” Golf Outing will be held at Spring Brook Country Club at 9 Spring Brook Road in Morristown, on APRIL 27, 2015.

Foursome - $1,400  
Individual - $350  
Reception only - $125  
Please consider sponsoring a hole for $300.

See our Website at www.csjb.org to register online  

Call or email Sr. Pamela at 973-543-4641x9 or sr-pamela@csjb.org

All proceeds from the Golf Outing will benefit the Sisters’ Building Fund

BEGINNING RENOVATIONS OF THE CEMETERY WALL

The Construction Committee has begun the renovation project with the removal of the top portion of the most unstable part of the wall. There has been danger that it would fall and damage the crosses. An architect will soon be chosen to direct the renovation project.

PAVERS FOR OUR OUTDOOR PATH

THE PAVERS HAVE BEEN ORDERED AND ARE ON THE WAY! THEY WILL BE STORED FOR A SPRING INSTALLATION AT THE RETREAT HOUSE.
**In Memory of Fr. John Negrotto**

On December 13, our beloved Oblate Fr. John Negrotto passed away suddenly of a heart attack. Fr. John was a priest of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark. He had served many churches both in that diocese and in the Diocese of New Jersey. He had been Rector of Holy Trinity Church in Hillsdale for 27 years. Most recently he served in the Diocese of Newark as a member of the Standing Committee.

Fr. John became an Associate of our Community in 2008 and an Oblate in 2010. He served on the Capital Campaign Committee, working diligently on seeking support from churches in both dioceses for our renovation projects. More recently, he also served on the Construction Committee.

Fr. John was always enthusiastic. Like a cheerleader, he came to us with ideas and energy and he was proud to advertise the Community wherever he could by word and deed. His enthusiasm extended to clothing, as he organized the ordering and purchasing of CSJB shirts, and more recently, jackets. After completing several years of interim ministry, Fr. John was hoping to begin a new ministry as chaplain to Daytop. He had hoped to start helping there in the near future.

Fr. John is survived by his wife Susan, a son and a daughter, and one grandchild. May he rest in peace and rise with Christ in glory.

**COMMUNITY NEWS**

**Installation of Fr. Bernard Poppe as Community Pastor**

On December 3, the Rt. Rev. Prince Singh installed the Rev. Bernard ("Bernie") Poppe as Community Pastor for a term of five years. Fr. Poppe will be an advisor and pastor to the Community and will preside at Community functions. Originally from Warwick, Connecticut, as a young adult he taught school in the Alaskan panhandle and Eskimo villages. Although he loved this life, he felt called to ordained ministry and moved to New York City to attend the General Theological Seminary, graduating in 1984. After serving several urban parishes, he answered a call to St. George’s in Maplewood, NJ where he has served for twelve years. He will continue at St. George’s while assisting the Sisters in spiritual and temporal matters. The Sisters have welcomed him warmly as pastor, guide and friend.

**Holiday Brunch at Daytop**

On December 9th the Daytop students and staff hosted their annual Holiday Brunch for friends of Daytop. The young people served a delicious brunch to about 200 people in the school gym and the Daytop Choir performed a concert of old and new songs for the season under the direction of Ellen Purtell, counselor and choir director. During this event each year, a dollar bill is given ceremoniously to the Sisters of St. John Baptist in payment of the year’s rent. Daytop covers all expenses of management of 25 acres of our property, including taxes. It is always a joy to hear the stories of those who have experienced a new chance for a healthy and sober life at Daytop.
SJBS Class of 1961 Holds Reunion

On October 13-16 the St. John Baptist School class of ’61 came to St. Marguerite’s Retreat House for a time to get together with old friends. Their reunion included hours of reminiscing and catching up; a visit to the old school, now Daytop; a visit to St. Mark’s Church in Mendham where the original School altar is now situated; shopping in the Sisters’ “Nun Better” shop, a tour of the Convent, including an opportunity to view all of the renovations, and great meals and conversation.

Those who attended are pictured here. From left to right are: Joyce Bearden McGirr, Kathy Wilkinson McCain, Garland Talmage Riggs, Mary Ann Lewis Renn, Sr. Barbara Jean, Molly Breck Edwards, Frannie Bramhall Wittgens, and Barbara Lane Daly-Schpok.

New Outdoor Cross

The altar top from the St. John Baptist School chapel that was built in 1965 has rested in storage for several years. Our Associate, Lily Altamura, made it possible for the altar to be erected on the lawn next to Saint Marguerite’s Retreat House in memory of her husband Sam Altamura. Groups that come to the Retreat House now hold outdoor services there. Lily had a dream of finding a small stone cross to place on it, and we now have a hand-carved limestone cross to match the altar. The cross was carved by Rudy Miller and donated by him and Leber Funeral Home as a gift to the Sisters.

Conference for Episcopal Religious Orders and Christian Communities

On October 7-10, a conference for members of religious orders was held at St. Marguerite’s House. The Rev. Barbara Crafton, pictured behind the group, was the conductor. The orders represented in the picture are the Society of St. Margaret, the Episcopal Carmelites of St. Teresa, the Anamchara Fellowship, the Sisterhood of St. John the Divine, the Community of the Transfiguration, the Brotherhood of St. Gregory, the Community of St. Francis, the Society of St. Francis, and our own Community, including Susan Negrotto, Oblate.
**Blessing of the Animals**

On Sunday, October 5 St. Francis Day, we held a blessing service for our pets and their guests. Pony, Jennie, Bob and their two guests Boz and Autumn received blessings with prayers and holy water. Bob (the cat) did not think much of the sprinkling. The dogs and the pony didn’t seem to mind. We give thanks for the blessing that our animals bring to us and our visitors. Below are some pictures from the day.

![Bob is blessed (accompanied by Sr. Suzanne Elizabeth, Janet and Sr. Barbara Jean.)](image1)

![Sr. Linda Clare with Jennie watches as Autumn (of the family of our friend Karen Orgera) is blessed. Around Autumn are Donna MacKenzie, Sr. Pamela, Karen, Sr. Barbara Jean, and Sr. Suzanne Elizabeth.](image2)

**A New Tile Floor for the Lady Chapel**

Every Wednesday, the Rev. Philip Carr-Jones comes to the Convent to celebrate at our 8 a.m. Eucharist. We look forward to his provocative homilies and his use of hymn lyrics as prayers. His creativity extends beyond liturgy to church décor, as can be seen at his parish, the Church of the Holy Spirit in Lebanon, NJ.

Here at the Convent Fr. Phil recently offered to tile the concrete floor in the “Lady Chapel,” the small chapel behind the altar of the Main Chapel. He gathered a number of volunteers, and for several weeks they came and cut and laid the tiles. Besides its beauty, this floor will prevent the seeping of ground water into the chapel.

Along with Fr. Phil, the Sisters would also like to acknowledge his helpers: Chuck Bierwirth, Carlos Rivera, Jesus Rivera, Howard Bird, John Higgins, Jim West, and Gary Scott.

**Caroling at Holly Manor Nursing Home**

A tradition of the Mendham Interchurch Committee for many years has been a Carol Sing at our local nursing home, Holly Manor. This year, Sr. Monica Clare, Sr. Linda Clare and our resident, Donna MacKenzie attended the event. In the foreground of this picture is Betty Dormer, an Associate, who worked for the Community for over 50 years.

Sr. Monica Clare visits residents of Holly Manor regularly.
Two Journeys
By Sr. Eleanor Francis

A Journey to England

In November, Sr. Victoria Michelle and I were fortunate to make a trip to England. We went primarily to visit our English Sisters and see their new home near Oxford. They are living in the newly-built “Harriet Monsell” House on the grounds of Ripon College Cuddesdon, which trains students for ordination and offers many programs. We were delighted to meet students and faculty as well as spend time with our Sisters.

A highlight for both of us was a trip to London to see Westminster Abbey. There we were met by a welcoming chaplain, who immediately invited us to a private showing of the shrine of St. Edward the Martyr. This shrine is the only one in England that survived the Reformation period. We agreed that the atmosphere was amazingly thick and powerful.

As most readers of this newsletter will already know, religious life in the Anglican Church is in a time of transition. I was most interested to visit the Benedictine Abbey known as “Mucknell.” It is a co-ed community. Anyone interested in joining the Abbey starts out as an “Alongside.” Alongsiders, whom I have encountered in this country, in Canada, and in England, are people who come to share in the worship and life of the community. They come for a limited time and do not make any promises or vows. However, those who feel so called may continue on as monks or nuns. Below is a photo of Br. Luke, who came as an Alongside and is now a monk.

The oldest CSJB Sister, Sr. Monica, lives in a home that cares for many elderly religious. The Sisters of St. Margaret run the facility. We were able to go to the home in Chiswick on the outskirts of London to visit with her.

A Journey to Portland, Oregon

Our newest Associate is the Rev. Canon Robert Bryant, Rector of St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church in Portland, Oregon. Due to his vision and kindness, I was invited to Portland December 12 to 15 to lead a Saturday Quiet Day, preach at the Sunday services, and lead an adult forum. At the main Sunday service, a Portland Associate, The Rev. Lou Ann Pickering, presented Fr. Robert to be received. I received him and gave him one of our new Associates’ medals.

Currently there are no traditional Episcopal religious orders in the northwest. However, Associates of orders in the Portland area have an organization called St. Benedict’s Guild, which brings together Associates for spiritual programs. Fr. Robert and I are both keen on revitalizing the relationship between CSJB and Portland. Some readers will know that CSJB Sisters served at St. Helen’s Hall in Portland for 40 years. The school, now called the Oregon Episcopal School, is alive and well (rated the #1 private school in Oregon!) The Sisters had to leave the school in 1944 and many of the old Associates have passed away, but thanks to Fr. Robert and St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church, we may be receiving more Portland Associates.
An Advent Reflection: John the Baptist was a mover and a shaker who prepared the way of the Lord, GOD’s way of love. John’s proclamation of a baptism for the forgiveness of sin was a challenge to the religious authorities of the time and a release for people who needed to be raised up to serve in the name of love. No longer did people have to “pay their dues” to gain GOD’s favor with fees and sacrifices given in the temple. People could begin again to connect with GOD in the waters of baptism. Forgiveness of sins released people to a life-involving and life-giving relationship with GOD. John challenged those who served the Roman Empire to use their power to serve and not exploit the people. He called people to live in abundance and share with others in response to GOD, rather than live in poverty of indebtedness to Rome. He called people to see that they belonged to GOD, who called to serve freely in the name of love. John’s life and message of preparing the way of the Lord continue to move and shake people today. John challenges those who have power and comforts those who are oppressed. He calls all people to be baptized, receive forgiveness, and enjoy a relationship with GOD. John challenges us to see GOD’s direction and GOD’s way of love and to live lives that make a difference to others. He calls us to serve freely in the name of love, as part of GOD’s love at work in the world. - From a book of faith – Advent Reflections

Departed Associates and Oblates

The Rev. John Negrotto, Associate and Oblate
“Father John,” whose story appears on page 3, was a beloved Associate and Oblate of the Community. Our prayers rest with his family and many friends as we mourn his passing on December 13, 2014. May he rise with Christ in glory.

The Rev. Walther Dettweiler, Associate
Father “Walt” Dettweiler first became acquainted with the Community when a curate at the Church of the Redeemer in Morristown and became an Associate in 1959. He served churches in the Diocese of Pennsylvania before returning to New Jersey to serve as houseparent and chaplain at St. John Baptist School with his wife, Marcy. Later in life he became a counselor. At the time of his death on July 2, 2014 he was 81 and active at St. James Church in Waimea, Hawaii. May the eternal light of Christ shine upon him.

Tudi DeLucca, Associate
Tudi DeLucca passed away October 1, 2014. She was 88. Tudi was a member of St. Peter’s Church in Washington, NJ, where she met the Sisters in the late 1950’s. She was received as an Associate in 1970. As a young woman she was a ballet dancer and later pursued a career at Lipton Tea until her retirement. She always remembered the Sisters she had known at St. Peter’s and attended Community events when she could. May she rest in peace.
Sister Jane, the founder of Good Shepherd Home, has good news about the Roberto Revere Clinic for which we have been slowly preparing over several years. A small bathroom has now been installed. What is now needed is equipment and furnishings for the interior.

Sr. Jane also reports that the Sisters have a new Postulant. This is the first stage in becoming a Sister. Her name is Rose. This brings the total number in the Benedictine Sisters of Bethany to six. Recently the Sisters and children took their best sow to an agricultural fair and she won first prize! They plan to keep her for piglets.

Sr. Mary Ruth returned to Cameroon on December 11, and is now back in Batibo helping care for the children there. Batibo is the second home, an annex some distance away with about 50 children.

During the year that Sr. Mary Ruth was here in Mendham, she visited many churches with a slideshow and information about the work of the Benedictine Sisters of Bethany in Cameroon. She was accompanied at various times by Sr. Mary Lynne, Sr. Barbara Jean, and friends of our Community who invited her to their churches.
1937 Margaret (“Maggie Liz”) Clarke McWethy recently passed away at age 94. In her long life, she was active as a kindergarten teacher, a relief worker in Europe after WWII, a political organizer, and a poet. She had five children and ten grandchildren.

1941 Kit King Rockwell telephones the Convent with news of her family and prayer requests. She is active in her church and attends Oblate meetings at the Convent.

1944 Patricia Wilson Vernam enjoys reading the Community Notes. She has recently moved to a place where meals and housekeeping are provided. She will turn 90 this year.

Mary Elizabeth McNulty Stoughton writes of her happy years at the School and her years as a Director of Religious Education, and gives thanks to God for the blessings of her life.

1950 Valerie Bradt Hymes wrote with the notice of Margaret Clarke McWethy’s passing. She and one of Margaret’s daughters are friends. They live in Annapolis, MD. Valerie continues to be active in prison ministry in the Diocese of Maryland.

1952 Charlyn Crandall Heidenreich enjoys bridge, golf, walking and swimming and is active in church and book clubs. Her computer is a great help in keeping up with family and friends. She and her husband Bob have visited the Convent.

1956 Marilla (“Holly”) Holland Savage writes that she volunteers as a “Senior Companion” and also visits people on hospice. Her two daughters live nearby.

1960 Joyce Bearden McGirr lives in Norwood, NJ. She sent an invitation to her upcoming ordination to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church, to take place January 10. She will be the third Alumna to be ordained, following Martha Gobdel Blacklock ’57 and Ellen Kohn Perry ’80. She has taught music in several schools and gives private voice lessons. She has one son.

Garland Talmage Riggs is active at St. Matthew’s in Hyattsville, MD, where she participates in choir, Altar Guild, and as a layreader. Her daughter Elizabeth is a Registered Nurse.

Frannie Bramhall Wittgens lives in Antigonish, Nova Scotia and serves her church in communications and outreach. She is a reading specialist and taught children’s literature at the University of St. Francis Xavier.

Barbara Lane Schpok serves at Leisure Village West in Manchester, NJ. She enjoys volunteering her time to help others.

Molly Breck Edwards lives in Florida. She has four children and three grandchildren, all boys. She cares for two puppies, a Golden Doodle and a Yorkie.

Mary Ann Lewis Renn has two daughters. One lives in Mendham and attends St. Mark’s. Her husband Wade has just retired from 50 years as a parish priest. Her favorite spots are New York City and the beach.

Members of Class of ’61 visited St. Mark’s where the old altar is now situated thanks to Marion Wysong ’35

Kathy Wilkins in McCain lives in Lewes, DE. She has two daughters and four grandchildren. Kathy worked many years as a kindergarten teacher. She belongs to St. Peter’s in Lewes.

The Class of 1961 held a reunion at our Retreat House in October. Any other class that would like to hold a reunion here is welcome. We offer overnight accommodations. Contact Sr. Margo at srmargo@gmail.com or 973-543-4641x4.

1966 Peggy Salter Barrus sent Christmas greetings.

1968 Elizabeth Cumming Gheno wrote that she and her husband attended the Wimbledon semifinals and finals last summer.

1970 Pamela Warntz sent Christmas greetings.

1971 Kate Symonds enjoys the “Community of St. John Baptist” Facebook page, especially Flashback Thursday, which includes old pictures from SJBS.

1972 Celia Kaltenbach Crotteau writes that her second novel, The Profit of her Fellowship, based on her experiences at SJBS, has received some positive reviews. The book is available at Amazon.com. She and her husband Bob cruised the Mediterranean last summer. Their daughters are college seniors.

Ann Schmitt Hinman wrote that she works part time as a teacher’s aide and helps her mother, who is now 98. Her Christmas card included a picture of her twin sons, now in their ’20’s.

1977 Daryl Tucker DeRogatis sent Christmas greetings.

1983 Pascale Shostal sent Christmas greetings.

Non-Grad

Jane Howard Jibson, a ninth grader from the early ’60’s has been traveling from her home in Michigan for Oblate meetings at the Convent. She loved her one year at SJBS and has found her way back through the Convent. She is active in her church.
Hello everybody! BOB here. It is a busy time for me at the moment. One of my people is down with a broken foot——— and I have at last found my "calling" here in the community. I am studying to become an RNc (that's Registered Nurse cat!). This is serious work! I provide comfort when she is down by compassionate purr. I bring toys into the bed for occupational therapy, and when she has sleepless nights I am there too to provide company. It is a 24/7 job and I am loving the challenge! Sometimes I break out in crazy abandon just to make her laugh. She loves that! I finally feel what the Sisters all talk about when they say they have a "call" to the monastic life. Compassionate purr is serious business and takes great concentration and connection to the Holy One. May I ask your prayers as I continue on my journey as RNc? And maybe a prayer for kitties everywhere who are providing comfort and care for their people? You know legend has it there was a cat in the stable at Jesus’ birth who bore witness to the Holy.....and purred mightily for the baby there. Blessed Christmas to you all! Love BOB!

Greetings from Kookie in New York

It’s that time of year again. My Sisters tell me that lots of humans are doing something that’s called shopping. I imagine they are buying treats for each other, [like my chicken flavored treats] I enjoy every night. Last time Marie cat-sat me, I was naughty. My bag of treats was on the counter where easily sought. She caught me in the act of tearing it open and helping myself. A sticky note was written to say ‘I was a bad kitty’.

Soon the mantel will be decorated with blinking lights and some sprigs of pine for me to investigate and play with. My Sisters tell me that shopping, colored lights, pine decorations and treats are not the meaning of Christmas. They say that Christmas-tide celebrates a time when God came to earth as a human being, a baby, in order to save people from their sins. From my point, it’s being loved and accepted even when I am a bad kitty. May you have a joyful and meaningful Christmas. Love Kookie

Pony’s Point of View

Ah, and here we are again, full circle, to Advent and Christmastide (and to be sure, by the time this gets to you, it may be after Christmas!) If we are lucky, the coming Winter might be more forgiving than last year. So far it really hasn’t been too bad, has it? As long as there is no snow on the ground there is still always some grass to munch on, and anything else that might be back here in my larger enclosure (after all, I am one of those foraging beasts!) But Ken and Ryan and the Sisters are good to me, softening the Timothy pellets they now give me. The apples have to be cored and the carrots grated (some of my teeth are not there!) Did you all know I’ve been here for over 23 years, and they think I was already 7 or 8 years old when I arrived. Hey, that makes me close to 30 years old! It’s been a good life, living back here on the convent grounds. Nothing to complain about...

Blessings to you all during this very Holy Season. Take the time to stand outside during a softly falling snowfall... does the soul good.

Love, pOnY
THE EPIPHANY PARTY! Sunday, January 4, 5:00 p.m. This event is for old and new friends of the Community. Enjoy an evening of music and fellowship with the Sisters. Vespers and Reception of Associates - 4 p.m. Informal Supper and Musical Evening at 5. Bring hors d‘oeuvres, veggie platter, finger food or dessert. Come when you can!

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, 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 Jan. 10, Feb. 7, 21, March 7, 21, Apr. 11, May 16, June 6, 2-4 p.m. Walk our labyrinth and learn about this ancient way of prayer. Phone Sr. Barbara Jean or e-mail srbj@csjb.org Meet at the white Convent Building.

FABRIC OF FAITH 1st and 3rd Thursdays, 10-3. Learn about ecclesiastical embroidery and the preservation of church vestments. $10 includes lunch. Contact Sr. Suzanne Elizabeth at srse@csjb.org or 973-543-4641 x 5.

YOGA AT THE CONVENT at St. Marguerite’s Retreat House. Join us Mondays from 4:45 - 6:00 p.m. For Gentle Yoga. Experience how Yoga can benefit your overall well-being. Suggested donation: $12.00 per class ~ Please bring a Yoga mat~ Classes are subject to change. Send us your email address and we will add you to the class update list. Contact: Jean Marie at 908-850-6475

SHAMANISM RETREAT Sat. Feb. 7, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Learn how to help heal yourself and others and the planet. Conducted by John Foord. Bring blanket, bandana, and journaling materials. $45 includes lunch. Register at interweave.org or 908-277-2120.

WINTER SEARCH PROGRAM February 13-16, 2015. 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. Barbara Jean 973-543-4641 ext. 1 or srbj@csjb.org

ASSOCIATES’ LENTEN RETREAT Sat. Feb. 28. 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. THE PRODIGAL SON/DAUGHTER. Led by Sr. Eleanor Francis. $65 suggested donation includes lunch. RSVP sref@csjb.org or ph. 973-543-4641 ex.3

ADELPHI CHAMBER ENSEMBLE: Baroque Festival - Sunday, March 1 at 4 p.m. Michael Wittenburg, Conductor, featuring Robert Deutsch, Cello; featuring works by Couperin, Quartz, Bach and Vatall. Suggested donation: $20 at the door. For information: sr-pamela@csjb.org or 973-543-4641 ext. 9.

MANUSCRIPT ILLUMINATION RETREAT April 13-16. With Patricia Miranda. At St. Marguerite’s House. $410 (residential) or $350 (non-resident) includes all materials needed to create a beautiful manuscript. No prior experience needed. Contact Sr. Pamela at sr-pamela@csjb.org or 973-543-4641 ext. 9.

THE NUN BETTER GOLF OUTING April 27 at the Spring Brook Country Club, Morristown Come, partake in the fun, friendship and the chance to meet new people who are all interested in CSJB and golf! For more information, please see page 2.

Celtic Journeys 2015

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<td>May 12-22</td>
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Contact: srmargo@gmail.com for details
We have gone Green and wish to go greener!
Please let us know if you would prefer to have the Newsletter sent to you by email.
Please respond to: office@csjb.org

Back Row: Sr. Margo Elizabeth, Bishop Prince Singh, Sr. Victoria Michelle, the Rev. Bernard Poppe, Sr. Suzanne Elizabeth, Sr. Eleanor Francis, Sr. Linda Clare. Front Row: Sr. Mary Lynne, Sr. Monica Clare, Sr. Deborah Francis, Sr. Laura Katharine, Sr. Pamela, Sr. Barbara Jean

With Prayers for you this Christmastide and New Year - From all of the Sisters