



FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 156

Lent 2026



Giving Up Resentments: The Forgiven Forgives

By Eric Kreuter, n/OEF

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A resentment is a bitter feeling of being wronged in some way— a sense of indignation of being treated unfairly. While it is human to feel our emotions, and psychologically healthy to express them in a healthy our faith say about holding space in our hearts and minds for archived resentments? How would Franciscan teachings help up to navigate and let go of these remnants of lingering thought that carry over and make us shrivel inside?

St. Francis of Assisi taught that letting go of resentments is a spiritual journey that involves the acceptance of others in the ways that they are absent judgment or disdain and appreciating the potential in them. When we recognize the humanity of others and embrace the possibility of redemption we are encouraged to abandon our hold on resentment is part of our spiritual journey and is expressed as love and forgiveness of our enemies. This requires grievances. In doing so we can focus on grace and mercy— hallmarks of our Christian faith. The experience of joy and peace in our lives is restored through forgiveness and love Jesus taught that letting go of resentment is part of our spiritual journey and growth, and is forgiveness of our enemies. This requires emptying our reserves of bitterness and anger. In Matthew we are shown that when we forgive others, we too, receive forgiveness. There are at least two

ways to handle a situation where somebody steps on your toes: the first is to complain and perhaps announce in a loud voice: “Hey, you stepped on my toes, And I don’t particularly appreciate that.” This could be the response in the case where the aggressor –that clod who carelessly walked on your foot, but then continued without so much as an apology. The second is to say, “That’s okay, I forgive you.” The second response is more typical if we are centered in the concept of all of us now and then, All of us are sinners, and all of us need to forgive and be forgiven. But why is it so hard to forgive the first person who does not offer an immediate acknowledgement followed by a hearty apology? Jesus taught us, in fact, instructed us, to forgive the sins of our neighbors, those who have sinned against us, our transgressors.

In Romans 17: 17-19, we read: *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.*

(Continued on page 2)

Giving Up Resentment... Continued

Luke 6: 31-25 tells us:

“Do to others as you would have them do to you? Even sinners love those who love them. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies. Do good to those who persecute you. But why is this oftentimes so difficult? We reflect on the message of the cross: that Jesus died for us and for our sins, that they be washed away through the price of His precious blood. We recall even as Jesus was at the point of his own death, the sinner who confessed his belief in Jesus as the Saviour. Yet, God is perfect, and Jesus is incapable of imperfection. We hold grudges. We like to get even when we are hurt. Do we turn the other cheek when we are struck?

One way to become a forgiven forgiver is to put love first in all situations, even the ones where we are hurt the most. By taking a moment to sidestep the hurt and see Jesus on the cross in our mind, perhaps we can learn to love our enemies. It takes a daily practice of humility reminding ourselves who we are, and that we are loved by God always, even when we sin, even when we step on someone else's toes.

We also ought to learn to forgive ourselves. If we carry the burden of self-loathing after we stumble, then we attempt to circumvent the forgiveness of God to us. We cannot intercept the love of God, but we can ignore the call to accept God's love. It is with the acceptance of such agape love that we inherit a burden to love our neighbors as ourselves, to be the Samaritan who helped the wounded man on the side of the road, see the hurt in another and walk beside them. We must see and we must listen. We must be forgivers because we have been forgiven. This is a given if we are to truly embrace the message of the cross, the bread of

life, the cup of salvation. Without Easter, we need not have an assembled church, as once was said by Pastor Chip Low at the first Easter Sunrise service of The First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown.

That simple message stuck with me and provided new depth of meaning to the essence of Easter as the foundation of our faith. When I am in a difficult situation, I remember who I am— a Christian with a Saviour who died for my sins to wash me clean. We are like dusty, old carpets that Christ cleaned with his own blood to make us new again. Yes, we will continue to sin, but we can trust in the power of forgiveness to wash love over us, to make the stained cloak covering our lives white as snow again. For now, the dusty nature of our sense of right and wrong, together with our need to assert jurisprudence on those who break the laws, rules and regulations we set for them and those around us, need reconsideration and reconciliation through our penance of unforgiveness in our hearts, our words and actions. From here, we become forgivers.



OEF Archives

OEF Online Bible Study

Archives Ahoy!

In April, 2025, The North Dakota Historical Society located at The Heritage Center on the campgrounds in Bismarck, ND, accepted our application to archive the life and history of The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. We are incorporated as a non-profit organization, and have been filed with the state of North Dakota Since November 22, 1983. It was signed before a notary by Ron Nuss-Warren, OEF, Dale Carmen, OEF and Charles Maxfield (deceased.)

On October 6 , 2025, Ron Nuss-Warren, Dale Carmen and Owusu Slater worked on location at the NDHS to begin the process of entering OEF documents, both electronically and hard copies. Below is a Press Release from Archivist Emily Kubischta providing details of our entry and its availability:

“In October 2025, The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans donated their records and a statue of St. Francis to the North Dakota State archives in Bismarck, North Dakota. There, it will be preserved and made accessible to current and future generations. OEF members volunteered their time and assisted archives staff in organizing and describing materials in the collection. Assigned manuscript number ‘aa7a7,’ an inventory to the records will be made available on the State Archives’ website FINDhistory: (<https://findhistory.nd.gov/>) as soon as the records are processed. Please contact the North Dakota State Archives (archivesnd.gov) if you would like to view the records in person. In addition, State Archives staff are happy to answer questions or help with remote access to the collection if you cannot make it to Bismarck.

The state Archives is grateful to the OEF for their commitment to preserving this important chapter in North Dakota history.”

This is the ‘tip of the iceberg’ for the OEF Archivist Team. We need more team members and will outline more specifications for archive material leading to and including

Chapter 2026. All of us are aboard this ship with the Holy Spirit bi;owing our sails forward!

Dale Carmen and Ron Nuss-Warren reporting.



This is a recurring meeting every Thursday.

Each week’s Bible reading will be announced on the OEF-Chat.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89760718708>pwd=N2R0THcrWUpWSzlyM2N3eEdGdEF0QT09 - Meeting ID: 897 6071 8708 -

Password - oef

- 7:30-8:30 PM ET
- 6:30-7:30 PM CST
- 5:30-6:30 PM PST
- 7:30-8:30 PM in Ecuador
- 1:30 –2:30 PM Friday in New Zealand
- 12:30-1:30 AM Friday in Ireland
- 9:30– 10:30 AM Friday in Japan



You will need a computer or a smart phone. A headset (and a camera) would be good to participate. I will give a brief Zoom tutorial as we meet, and I can help people before the meeting gets connected. We can talk on the phone as we work things out.

You are most welcome to join!
Br. Juniper, OEF

An Important Remminder!

Nancy Menning is the OEF Treasurer.

Contributions can be made by sending a check made out to: “Order of Ecumenical Franciscans” to:

Order of Ecumenical Franciscans

c/o Nancy Menning, Treasurer

3175 Duke Snider Ave.

Eugene, OR 97402



Whitewater Kayaking with a Personal Rule of life

By Nancy Menning, OEF

Not quite four decades ago, I spent a week in the mountains and fast waters of western North Carolina learning whitewater kayaking skills. Two guidelines are often, all these decades later, still at the front of my mind. First, don't look at the rocks. Instead, look at the passage of smooth water around the rocks (because your boat will tend to go where you're looking). Second, to have any control of your boat in the moving water, you need to be going either slightly faster or slightly slower than the current. That's why you're holding the paddle in your hands. Put it in the water.

Whitewater kayaking is a helpful metaphor for the Personal Rule of Life. With respect to the rocks and the smooth water flowing around them, we might acknowledge the behaviors and choices about living that are "rocks" in our well-being. This might include things like doomscrolling social media, binge-watching Netflix, mental health challenges, substance abuse, and overwork. But then we might carefully specify the practices and commitments that focus our attention on the "safe passage" around those hazards. For example, we might define hours at the beginning and end of the day that are "screen free," commit to consistent presence at 12-step meetings, recommit to our therapy practices, set aside dedicated reading time, mark out time on our daily calendar to engage in contemplative practice, or practice mini-sabbaths at the end of each workday.

Or maybe it works more like this: First, you pause



before the rapids to prepare, imagining how you might safely pass through.

Then you run the rapids as best you can. Afterwards, you pull into the calm waters beyond to catch your breath and reflect on what just happened. (Don't forget to listen for the birds singing in the shrubs at the river's edge.) In the Personal Rule, this could look like five minutes of quiet contemplation and calming breath practice prior to "no more than 15 minutes" of fulfilling your citizenship responsibility to look at the news cycle, followed by 10 minutes of intercessory prayer. Or it might be preparation during morning prayer, a full day of doing all the things that need doing, and quiet reflection during an evening examen.

As for moving faster or slower than the current, it is by both forward and backward paddle strokes that a kayaker maneuvers her boat in the water, directing it toward where she wants to go. In our more "contemplative" practices we are backpaddling to rest, reflect, and prepare for what is coming next. In our more "active" practices we are forward paddling to move effectively and efficiently (and safely) in our various pursuits: moving toward this neighbor in need, engaging this work or mission project, pivoting to address an unanticipated challenge.

Finally, our Personal Rule of Life asks us to "stretch" ourselves ... and yet remain realistic. In the United States, with the current administration's "flood the zone" political strategy, the waters have been moving faster, and the rapids are significantly more hazardous. We each need to be realistic about the capabilities of our crafts, the quality of our flotation devices, and the level of our paddling skills. Not all of us will be running the class 4 and 5 rivers. We will all find certain stretches we need to portage around. But, for each of us, there is a stream moving just slightly out of our current comfort zone. Find it. Get your boat—and your paddle—in the water. There is joy in this! We're kayaking!

Words From The Servant Council

Greetings from your Servant Council, Peace and All Good to Each and All!

We were blessed to meet in-person in Chicago, January 16-19. Coming from Ireland, Canada, Arizona, Indiana and Connecticut, we met in an obscure hotel near O' Hare International Airport.

There were no distractions, as the weather outside was frigid and icy, the television system was undergoing repair, the gum equipment was functioning poorly, and the neighborhood consisted solely of remote airport parking lots, hotels and one gas station on a well-traveled busy road.

Having pushed the bed against the wall, each morning we rolled our desk chairs down the hallway to Shoshanah's room, where we created our own cozy meeting space.

We filled our days and nights with conversation and considerations of all that rambles in our minds and stirs in our hearts.

A major focus of our meeting was to give attention to the "Life And Witness Reports" which the Professed had so thoughtfully addressed and submitted.

If you are a Professed member who is yet to respond, the questions are shared below. We would still love to hear from you. Feel free to send your responses to any Servant Council member.

1. How are you putting your Franciscan calling into action in both your faith community and in your community at large?
2. In what ways are you being called to "Rebuild the Church" in your life and as a witness of Christ?
3. What are some of the things that OEF does, or could do, to help you in these callings?

We are asking these only of the Professed because others are already in regular contact with

their Formation Companions and with the Formation Team

These life and witness reports are guiding our planning for our annual Chapter/Convocation, and have given rise to this year's theme: Passion and Compassion/The Personal Within the Communal."

We are passionate people. We are each trying to do what is ours to do in this world turned upside down.

Our hearts and minds are troubled.

Our hearts and minds are hopeful.

Our anchor is in the Prince of Peace, the Spirit of Love, the God of all Hopefulness.

We seek to walk this path together, in joy and in faithfulness.

We will be meeting once again at Pallottine Renewal Center in Florissant, MO, June 25-28, with optional early day on June 24th..

(Continued on page 7)



Words From The Servant Council... Continued

When it comes to travel (and life in general), we are aware of and sensitive to the fears of many, especially our trans siblings. This retreat center is fully affirming, and has been a safe gathering place for us for many years. In the rare instances when medical attention is needed, we always accompany our siblings.

As in previous years, we will continue to offer a hybrid option for those who, for whatever reason, are unable to attend in person. We value your presence among us, in whatever ways are best for you.

During our meeting, we consulted with members serving on various teams within our Order (Formation, Fellowship, Life-Long Formation, Treasurer, etc.)

We are exploring ways to improve our communication and to better utilize technology in positive ways. In our spare time, we were also blessed to have some spontaneous and meaningful phone conversations with some of our members.

Life in community as a dispersed Order is challenging. One can easily feel isolated and out-of-the-loop. We encourage our siblings to reach out to one another. Call, text, email, write a letter, visit, attend regional gatherings, participate on the OEF-Chat, etc.

Take advantage of opportunities to connect via Zoom, Bible Study, Morning Prayer, seasonal worship services, and the upcoming Town Hall.

And, as always, may we pray for one another. Always. We are in this together. Thanks be to God! In Christ's Love for Each and All.



Servant Council Statement Regarding Recent Events in Minnesota

The Council of The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans stand against the wanton cruelty and dehumanization being perpetrated by the current American administration and Customs Enforcement, and Customs and Border Patrol in communities across the United States. We stand with those who are seeking to disrupt these operations through peaceful means. We also stand with those immigrants who are simply trying to make a living and live their lives in peace and dignity.

We are called to welcome the stranger and the foreigner, and our society is much better when we embrace these folks.





Readers' Corner



The Saint and The Sultan: The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace

(Image Books/Doubleday, 2009) Reviewed by Br. Seaghán Murphy, OEF.

Inspired to look into this moment of religious persuasion in the wake of 9/11, Paul Moses elaborates—necessarily given the scarcity of reliable testimony—about the 1219-1220 encounter that found Francis of Assisi meeting with the Sultan Malik al-Kamil, a name not as mythical as his brother “Saladin,”

Moses has to expand, as so little is known about the titular summit between friar and potentate, on the backstories of the scrappy Poor Man of Assisi, and the dignified Muslim commander who sought to fend off the depredations of the Fifth Crusade, which naturally sought again to “liberate” the Holy City. Therefore, Moses elaborates the historical record, expanding the political power plays, notably under Cardinal Pelagio. He found himself mired in martial rather than diplomatic exchanges, dispatched new Cairo by Pope Honourius III to rouse troops' flagging spirits amidst plague, hunger and heat, as they besieged the delta fortress of Damietta amid swamps, desiccation, fear and spies.

The author relates the gist of chronicles and rather to romanticize, denigrate, and/or celebrate secondhand reports, many set down long after and not intended to accurately convey but claims of hagiography, rhetoric, score-settling, or debates roiling the new Order of Friars Minor in decades after 1220. Moses conjectures that on Francis' return from his parley—did he ever expect the Sultan to convert, or was it seen as an idealized harbinger of ecumenical attempts in centuries ahead to witness to Muslims a Pax Christi instead of the elimination of Catholicism's foes?—the Poverello did try in his 1221 Rule to suggest conciliation with believers of the Prophet, but that these attempts were by the Papacy compromised in the 1223 Rule established by the Order and approved by Rome

One shortcoming, although admittedly in a book about the two great faiths, it may be inevitable. What about the original “People of the Book,” the fewer Jews across Europe and the Near East who were caught, in proto-pogroms exacerbated by preachers, wayward Crusaders, and especially their camp followers? Or the uneasy treaties upheld or broken by the authorities in Christendom and caliphates as to Jewish protection against (Moses is good on the parallel predicament of the Copts and their slow-burn persecution, O prior to Francis' arrival in Egypt.)

And the text oddly isn't clear to me as to how and when the “custody of the holy places” still conducted by the OFM today began, as to its initial implementation. Moses commendably in his aftermath sketches out the efforts of Muslims and Christians in the past 150 or so years to greet, pray, and meet in interfaith dialogue. He pays attention to how art has represented or distorted the probable real-lif truth by the Nile.

Paul Moses incorporates a lot of scholarship into his popular version. The book does fill a niche for those likely to find appeal in this accessible presentation. A decade after its publication, PBS partnered with Unity Productions Foundation, a media initiative aimed at promoting pluralism through pro-Muslim content, to air an hour-long docudrama narrated by Jeremy Irons, filmed on location, based on Moses' work. Nobody can deny it's a timely need.





Formation Station



Introducing:

Gloria Faith Dikeogu



I belong to All Saints Anglican Church in Bakersfield, California. I became Anglican in 1990 and was confirmed at St. Cyprian's Church in Cape Town, South Africa. I renewed my baptism in 2015 and went to formally join the Anglican Church in 2020. I was Catholic for 30 years, bringing my faith to the Anglican Church. I am currently active in the Church, a member of the Daughters of the Holy Cross. I am starting the journey at the Anglican Catechist School to become a catechist in August 2026. Preparation includes three online courses ending in June 2026. I am also in discernment for a calling to hospital chaplaincy. The first step for me would be candidacy, and since this would be a lengthy process, I plan to start my M.Div. at Trinity Seminary in August 2026. I came to the US to study in 1990 and met my husband, Nathaniel, who is from Aba, Nigeria. We have a son, Chijike.

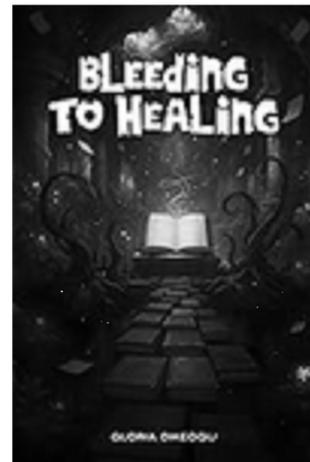
I lived in Kansas for more than 30 years before moving to California. I was a library director of a private academic for 21 years before coming and applied for many different jobs in librarianship before finding one.

This might sound odd or delusional, but it's true and attests to what God can do in someone's life. God organized everything for me, and it was a surprising move for me. I am married for 31 years, but my husband still lives in Lawrence, Kansas, on the street where I would be if I had not chosen to come to California.

I left, also, because I had to. I came here to save my son, who did not want to return to Kansas after he lost his job in San Jose. He came to Bakersfield when I got a job at California State University Bakersfield as Associate Dean of Libraries. We currently share an apartment. My Associate Dean job lasted for two years. Then, I was let go along with a few administrators when there was a financial crisis at the university. We were the most recently hired when the cuts occurred.

I was saved because of a pre-contractual agreement with the university, created when I was hired. I was placed on sabbatical for six months and was encouraged to look for other jobs until my new contract would start in July 2025. As a result of that transition, I am a Tenured Librarian currently specializing in government and international documents.

In my spare time, I am a writer. I have published children's books and a poetry book called, "Cape Town Station to Kansas." I am currently working on two young adult novels, and I just released a poetry book called, "Bleeding to Healing."



Welcome Gloria!!!

2026 OEF Chapter and Convocation Registration

Wed. June 24th — Sun. June 28th at Pallotine Renewal Center, Florissant, MO, US (Wed. arrival optional)

Please Print Name _____ Pronouns _____

Email _____ Cell Phone _____

Will you be joining us by Zoom? ___ No ___ Yes What time zone? _____

If joining us In-person please continue to fill out this form.

Arrival day: ___ Wed. ___ Thurs.

Arriving by: ___ Car ___ Bus ___ Train ___ Plane

Are you interested in joining some of us in community service on Thurs.? ___ Yes ___ No

If arriving by bus, train or plane, send as soon as possible the time of arrival and which carrier.

Room: _____ Standard room is a single room with 2 twin beds _____ Couple's room with a queen bed

Would you be willing to share a standard room? ___ No ___ Yes With whom?

Other room needs _____

Food: ___ Vegetarian ___ Vegan ___ Carnivore ___ Gluten Free ___ Lactose Free Food Allergies:

Communion: ___ Wine ___ Grape Juice ___ Gluten Free Bread

Emergency contact person and cell phone number: _____

General info:

Are there Allergies that we might need to know?

Are there any physical accommodations that we need to know about to provide a better experience at C/C?

Is there anything else you want us to know?



Fellowship News

THE WEST COAST FELLOWSHIP MET

BY Zoom on Saturday November 8th with none siblings participating, 7 checked in but not able to be present. Three were from **The Golden Gate Fellowship**, one from the emerging **Southern Cal Fellowship**, and two were with us for the first time. Postulant **Shiloh Michelle Minuk** from Chilliwack, British Columbia, and Novice **Dustin Nguyen** (pronounced Noo-wen) of Fountain Valley, CA (southern end of L.A. Metro). Y'all are going to delight in meeting these two new souls in our little Order

Guests: John Surinchak, a member of The Univeral Anglican Interspiritual Church, living and working as a chaplain just north of the Golden Gate Bridge; and **Donal Welch**, our new OEF Fellowship Team Coordinator, residing in Des Moines, IA.

We spent the majority of our time "catching up," and through check-ins. **Betty Lou Leaver** served as Zoom host and breathed liturgical spirit into the beginning and end of our convening. We shared reflections on Chapter 2025, noting those who professed, which included our own Seaghán O'Murchu Murphy; and those the gathered collectively observed should be seated on the Servant Council for the next term of 20.28

Lastly, we called attention to an unfortunate incident of exclusion experienced by Br. Ysidro in Claremont, CA, in relationship with Franciscan colleagues there. We earnestly hope this incident and the learnings from it will be processed by the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity.

Those present not mentioned above: Nancy Menning, Anne Nancy and Michael Vosler.

Our next Zoom gathering is scheduled for February 28th, 2026 at 10am PST.

Peace to all our siblings!
- michael v

The **Great Lakes Lighthouse Fellowship** continues to work on getting their act together! We have had Francistide retreats each year for several years at Assisi Heights Retreat Center in Rochester, MN. Last year, we learned that it is no longer available because most of the sisters are gone now, and the owner of the facility, Mayo Clinic, has begun using it for office space. We are sad to lose our "home," but understand that the sisters can no longer host us. We are working on building a relationship with the FSPA Retreat Center in La Crosse, WI (right across the Mississippi River!) We have put a deposit in for a retreat **October 1-3, 2026** (Thursday—Saturday) Mark your calendars!!!



FSPA Retreat Center in La Crosse, WI



Aging in Grace

Reflections on Ministry to Older Adults

Dementia-Friendly Worship

By Rev. Art Wille

As our congregations continue to age and the number of worshipers with Dementia increases, several Wisconsin Conference UCC congregations have focused on making accommodations in worship for this population. The following are some worship adaptations made by Susan Stein, who previously served as a licensed authorized minister. Here are some guidelines that Susan used as she put together worship for those with dementia.

- Only use hymns that are familiar. We sang, "Jesus Loves Me" every week.
- No sermon should last more than five minutes because that is about the maximum attention span of those with dementia.
- Say the Lord's Prayer, and allow whatever version they are familiar with.
- Print a limited number of bulletins because they will need to be in larger-than-normal type.

The following is a worship bulletin for a dementia-friendly service of worship that Susan led at First Congregational UCC in Wisconsin Rapids, WI on April 15, 2018.

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here.

WELCOME - Pastor Susan

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: God be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them to God.

One: Let us give thanks to God most high.

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

The scripture verse of the day comes from Psalm 121, verse 8, which says, "**The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.**"

HYMN #327 "Jesus Loves Me"

Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so.

Little ones to Him belong; they are weak, but He is strong.

**Yes, Jesus Loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.**

The verse of the day: "**The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.**"

SERMON

HYMN # 247 "My Shepherd is the Living God, I therefore nothing need;

In pastures fair, near pleasant streams

You settle me to feed.

You bring my wandering spirit back

(Continued on page 12)

Aging in Grace... Continued

**When I forsake Your ways,
And lead me for Your mercy's sake in paths of
truth and grace.**

**When I walk through the shades of death,
Your presence is my stay;
A word of Your supporting breath drives all my
fears away.
Your hand, in sight of all my foes, does still my
table spread.
My cup with blessings overflows, Your oil
anoints my head.**

**The sure provisions of my God attend me all my
days;
O may Your house be my abode, and all my work
be praise.
There would I find a settled rest, while others
come and go—
No more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at
home.**

The verse of the day: **"The Lord will keep your go-
ing out and your coming in from this time on and
forevermore."**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

(Allowing for whatever version you have learned)

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy
will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us
this day our daily bread. And forgive us our**

**debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us
not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and
the glory, forever. Amen.**

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Please hold the cracker until all are served and
take it together when prompted. This symbolizes
our communal need for a relationship with Jesus.
When you receive the juice, drink it immediately.
The taking of juice individually symbolizes the
need for a personal relationship with Jesus.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

**We thank you, God, for inviting us to this table
where we have known the presence of Christ
and have received all Christ's gifts. Strengthen
our faith, increase our love for one another,
and let us show forth Your praise in our lives;
through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen**

HYMN # 252 "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us"

**Savior, like a shepherd lead us, much we need
Your tender care;**

**In Your pleasant pastures feed us, for our use
Your folds prepare.**

**Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, You have
bought us, Yours we are;**

**Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, You have
bought us, Yours we are.**

**We are Yours, in love befriend us, be the
guardian of our way.**

**Keep Your flock from sin, defend us. Seek us
when we go astray.**

(Continued on page 13)

Aging in Grace... Continued

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, hear Your children when we pray;

Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, hear Your children when we pray.

The verse of the day: "The Lord will keep you going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore."

BENEDICTION

RESOURCES

Website: Alzheimer's and Dementia

Books"

Wayman, Laura. A Loving Approach to Dementia Care: Making Meaningful Connections With the Person Who Has Alzheimer's Disease or other Dementia or Memory Loss (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011)

McFadden, Susan. Dementia-Friendly communities: Why We Need Them and How We Can Create Them. Jessica Kingly Publishers, 2020)

Mace, Nancy and Rabins, Peter V. The 36-Hour Day: A Family Guide to Caring for People with Alzheimer's Disease, Other Dementias and Memory Loss. (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2025

**Article reprinted with permission from Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ Newsletter, January 2026*

**Susan Stein is an ordained lay minister and member of First Congregational Church, UCC in Wisconsin Rapids, WI*

-Shared by Sr. Chris Petersen, OEF

Held

By Steve Garnass-Holmes

This moment, stop.
Be still.

The Beloved says,
"I am holding you."

Notice the planet earth.
Yes, "I am holding you."
The light of day and the dark of night
say "I am holding you."

No matter what happens,
triumph or tragedy,
we are held.
It's all right to want paradise,
but for now, here,
let it be enough
that we are so lovingly, tenderly,
mightily held.

Deep Blessings,
Pastor Steve



*Shared by Br. Juniper, OEF

**Sonorous Desert: What Deep Listening Taught Early Christian Monks
– And What It Can Teach Us. By Kim Haines-Eitzen
(Reviewed by Br.Sam Loudenslager, OEF)**

“Sonorous (adj.)—full or loud in sound”

I recently read this beautifully written book by Kim Haines-Eitzen, a teacher of the history of Christian monasticism at Cornell University. I offer it for “Fiddlesticks” because one of the things that the book emphasizes is the importance of place—the place each of us find ourselves in daily.

While there are a number of books about the sayings of the early Desert Fathers and Mothers, this book is a unique offering. Dr. Haines-Eitzen doesn’t simply answer the question of why men and women left the cities of Egypt beginning in the third century of Christianity or even the question of what they hoped to encounter in the desert.

She certainly addresses both of those questions, but she also leads us into the spiritual practice of listening to a world that is alive all around us. She explores how such listening today can change us.

She also states that “the desert was a place of profound paradox that sparked the imagination... and it is in [paradoxes] where we can best understand the cultivation of listening among ancient monks.” She then shifts to write about how sound shapes our world, how the sounds of our world are changing, and how these changes are the result of climate crisis, changing water patterns, wildfires and



anthropogenic generated sounds. She then shares her experience of the sounds of the desert and the process she used of recording the sounds of the desert. The chapter ended with a section entitled “Coda” which was an incredible recording of sounds from the Negev Desert. She stated that her practice was to wear headphones to listen while recording as opposed to pressing the record button and turning her attention to something else. It is through these recordings at the end of each chapter that one can listen to the sounds of the deserts by using the QR codes she provides to hear the sounds of birds, flowing water, insects, storms, and human activity. This addition added much to my experience of this book.

The remaining chapters of the book have a similar pattern. The author engaged in a multi-disciplinary approach in writing this book. She used the writings of geographers, birders, historians, scientists and poets. The use of this information allowed the author to delve deeper into why people would go to the desert, and what sounds they encountered on their arrival. She seemed frustrated early on when, while recording, she would hear humans nearby talking or walking. However, as her practice grew deeper, she realized that these interruptions were also part of the sounds of the desert. Midway through the book, she said that “over time, I began to rethink my own ideas about silence as absence. As I listen to the rich sonority of desert landscape, I quest less for silence and more for a quality of presence, and perhaps even excess.”

(Continued on page 15)

Sonorous Desert... Continued

I think that this book is a significant contribution to inquiry about Christian desert monasticism. It is also a work that encourages using interdisciplinary approaches outside of one's academic field to answer the questions one may be pursuing in one's own academic field. It is beautifully written and is a worthy addition to those who engage in a contemplative practice or want to hear the world outside their door. This may be the most important aspect of the book. One doesn't need to travel anywhere other than outside their home to encounter God in creation of silence and sound.

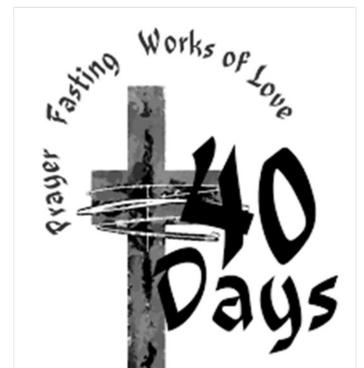
-Submitted by Br. Sam Loudenslager, OEF



A Prayer for the Brink of Lent

By Sr. Katie Cook, OEF

**God, how well we remember
the celebrations of the past—
the hopes and dreams
and wild expectations
that we dared to allow in our hearts.
And now, how troubled
we are to recall our failures!
We have not lived up
to our own expectations.
We have not measured up to your call.
The world has not been healed.
There is no peace.
The poor are still hungry.
Our dreams have burned to the ground.
The songs and carols of Advent and
Christmas
brought a brief respite
from the darkness,
but now we stand on the brink of Lent.
We are weary and frustrated.
We are fearful of what
you might now ask us to do.
Help us to bring today
the ashes of our dreams,
and present them to you
for transformation.**



A Definitive Take on the Real Presence

Siblings:

Richard Rohr offers us with a depth that warrants even this low church(!) member to address him as an (earthly) "Father."

The following is his CAC meditation on the Eucharist that may say something vital to The OEF

Father Richard writes of the sacramental nature of bread and wine in the Eucharist.

When Jesus spoke the words, "This is my Body," I believe he was speaking not just about the bread right in front of him, but about the whole universe, about everything that is physical, material, and yet also spirit-filled.

Seeing the Eucharist as a miracle is not really the message at all. I can see why we celebrate it so often. This message is such a shock to the psyche, such a challenge to our pride and individualism, that it takes a lifetime of practice and much vulnerability for it to sink in—as the pattern of every thing, and not just this thing.

The bread and the wine together are stand-ins for the very elements of the universe, which also enjoy and communicate the incarnate Presence. Why have we resisted this message so much? Authentically Eucharistic churches should have been the first to recognize the corporate, universal and physical nature of the "Christification" of matter. While Catholics rightly affirm the Real Presence of Jesus in these physical elements of the earth, most do not realize the implications of what they have affirmed. The bread and wine are largely understood as an exclusive presence, when in fact, their full function is to communicate a truly inclusive—and always shocking—presence.

A true believer is eating what he or she is afraid to see and afraid to accept: The universe is the Body of God. Both in its essence and in its suffering. The Eucharist is an encounter of the heart when we

recognize Christ's Presence through our own offered presence. In the Eucharist, we move beyond mere words or rational thought and go to that place where we don't talk about the Mystery anymore; we begin to chew on it. Jesus did not say, "Think about this," or "Stare at this," or even "Worship this." Instead, He said, "Eat this!"

We must move our knowing to the bodily, cellular, participative, and thus unitive level. We must keep eating and drinking the Mystery, until one day it dawns on us, in an undefended moment, "My God! I really am what I eat! I also am the Body of Christ." Then, we can henceforth trust and allow what has been true since the first moment of our existence. The Eucharist should jolt us into awareness that we have dignity and power flowing through us in our bare and naked existence—and everybody else does too, even though most do not know it. A body awareness of this sort is enough to steer and empower our entire faith life.

This is why I must hold to the orthodox belief that there is Real Presence in the bread and wine. For me, if we sacrifice Reality in the basic and universal elements, we end up sacrificing the same Reality in ourselves.

**Submitted by Br. James Schwarzlose, OEF*



Fiddlesticks

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**Articles for the Eastertide issue are being accepted immediately.
The deadline is April 15, 2026**

AWE

By Br. Salachar Bpwmn, OEF

I fasten my heart to mystery
Plug my spirit into high-voltage joy,
Where light and wonder hum together
Before words were born
Let there be light
And hope takes flesh
Community follows

It is how we share
In God's redeeming love.
Our creativity is God's longing
Still shaping the world.

So I stand
Small, open, unguarded
In radical amazement
Before the mystery of God.
What cannot be analyzed,
I learn to feel.
What cannot be understood,
I become.

