



That all may  
know the Savior

# SISTERS OF THE DIVINE SAVIOR

## Salvatorian News

*Walk  
with us*



From November 1-30, I'll be in Rome, Italy, along with our elected delegates Sister Jean Schafer and Sister Darlene Pienschke. We'll represent our province at the XXI General Chapter of our Congregation. Sister Barbara Reynolds will also join us to serve as a recording secretary. In a nutshell, our General Chapter is a strategic planning session with Salvatorian Sisters from almost 30 countries around the world. Together, we'll re-set our priorities to address the greatest needs of the people we serve, and elect our international leaders for 2019-2024. As we call on Providence to guide us in this undertaking, we ask you to walk with us in your prayers.

Here at home, we'll host our 18th Annual Woman of Faith event on Thursday evening, September 27. This year, we'll present our Woman of Faith Award to Michelle Runte, who advocates for acceptance of people of all abilities through the joy of play. Her story appears on Page 6. We hope many of you in the Milwaukee area will join us to honor Michelle, and hear how she "found her voice for others" through her daughter Kayla, who never spoke a word.

Holding you in prayer,

*A. Beverly Heitke, S.D.S.*

Sister Beverly Heitke, SDS  
Provincial Leader

## *Legacy of service endures along with fond memories*

Salvatorian Sisters Jean Marie Hauck and Joan Wagner have turned the page on a combined 80 years serving generations of families at Holy Family School in Huntsville, Ala. They said goodbye to their longtime friends and neighbors in early June. Their profound sense of loss has been softened by their welcome home to our Salvatorian Sisters Residence in Milwaukee. Now, they're sharing memories from their time in Huntsville.

**Sister Jean Marie** was assigned to Huntsville in 1965 to teach third grade. She stayed two years, and then taught in Maryland parochial schools for nearly 20 years. When she returned to Huntsville in 1989, she taught art classes for seven years, then retired. "From then on," Sr. Jean Marie says, "I stayed put."

In her first two years, Holy Family was still known as St. Joseph, founded as a mission school in northeastern Huntsville. Salvatorian Sisters Bernadette Klein, and Mary Ruth Dittman now deceased, opened the doors in September 1956 to serve black families.

Sr. Jean Marie saw changes when she returned to Huntsville. "They had added a whole wing to the building and air conditioning. And, the playground was blacktopped so red mud didn't get on your shoes and tracked into the classroom." The ratio between black and white students had also changed to nearly half and half. St. Joseph was the first all-black school in Alabama to admit white students. That "reverse integration" happened in 1963, two years before Sr. Jean Marie's first assignment there. Later, St. Joseph families spoke in positive terms about it. She says, "They were determined to make it work."

She looks back on that time and says, "The children had no notions of black or white. My favorite story was about one of Sister Fidelis's first graders. He went home and told his family he had the most wonderful friend. His mother asked, 'Is he black or white?' His reply: 'I don't know. I'll look tomorrow.' He didn't even notice."

After retiring, Sr. Jean Marie joined a

*continued on page 3 —>*

Sisters Joan Wagner (left) and Jean Marie Hauck are the last Salvatorian Sisters to leave St. Joseph Parish and Holy Family School in Huntsville, Ala.





# Celebrating 2018 Jubilarians

75 years 70 years 65 years

In September, we'll honor five jubilarians, pictured here from left to right:

Sr. Marilyn Wegener, SDS, 70 years

Sr. Bernadette Kline, SDS, 75 years

Sr. Georgene Faust, SDS, 75 years

Sr. Clarice Steinfeldt, SDS, 70 years

Sr. Maryann Engelhardt, SDS,  
(formerly Sr. Joseph Marie), 65 years



Read about our jubilarians here: [sistersofthedivinesavior.org/2018jubilee](http://sistersofthedivinesavior.org/2018jubilee)



You can send Jubilee greetings c/o:

Mission Advancement Office • 4311 N. 100th St. • Milwaukee, WI 53222 or [missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org](mailto:missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org)

A gift to support our mission is a meaningful way to honor a jubilarian. You can mail your donation to the address above, or donate online: [sistersofthedivinesavior.org/donate](http://sistersofthedivinesavior.org/donate)



## Companions in Mission

Margaret "Peggy" K. cherishes her time as a student at St. Mary's School of Nursing in Wausau, Wis. "From the skeleton in anatomy lab, our dances and stage shows, to the wonderful staff and admirable students ahead of us, I don't know where to begin," Peggy says today.

St. Mary's is where Peggy says she was blessed to meet the Sisters of the Divine Savior. One of her classmates is Salvatorian Sister Rachel Wallace, and they've attended reunions together. Peggy's freshman roommate was a hometown friend named Connie. "Our room was across the hall from nursing school director Sister Adelinda, but next door was the 'Smoker.' Lots of girls smoked so it got quite loud and lively."

Today, Peggy is hard pressed to name a favorite nursing instructor. "I really enjoyed them all, even if I was a little afraid of Sister De Lellis. She was a good teacher. Sister Paulette was usually quite jolly as she taught Nursing Arts, and I liked the way Sister Therese (sociology and psychology) walked. She just floated. Since I loved pediatrics, I thought Sister Mary Edward was special.

"As mid-year juniors, we were allowed to do special-duty nursing for polio victims who needed one-on-one care. I felt very comfortable with my lessons from Sister Leonita in that department."

Peggy also recalls, "I found our psych training at Winnebago the most stressful. The only treatments back then were the drug Thorazine, and electric or insulin shock therapies. It was hard to see kids my age going through that."

Peggy practiced nursing for more than 55 years, with about seven years off when her children were small. When they reached school

*"The education the SDS gave me has made my life what it is — and it's wonderful!"*

— Peggy K.,  
Class of 1957



age, she worked in doctors' offices so she could be home weekends and holidays. When her youngest started high school, Peggy began working at a skilled nursing facility. She started as a floor nurse, then became assistant director of nursing and stayed for 26 years.

"I wanted to work 'til I was 75," Peggy says, "but left when I was 71. When our parish priest put me in touch with a sweet lady who lost her caregiver, I started caring for her." Peggy's home-care service grew, and at times, she cared for five or six patients.

"Now I just help three people. It isn't skilled care, so two years ago I didn't renew my license. That was hard after renewing for 59 years. I can't imagine what my life would have been like without my profession. I am ever so thankful for my nursing education."

Peggy is grateful, too, for the sisters' sacred trust of their Apostolate of Prayer Ministry. She says, "I pray for others, and find peace and comfort when others pray for me. I have depended on them to help me through many family crises. God is great and prayers are powerful."

*Our SDS Apostolic Circle recognizes the generosity of Peggy and other friends who have named Sisters of the Divine Savior in their will or estate plan. Apostolic Circle members are listed in our stewardship update and on a plaque at our Community House in Milwaukee. We also remember them each December at Mass in our Motherhouse, Villa Salvator Mundi in Rome, near our founding site in Tivoli, Italy.*

## Legacy of service

continued from page 1

group of quilters who made sleeping bags for homeless people in the Huntsville area. She also stayed active with the school, using her artistic gifts to design and decorate school bulletin boards.

**Sister Joan** (formerly Sr. John Bosco) arrived in Huntsville in January 1969. She taught first grade for 27 years, then became the administrative assistant in the late '90s. She remained there until June 2018 – nearly 50 years. Substitute teachers had been filling in before she came, and Sr. Joan recalls, “My first priority was to get the children back where they needed to be in their studies.

“We had a lot of Nigerian children in our school, whose parents taught at Huntsville’s Alabama A&M University.” Sr. Joan says many parents of white children at St. Joseph School were employed at Redstone Arsenal and the missile program, and were not native southerners. “An Arsenal bus brought children every day in the first years I was there.” She also remembers touring the arsenal where they tested rockets. “From our school you could hear rockets roaring when they did testing 15-20 miles away. We could see rockets too, standing up on display.”

Sr. Joan wasn’t in Huntsville in 1963, but the tumult of desegregation continued after her arrival. White non-Catholics tried to enroll their children at St. Joseph School because it was more racially balanced than Huntsville public schools. The Diocese of Birmingham would not allow St. Joseph School to be a refuge for families trying to avoid the federal court’s desegregation order. Parents sued St. Joseph School for denying their children admission.

Sister Joan Wagner taught 896 first graders in the first 27 of 49 years she served in Huntsville, Ala.



Of the court case, Sr. Joan says simply, “Our school won out.”

Another early incident Sr. Joan will never forget is a teacher’s convention in Birmingham. “On the way home we crossed a bridge over the Tennessee River. All along the river, lined up on the bridge was the KKK in white. It scared me. Our driver said, ‘Duck down.’” Sr. Joan explains that attitudes were pretty much the same toward Catholics as toward blacks. “That was my first – my only – experience with the KKK.”

In 1979, St. Joseph, St. Mary’s and Mary Queen of Universe parishes merged their grade schools to become Holy Family School. Merging three student bodies furthered St. Joseph’s reverse integration. It was far more peaceful than desegregation at other schools.

Even with a new name, the spirit of the original mission school lives on. Sr. Joan says parents always were and still are very much involved at the school. “They volunteered a lot, black and white parents working together.” She says that along with ethnic diversity, Holy Family students come from many faith traditions, including Baptist, Church of Christ and Methodist. The school’s strong reputation garners respect throughout the community.

As for St. Joseph Parish, Sr. Joan says, “Over the years it’s grown, and although it’s not a large parish, it’s thriving.” Sr. Jean Marie adds, “We’ve never been known as a wealthy parish, but people are extremely generous. When something needs to be done, they’re there.” You could also say that’s the legacy the Salvatorian Sisters leave behind in Huntsville.

Today, Sr. Joan’s image is one of four stained glass windows above the front door of the church. There’s Mother Mary and Father Jordan, our two founders; Fr. Hermenegild Messmer, SDS founder of St. Joseph Parish; and Sr. Joan. “So my picture is there until the window breaks,” says Sr. Joan, but she doesn’t take the honor lightly. When she thinks back now, Sr. Joan says, “I loved it there.”

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## In Memoriam

**Sister Frances Marie Lendle, SDS** (formerly Sr. Agnella) died on June 10, 2018 at age 96. A profound zeal for promoting education distinguishes her 78 years professed as a Salvatorian.

**Sister Mary Ruth Dittman, SDS** died on June 18, 2018. She was professed 69 years. After 15 years in teaching, Sr. Mary Ruth followed her heart to care for newborn babies in hospitals in the Milwaukee area and later, Phoenix, Ariz.

Read about Sisters Frances Marie and Mary Ruth here: <http://sistersofthedivinesavior.org/memorial/>

# Counting Your Blessings

*Seeds of hope come in all sizes*

Ever wonder if your gift truly makes a difference? In response to our May appeal for our education support program in Sri Lanka, we received 162 gifts ranging from \$1 to \$10,000. Together, those gifts will enable our Salvatorian Sisters in Sri Lanka to continue the program for another full year. Each gift is an expression of faith in our mission and trust in our stewardship to support a ministry that is lifting Sri Lanka's next generation to a better life. What could be a more valuable gift than that?



## *“Knowing her call is only from God”*

Salvatorian Sister Yasinta Godfrey, SDS recalls her father's words when she professed first vows in her east Africa homeland of Tanzania.

“Now I am free to let her go, knowing her call is only from God.”

Years earlier, when Sr. Yasinta spoke of her desire to join a Catholic Sister's community, her father did not share her mother's joy. She knew her mother once had the same desire and was not allowed to discern a religious vocation. She understood her father's feelings too, saying, “He was not ready to let me go.”

Sr. Yasinta was 14 years old when she first felt called to religious life. She was a catechism student taught by another congregation of Catholic Sisters. While she didn't resist God's call, she wasn't sure that congregation was the best place for her to be. When she visited the Salvatorian community at age 19, she fully intended to return home. Sr. Yasinta shares why she stayed. “It was the way they live with the people; they are close to the people.”

Starting out in her studies, Sr. Yasinta saw two possible paths. Her first choice was to become a doctor. When she was one of just a few students remaining in science classes, the school decided it could no longer justify paying science teachers. Without a foundation in the sciences, she gave up her dream to pursue medicine at university.

Sr. Yasinta attended three years at university studying education and two years practice teaching in a government-run school. She also earned her master's degree in education management, preparing her to serve in school



**Sister Yasinta Godfrey, SDS** shared about our Salvatorian missions around the world during summer 2018. She traveled across the country, speaking to parish communities at weekend Masses by invitation from the diocesan mission co-op program.

administration. Sr. Yasinta comes from a family of teachers, including her father, one of two brothers, and one of her three sisters who is now deceased.

Sr. Yasinta paints a picture of Tanzania's agrarian society, but it's nothing like our image of farm life. In Tanzania, people grow crops to feed their families. If blessed with a surplus, they try to sell it for cash.

For many families, the greatest challenge is survival. Sr. Yasinta knows education is key to changing that reality. She talks about a student she came to know during her time in student teaching. The girl was “form 3,” roughly equivalent to middle school in the U.S. Sr. Yasinta describes this particular student as very open in sharing about her life. Always encouraging her to work hard, Sr. Yasinta explains, “Education for one member of a family has the potential to lift up entire families to better opportunities in Tanzania.”

When the girl said she would not be returning to school because her father could no longer pay tuition, her teacher knew there was more to the story.

“I learned the young woman was pregnant. I stayed in contact with her and helped arrange for housing and infant care so she could return to school.” Today, she is a teacher too.

Sr. Yasinta firmly believes, “Service in God's name is making a difference. Not for one life, but for many.”



### Tip

**When your IRA does well, it can do good too!** Many of our friends age 70 ½ or older contribute gifts from their IRA directly to the Sisters of the Divine Savior (SDS). This qualified charitable distribution (QCD) is limited to IRAs and offers two main advantages. First, a QCD counts toward the yearly required minimum distribution.

Second, you avoid a tax penalty because individuals are allowed to donate up to \$100,000 a year without paying income tax on the withdrawal. Best of all, you can designate your gift to support ministries that are important to you. If you have questions on transferring your IRA gift to SDS please contact Lori Land at [landl@salvatoriansisters.org](mailto:landl@salvatoriansisters.org) or 414-466-7414.



2018 Passion for Remembering

# The 100th Anniversary of 1918 A Year of Armistice and Anguish

For Salvatorians living in America in 1918, five significant events made it “A Year of Armistice and Anguish.” Last spring, we looked back on the St. Nazianz fire and World War I. Here we commemorate the last three milestones: the death of Salvatorian Founder Father Francis Jordan, the November Armistice and the Spanish flu epidemic.



## Death of Father Jordan

Soon after joining the Allied Powers, Italy found itself in the midst of a deadly war. The Italian government could no longer ensure the safety of Fr. Jordan and other German-born Salvatorians in Rome. In May 1915 they were relocated to neutral Switzerland. The portrait of Fr. Jordan at left was taken on the roof of the Society of the Divine Savior Motherhouse in Rome, shortly before their departure.

The move was difficult for our Founder. He didn't know it then, but Fr. Jordan would never return to Rome. He lost his battle with stomach cancer on September 8, 1918 before the war ended. The morning after Fr. Jordan died, a telegram was sent to St. Nazianz, but for reasons unknown, was never received. Word about Fr. Jordan's death did not reach Salvatorians in the U.S. until a month later.

## November Armistice

On November 11, 1918, “at the eleventh hour ... of the eleventh day ... of the eleventh month...” a treaty was signed ending the First World War. The armistice withdrew armies from the Western Front, but it did not formally end the Great War. Peace between the Allied Powers and Central Powers was not officially declared until six months later at the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.

Several European countries recognize November 11th as Armistice Day. In 1954, the United States renamed Armistice Day to Veterans Day to honor veterans of all wars.



## Spanish Flu Epidemic

As a temporary moment of peace settled after World War I, the “Spanish flu” began to spread throughout the world. Soldiers returning home from Europe carried the disease responsible for more than 50 million deaths worldwide. The Spanish flu caused more casualties than the Great War, as quarantines and bloodletting was the only treatment at the time. A flu vaccine was about thirteen years away from being developed.

Tragically, young adults were affected most by the 1918 flu outbreak. It claimed four of the first American-born Salvatorians, including two of our sisters. Below, we remember these “spiritual sons and daughters” who died from the disease.

**Frater Edward Lesch, SDS, 25**  
Holy Cross, Wisconsin  
† December 7, 1918

**Novice Gregory Nazianzenus Vogelsang, SDS, 21**  
West Bend, Wisconsin  
† December 15, 1918

**Sister Virgilia Schuessler, SDS, 20**  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin  
† December 17, 1918

**Sister Maryanna Schuch, SDS, 23**  
Lima, Wisconsin  
† April 9, 1919

We're grateful to Salvatorian Archivists **Father Michael Hoffman, SDS** and **Sister Mary Jo Stoffel, SDS** for their research of photos and stories for “1918 — A Year of Armistice and Anguish.” See more photos online at: [sistersofthedivinesavior.org/years-on-fire/](http://sistersofthedivinesavior.org/years-on-fire/)

# 2018 Woman of Faith found her voice and inspired others

Michelle “Shelly” Runte has inspired a community to embrace her vision for persons of all abilities to share in the joy of play. The gift of her vision is a 12,000-square-foot, accessible playground in Franklin, Wis. for children and adults of all abilities.

You might think Shelly’s vision would have easily won support, but Franklin’s Mayor Steve Olson says, “In fact, none of it came easy.

“Shelly maintained her faith in God and humanity through many heartbreaking setbacks and challenges,” says Steve. “Her ability to see good in everything remains an inspiration to those of us who worked closely with her.”

Salvatorian Sister Mary Frost, SDS nominated Shelly for this year’s *Woman of Faith* Award. She came to know Shelly while leading a bible study class at St. Mary’s Parish in Hales Corners, Wis. Soon, Sr. Mary came to know Shelly’s daughter Kayla too.

“Kayla was a non-verbal child,” says Sr. Mary. “Shelly and her husband John took special care of her for eight years until Kayla’s death in 2012. Those years were a journey of faith, that God wanted them to care for Kayla and had not made a mistake.”

Father Matthew Widder had the privilege of coming into the Runte family’s life the night that Kayla died. He recalls, “The house was full of people – neighbors, teachers, friends and family. What moved me was the diversity of people, and then in the midst of sorrow, they sang songs praising God.

“Shelly dedicated her life to caring for Kayla, who carried beautifully the cross of cerebral palsy,” Fr. Matthew says.

After Kayla died, Shelly took all she had learned from her young daughter and transformed an idea into reality. She wanted children with severe disabilities and special needs to know they are loved and deserve a rightful place in our communities and our world.

Fr. Matthew says, “Shelly used Kayla’s life story to inspire others to advocate for those

*“I witnessed Kayla’s soul connecting with others without ever speaking a word. It was only after her death, when her voice resonated in my soul, that I felt a calling to build a playground — a place for able-bodied children and adults to learn life lessons of compassion, patience and acceptance through play.”*

— Shelly Runte

with disabilities. She’s a community builder and an advocate for the forgotten.” He recalls that Shelly refused to be daunted by many roadblocks along the way, and says, “Over 1,500 people helped in building Kayla’s Playground, a sign that indeed, God was working in this process.”

Father Brian Mason, now St. Mary’s pastor, says Shelly focuses, not on what she did for Kayla, but on what Kayla taught her. He didn’t meet Shelly until 2016, when he arrived at the home of a family who lost their husband and father at age 48 to ALS. Shelly was already there comforting them.

“She told me she received so much support from our parish community when Kayla died that she wanted to help someone going through a similar tragedy. Shelly continued to walk with that family for quite some time after his funeral,” Fr. Brian says.



After a couple years of fundraising and advocating with Franklin’s local government, Kayla’s Playground opened on October 9, 2015. Mayor Olson says, “Shelly used her faith to inspire others. Shelly inspires by attitude and action. She’s humble, joyful, thoughtful and full of grace.”

Visit Kayla’s Playground at [kaylaskrew.org](http://kaylaskrew.org)

Read about our *Woman of Faith* Award at [sistersofthedivinesavior.org/2018wof](http://sistersofthedivinesavior.org/2018wof)



## WOMAN OF Faith AWARD

Please join us to honor

### Michelle Runte

Advocate for people with disabilities

### Thursday, September 27, 2018 • 7:00 p.m.

SDS Community House • 4311 N. 100th Street, Milwaukee

*Please register for this free event by September 21*

Go to [sistersofthedivinesavior.org/2018wof](http://sistersofthedivinesavior.org/2018wof) or call 414-466-7414

Special thanks to Play By Design for their Premier Partnership in this event.

[pbdplaygrounds.com](http://pbdplaygrounds.com)

