

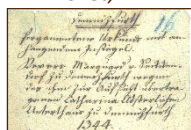
WWII Hospital
Hamburg, NY



"The Seed"
Stella Niagara, NY



Unexpected Discovery
Joliet, IL



Music, Words, Healing
Redwood City, CA



New Leadership
Wheaton, IL



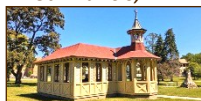
Historic Chapel
La Crosse, WI



Mayo Clinic Origins
Rochester, MN



Historic Features
St. Francis, WI



In This Issue

The Latest from the FCA

by Holly Fiedler, FCA Board President

Frankfort's peaceful campus ready to welcome FCA as discussions, design, preparations progress

This year, the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart (FSSH) in Frankfort, Illinois – the future site of the FCA – are celebrating “150 Years of Grace: Journeys Ventured, Hearts of Hope.” Summer also is a season of Jubilee celebrations for many of our partner communities, including the FSSH who honored their Jubilarians in June. Here in Denver, the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Sacred Heart Province, likewise celebrated five Jubilarians marking 25 to 65 years of “simplicity and service into the world, living in a spirit of penance and love.” I extend my best wishes and congratulations for these and all the milestone events happening within our FCA family and beyond.

This year also marks the 800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis of Assisi. At the end of his life, he said, “I have done what was mine to do; may Christ teach you what is yours.” That commissioning for his followers still guides our Franciscan partners today. Our archive center will preserve and enliven this charism and legacy by safeguarding and sharing the collections

that document each community's care for creation, compassion and peacemaking which unite the hearts of all our ministries, missions and work. We look forward to the day we can open the doors to this sacred repository that honors and respects so many who have come before us and literally changed our world.



Choosing our collective home

At the invitation of Sister Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF, FSSH General Community Leader, FCA representatives visited their Frankfort property in early 2025, thus beginning a meaningful partnership. On their website, the FSSH

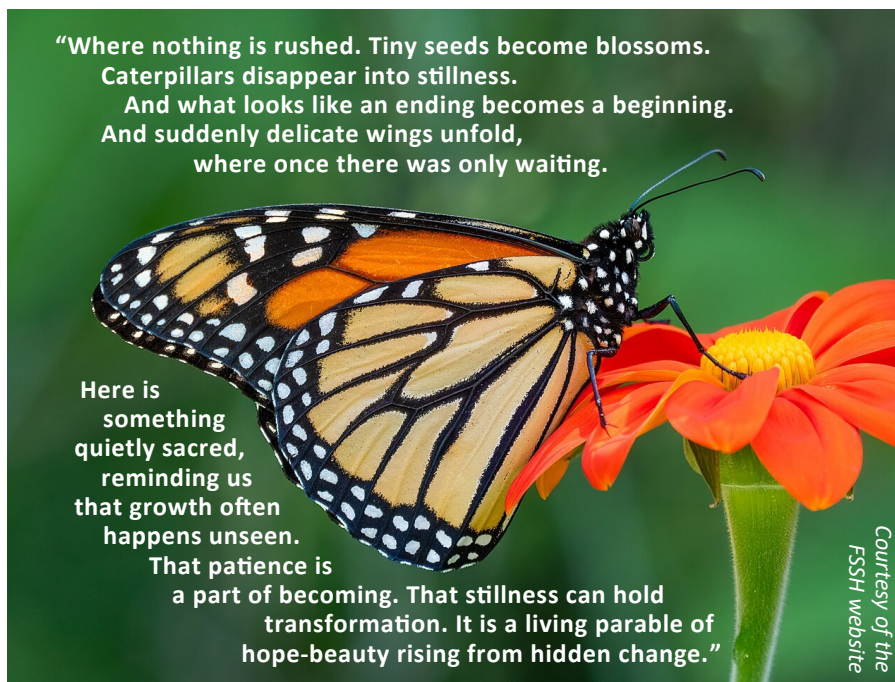
The Latest from the FCA continued on page 2 ...

**A sustainable, charism-based collaborative repository
for the combined archival collections of Franciscan entities across the United States.**

...The Latest from the FCA continued from page 1

describe the campus with these tranquil words: “The Woods, a sanctuary of beauty and stillness, a landscape of whispering trees, shifting light, and quiet spaces that invite reflection.” This vision was immediately recognized during the visit and, by August, partner leaders agreed this would become the future home of the FCA.

Entering the grounds, you are immediately met with grass and scattered trees that become denser as you go further. The website notes the presence of a butterfly garden outside the Portiuncula Center for Prayer (“the Port”) as described on the [FSSH website](#):



The FCA’s portion of land is located just north of the Port. As we move forward with new construction we hold a sacred responsibility to take gentle and intentional care of our Sister Mother Earth. We must consider water retention and detention, the replacement of trees lost due to construction, and the safeguarding of the bat habitat. Discussions also include concern for native plant species and responsibly sourced building materials.

With an expected groundbreaking in 2027, the FCA aims to open by or before 2030. You can find **updates on our progress**:

- **Posted on our [newly expanded website](#)**
- **Printed in future issues of this newsletter**
- **Shared on social media (follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#))**
- **Through the [Franciscan Federation](#)**

We currently have 17 partner communities! At this time, our design team is working closely with our partners to finalize the needs for this phase of construction.

Who will tell our story?

Sister Mary Navarre, OP, archivist for the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, has spoken of women religious being part of the fabric of this country. Her email signature includes this quote attributed to Sheila Flynn, “The story is not ended; the cloth is still on the loom.” To me this speaks of her journey, the journey of women religious, and their ministries. Each ministry, life of service, lived experience, and story brings us to the present. It is our reason for being and part of what guides us into the future.

May we hold steady like Clare to create an archival center where Franciscans feel a warm welcome to research, be in community, or sit in contemplation with our partners’ legacies. In this way we can honor those who have come before us and continue the mission which guided generations in the ministries of care. To share, advocate, and celebrate our charism through educational opportunities based on our partners’ history – *this* is the work of the FCA.

I weave back to Sister Mary Navarre at our first presentation together. Her eloquent words closed with, “Who will tell our story?” For the FCA, through preservation and responsible access, may we not only share stories, but also be inspired by them. *May you consider the stories, mentors, and spiritual ministers who have impacted your life. How have they inspired you to do what is yours to do?* 

Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph kept St. Mary's Hospital going during WW II

by Sister Jean Cherry, FSSJ, First General Councilor,
and Sister Sharon Goodremote, FSSJ, Archivist,
Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph (Hamburg, NY)

Throughout history, Americans have stepped up in times of crisis to help the common good of the nation. Just as thousands of “Rosie the Riveters” became machinists and other types of workers during World War II, our Sisters responded as healthcare providers

In 1940, the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph began their service at St. Mary's Hospital in Brooklyn, New York, in various capacities. They filled voids in leadership when many of the male doctors and professionals were called into the military. The Sisters did not hesitate to fill roles as administrators and teachers in medical classes, including orthopedics and cardiology.

The Sisters held these roles for years after the war ended, working side by side with male professionals as they returned to the hospital. While the Sisters did not sponsor the hospital, they staffed it for many decades. It was later said that, “St. Mary's Hospital would have closed if the Sisters did not step up to administer the hospital and provide direction for the hospital in those challenging times.”



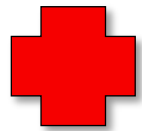
Sister Rayneld Samsel, FSSJ, teaching

► senior cardiology (right) and

▼ freshmen orthopedics (below).



“St. Mary's Hospital would have closed if the Sisters did not step up to administer the hospital and provide direction for the hospital in those challenging times.”



Director,
School of Nursing:
Sister Mary Jan,
FSSJ, RT, RN, Ph.D.

"And here **The Seed** is planted"

by Sister Mary Serbacki, OSF, Archivist, Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Holy Name Province (Stella Niagara, NY)



"The Seed" is one of the Stations of the Cross



When young Larry Griffis, Jr., son of a well-to-do family in Erie County, New York, came to Stella Niagara in the 1930s, he had no idea that a woman he'd meet would inspire his life's work.

Like other elementary and high school students, Larry took classes with Sister Callista Lentz, OSF, an art teacher at Stella from 1923 until 1960. Born in 1895 in Chillicothe, Ohio, Sister Callista received her B.S. in Education from Ohio State University in 1918 and was a map maker for the Ohio Fuel Supply Company before entering the Sisters of St. Francis, Stella Niagara, in 1923. Later, she received a master's degree in fine arts from The Catholic University of America. At the time of her death, it was said that,

"She had given herself heart and soul to her teaching, and her inspiration had led many of her pupils to pursue a career in art in one form or another."

One inspired student was Larry Griffis, whose work is displayed, among other places, in the Griffis Sculpture Park in Ashford Hollow, New York. In 1987, Larry completed "The Seed," a commemorative sculpture on the grounds of Stella Niagara. He dedicated this work in memory of Sister Callista who planted in him the seed he had been nurturing, and who gave him a love of art which was a driving force all his life.

The symbolic seed stands almost seven feet tall in front of Ormsby Hall on the Stella campus. "The Seed" was formally dedicated on May 10, 1987, Sister Callista's birthday. ♻️



Collection reassessment leads to unexpected discovery

by Elizabeth Piskorski, Archivist, *Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate* (Joliet, IL)



As community archivists from coast to coast prepare materials for eventual transfer to the Franciscan Central Archive (FCA), many are reassessing collections. In Joliet, while moving Sister records from filing cabinets to archival boxes, I made a fascinating discovery...

The document dated 1344.

While shifting the folder of Sister Celeste Kocab, OSF, two documents fell out. The largest one had a pair of long hanging pieces and was dated 1502, and the smaller one was dated 1344. Our Sisters did not come to America until the 1850s, so the purpose of these records was unclear. It was time to do some research.

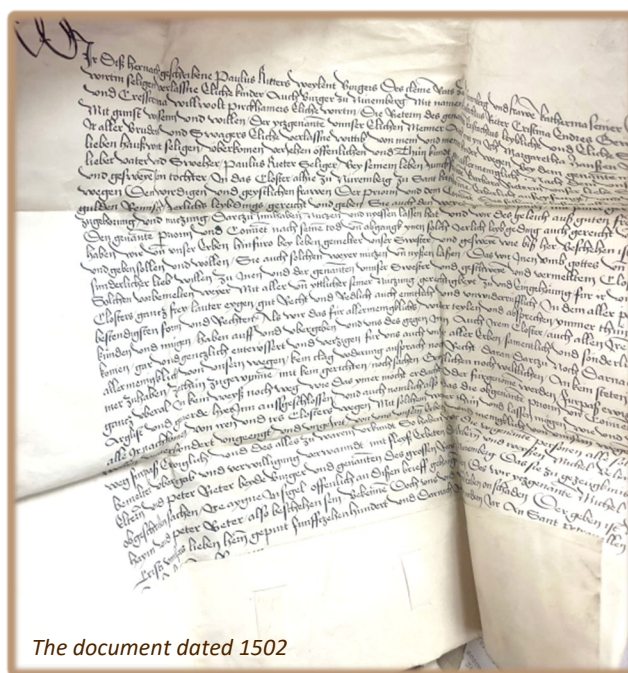
I uncovered that the hanging pieces were pendant seals, which were used during the medieval era. Made of a hard waxy substance, they are connected to the largest document with two pieces of parchment. Sister Caritas Strodthoff, OSF, of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, an advocate for the FCA, called a friend to assist with the translation of the document (*thank you, Josef Engelke!*). Through the translation, we discovered it was a gift from a Sister to the St. Katharine Monastery in Nuremberg. The document listing 1344 as a date likely refers to an item we do not have, akin to a library catalog card.

With the help of FCA Consultant Veronica Buchanan, I got in touch with the Nuremberg City Archives where the document may have originated when items were relocated for preservation during World War II. They even had the document in their database with its meaning and history.

This summer, the German Consulate in Chicago will come to film a short video about the item's discovery and help return it safely to Nuremberg. While we do not exactly know how this item came to the archives, it demonstrates how reassessing our collection can lead to exciting discoveries and even the repatriation of artifacts.



All the pieces that fell out of Sister Celeste's folder, including the 1344 document, the document with pendant seals, and a description with a story about the object that we have since debunked.



The document dated 1502

Words, Music, Prayer & Healing

Sister Mary Mebane inspired as she ministered



Sister Mary Mebane, OSF
(† 1935-2025)

by Melissa Martin, Archivist, *Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, St. Francis Province (Redwood City, CA)*

In May 2025, the St. Francis Province of the Sisters of Penance and Christian Charity, Redwood City, California celebrated the life of Sister Mary Mebane, OSF.

Throughout her life and ministry, Sister Mary shared her love of words, her music (she played the recorder), and healing through poetry while serving as a chaplain at the Marian Regional Medical Center in Santa Maria, California. She also was a licensed Reiki practitioner who helped many patients heal through prayer.

In 1981, Sister Mary wrote “A Pause on the Journey” for the *Havre Daily News*, in which she reflected upon the journey of life with its many “rest stops or pauses.” She shared that the Emmaus story (Luke 24:13-35) was to her a symbol of a journey, of Christ revealing himself as our companion on the road.

“I turn from talking about the Lord to speaking with him,” she wrote.

Sister Mary gifted us much through her caring and loving spirit, which is reflected in a collection of poems she wrote. This particular one (*see left*) pairs poignantly with the *Daily News* article.

Road to Emmaus

Emmaus, I hear your call in
my heart once again.

I have seen you, recognized
you.

Set my feet on your path
once more.

Help me to help others find
their way to you

That they, too, recognize
their “Emmaus moment”

In the breaking of the bread
of self as did I.

Sister Mary Mebane, OSF
May 7, 2017



Christ on the Road to Emmaus by Jan Wildens

Wheaton Franciscan Sisters announce new Regional Leadership Team

On April 17, 2026, Sister Magdalena Schmitz, OSF, General Directress of the international congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, announced the new **Regional Leadership Team (RLT)** for the United States.

Commonly known as the Wheaton Franciscans, the newly appointed leaders are:



Sister Melanie Paradis, OSF, Regional Directress

Sister Beatrice Hernandez, OSF

Regional Leadership Team Member (*right*)

Sister Alice Drewek, OSF

Regional Leadership Team Member (*left*)

The RLT has been called to provide visionary, synodal leadership as the community continues to journey together through the ongoing transformation of the region, the congregation, the Church, and the global community.

Gratitude for the outgoing Leadership Team

The Wheaton Franciscan community expresses heartfelt gratitude to the outgoing RLT, who faithfully served the community from Oct. 8, 2023, to April 19, 2026: **Sister Mary Lou Wirtz, OSF** (outgoing Regional Directress), **Sister Glenna Czachor, OSF** (outgoing Regional Leadership Team Member), and **Sister Toby Bonny, OSF** (outgoing Regional Leadership Team Member).

Their dedicated leadership and commitment have played an integral role in the community's ongoing transformation, leading to this next step in our shared journey.

A Renewed Vision

In prayerful discernment, the community reaffirmed their Vision Prayer and embraced a new **Vision Statement** to guide its path over the next three years.

To animate this vision, the new leadership team will focus on several strategic priorities including:

- **Mission and Inclusivity:** Deepening the commitment to be a welcoming and diverse community.
- **Spiritual legacy:** Sharing the spiritual heritage to ensure the sustainability of the charism for future generations.
- **Stewardship and Sustainability:** Living out the Laudato Sí statement as a transformative way of life.
- **Evolution of structures:** Adapting administrative functions to meet current needs, foster collaboration, and facilitate thoughtful succession planning.
- **Global and Local collaborations:** Strengthening organizational collaborations that contribute to the ongoing transformation of the world.

Mary of the Angels Chapel at St. Rose Convent in La Crosse, Wisconsin, is a remarkable testament to faith, beauty and perseverance.

In 1865, Mother Antonia Herb made a solemn promise: *"Dear Lord, accept this poor light. It is the best we can give you now, but if you will help us and bless the community, we will one day establish Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and build for you as beautiful a chapel as our means will allow."* The Sisters fulfilled this promise when Perpetual Adoration began in 1878. After the original chapel became too small, plans were made for a larger church. Construction of Mary of the Angels Chapel took place between 1902 and 1906.

Designed by German-American architect Eugene Leibert, the chapel's beauty reflects the work of gifted artisans. Master woodcarver Egid Hackner created many of the intricate interior details, including hand-carved sedilia adorned with delicate beading and figures of angels and the Christ Child. Visitors also encounter a large, intricate oil painting of Franciscan saints by Sister Clea Bakewell, FSPA, who developed her artistic talents after entering the community in 1911.



Mary of the Angels Chapel, Roger Grant

Enlivening the Ministry & Beauty of Adoration

Exterior by Larsh Bristol



Hackner workers



St. Mary Magdalene

Among the chapel's highlights are its stained-glass windows, crafted in Bavaria, Germany, by the Franz Xaver Zettler Studio. These windows continue a long tradition of teaching and storytelling through sacred art. One depicts the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, inviting reflection on faith and readiness.

Throughout the chapel, faith stories also are told through 10 life-size statues of four Old Testament prophets, four Doctors of the Church, and Saints Peter and Paul. Hackner and his men built altars made of beautiful, Italian marble. The tedious work of cutting the Venetian glass and mother of pearl shells edged into the marble enhances their beauty. Above the tabernacle, a revolving platform displays either a crucifix or a monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament, reflecting the community's enduring commitment to Eucharistic adoration.

More than a historic landmark, Mary of the Angels Chapel remains a living expression of Franciscan spirituality, prayer and hospitality.



Virtual chapel tour:
tinyurl.com/FSPACHapel

by Sister Carrie Kirsch, FSPA, Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (La Crosse, WI)

The Franciscan origins of Mayo Clinic

Rochester Sisters partner with Dr. Mayo to build hospital

by Sister Marisa McDonald, OSF
Archivist, *Sisters of St. Francis*
(Rochester, MN)

The Rochester Franciscans began their partnership with the Mayo Clinic in August 1883 when a tornado devastated the city of Rochester, Minnesota.

In the immediate aftermath, Dr. W. W. Mayo asked Mother Alfred Moes if the Academy building could be used for the wounded, and whether the Sisters (mostly young teachers on summer break) would help care for them.

After this initial response to the disaster, Mother Alfred advised Dr. Mayo that Rochester needed a hospital. She proposed that the Sisters would raise the money to construct a building, and Dr. Mayo and his sons would serve as staff. Dr. Mayo expressed skepticism at first, wondering if a hospital was needed in

Rochester and if a group of Catholic Sisters could raise the needed funds.

Mother Alfred was not to be underestimated! Six years later, on Sept. 30, 1889, Saint Mary's Hospital opened and then continued as a sponsored ministry of the Franciscan community for almost a century. This 1,200-bed hospital still flourishes as one of two Mayo Clinic hospitals in Rochester.

The connection between the Congregation and Mayo Clinic has persisted in various ways over the years. In 2004,

that partnership became more apparent to clinic visitors when a statue of Mother Alfred and W.W. Mayo became part of the statuary park on the downtown Mayo campus.

Due to major construction in the area, the statues currently are "on sabbatical" but will reappear in a few years somewhere on the campus! ☞

Statues of W.W. Mayo and Mother Alfred Moes will return to the downtown campus.

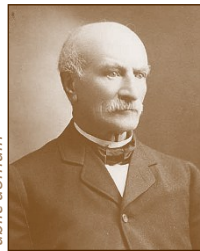
Unknown photographer, public domain



Note: Mother Alfred Moes (above) is connected with several Franciscan congregations, including two other FCA communities in Allegany, New York, and Joliet, Illinois, as well as Sylvania, Ohio, and Kirkwood/St. Louis, Missouri. The leaders of the five "Mother Al's Gals" gather annually during the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR).



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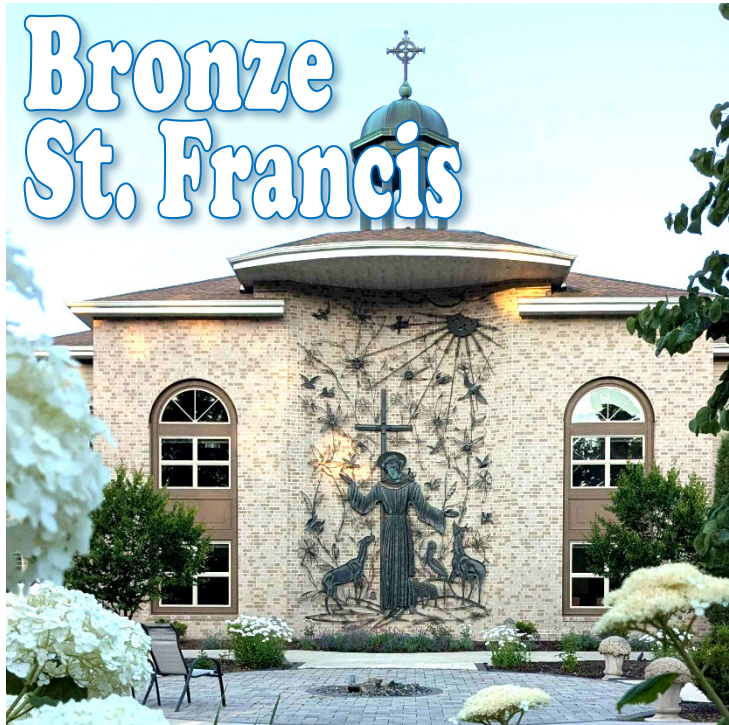


Timeless & Enduring

Outdoor features captivate visitors at St. Francis Convent

The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi (*St. Francis, Wisconsin*) welcome visitors to stroll the timeless convent grounds they have called home since 1849. This lush, lakeside home is a peaceful urban oasis where enduring historic features surround a modern 2019 convent building, providing a prayerful place of respite and contemplation. Among the more remarkable highlights are:

Bronze St. Francis



▲ Master blacksmith Carl Wyland created this two-story bronze façade piece for the Sisters. Fashioned in Cologne, Germany, the 220 lb. artwork took Wyland and his assistants more than 4,000 hours to complete. In 1956, the art first adorned the Motherhouse and now provides a distinctive historical touch to the front of the 2019 convent.

St. Clara Bell

Father Mathias Steiger purchased a bell in 1850 from Meneclý's Foundry in New York. Blessed and named "St. Clara," she rang from the heights of three sacred OSF chapels. On Nov. 1, 2024, the Sisters dedicated St. Clara Memorial Bell Tower, erected within 10 feet from where she hung in the 1894 bell tower.



In 1917, the Congregation built the Assisium, a facsimile of the Sisters' first 60'x60' convent built in 1849 by 13 Franciscan tertiaries from Ettenbeuren, Bavaria. A new, larger convent replaced the original in 1861.

Assisium





The Franciscan Central Archive (FCA) preserves, protects, and provides access to the records of its Franciscan entities for the purposes of research and knowledge through a collaborative repository that will carry the Franciscan charism and legacy into the future.

We recognize the urgency for Franciscan congregations to find permanent repositories for their archives that will safeguard the community's charism and legacy for future generations. The Franciscan Central Archive will be a physical center open by or before 2030, following national archival standards, with a reading room, exhibition space, lecture hall, and robust virtual presence. Researchers will be able to study congregational ministries, shared vocations, and Franciscan charism across the collections. The FCA will be supported by charism-based educational programs and social engagement to ensure its members' legacies are carried into the future. Participation is open to Franciscan communities and organizations.

Volunteers & Funding

Funding is dependent upon grants, donations, legacy gifts, and participating member contributions. We need your help to see FCA through next steps and into the future.

How to Support

Volunteer: We are seeking experienced assistance with grant writing, development, and fundraising.

Donations and Planned Giving: The FCA welcomes gifts in support of the legacy of our communities and Franciscan charism through the preservation of our archival collections.

✧ Contact FCArchive@franciscanway.org for planned giving.

✧ Please visit the [FCA website](https://www.fca-archives.org) to donate!

Services & Initiatives

- Provide guidance, resources concerning archives
- Assist with hiring or contracting archivists
- Guide needs assessment and strategic planning for members and FCA
- Assist members in preparing their archives for transfer
- Seek grants and donations to assist members and reduce costs
- Enable donor development and gift campaign to support efforts
- Initiate agreements for members
- Facilitate move of members' archives to the FCA
- Promote and increase accessibility to FCA collections, bringing forth the shared Franciscan spirit



Spanning four time zones and representing generations of women religious, these communities join together as true partners in this collective building project that will create an unprecedented trove of Franciscan history.

FCA Partner Communities

- ✧ Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity
 - Holy Name Province, Stella Niagara, NY ([link](#))
 - Sacred Heart Province, Denver, CO ([link](#))
 - St. Francis Province, Redwood City, CA ([link](#))
- ✧ Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY ([link](#))
- ✧ Sisters of St. Francis of Rochester, MN ([link](#))
- ✧ Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis, WI ([link](#))
- ✧ Wheaton Franciscans Sisters, Wheaton, IL ([link](#))
- ✧ Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate, Joliet, IL ([link](#))
- ✧ Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, La Crosse, WI ([link](#))
- ✧ Franciscan Sisters of Chicago, Lemont, IL ([link](#))
- ✧ Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, Cincinnati, OH ([link](#))
- ✧ School Sisters of St. Francis of Christ the King, Lemont, IL ([link](#))
- ✧ Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph, Hamburg, NY ([link](#))
- ✧ Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, Springfield, IL ([link](#))
- ✧ Generalate of the School Sisters of St. Francis, Milwaukee, WI ([link](#))
- ✧ Sisters of St. Francis of Dubuque, IA ([link](#))
- ✧ Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Frankfort, IL ([link](#))

Partnerships & Affiliations

- Academy of American Franciscan History ([link](#))
- Archivists for Congregation of Women Religious ([link](#))
- Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities ([link](#))
- Commission on the Franciscan Intellectual-Spiritual Tradition ([link](#))
- Franciscan Federation ([link](#))

FranciscanCentralArchive.franciscanway.org

PURPOSE

History & Memory
Knowledge



GOALS

Preserve
Inform & Connect
Foster Collaboration
Engage & Inspire



VALUES

Responsible Stewardship
Integrity & Accountability
Professional Service
Sustainability



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Sister Celia Struck, OSF

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Connect with us!

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