

aim usa

The United States Secretariat of the Alliance for International Monasticism

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Love is born again and again.

AIM USA

Annual Board Meeting

The AIM USA Board of Trustees met at Mount St. Benedict Monastery in Erie, PA on October 18, 2011. The agenda focused on good stewardship of our resources as we continue to assist mission monasteries in the future. The current financial climate, resulting in a decrease in donations, poses challenges as the needs increase around the world.

Gratitude was expressed to three board members who have completed their terms: Abbot Justin Duvall, OSB; Prior Konrad Schaefer, OSB; and Sister Kathy de Vico, OCSO. Elections were held and the following new members were chosen: Abbot John Klassen from Collegetown, MN; Abbot John Brahill from Marmion, IL and Sister Pia Portmann from Norfolk, NB.



Seated: Abbot Justin DuVall, OSB, St. Meinrad, IN; Sr. Kathy DeVico, OCSO, Whitehorn, CA. Standing from left: Abbot Neal Roth, OSB, Lacey, WA; Abbot John Denburger, OCSO, Piffard, NY; Sr. Karen Joseph, OSB, Ferdinand, IN; Sr. Stephanie Schmidt, OSB, Erie, PA; Sr. Anne Shepard, OSB, Atchison, KS; Sr. Susan Hutchens, OSB, Rock Island, IL; Prior Konrad Schaefer, OSB, Cuernavaca, Mexico; Sr. Anne Wambach, OSB, Erie, PA. Absent: Abbot Paul Mark Schwan, OCSO, Vina, CA was unable to attend due to a death in his community.

November 2011 GRANTS

These grants were assigned to AIM USA at the November meeting of the AIM International Council and will be funded by the AIM USA Secretariat.

- Benedictine Sisters in Brazil— help purchasing a car
- O’Cist Sisters in Vietnam— tuition for 10 sisters to attend theology courses
- Benedictine monks in the Ivory Coast— formation studies for young monks

AIM USA 2012 Lenten Appeal

The 2012 Lenten appeal will fund the following projects.

- Benedictine monks in India— the purchase and installation of toilets in the school
- Benedictine monks in the Congo— purchase of ovens for the kitchen
- Cistercian Sisters and monks in Latin America— support of a conference for Formation directors

MISCELLANEOUS BRIEFS

- **Mass stipends** are always needed by our mission monasteries. No amount is too small to send.
- Please consider naming AIM USA as a **beneficiary in your will or trust.**
- To see any issue of the AIM USA newsletter in full color go to our website: www.aim-usa.org

Cover Art: original nativity scene by Sr. Laura, OSB, Abadia Gaudium Mariae, Argentina

Changes to AIM USA Staff

The AIM USA Board also said a fond farewell to Sr. Marlene Bertke, OSB, who retired after 16 years as AIM’s Associate Director. Marlene has been a passionate advocate for the mission monasteries, especially those in Latin America. She created links of love around the world and ensured that the AIM USA newsletter was translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and French. Her enthusiasm and energy will now be directed to her peace and justice work with Benedictines for Peace.



Sr. Marlene

AIM USA is grateful to Marlene for her tireless commitment throughout the years.

We are happy to welcome Sr. Therese Glass, OSB, to our staff. Therese has had varied ministry experiences in elementary and adult education, including programs with migrant and refugee populations. In 2001, as part of The African Women’s Commission, she went to Tanzania; and in 2010 she visited missions in Honduras. We are sure that these ministries and travels will complement her ministry at AIM.



Sr. Therese

Meet a North American Community

St. Placid Priory, Lacey, WA

At St. Placid Priory, we seek God through the Benedictine way of prayer, work, community, and hospitality. We are located in Lacey, Washington, near the state capital of Olympia. We are fortunate to live on 60 acres of land heavily populated with Douglas fir and an abundance of backyard wildlife. Our property contains walking paths and places for prayer and meditation. Our current monastery home was completed in 1992. Our cedar buildings blend with our forest setting.

Benedictine Sisters have ministered in Washington since 1892. St. Placid Priory was founded as an independent monastery in 1952 by St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota. For many years, our Sisters served primarily as teachers not only in our own high school but also in several Catholic elementary schools in the Archdiocese of Seattle.

We now serve God's people primarily through our prayers, our retreat and adult spiritual formation ministry at the Priory Spirituality Center, Priory Store, Priory Knitters and Spinners, and our Conference Center ministry. We help members of the African Benedictine Sisters of St. Agnes in Chipole, Tanzania, East Africa, obtain their college education.

The African Benedictine Sisters of St. Agnes Convent are a monastic community of more than 360 indigenous Tanzanian women. Their convent is located in the village of Chipole, near the city of Songea, in the southwestern part of Tanzania. The Sisters directly serve the needy of Tanzania through charitable works of providing education, healthcare, and social services. St. Agnes Convent urgently needs to educate their Sisters to be able to provide these social and health services and to staff their own schools and schools in parishes throughout Tanzania.

Together we have gained a new lens with which to see the world.

The St. Agnes Sisters are resource limited; the needs in Tanzania are great. For more than twelve years, St. Placid Priory, in partnership with St. Martin's Abbey and University, has been blessed to be able to assist these sisters with educational needs.

The St. Agnes Sisters are motivated, hard working students. They are anxious to learn to serve God, their community, and God's people. Our Sisters are dedicated to assisting them. While they are with us, our Chipole Sisters fully participate in our community's life and activities.

Four Sisters have graduated from St. Martin's, all with honors. All have been members of St. Martin's University honor society, the Society of Fellows. Sister Beatrice Kapinga majored in history. She continued her studies at St. Martin's and obtained



a Master's degree in Teaching. She is now leading an English medium primary school, a school where all subjects are taught in English, in Iringa, Tanzania. Sister Redemista Ngonyani majored in religious studies. She continued her education at the Catholic University in Belgium and is completing her doctorate in theology with an emphasis in canon law at the Catholic University of East Africa in Kenya. In May 2011, Sister Anamaria Haule completed her education studies and is now leading an English medium

primary school in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Sister Redemta Ndunguru graduated with her Bachelor of Arts in Education in 2009 and continued her studies at St. Martin's. This fall she started her internship as a principal as part of her studies for a Master in School Leadership and Administration degree.

As a community, we have been blessed by this ministry with our Chipole Sisters. Together we have gained a new lens with which to see

the world. This has given us cultural enlargement and connection. Together we grow in diversity. Together we see another way that monasticism is lived out. We share life as Benedictines. We share faith. We share in learning, in love, and in friendship. And in many ways, our world seems smaller as we experience that we are all one people.



Srs. Anamaria, Therese, Maureen, Redemta and Dorothy



St. Martin University's Dr. Roy Heynderickx presents diploma to S. Anamaria.

The Benedictine Nuns of “Mater Unitatis” (St. Helen’s Benedictine Monastery, Sri Lanka)

The monastic family of Benedictine nuns of “Mater Unitatis” (Mother of Unity) had a great longing for mission from its very inception. In the 1950’s they met an advocate, Fr. Benedict Alapath, OSB, from Belgium, who promoted new monastic foundations, both of monks and nuns, in the missionary lands. He was a member of Monte-Fano, a Sylvestrine monastery in Sri Lanka at that time and was greatly interested in bringing cloistered contemplative nuns in to the Eastern countries, especially to Sri Lanka.

Fr. Alapath got to know “Mater Unitatis” in Sardinia and invited the nuns to make a foundation in Sri Lanka. By this time, the nuns had received many missionary requests from various parts of the world, but the request from Sri Lanka was the most favorable. As a result, six young and energetic Italian nuns made their missionary journey to Sri Lanka and founded there the first Eastern monastic women’s community on the 11th of April 1952.

They were warmly welcomed by the bishop of Chilaw and given a small house and land by a generous benefactor in Wennappuwa, in the northwest sea coast of Sri Lanka. As the number of the nuns gradually increased, with the help of local and foreign benefactors, they were able to make some foundations. In 1960, the community was able to start a new foundation that was given the name St. Helen’s Benedictine Monastery in gratitude to the family of most generous benefactors whose daughter’s patron saint was St. Helen. The nuns consecrated their life as a continuous praise and supplication for the Unity of the Church.



Two of the pioneer nuns died in the mission land itself and the others, after having completed their mission, returned to their homeland in Sardinia, handing the community over to the local nuns. In 1983, the abbess, Rev. Mother Maria Emmanula Manca, visited the monastery in Sri Lanka and appointed Rev. Sr. Mary Sylvester Jayakody as the prioress of the community.

In 1990, the community was able to construct a new chapel which was blessed by the bishop of Chilaw. As the local vocations increased a new foundation was made, St. William’s Benedictine Monastery at Nainamadama in the same Diocese. In 1999, this community became independent and continued to live their consecration in the local church.

The Benedictine Motto “Pray and Work” is strictly observed by the nuns. They are also faithful to singing the Divine Office, daily celebration of the Holy Eucharist and all other elements which form a part of monastic life. At times of prayer, their focus is the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Olives: “That they may be one as you are in me and I am in you” (Jn: 17: 21).

The Holy Rule specifies, “Living with one’s own hands is a sign of a true monk”. This is why they are engaged in making altar breads, sewing mass vestments and altar cloths, and providing other church goods. At present, the community has the equipment to produce 50,000 hosts of high quality each day, with three modern machines, three cutting machines and a moisture machine. In this way, the community



has become the major producer of altar breads in Sri Lanka. Making altar breads had been an income-producing venture at the beginning in Sri Lanka but with the ever increasing cost of wheat flour, electricity and imported spare parts, this venture is reduced to a mere service to the Church rather than a financial assistance to the community.

The vestments and other church goods are carefully and prayerfully made by the nuns. Candles for Easter, Advent, Confirmation, and ornaments for the children who receive first Holy Communion, are also made in a like manner. The nuns also engage in other income-producing activities, such as cultivation of vegetables and fruits in the garden.

These are the sources of income that sustain the community economically. The nuns attend to all these works in a spirit of poverty, silence, and prayer. Apart from the cloister, the monastery is also blessed with a few guest rooms for religious, priests and lay people who wish to spend time in solitude with the Lord. There are also many cases of desperate people who come in need of spiritual counseling and guidance. The nuns commend them and their intentions to the Lord in their daily prayers.

The community follows the Latin Rite and the customs of the local church. In 2007, the community launched into a new venture, namely the Benedictine Lay Oblates, both men and women. This appears to be a successful initiative of the nuns. At present, about 50 members have willingly consecrated themselves to this Benedictine way of life. They are the extended arms of the nuns who carry the Benedictine spirituality to the world. Once a week they gather for Holy Eucharist and the Divine Office, which are celebrated in the local language.

The support, spiritual, and material extended by the benefactors, both local and foreign is greatly appreciated — as is the generosity of AIM with their financial assistance, scholarships, books and other materials.

St. Helen’s Benedictine Monastery
Helenmawatha • Wennappuwa, Sri-Lanka
helencon@sltnet.lk

African Women's Commission

Sister Cathy Bauer, OSB from Covington, KY and Sister Suzanne Fitzmaurice, OSB from Atchison, KS visited Tanzania from June 20 to July 28, 2011 as part of the African Women's Commission sponsored by AIM USA. The following are some of their reflections on this experience.

This summer we were blessed to have the opportunity to spend six weeks with the African Benedictine Sisters at Our Lady Help of Christians Monastery in Ndanda, Tanzania. A joyous welcome awaited us as the sisters greeted us with the traditional African hospitality of prayer, dance, song, and food.

During our time there, we spent the first two weeks teaching classes. We talked about the Prologue to the Rule of Benedict and Chapter 4 describing the tools for good works. Our sharing brought forth much discussion about our lived experience, opening our eyes to the ways the Rule is lived in different cultures. We also shared on the role of the Psalms and *Lectio Divina* in our daily life. The sisters were very interested in learning about the Myers-Briggs personality types which helped them understand themselves better and deepened their understanding of how to work with each other in community. Some sisters were eager to learn about computers and keyboarding. We taught the classes in English and they were translated into Swahili by the community's superior. Most of the African sisters speak very little English since Swahili is the language of daily life.

After the two weeks of teaching and sharing, we spent the



Recreation and learning unite as sisters use letter tiles to form words.



Srs. Cathy (left) and Suzanne work with the Sisters at Our Lady Help of Christians Monastery shelling dried corn.

rest of the time living community life with them and visiting several mission houses. Most of these houses were a significant distance away from the monastery and required a trip of several hours on very rough roads. While the country was very dry and dusty, it was also filled with wonderful trees and flowers along the roads. There were beautiful woods and hills along with sandy flat plains and an amazing variety of butterflies. All of the mission houses had several active ministries. We were moved by their hard work in providing education and medical care for the local people. The sisters teach life skills to the women, and offer workshops to students in plumbing, masonry, carpentry, mechanics, and electricity. They grow fruits and vegetables, and raise chickens, pigs, goats and cows to provide payment for those who work at the local health clinic. Each ministry is designed to meet the specific needs of the people in each local area.

All of these experiences gave us the opportunity to spend time with a variety of Tanzanian sisters. It was wonderful to see the similarities in our lives-the prayer, the common table, the seeking God, and the quest for balance. It was also important to see the challenges these sisters face every day in regards to resources- food, water, electricity, health care, education. Here in the USA, it is so easy to take so much for granted. This visit helped us become more aware of the excess in our lives and deepened our desire to live simply. This was an amazing experience and a real gift for us.



Letters—Worth Noting...Worth Quoting

FROM MEXICO

Greetings from Torreon.

This is a note to tell you what a wonderful box of books arrived here yesterday! They were in good shape and a wonderful selection! You do a great service to our monasteries. I was asked to write a few pages for an AIM Anniversary publication on the occasion of the 50th anniversary. I asked the monasteries of Central America for input and had a great response...and besides many other things, they expressed gratitude for the boxes of books and the subscriptions.

Love from us all here at Pan de Vida,
Pat Henry, OSB

FROM KOREA

Thank you for sending English books, which are very precious for us. Among all of them I took *Poets, Prophets & Pragmatists*. It seems it gives much inspiration to me because I love to write poems. I attached one of mine as a token of appreciation.

Once again, thank you so much!

Sincerely yours,
Sr. Josepha Chong
Sujong, Korea

Violet

A vortex whirling aloft
Ripping away
Part of its edge
Softly

At any moment
Every petal
Seems to fly aloft
Toward the sky

They've likely failed,
Our dreams of soaring.
A secret door opens
In the dark purple.

FROM INDIA

I am happy to let you know that we are in receipt of the parcel you sent containing books, rosaries and a cassette of chants of praise "Te Deum." Thank you very much and please convey our heartfelt gratitude to the Benedictine and Cistercian communities as well as the lay friends who made it possible for you to send this parcel. We just glanced into the books and they are good and worth having. English is no problem for us.

Sr. Maria, OSB,
Iswar Krupa Ashram
Bhanvad, INDIA

Our 16-minute DVD on the works of AIM, especially the USA secretariat, is available at no cost, to groups and individuals. If interested, please call, write or email us.



FROM ETHIOPIA

Thank you now very much. We got all the books and all are very suitable.

This year we are blessed because we have 6 novices and 22 seminarians. Those books are very nice for priests and for young candidate monks.

Our greetings pass to all sisters. We remember you in our daily prayer.

God bless you.
Fr. Kidane and Mendida Cistercian Community

FROM THE PHILIPPINES

I was so happy as I looked through the box of books you sent us. They are a great help in our reading during meals and in our library. The sisters were very excited to find new books in our library. Monastic and spirituality books are hard to obtain here in the Philippines.

Mother Waldetrudia Cartalla, OSB
Benedictine Sisters of the Eucharistic King,
Quezon City, Philippines



FROM TANZANIA

Today we had a great surprise! The receipt of your wonderful box of medicine and all has reached us in a good condition.

Thank you for such great love and thoughtfulness in helping us. Words fail to express my sincere thanks, and I have nothing to repay you. However I ask the Good God to reward you all the more. For sure I can see through you the work of God to us.

Please convey my greetings to everyone. Let us pray for each other. Gratefully yours in Christ.

Sr. M. Clothilde Sanyika, OSB

FROM MADAGASCAR

Dear Sisters,

We just received your big parcel full of very interesting and useful books: Bible, monastic spirituality, dictionaries, etc. Thanks a lot! No, the English is not too difficult and in any case, it invites us to learn a bit more. So many thanks to all of you, Sisters and donors. For Abbot Thierry Portevin, OSB,

Fr. Christopher Vuillaume, OSB

Monastery to Monastery — 2011

Eighty-eight monasteries and abbeys joined the AIM USA Monastery to Monastery program for 2011 (as of November 23). Two oblate groups also became members.

All membership donations are used to fund grants for Benedictine and Cistercian communities in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

MONASTERY	CITY	STATE
Mon. of Christ in the Desert	Abiquiu	NM
Mount St. Scholastica	Atchison	KS
St. Benedict's Abbey	Atchison	KS
Assumption Abbey	Ava	MO
Holy Cross Monastery	Beaumont	TX
Our Lady of Grace Monastery	Beech Grove	IN
Belmont Abbey	Belmont	NC
St. Benedict's Abbey	Benet Lake	WI
Abbey of Regina Laudis	Bethlehem	CT
New Camoldoli Hermitage	Big Sur	CA
Annunciation Monastery	Bismarck	ND
St. Scholastica Monastery	Boerne	TX
St. Benedict Monastery	Canyon	TX
St. Scholastica Monastery	Chicago	IL
St. Andrew Abbey	Cleveland	OH
Perpetual Adoration Cong.	Clyde	MO
St. John's Abbey	Collegeville	MN
Conception Abbey	Conception	MO
Monastery of the Holy Spirit	Conyers	GA
Monastery of St. Gertrude	Cottonwood	ID
St. Walburg Monastery	Covington	KY
Mt. St. Benedict Monastery	Crookston	MN
Our Lady of the Angels Mon	Crozet	VA
Sacred Heart Monastery	Cullman	AL
Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey	Dubuque	IA
St. Scholastica Monastery	Duluth	MN
Transfiguration Monastery	Emmaus	PA
Mount St. Benedict Monastery	Erie	PA
Mon. Immaculate Conception	Ferdinand	IN
St. Lucy's Priory	Glendora	CA
St. Emma Monastery	Greensburg	PA
Glastonbury Abbey	Hingham	MA
Abbey of the Holy Trinity	Huntsville	UT
Holy Angels Convent	Jonesboro	AR
St. Martin's Abbey	Lacey	WA
St. Martin's Abbey Oblates	Lacey	WA
Our Lady of Guadalupe Abbey	Lafayette	OR
St. Vincent Archabbey	Latrobe	PA
Sacred Heart Monastery	Lisle	IL
St. Procopius Abbey	Lisle	IL
Sisters of St. Benedict Priory	Littleton	CO
Emmanuel Monastery	Lutherville	MD
Holy Wisdom Monastery	Madison	WI
St. Anselm Abbey	Manchester	NH
Dwelling Place Monastery	Martin	KY
Blue Cloud Abbey	Marvin	SD
Westminster Abbey	Mission	BC
Mepkin Abbey	Moncks Corner	SC

St. Mary's Abbey	Morristown	NJ
Queen of Angels Monastery	Mount Angel	OR
St. Peter's Abbey	Muenster	SK
House of Bread Monastery	Nanaimo	BC
St. Paul's Abbey	Newton	NJ
Immaculata Monastery	Norfolk	NE
Prince of Peace Abbey	Oceanside	CA
New Melleray Abbey	Peosta	IA
St. Bede Abbey	Peru	IL
Abbey of Genesee	Piffard	NY
Mount Saviour Monastery	Pine City	NY
St. Benedict Monastery	Pittsburgh	PA
Woodside Priory	Portola Valley	CA
Abbey of St. Gregory the Great	Portsmouth	RI
St. Martin Monastery	Rapid City	SD
Sacred Heart Monastery	Richardton	ND
Mary Mother of the Church Abbey	Richmond	VA
Monastery of the Good Shepherd	Rio Grande City	TX
St. Mary Monastery	Rock Island	IL
St. Mary Monastery Oblates	Rock Island	IL



Saint Joseph Abbey	Saint Benedict	LA
Holy Name Monastery	Saint Leo	FL
St. Louis Abbey	Saint Louis	MO
St. Paul's Monastery	Saint Paul	MN
St. Gregory's Abbey	Shawnee	OK
Benedictine Monastery	Sonoita	AZ
Santa Rita Abbey	Sonoita	AZ
St. Joseph's Abbey	Spencer	MA
Mount Angel Abbey	St. Benedict	OR
Holy Trinity Monastery	St. David	AZ
St. Benedict's Monastery	St. Joseph	MN
Saint Meinrad Archabbey	St. Meinrad	IN
New Subiaco Abbey	Subiaco	AR
Abbey of Gethsemani	Trappist	KY
St. Joseph Monastery	Tulsa	OK
St. Andrew's Abbey	Valyermo	CA
Our Lady of New Clairvaux Abbey	Vina	CA
Queen of Heaven Monastery	Warren	OH
Mother of God Monastery	Watertown	SD
Weston Priory	Weston	VT
Redwoods Monastery	Whitethorn	CA
Mt. St. Mary's Abbey	Wrentham	MA

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Benedict saw the entire world in a single ray of light. (Dialogues)

Every year the AIM International Council holds its annual meeting at a different monastery in Europe. This November it was held at the Abbey of Ligugé in France and commemorated the 50th anniversary of the founding of AIM. As director of the AIM USA Secretariat, one of my more pleasant responsibilities is to attend these international meetings. They provide wonderful opportunities to connect with monastics around the world.

Whenever I travel to Europe, the change in time zone is much more than a few hours for me. I feel transported back in time to another world; the history, the culture, the variety of languages. At first, this can be a bit disorienting, yet it is always full of richness and blessing. This trip did not disappoint—the centuries-old buildings (the first abbey of Ligugé was built in 361), the sounds of Gregorian chant filling the chapel at daily prayer, the symphony of languages heard at this gathering of Benedictine scholars from around the world—all combined to remind me that *we are each just a small part of the greater global family.*

This celebration of AIM's golden anniversary was filled with gratitude for the accomplishments of the past. For 50 years, AIM has worked to bring growth and development to monastic communities worldwide, providing financial and educational resources to those most in need. New foundations have flourished bringing the total number of monasteries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America to 450.

In his remarks during the Council meeting, Abbot Primate Notker Wolf, OSB, noted that AIM started as a simple idea and has evolved into the biggest trans-monastic meeting

in the Catholic Church bringing together three Benedictine families (Cistercians, Trappists, Benedictines). This model of international collaboration has much to offer our world today. The Church and world face multiple challenges—economic, environmental, political, and spiritual—as we move into the future. New visions and structures must continue to emerge. We can be confident that our rich monastic tradition, 15 centuries old grounded in the Rule of Benedict, will lead us in the right path.

I left this meeting proud of the great heritage of Benedictinism and full of hope for the new things God will do through AIM in the next 50 years.

Thank you for your support of AIM through the years.

Blessings and prayers,

Stephanie Schmidt, OSB

Stephanie Schmidt, OSB
Executive Director, AIM USA
director@aim-usa.org

P.S. For more information about this AIM celebration and to view the movie produced for this anniversary go to www.aimintl.org and under “SPECIAL NEWS,” click on nouvelles videos.