



Spirit of Sisters inspires Ursuline Associate meetings

By Dan Heckel, OSUA

The earliest Ursuline Associate gatherings were days of reflection at Maple Mount, led by Sister Fran Wilhelm. As the program expanded, and the number of Associates who lived a distance from the Mount grew, Associate groups formed in various communities where Ursulines served, and those Sisters joined in their gatherings.

With fewer Sisters serving away from the Mount, the number who can gather with Associates is growing smaller. Sister Angela Fitzpatrick moved to Maple Mount in January from her lifelong home in



Pictured from left are Mike Sullivan, Sister Sharon, Doreen Abbott, Sid Mason, Elaine Wood, John Wood, and Rosann Whiting.

The Western Kentucky Associates welcomed Sister Sharon Sullivan, Doreen Abbott and Dan Heckel to their Nov. 21, 2025, meeting at Associate Sid Mason's home in Mayfield. The group planned their December trip to see the Sisters in Saint Joseph Villa, went over a Formation Session, and shared stories of their many interactions with the Sisters.

Kansas, leaving the Associate group there to carry on without any Sisters.

"It has been important for the Sisters to join with Associates because that is how we are able to learn from our role models and the way of Saint Angela," said Joanne Thompson, the leader of the Kansas group. "It is with the Sisters in shared faith discussion that I learned to see things from a different perspective – a way of peace, hospitality, ministry, kindness and love. I had an idea of Jesus. With the Sisters, I came to know Jesus and how Jesus would respond."

Some of Joanne's favorite memories with the Sisters are weekend retreats at the Paola Motherhouse, and attending the Ursuline Convocation in St. Louis, where she was able to meet Ursulines from

Canada to Mexico.

"We have to carry on with the stories, the contributions, and ... to be of one mind and heart united with each other as Saint Angela asked – and then be ready for big surprises," Joanne said. "As we bring our own gifts to the table after learning to extend the charism of Saint Angela, we are able to carry on the legacy of the Ursuline Sisters.

"I won't forget what I learned at the St. Louis convocation: the charism is not in the connection with each other, it is in the spaces between our reach, moving forward and connecting us to each other in a larger way," Joanne said. "Since I am connected to all the Ursuline Sisters around the world, and all the Ursuline Associates, and I belong to something bigger than myself, time and distance aren't really there."

Sister Angela was able to join the Kansas Associates via Zoom in January. Kansas Associate Renee Schultz called this new way to connect a "gift to be given."



Associate Tina Wolken, above left, smiles as she gets some soup at the Owensboro Associate meeting on Nov. 18, 2025. The group met at Brescia University in order to invite Brescia staff. Seated at left is Sister Betsy Moyer.



"Back to the future"



When I was a little girl in 3rd grade back in 1972, we were asked to write what we thought it would be like in the year 2000. I must have watched too much "Lost in Space" or "Star Trek," because I remember thinking there would be electric flying cars, moving sidewalks, and people flying around with

power packs. I also remember thinking I would never be alive at that time because it was so far into the future, no one could live that long.

Much to my surprise, I'm still here and it is now 2026. Wow, was I wrong about still being alive, but I was pretty accurate about the moving sidewalks and the power packs that allowed people to fly in the sky. I was accurate about electric cars, which we do have. None fly yet, but I am sure that day will come.

As we can see, everything is changing around us, even the number of Associate groups we have with the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph. I know a lot of the change is due to the lack of Ursuline Sisters' presence, but I am grateful to see that there are still groups that meet on a regular basis. I want to thank all the Associates for keeping the charism of Angela Merici alive in whatever you do, whether it be helping at church, a soup kitchen, a nursing home, or just helping someone out in a grocery store. Remember, you are doing this as an Associate and in the name of Angela Merici.

If there is someone that you feel would be a good example of an Associate, please give them my information: 270-229-2006 or doreen.abbott@maplemount.org. There may be someone you never thought of who would be interested in becoming an Associate. If we never ask, we will never know. God Bless you all!

Doreen Abbott, OSUA, Coordinator of Ursuline Partnerships

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ASSOCIATE PURPOSE STATEMENT

We, the Associates of the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph, proclaim the Gospel of Jesus through the actions of our everyday lives. We commit ourselves to living the charism of Saint Angela Merici in union with and in support of the Ursuline community of Mount Saint Joseph.

What if Angela were here today?

Dear Friends,

In this *UPDATE* we are exploring the many ways our Associates experience and express the charism of Saint Angela Merici and the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph.

Sometimes, I find myself imagining Saint Angela in our time and place, picturing her in Owensboro, Ky. Do you ever wonder how Saint Angela might have found ways to express and experience her faith and sense of mission in the world today?

What, today, would have resonated with her inner



call, her guiding light? Saint Angela was an inspiration, a "madre," for so many different populations. She brought her light to widows in need of spiritual consolation, to men (and women) of all ages in positions of authority desiring arbitration and clear direction, to all who needed counsel, to those who simply craved a listening ear, to

those in the Church in desperate need of challenge and guidance, and to countless young and old craving the gift of faith-filled hope.

So how might Saint Angela's mosaic of service in God's love express itself today? I imagine the myriad ways Saint Angela might engage and lead, living her charism of faithfully calling herself and others to model God's love. Perhaps she might be a social worker or a teacher, or someone involved in parish council and volunteer work through the Church, or a team member in agencies with similar missions of faith and service.

Would Angela be that marvelous person in so many neighborhoods whose house is always open to those in need, with aromas and fragrances of baking and nutritious meals to share? Whose garden always has just that extra amount of produce that someone else needs? Whose backyard is the passageway for all the neighborhood youngsters hoping for a kind word or an after-school hug?

In short, might Saint Angela live and serve just as so many of our Associates and Sisters do? As we follow the charism of Saint Angela, we are each Angela in the world today. Bless you for all the ways – large and small – you also share God's love.

Blessings,

Sister Sharon Sullivan, OSU

Congregational Leader, Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph



MEETINGS

from front

“I am so happy to see everyone’s faces,” she said. “Saint Angela told us to move with the (signs) of the times.”

Sister Angela said she recognizes some of Saint Angela Merici’s message in the Associates. “Saint Angela said she would be with us until the end of time. I hope the Associates will be the ones to see the signs of the times and make a difference in the world,” Sister Angela said. “With or without the presence of Sisters, I hope they will support one another to use their gifts, to be of service to others and to draw others to Christ. In the words of Saint Angela, ‘Without doubt, Jesus Christ will be in your midst, and as a true and good master, he will enlighten and teach you what you have to do.’”

The Western Kentucky Associates have fond memories of the many Sisters who have served in their area, but they have continued to gather despite not having a Sister nearby in four years. Associate Sid Mason advises Associates to utilize their own strengths and the examples they’ve seen from the Sisters.

“You tend to fall back on the Sisters when they are there,” Sid said. “(Without the Sisters) you have to use your own resources, your own skills. Situations change along the way. All of the examples that you experienced should stay with you.”

Every year in December the



The Louisville Associates met on Dec. 18, 2025. Seated: Sue Scott and Marilyn Beam. Standing, left to right: Suzanne Reiss, Charlotte Paez, Debbie Walker, Linda Perri and Ursuline Sister Nancy Liddy.

Western Kentucky Associates gather at the Mount, bringing Christmas cheer and Saint Nicholas treats to the Sisters in Saint Joseph Villa.

“Our group has been raised well in their faith,” Sid said. “The Sisters are still in our minds – the kindnesses they shared, the examples that they showed.”

The Louisville Associate group has had many Sisters involved throughout the years, but with only three Sisters living in Louisville now, interactions have grown less frequent. Sister Nancy Liddy moved to Louisville in 2024 and began gathering with the Associates.

“Sister Nancy is enthusiastic, she has ideas,” said Suzanne Reiss, leader of the Louisville group. The group doesn’t await direction from a Sister, Suzanne said. They utilize the formation sessions provided by the Ursuline Partnerships office,

and have recently shared “*All About Love, Reflections over the decades with Saint Angela Merici*,” writings from the late Louisville Ursuline Sister Martha Buser.

“We all have a love for, a respect for, and a history with the Sisters,” Suzanne said. “That all plays into our meetings. They are still a part of our lives. Even though they are not at a meeting, there is still a connection.”

Owensboro has the most Sister participation, and that means a lot to Tina Wolken.

“It makes me feel valued as an Associate that the Sisters would take their time to join our prayer group,” Tina said. “I’m humbled that they will join us for a meal, prayer and discussion. The perspective the Sisters bring to discussions is faith-filled and Angela-based. Their whole life is dedicated to being an Ursuline and having Saint Angela as their foundress. It’s a blessing as a life example and a faith example.”

For those who aren’t as blessed to have Sisters nearby, Tina urged them to stay in contact through Ursuline publications and formation sessions, which are developed in conjunction with Sisters on the Associate Advisory Board.

“If you want to be with the Sisters, **attend Associates and Sisters Day on June 27**,” Tina said.

Sister Michele Morek began gathering with Owensboro Associates in 2025 after returning to the Mount from Kansas. She brought Sister Angela along in January.

“Associates are like the original members of the Company – living their lives ‘out there’ but attracted to Angela’s spirituality,” Sister Michele said. “They also help me realize the spiritual treasure we have in Angela and in our Ursuline way of life, and I am grateful for that.” ■

The Kansas Associates met at the Ursuline Sisters of Paola cemetery on May 31, 2025, to pray the Seven Directions Prayer and to remember deceased Sisters. The prayer encompasses north, south, east, west, up, down, and within, as a way to connect with all of creation. Pictured, front from left: Sister Angela Fitzpatrick, Mary Ann Stewart, and Jean Vanderheiden; Back: Renee Schultz, Nanette Foley, and Joanne Thompson.



What one associate can do: Rosann Whiting's life intertwined with Ursulines

By Dan Heckel, OSUA

Ursuline Associate Rosann Whiting did not attend a Catholic school until she began at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. Since then, she and Catholic education have been intertwined, in part influenced by the Ursuline Sisters.

Rosann and her late husband Bob moved to Paducah, Ky., in 1979 from Omaha, when Bob started Home Medical Equipment. She had worked in public schools in San Antonio and Omaha but decided to stay home to raise their son when they moved to Paducah.

In the early 1990s she was asked to serve on the St. Mary Education Committee in Paducah. At the time, St. Mary High School included middle school age students as well.

"Parents of the middle school students approached SMEC and asked for the creation of a middle school so that the two schools would be separate," she said. "Pam Matlock and I were asked to design a plan that might work. St. Mary Middle School began, and I was chosen to become the head."

She remained in that position until 1997 when she was asked to assume the duties of St. Mary High School principal. Additionally, she remained principal of both schools until June 2007.

"When I was asked to be on SMEC, I had the great privilege of working with Sister Amelia Stenger, who was the superintendent of the Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Owensboro," Rosann said. "She was such a positive role model and one that I felt could guide SMEC in our decision-making. Once I became the head of the middle school, she was the person who was always willing to answer questions, lend a helping hand ... or just support my efforts through her presence. She is another mentor who taught me the charism of the Ursulines."

Two more Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph who influenced her were Sister Mary Celine Weidenbenner, who taught social studies at the middle school, and the late Sister Mary Jude Cecil, who taught French in the high school.

"Each of them demonstrated the charism of 'community' and sought to create an environment



Rosann Whiting and her husband David Leis, with one of the poinsettias they brought the Sisters for St. Nicholas Day on Dec. 6, 2025.

of camaraderie where the faculty members worked together for the good of the students as well as the school," Rosann said. "They each were peace-filled women. Their classrooms were environments where student expectations were spelled out carefully so that everyone understood how to perform."

"Sister Mary Jude encouraged me to be welcoming, to listen carefully when people spoke, and to be a courageous leader," Rosann said. "Sister Mary Celine taught 6th-grade students. She was always filled with happiness and with love. She became my spiritual guide, and it was during

those conversations that we learned more about one another. Sister Mary Celine is one who places service to and for others above her own needs. Her compassion and love for others was always demonstrated throughout the day at SMMS. It was Sister Mary Celine who encouraged me to become an Ursuline Associate. Each of these women possessed deep faith."

Rosann and her husband Bob both became Associates in 1994. Bob Whiting died in 2013. Rosann's understanding of the Ursuline charism has evolved over her 32 years as an Associate.

"I can only pray that I learned from the women who were role models to me," she said. "It is my hope that I was able to assimilate their positive spirit, their capabilities of building community, and their dedication to service. I know that I grew professionally through each of my experiences."

In 2007, Rosann was selected as the first lay president of Ursuline Academy in Dedham, Mass. She spent 11 years leading the school in the Boston suburbs before moving back to her adopted home of Paducah in 2018. In 2016, she married David Leis.

"I honestly believe that I deepened my understanding of Ursuline charism through my association with the Ursuline Sisters in Dedham who made up the North-Eastern Province of the Roman Union Ursuline Sisters," Rosann said. "I was able to visit the motherhouse in Rome where I met the Mother General."

Rosann had served on the board of the Ursuline Education Network, which was created in 1990 to foster collaboration among Ursuline-sponsored schools in North America.

Continued on page 5

Shortly after moving back to Paducah with a plan to retire, she was approached to become the executive director of UEN, which she agreed to only if she could work from Paducah. She led UEN until September 2023.

“I had the benefit of working with many Ursuline Sisters who worked in the various Ursuline schools throughout the U.S.,” Rosann said. “I was able to travel to board meetings, see other schools, and meet additional sisters who were on the staff or in the convent in many of the schools. ... Sister Pam Mueller served with me on the board for many years and we became good friends.”

Rosann continues to stay busy these days in Paducah. She assists with advancement efforts at St. Mary Schools and chairs the Finance Committee at St. Thomas More Church. She is also a member of the Rosary Garden Keepers at St. Thomas More. Together, she and David have grown children and grandchildren from Colorado to the East Coast.

Rosann now gathers with the one of the longest-serving groups of Associates in Western Kentucky.

“Our group is small, but the love that these folks feel is reflected in their gratitude for the Sisters and their love for them,” Rosann said. “Their memorable stories about the Sisters are incredible.”■

Associates fulfill a social need



A recent poll by the American Psychological Association (APA) titled “Stress in America” found that loneliness and emotional disconnection is a defining feature in American life. More than 6 in 10 Americans reported feeling this way, and

this is especially true for people under the age of 44.

In a Harris survey of 3,000 adults, 69 percent reported needing more emotional support. Loneliness can lead to mental and physical health issues. Social support is the strongest predictor of people’s well-being. Arthur Evans, CEO of APA said, “Reaching out, showing up, building community are not optional, they are essential.”

When I read this, I thought about the Associate groups and the important role they play not only for their members but also for the lives they touch through their service to others. There is always so much energy and love in the room on Associates and Sisters Day. I see the hugs and the smiles and the genuine care for one another and I feel uplifted just by being there.

While Associate groups may change in numbers or members over the years, their purpose and benefit are still important. We live in an age where people feel that making a difference or connecting with people is based on your Facebook likes or going viral with something posted on the Internet. It is the small stuff – a phone call, a visit, a card, or inviting someone for a cup of coffee – that can make a big difference in a person’s life.

In Michelle Obama’s book “The Light We Carry” she says:

“Each of us carries a bit of inner brightness, unique and individual, a flame that is worth protecting. When we are able to recognize our own light, we become empowered to use it. One light feeds another. One strong family lends strength to more. One engaged community can ignite those around it. This is the light we carry.”

This is what Associates do.

Carol Braden-Clarke

Director of Development, Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph



Associate and seminarian Wes Wheatley played trumpet in the Motherhouse Chapel as Sisters Alicia Coomes, left, and Amelia Stenger led the Sisters in singing along on Dec. 29, 2025. Photo by Sister Nancy Murphy.

Be sure to get your 2026-2027 Quilt Club tickets. The first drawing is April 2. For \$25, you get 12 chances to win a quilt! Buy tickets online: ursulinesmsj.org/quilt-club

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WE EXTEND DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO:

- Brenda Semar, whose mother Patricia Young died Nov. 2.
- John and Elaine Wood, whose sister/sister-in-law Ruth Wood died Nov. 6.
- Sam and Doreen Abbott, whose aunt Selina Doriski died Nov. 16.
- Sister George Mary Hagan, whose nephew Patrick Hagan died Nov. 16.
- Sister Amelia Stenger, whose sister Genevieve Stenger Siebert died Nov. 19.
- Sister Angela Fitzpatrick, whose brother-in-law Stan Bechtold died Dec. 6.
- Mary Costello A'65, whose niece Barbara Dully died Dec. 12.
- Sister Mary Ellen Backes, whose brother Norman John Backes died Dec. 12.



IN LOVING MEMORY...



SISTER PAUL MARIE GREENWELL, 90, died Jan. 3 at Mount Saint Joseph, in her 73rd year of religious life. A native of New Haven, Ky., she always enjoyed interacting with others, and sharing her gifts with those she met, including her deep spirituality. She was a teacher in Kentucky and Missouri for 31 years. She was secretary at the Mount Saint Joseph Conference and Retreat Center (1986-89) and served in parish ministry at two Daviess County churches for 16 years. At the Motherhouse, she offered transportation to the Sisters and served as an assistant to the archivist. Survivors include the members of her religious community; two sisters, Sister Margaret Marie Greenwell, OSU, of Maple Mount, and Janice Newton of Bardstown, Ky.; nieces and nephews. *Donations in memory of Sister Paul Marie may be made to the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph, 8001 Cummings Road, Maple Mount, KY 42356.*



RUTH M. METSCHULEIT, 87, of Venice, Fla., died April 28, 2025. She formerly lived in Cadiz, Ky., where she was a longtime active member at St. Stephen Parish. Ruth said she always felt closer to Jesus and Mary because she was born on Christmas day. She became an Ursuline Associate in 2002, with Sister Amelia Stenger as her contact sister. Ruth began coming to Maple Mount in the mid-1980s and always revered the grounds as a holy place. She volunteered at Maple Mount making quilt tops for the Quilt Club.



REV. PHIL HOY, 88, of Evansville, Ind., died Sept. 4, 2025. He became an Associate in 1986, with the late Sister Marita Greenwell as his contact sister. He was an ordained minister for 67 years, 63 of them

in the United Church of Christ, and spent his life on the frontlines of the struggle for peace and justice. His daughter nicknamed him "a rebel without a pause." His family will remember him as a loving husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. The congregations of the seven churches he served will remember him as a caring pastor and friend who challenged them to live their beliefs. The community at large will remember him as a tireless advocate for the common good. His accomplishments and honors are too numerous to mention here. He met the Ursuline Sisters in 1969, when Brescia College in Owensboro hired him to teach a male companion course to the Contemporary Woman program, founded by Sister Francesca Hazel. Hoy later co-taught "Woman and Man: Their Relationships" with his friend Sister Francesca. When Sister Francesca died in 1987, Hoy returned to

deliver her homily. He is survived by his wife, Sandra; daughters Rene' (Bill) Riegle and Sherri (Tom) Haas; son Matthew (Kim Williams) Hoy; stepchildren Wendy Bredhold and Ben Knipe; 16 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren.



DAVID ALLEN GRANT, 77, of Clarkson, Ky., died Sept. 6, 2025. He became an Associate in 1985, with the late Sister Elaine Byrne as his contact sister. David was a U.S. Army Veteran, a member of the American Legion, St. Elizabeth Catholic Church and the Knights of Columbus. He was an avid storyteller and an encyclopedia of jokes. He loved walking around town or to the ballpark and talking to anyone who would listen. David is survived by his daughter, Julie Cox; a son, Eric Grant (Monica); and five granddaughters.



CAROLYN DOWDY, 90, of Paducah, Ky., died Oct. 30, 2025. She became an Associate in 1999, with the late Sister Agnes Irene Bickett as her contact sister. Carolyn was an embodiment of compassion, dedication, and patriotic pride throughout her remarkable life. She was a nurse for five decades, retiring in 2012. Her work was not just a profession but a calling, as she often volunteered to work on holidays, ensuring her colleagues could spend cherished time with their families. Deeply rooted in her Christian faith, Carolyn was a pillar of the St. John Catholic Church community. Her spiritual journey was enriched by regular retreats at Mount Saint Joseph, a testament to her devotion to nurturing her inner life and that of others. Carolyn is survived by four grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, and her pug and best friend, Duke.



SHIRLEY ANN KURZ HAGMAN, 92, of Owensboro, died Nov. 18, 2025. She was one of our earliest Associates, joining in 1984 with the late Sister Rose Marita O'Bryan as her contact sister. Shirley graduated from Owensboro Business College. She worked at General Electric in Owensboro and the Hancock County Soil Conservation office and Immaculate Conception Church in Hawesville. Shirley was well known for her "Pepsodent" smile, twinkling eyes and ready laugh. She loved being in the Hancock County Homemakers, Immaculate Conception Altar Society and various book clubs. Shirley is survived by her husband of 65 years, Dan; her children, Elizabeth Hagman, Harold (Sherry) Hagman, Rachael Hagman and Janice Sexton Hagman (widow of son John Hagman); nine grandchildren and three great grandchildren; sisters Elizabeth Kamuf, Rose (Joseph) Rousoff, Mary Julia Kurz, and sister-in-law Mary Ann Kurz. ANDREW "ANDY" CHAVEZ, 90, longtime resident of Edgewood, Ky. and



Florence, Ky., died Nov. 24, 2025. He became an Associate in 1985, with Sister Ruth Gehres as his contact sister. Andy was a man of intense passion for those who are the "least of our brothers and sisters." He believed fervently in helping those most in need and dedicated his professional career to that end. Andy was a longtime social worker for the state of Kentucky, working with broken and troubled families. After reading the book, "Seven Story Mountain," by Thomas Merton, Andy was determined to follow in Merton's footsteps. In 1952 he traveled to Kentucky to join Thomas Merton's monastery – the Abbey of Gethsemani. While living the monastic life he was asked to transfer to a Gethsemani daughter house in Chile until 1972. Thereafter he left the monastic life and pursued his MSW degree. A friend in Chile suggested that he call an acquaintance, Helen Thomas, the former Ursuline Sister Annette, and the rest is history. He and Helen were married for 40 years until her death in 2014. Andy is survived by his daughter, Emily Ramon (Jonathan), his granddaughter Lauryn Raymer, and his siblings Tom Chavez, Leo Chavez (Eloisa), Ben Chavez (Leone), Pat Chavez, Lucille Chavez, Inez Catbagan, and Genifer Chavez (Steve Harrington).



MARVIN G. GIITTINGER, 90, of Nebraska City, Neb., died Dec. 6, 2025. He became an Associate in 1994, with Sister Mary McDermott as his contact sister.

Marvin attended school in Nebraska City, where the Ursulines taught. One day while skating at the local rink, he met his future wife, Murilla Dovel, who is also an Associate. Marvin was a bricklayer and then went on to work as a milkman for Meadow Gold. He later delivered meat for Rhoden Meat Co. and loaded trucks for All American Freight in Omaha. He began driving a semi-truck for Nebraska Iowa Express (NIX) and started M&M Trucking that he continued until 2018 when his health forced him to retire at the age of 84. He also owned and operated a food truck with his twin brother Mel, and his wife Murilla had a business called the Sweet Shop in downtown Nebraska City. He served in the Nebraska Army National Guard for six years. Marvin was a longtime member of St. Mary's Catholic Church; Knights of Columbus; Legion of Mary, and Knights of the Holy Sepulcher. He delivered communion to homebound parishioners. He is survived by Murilla; children Dan Giittinger (Rickie), Jerry Giittinger (Katrina), John Giittinger, Diane Rainbolt (John), and Amy Cullum (Bryan); son-in-law Clark Lowe; 32 grandchildren, 54 great-grandchildren and 11 great-great-grandchildren.



JANET MARIE MATYK, 91, of Longmont, Colo., died Dec. 10, 2025. Janet formerly lived in Indianapolis, Ind., which made visiting the Mount easier. She

was invited to become an Associate by the late Sister George Marie Wathen. She became an Associate in 1987, with the late Sister Clarence Marie Luckett as her contact sister. Janet volunteered to make craft items for the Mount Saint Joseph Picnic, but when she moved to Colorado at the turn of the century, her contribution became praying for the Sisters, whom she never forgot.



MARGARET ANN "PEGGY" TASAKA, 78, of Indio, Calif., died Dec. 21, 2025.

She became an Associate in 1987, with the late Sister Elizabeth Ann Ray as her contact sister. Peggy devoted her heart to teaching children and to supporting fellow teachers and new educators finding their way. She believed deeply in learning as a lifelong journey and reminded everyone around her to find joy and purpose. In her classrooms, music was part of everyday life – her guitar and recorder brought beauty, calmness, and happiness to otherwise ordinary moments. She gave so much of herself to every school and family she worked with, always believing that education is strongest when it includes the whole community. She is survived by her husband of 55 years Edward (Butch) Tasaka; daughters, Elisa Hall and Angela Tasaka; five grandchildren and one great grandchild; and siblings Dora Rose Chavez, David Gerald Chavez, Gloria Chavez, Eileen Chavez, Marty Kay Hutton, and Dennis Chavez.



RITA ANN (KINCAID) BANHART WILKUS, 93, died Jan. 23 in Kansas City, Mo.

Rita made her commitment as an Associate of Paola, Kan., in 2008, with the late Sister Raymond Dieckman as her contact sister. Rita attended Ursuline Junior College in Paola, and entered the Ursuline community as Sister Mary Ralph. She taught in Kansas Catholic elementary schools and was principal at Holy Name School in Kansas City, Kan., before leaving the convent in 1966. Rita earned a master's in education and administration at St. Mary College in Leavenworth, Kan. She taught at two schools in Kansas City, Kan., at St. Peter's Catholic School in Brookside, and was the librarian at Border Star Public School in Brookside. Rita married Donald J. Banhart in 1967. They raised three children and were foster parents to five other children. Don died in 1982 from brain cancer. Rita was a widow for five years before marrying James D. Wilkus in 1987. They lived in Roeland Park, Kan., for 34 years before moving to Kansas City. Jim – who also was an Associate – died there in 2022. Rita was a volunteer at Villa of St. Francis in Olathe, Kan., and St. Agnes clerical offices. She served at St. Agnes Church. Rita is survived by her children Staci Banhart, David J. Banhart, and Paul (Laura) Wilkus; sister Delores (Richard) Schoneburger; brothers David and Joseph (Linda) Kincaid; six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.



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Join us for a Lent 2026 Program

Deepening Our Prayer Life: Advice from the Four Saint Teresas

All are invited to join **Ursuline Sister Cheryl Clemons, Ph.D.**, for a Day of Prayer and Reflection during Lent. She will offer insights on prayer from Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), and Saint Teresa of Calcutta. The day will include quiet prayer and reflection and small group sharing. Lunch will be provided. The fee is \$60. Questions? Call Doreen: 270-229-2006

Saturday, March 28

9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

Maple Hall, Mount Saint Joseph

Learn more and sign up online:

ursulinesmsj.org/four-teresas-guide-prayer-day-led-by-sister-cheryl-clemons