



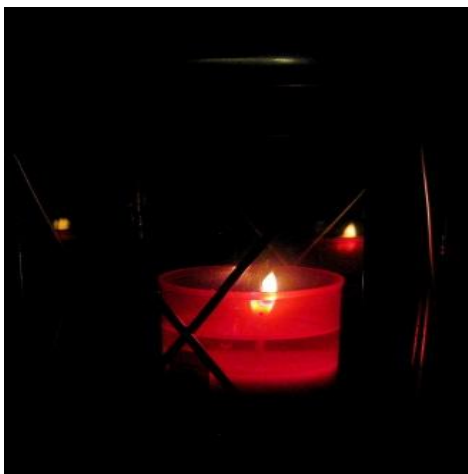
Franciscan Sisters Congregational JPIC Newsletter

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Germany: “Christmas In a Shoe Box”

By Sr. Alexandra Völzke

The "Christmas in a shoe box" project is becoming more and more popular. Children and families pack Christmas presents in a shoe box and decorate them colorfully for children and elderly people in Romania—two truckloads of presents for poor people in Caransebes! With great joy, Sr. M. Hiltrud and all the Sisters welcomed the colorful packages from different schools, kindergartens and parishes in Germany. “We say: THANK YOU! from the bottom of our hearts! This big teddy bear was also a donation for our kindergarten in Caransebes. The children will be very happy!”



“The Light of Peace from Bethlehem”

Every year during Advent a light is lit in the Grotto of the Nativity of Jesus in Bethlehem, which, protected by lanterns, is brought by scouts via Vienna to 25 European countries, including Dortmund and Berlin in Germany. In a central service, the children and young people pray for peace in Israel,



Palestine and all over the world. Afterwards, the scouts carry the Bethlehem Light from Dortmund to Paderborn, where it is again solemnly welcomed with a prayer service and then distributed to parishes and families. Since I came from a seminar, I was lucky to be on the train from Dortmund with the Boy Scouts to guard the light with guitar singing and good humor. At Salzkotten station (2 stations before Paderborn) families and fellow sisters were already standing with lanterns to receive the light of peace. Thus, the light of Bethlehem burned from the 3rd Sunday of Advent throughout the whole Christmas season at our crib in the Motherhouse Church. It reminded us to pray for peace and made us feel a connection with the country of Jesus' birth and with the whole world.

Visits during Advent Season

We, Sr. M. Alexa and myself, have visited the Liborius School in Paderborn twice, which primarily supports children with physical disabilities. A teacher born in Salzkotten had invited us to enrich her classes on St. Francis. What joy the children had while playing and deepening the Canticle of the Sun! Truly a gift for all involved. Sr. M. Căcilia and other religious and other volunteers always provide food for the homeless and poor people in Paderborn during the Advent season. This time 150 people came, including many women who were expecting a festive meal. The room could hardly accommodate the people and yet everyone enjoyed not only the food but also the friendliness and fellowship. Sr. M. Carola has been visiting a prisoner regularly for a long time. Now before Christmas there was a contemplative hour of encounter and community to which the prisoners were invited and in which Sr. M. Carola took part - It is important to us to show people who are in difficult life situations that they are not alone with their suffering.

Romania: Christmas Joy Knows No Limit!

By S. Lydia Fecheta

If one takes and gives to another, and the other also keeps and gives to the next, then the sky will open!!!



When I read this sentence, it was for me the best way to describe the "action in a shoe box," which has become a custom over the last few years. Together with groups of children, parents and many other people from Germany, shoe boxes filled with gifts were sent with love to bring joy to the children in Romania. Many hands helped in searching for things which could be the best for a present. Signed with an image or writing for a girl or boy, from 0 until 18 years old, the presents first came to our house. Also, this year,

hundreds of presents came in from our Motherhouse in Salzkotten to Caransebes. These hundreds of packages left Germany and traveled more than 1500 km to come to Caransebes, to make many, many children happy at getting a present. Colorful and beautifully wrapped gifts were also filled with much love.



In a short time, we thought about which are the children who will be happy to get a present. Of course, all the children are happy, but we thought about some kindergarten children in our town, on other children around Caransebes in need, or contact persons who helped us to share the presents. “How many children are there?” we asked. Soon 40, 50, 60 boxes were on the way. With a great “Wow!” the faces of children shined during the opening of presents. Children squealed with delight as adults and parents looked on with wonder, gratitude and joy.



Through the opened presents, the opened hearts of children spread joy and happiness. The parents around them brought their thanks and we, the sisters, brought our gratitude to all those who organized this wonderful action in Germany—the sisters in Motherhouse, the parents, the teachers in kindergarten and parishes. Through this loving project, our hearts were opened and the sky opened.

May the Lord reward all those who took part of this action and who keep the joy of opened sky!

Netherlands: Christmas Season—A Time For Remembering By Mirjam Wolthuis

Help “Pay” For Jet Fuel By Planting Trees!

In mid-December we usually have our “end of year meeting” in Alverna. Our ad hoc Christmas choir (sisters, staff and volunteers) performs several songs. A winter tale is told and all staff is thanked for their work in the past year. Mirjam Wolthuis led a look back at all activities and developments in Alverna during the past year. She tickled everybody who had used an airplane last year by reminding us all of how we contributed less or more to the pollution of our environment. She suggested we all should plant trees to diminish our environmental guilt and to help lessen our carbon footprint. And so, every sister was given a very small tree (3 months) to nourish and support during these winter months. In spring they will be planted in the gardens around the motherhouse. A card which was added to the little

trees in a tube of glass contained a quote from environmentalist Greta Thunberg: nobody is too small to make a difference. The little book of Greta Thunberg with this title was given to the sisters too.



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hospitalization of the leader of the Dutch Socialist Movement (NSB), and therefore the representative of the Nazi-regime in the Netherlands, Anton Mussert in the Mariastichting, our hospital in Haarlem. In the next JPIC-newsletter we will report the rest of this history, since the meeting has not taken place yet.

75 Years Freedom

In 2020 the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands and of the end of World War II will be memorated. Via a niece of Sr Auxiline, the Dutch Region was asked to join a big meeting in which a selection of photos and stories will be presented. Sr Auxiline and Sr José will participate on behalf of our region. They are also invited to present some personal and congregational memories about war time, e.g. the

Brazil: Christmas Season In Brazil

By Sr. Raimunda Barbosa



The sisters in their various Pastoral services organized a Christmas Novena with children, young people and families. In the photo, Sr. Mary of the Cross is reflecting about the arrival of the Baby Jesus with the children accompanied by Pastoral of Children. On this occasion, they received toys and school supplies.

Presence With Missionary Youth

In October, Sr. Livania, Sr. Leonisia, Sr. Raimunda, and the novice Cassia Emily spent a weekend with the youth of the Parish of Trairão. The sisters stayed at the families' houses and at the meeting with three hundred young people they reflected about Vocation, Spirituality and the Protagonism of Youth in society. The parish has the presence of Missionary priests of the Divine Word, who always seek partnership with the sisters in pastoral service.





Welcome To New Members of the Alliance

In December we had the joy of officially welcoming the presence of two teachers as lay members of the Alliance. Marieli and Vanessa always are present with the sisters in several pastoral works and school activities.



Time To Say Goodbye!



After a year of missionary experience in Brazil, Sr. Livania and Sr. Aleonisia returned to Indonesia. The Brazilian sisters were very grateful for their presence being a support in the communities and various pastoral services. We hope that the exchange experience continues in the congregation. The sisters received sleeping hammocks and prayer books in Portuguese as gifts.



Malawi: Special Visitor Experiences Malawi Christmas!

By Sr. Raynelda Saragih and Sr. Johanna Harke



From November 10 to January 11, S Johanna visited Malawi. During her stay, she shared her skills as a physician by conducting a first aid course for the teachers in the kindergarten and the primary school. This was held in English. In the photos S Johanna is demonstrating some practical treatments to staff members. A second course was offered for the staff from the kitchen, the guard staff, and all others who work with our sisters. This course was translated by a teacher into Chichewa.





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with a crib and a Christmas tree made from "plastic. It looked very real. We decorated our rooms with stars, bowls and electrical candles around the Christmas trees. In the parish church there was a wonderful decoration in front of the altar. It looked like a whole village. The celebration during Christmas Eve in the church was from 6:00 to nearly 9:00 PM with much singing, dancing and praying.

The offertory was incredible. All the offerings were things from daily life, like juice, flour, vegetables, chickens (which were still alive), a goat and much more. Offerings also included money and, at the end, bread and wine. The strangest thing for S Johanna was celebrating Christmas and sweating. She said that she always connects Christmas with cold weather but in Malawi it was so hot. It is funny how we are fixed to our experiences from our childhood.



The celebration with all the faithful in the church and later in the sisters' house was very wonderful. We prepared the house during December 24. In the evening we had the celebration in the parish church and afterwards we had a festive meal and a celebration in our house together with the MAZ Volunteers from Germany and a friend, a Carmelite priest. The next morning, we went again to the parish church. The Eucharist started at 8:00 AM and we were back in our house at 11:00 AM following the

preparation for lunch. The afternoon we took a rest and met again in the evening for the vespers and the evening meal.

Indonesia: From Discarded Trash to Christmas Beauty

By Sr. Verena

JPIC Socialization and Brief Training of Christmas Ornaments from Trash



Socialization activities and brief training were carried out in class by Sr. Verena on November 28, 2019, targeting the children of Assisi High School (SMA) Assisi Jl. Asahan Pematang Siantar, which was attended by delegates from each class. On this occasion Sr. Verena explained about the situation of the earth that is getting hotter and damaged because of human activity itself. This socialization is also an invitation and awareness to young people to become a sustainable generation,

aware that waste is one of the global problems that needs sustainable handling to save the earth from the destruction of nature. Several videos shown about the danger of garbage and the risk of littering are one of the most touching ways of raising awareness for trainees. As far as my observations to date, awareness of the dangers of garbage is still very important and takes a long time. Then, with socialization finished, Sr. Verena gave a tutorial on making Christmas ornaments from waste materials as part of taking part in protecting the earth from garbage pollution. This becomes a small movement and invites young people as students to start caring for the environment and the earth as a shared home. After this training and socialization, Sr. Miranda, as their teacher, challenged the students to make a Christmas tree from waste materials for each class. She would evaluate the results of each class's collaboration and award the champion winners with a prize.

Movement with Community as Christmas Ornaments Act of Used Goods



In this movement, the KPK team urged all communities in Indonesia to make Christmas ornaments from used items as an act of our concern for the earth we love. So, on December 18, 2019 each community had begun to think about what they had to do. Most of the communities in Indonesia responded to it well. There is enthusiasm to carry out this movement. This is evident from some of the documentation sent by the communities as proof that they care and take part in the JPIC program. It is also encouraging that the Jecima FCJM Foundation as a Health Foundation also participates in making programs for each clinic as a competition. The JPIC Team is very appreciative that there are other groups besides the JPIC team who are able to carry out this movement. We feel that the KPK team has succeeded in mobilizing other parties to take part in continuing the JPIC program. Most use Aqua bottles and Aqua glasses, some use used medicine bottles, car tires, old newspapers, dry leaves and many other things.



USA: Celebrating Christmas Joy

By Jeanne Connolly, Covenant Companion and S Beatrice Hernandez



joy-filled.

More than 280 people filled Our Lady of the Angels chapel on Christmas Eve to celebrate Mass with the Wheaton Franciscans. As in recent years, the liturgy began with a procession to fill the nativity scene that would grace the chapel throughout the Christmas season. From young children to our eldest Sister, each piece was brought in with love, and placed with care, in the stable. The choir provided beautiful music and the faith community joined in joyful song. Smiles, hugs, and wishes for a “Merry Christmas” filled the space as people left the chapel. “Joy to the World” ... yes indeed, it was





This year, through the generosity of the many people who come to worship with us on Sunday morning, we again had a giving tree decorated with tags with the names and gift wishes of people who might otherwise not be remembered on Christmas. The gifts were collected throughout advent and delivered the week before Christmas to residents of Bethany House of Hospitality, a home for young women and children immigrants and refugees, and to residents of Canticle Place, an apartment building providing housing to those disabled by HIV/AIDS. The beautifully wrapped packages brought a smile to the faces of both donors and recipients!

Melanie Turner and Melanie Teska, 2 Wheaton Franciscan Associates, prepare to deliver Christmas presents from the giving tree.

2020 World Peace Day Interfaith Service

On Sunday, January 7, 2020, nearly 400 people gathered at North Central College in Naperville for the 15th Annual DuPage County World Peace Day Interfaith Prayer Service. As in past years, the Wheaton Franciscans were one of the sponsors of this event.

The theme for this years' service was "2020 Vision: Seeking a World Where Everyone Belongs. "

The program celebrated various faith traditions with prayers or songs from representatives of Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Latter Day Saints, Christian Science, Baha'i and Sikh communities. The keynote speaker was Regina Brent, founder and president of the nonprofit Unity Partnership. Her remarks provided a sad reminder that the vision of an all-inclusive society is still far from reality.



At the conclusion of the program the audience joined in a communal affirmation of commitment to compassion by chanting "everyone belongs" in response to a series of affirmations based on the U.N. General Assembly's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, delivered in a range of languages including Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese, Hindi,

Punjab, and English.

A reception followed the event with an opportunity to visit information tables from the various sponsoring organizations. Jeanne Connolly, Director of Charism and Mission, represented the Wheaton Franciscans at their information table.
