



Bethany Ministries

January 2018 – The Story of 2017

Prayer ~ Proclamation ~ Hospitality

Dear Friends,

This song has been resonating with us ever since we heard it sung by a group named “Brother Sun” in the Middleburgh Library:

♪ *Love is the water that wears down the rock,*
Love is the water that wears down the rock.
Love is the power that won't be stopped;
Love is the water that wears down the rock. ♪

You can hear it on YouTube by putting in the first line.

Spirituality & Prayer

The rhythm of our lives includes daily personal prayer as well as weekly & monthly gatherings for prayer & faith sharing, but often our ministry consists more in the interruptions & situations that call us to **love** & to reach out than just in scheduled events.

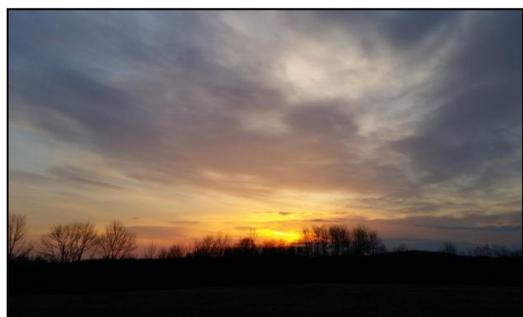
Our weekly contemplative prayer group based on the 11th step of AA continues to meet. With seasonal exceptions, we gather at **Stasia Hagan's** home. After a brief hospital stay she needed some assistance at her home. Her aide was unable to be there Mondays, so we volunteered to cover the first one. Stasia sent Peter to get coffee & *blueberry* muffins. While in Stewart's, he saw **Barbara Valosin**, a friend of Stasia's who not only became her Monday helper but has become a part of our prayer group that now meets on Monday. The Holy Spirit has strange ways of enabling the whole group to grow in **love** & concern for each other.

Our Franciscan Spirituality Group continues to thrive, with **10-14** people meeting regularly. Depending on schedules & weather we end up meeting about **6** times a year. Each session lasts **2-3** hours. Members of the group rotate hosting in Middleburgh, Schoharie or Delanson, NY. The faith sharing is always deep & transformative. The **love** & support we share between formal gatherings make it seem like we gather more often. Topics ranged from reflecting on Francis meeting the Sultan to the meaning of our Baptism in our everyday lives.

Once again, we joined a Franciscan group at Mt. Irenaeus for “Contemplative Days” in June as our annual retreat. It was not easy to keep our commitment to be there, since it followed a trip to NYC for a court appearance with our friend Terry, a Prayer House Community meeting in PA & a wedding in Northern NY. On this journey we stayed in **6** different places in **6** days. Our retreat was wonderfully rejuvenating. Following that, we had a chance to meet with **Dr. Dennis DePerro**, the new president of Saint Bonaventure University, who had been Peter's student when he taught at Timon HS in Buffalo in the **1970's**.

Ecumenical & Interfaith Sharing & Ministry

We meet with Middleburgh clergy from the Methodist, Reformed & Lutheran Churches once a month at a local diner. We preached at the Lutheran service in Feb, & during Lent did a renewal program for both the Catholic & Lutheran churches, called “Lenten R & R” [Reflection & Ritual]. We were blessed to lead the Ecumenical Easter Sunrise Service on April **16**, reflecting on Jesus' appearance to Mary of Magdala.



The clergy group planned a July Ecumenical Service on the steps of the local HS but were hampered by the absence of Pastor **Carol Coltrain**, who was in the hospital. The group was not sure who would provide the music, so we volunteered. It was a wonderful event & at the last minute, **Kim & Reggie Harris** were able to play, which added so much to the service for all attending. In Nov, we led the faith sharing at the yearly Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service at the United Methodist Church.

Finally, in Dec, we were again invited to tell stories, lead carols & use our collection of puppets in the village library for “**Miracle on Main St.**,”-the yearly Middleburgh celebration of Christmas. We think of that event as part of our “**ministry of presence**” & an opportunity for “**street preaching**” by telling Christmas stories & singing carols that proclaim the Gospel.



We still meet **4** times a year with the Prayer House Community, Dingmans Ferry, PA. Peter continues to serve as president & Anna as secretary. So we could continue our ministry as a hermitage but be free to evolve as a community we decided to sell the property & building to some friends of the Prayer House & to rent it from them.

With the support of the **Kateri Ministry** that we manage, our friend, **Terry Reid** has been able to begin a full time job with the Fortune Society, & has moved into his own apartment in the Bronx.

Preaching Ministry at Home & on the Road

In the course of the year, we visited **14** different parishes/ colleges/chapels. We did a **5**-day Parish Mission at Sacred Heart, Stamford, NY, during the **2nd** week of Advent. We were also invited to do **1**-day retreats for the Kateri Institute in June; for a group of Catholic nurses in Aug; & for the Vicariate we are part of [**13** parishes] in Sept. It has been a blessing to regularly collaborate with **Fr. Matt Wetsel** [**Pastor -Our Lady of the Valley, Middleburgh**] & **Lynn O'Rourke** [**Parish Life Director** [**Our Lady of Fatima, Delanson, NY**]] to help at both parishes with regular ministry-including funerals; visiting the sick; & blessing animals & especially during vacations, & Christmas, Holy Week & Easter.

We also covered **St. Thomas the Apostle**, in Cherry Valley **6** times after their Sacramental Minister died, working with **Karen Walker** [**Parish Life Director**], & their **2** wonderful deacons, **Richard Brown** & **Randy Velez**. Our weekend ministry has expanded to do Sun evening Masses at **2** colleges, **SUNY Oneonta** & **SUNY Albany**, several times a semester. Peter has also been invited to cover St. Francis Chapel at Wolf Rd, staffed by the Friars at Siena, as well as preaching & presiding at the Alumni Mass while he attended the **50th** anniversary of his graduation from Siena.

In July, **four** of Peter's classmates, **Vinny Flynn, Fred Pierson, Lou Ferreira & Howie Needham**, came to Middleburgh for their own reunion. Since Peter no longer has a guest room, his classmates stayed with **Jerry Werner**, a member of our Franciscan Spirituality Group. Along with their extended families & other classmates, they had met for a "*clambake*" each year for over **30** years after their graduation. The informal meeting last summer was a time of celebration, caring & renewed friendship, but it also became a time of healing & sharing of faith.

Love Is Stronger than Death

Marriage is a celebration of the **love** that makes it possible to endure even the pain of loss. We had the joy of being part of **3** weddings in **2017**. In June we travelled to Essex, NY to play & sing a blessing at the wedding of **Lyn Barrett & Ron Bussian**, attended by others from the Prayer House Community. In July, we helped celebrate a "**2** day wedding" for **Lori Roy & Hank Currey**. They wanted a Catholic wedding, but also wanted to have an outdoor ceremony. Peter presided at a Mass on Fri at the Middleburgh parish church with the wedding party & immediate family where they exchanged their vows & signed the marriage license. The next day, on a hillside overlooking the Catskills, they completed the celebration with processions & blessings & the exchange of rings, as they confirmed their commitment & celebrated with a larger group of friends & family. A brass quintet accompanied both celebrations.

In Sept, we drove to Burnsville, NC, to be part of the wedding of Peter's niece, **Margaret Casey** to **Jackie Sprinkle**. The local Baptist Pastor of Jackie's family officially witnessed the vows & signed the marriage license. Peter sang the Scriptures & preached the homily. We did a special blessing to the melody of Sabbath Prayer, accompanied on the violin by Peter's brother, **Stanley**, who also played prelude music before the ceremony with his wife, **Swana**. On the way there, in VA, we saw **Natural Bridge**, which is a wonderful visual of how— "**Love is the water that wears down the rock**".



Our **love** for members of the web of relationships which is **Bethany Ministries** called us out of our regular routine & schedule to be part of **14** funerals or burials in **2017**. In Jan, we participated in the funeral of **Tom Wargo**, a member of Our Lady of the Valley. In Feb, Peter's aunt, **Delfina Craft**, moved peacefully from Wappingers Falls to be reunited with her husband & parents at the heavenly banquet. Feb. found us involved in **4** more funerals in **2** weeks.

The first was for Deacon **Tom Luby**. A few days later, we celebrated the funeral of **Mike Saccento** while Fr. Matt, was away. Both Mike & his wife **Cathy** are part of our Franciscan Spirituality group & also of the weekly Contemplative Prayer Group. The day after that, we celebrated a funeral for **Butch Trendell**, whose family we knew for many years, especially his brother, **Bill**. We had participated in the funerals of both of his parents & his son. Another Friar, **Mike Tyson**, covered his burial for us the next day.

In May we were a part of **4** more deaths. Two of them were burial services. On May **27** we travelled to Morris, NY for the memorial service of **Robert Joy**, the husband of our good friend, **Maureen Joy**, who pastors Sacred Heart Parish there. A few days later we again stayed with the Wappingers Falls Poor Clares as we accompanied Peter's uncle, **Rudy Campilli** & his family for the Funeral of **Minnie Dul**, his ex-wife. In Nov, we did a Funeral in Roscoe, NY for **Mary Piccione**, a long-time friend & a Minister of Prayer for Bethany Ministries. We stayed with her children, & did a home Mass for them before leaving.

In Dec, we were called to walk with our friend, **David Nidey**, a member of our **11th** step contemplative prayer group for many years. His partner of **44** yrs, **Ezekiel Sunrise**, was hospitalized for congestive heart failure. Within a week, we celebrated the Sacraments of Anointing, Penance & Viaticum [the last communion before dying] with him. He died the following Sun, while we were doing a parish mission. We celebrated a memorial Mass for him with David at our next prayer meeting a week later. The last funeral of the year was a most intense experience of the pain & joy of **love**. As we were about to leave for the Advent Mission, Peter received a call from his cousin, **Bob Donahue**, informing us that his son, Paul, had died by suicide. The funeral was scheduled the following Fri so we could be there. Bob is the son of Peter's godmother, **Isabelle Donahue**. We celebrated the Funeral in a full church – at St Mary's in Hudson, NY.

IFM & OFM Connections

Anna continues to meet with her "Mission Group" & to travel to Scranton for community meetings. This Summer, she preached for the **IHM Sicuani [Peru] Mission** in **2** Syracuse Diocesan parishes – Mexico & Pulaski [pronounced **Pulask-eye**]. Peter's Emmaus Fraternity has evolved into a faith-sharing group of **6** or **7** Friars who live in diverse situations & meet every **2** or **3** months, usually at **Chris Keenan's** residence at Mt. St Vincent in the Bronx. Peter attended his provincial chapter in June, reflecting with his brothers about the merger of the US provinces. He also visits his Franciscan brothers at Siena whenever he is able.

Health & Recreation

Both of us enjoy good health, even as the pace of our scheduled ministry has slowed. While at his chapter, Peter contracted Lyme disease, but it was caught early & responded to treatment. Recently he had minor surgery on his right wrist to relieve the pain of tendonitis. Anna had a procedure requiring anesthesia & was referred to a sleep study because of possible sleep apnea.

Al & Bonnie Haberle, the couple we stayed with when we went to Lyn & Ron's wedding offered us a place for vacation in Westport, NY, on Lake Champlain, where we spent a week in Sept. The beauty of creation, the music at the Lake George Jazz Festival & visits with old & new friends blessed us with light & love. We had the joy of praying with **Ed Cornell** while on vacation & were in awe of the beauty he brings to life at **Crooked Brook Studios**. Peter continues to sing with the Depot Lane Singers, & often experiences both rehearsals & concerts as a revelation of God's beauty & **love**.



God's Providential Care

We are full of gratitude for your generous support & your prayers. It was the donations we received that got us through this year & all the previous years of Bethany Ministries. God has even provided our means of transportation over & over through the generous gift of a car just when we needed it. We are sure our present car will be able to meet our travel needs for the next six months & we trust that God will continue to take care of us through your generosity.

We are working to reduce our expenses yet most costs continue to rise. Since your donations account for **over** half of our income we will continue to depend on your support in the coming year.

Thank you for the **love** you have shown us over the years & for your participation in our 'Ministry of Presence & Prayer' by the **love** you share with your own families & communities. In spite of difficult circumstances & political turmoil, **love** remains & is always the living "*water that wears down the rock.*"

May the Lord, whose very name is **LOVE**, continue to bless you, heal your wounds & guide your every step.

Fr. Peter & Sr. Anna

Our [schedule](#) is on our **website** / newsletters [most with pictures] & many homilies/talks are on the '**Resources Page**'

You can find all of our [contact information](#) below.

THE FRANCISCAN MINISTRY OF THE WORD AT BETHANY MINISTRIES
is how **Friar Peter Chepaitis, OFM** & **Sister Anna Tantsits, IHM** earn their living.

BETHANY MINISTRIES ✘ **P.O. Box 432** ✘ **MIDDLEBURGH, NY 12122-0432**

✘ **Phone** (518)827-4699 ✘ **E-Mail** bethmin@midtel.net ✘ **Website** www.bethmin.org ✘

✘ **Facebook** Franciscan Ministry of the Word at Bethany Ministries ✘

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