

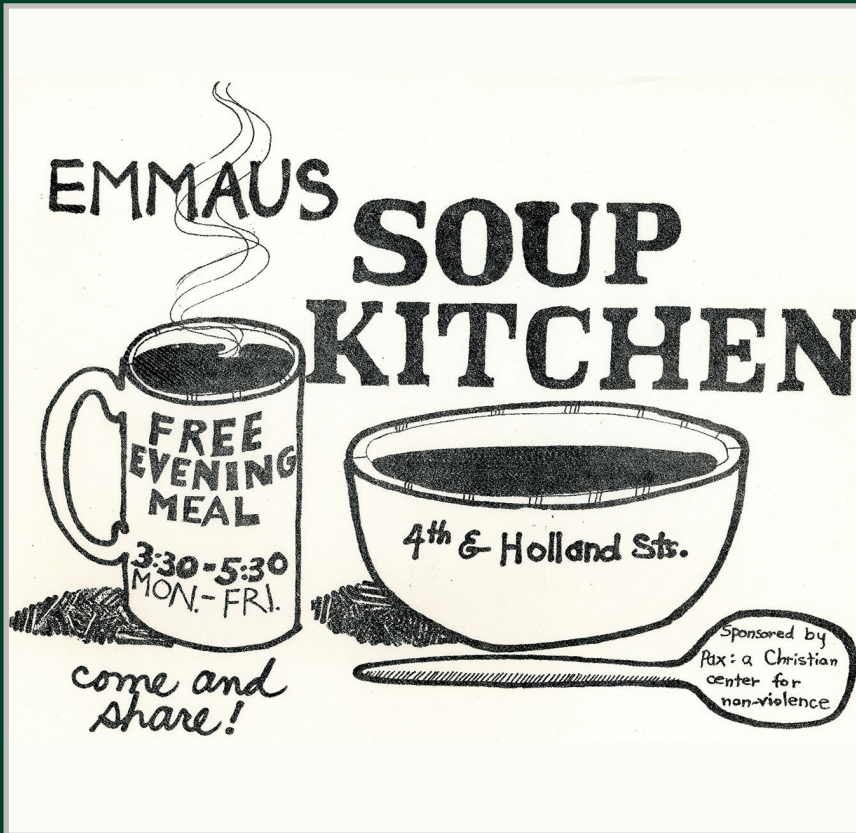


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The Companion

www.emmauserie.org

MARKING 50 YEARS OF PRESENCE



A Soup Kitchen Leaflet from 1974

From Sister Val ...

Dear Friends,

In 2021, I made my final profession as a Benedictine Sister of Erie, a public promise to live as a member of this community for the rest of my life. Profession comes after years of training and discernment, and as I studied the history and meaning of each of the three monastic vows—stability, obedience, and conversion of life—stability sounded like the hardest of the three.

Stability means that we Benedictine sisters commit ourselves to one another, to our particular monastery, and to our particular area, for the long haul. The other sisters and the people and places around us, are ours for life—however tempting another group or place might be.

I worried that it might quickly get claustrophobic and limiting. But, as I have lived as a Benedictine, I've found stability to be a great blessing. I know who I can count on at the end of the day; I know the rituals and traditions essential to my sisters' shared life; I know I have a safe and loving place to plant myself and grow.

It seems to me, as Emmaus marks 50 years in the Erie community, that Benedictine stability has been an underlying grace in each and every moment of our ministry to the hungry of the city. Our soup kitchen may have moved locations over 50 years, yes, but our guests who come for dinner know that—no matter what—we will be there Monday through Friday from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. with warm meals and open hearts. That is a promise our staff, our volunteers, and our supporters commit themselves to as members of the Emmaus community.

Over the course of this year, *The Companion* will look back on the history of Emmaus, highlight the work of this present moment, and share our vision for the future. I hope you will enjoy taking a trip down memory lane in this issue as we look at how a desire to feed those who came knocking on our Benedictine doors in the 1970s evolved into the soup kitchen, food pantry, Kids Cafe, and Emmaus Grove we offer to the community today.

What a privilege it is to be the Director of Emmaus during this commemorative year. While I was yet to be born in 1974 when the soup kitchen began, the stability of those who came before me has provided a beautiful place to plant my own heart.



Sister Valerie Luckey, Director, (left) with volunteer Colleen Hammon before dinner at Emmaus Soup Kitchen on January 9, marking 50 years since the first meal was served in January 1974

In peace,
Sister Val

LOOKING BACK

...WITH SISTER CAROLYN

Three women who were part of Emmaus 50 years ago, in its earliest days share reflections with three current staff members.

Sister Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski served as the first director of Emmaus Soup Kitchen from 1974-1981. She shared memories with Amy VanScoter, Community Development and Communications Coordinator, about the dedicated work that created a solid foundation for Emmaus.



When Sister Carolyn began spreading the good word of the new ministry to the Erie community in the mid-70s, she used to visit local churches and talk about what the Pax Center was doing to feed the hungry at Immaculate Conception Church, the first location of Emmaus Soup Kitchen. The Pax Center was the Erie Benedictine's Christian community for nonviolence, an intentional community that engaged in peace education and action for nuclear disarmament and other social issues—and became the birthplace of Emmaus Ministries.

“We did a lot of public relations on our feet in the beginning, beating the pavement and spreading the word. We went to a lot of churches talking about the soup kitchen, and we made leaflets with a mimeograph machine. The word started to spread and soon schools

started having canned food drives. When families would have weddings, reunions, picnics, graduation parties, or big gatherings, they would bring us the leftovers,” she said.

Many local businesses helped, too. “Artie Schultz used to donate all of the paper products,” Sister Carolyn remembers. “Napkins, bowls, plates—all free. And we would get bread from Majestic Bakery and pizza shops once they heard what we were doing.”

She says that it was also necessary to spread the word with guests that Emmaus was a safe space. “In those early days, it was all about getting some sustenance in people’s bellies and establishing a safe space. We weren’t going to allow any violence.” The emphasis on beauty came later, when volunteers Herm and Helen Klauk began putting flowers on the tables. “It began a big change in the environment and the attitudes of the people,” she said.

Reflecting on 50 years, she says we need to work harder on changing policies that contribute to keeping people poor so there doesn’t need to be a soup kitchen. “The basic injustice of ‘the rich get richer’ and ‘the poor get poorer’ has felt so much worse since COVID. There’s always been poverty but not like today. There is a lot of heartache in the country and in the world. I’d like to have a celebration when we can close the soup kitchen.”

Top: Sister Carolyn serves soup in 1974.

Bottom: Sister Carolyn (right) joins Sister Marcia Sigler serving dinner at the soup kitchen 50 years later.



LOOKING BACK

...WITH LENORA

Sister Jacqueline Sanchez-Small, Staff Writer, spoke with Lenora Lewis, one of Emmaus’ first volunteers, about the impact of the soup kitchen’s guests in her life. Lenora later became a member of the first Board of Directors for Emmaus Ministries.



The first time Lenora Lewis met Sister Mary Miller, then the director of Emmaus, Sister Mary casually said, “I’ve got my calendar here. Can I put you down to volunteer at the kitchen on Friday?” Lenora would go on to volunteer at Emmaus every Friday evening for the next 24 years.

“At that point, most of the guests we had were homeless men, really untethered, and I was a little afraid of them at first,” she reflected. “I was even

afraid of Larry; he was a big burly bearded guy and he lived under a bridge, and I thought, ‘I’ve never met anyone like that.’ But then I learned that he was one of the most gentle souls in the world. He was kind and personable and relatable, nothing like I had imagined him to be.”

A spirit of mutuality infused her relationships with the guests, like Chuck, who brought her a flower every week. “We never knew where he got them. But he wanted me to feel appreciated,” Lenora said.

“Another young man who used to come to the kitchen was very bright, very thoughtful, and he had nothing but what he could carry with him in a little bag, and he wore all the clothes he had, layered on top of each other. I told him I worried about him, and he said, ‘I worry about you, too—it must be hard to take care of a home and a family and a career.’ That really shocked me, that he would be concerned about me, or see my life and problems as challenging!”

Her time at Emmaus transformed her ideas about poverty and justice. “Being at the soup kitchen helped me to grow up. It taught me great humility and showed me that it’s only luck that makes someone homeless and someone else have enough.” Lenora and countless volunteers like her have built Emmaus into the sanctuary of compassion and solidarity that it has been for 50 years.

Top: Lenora Lewis with one of the first Emmaus guests. Bottom: Lenora at a memorial cookout for Sister Mary Miller in summer 2023.



LOOKING BACK

...WITH SISTER DIANNE

As a member of the PAX Center, Sister Dianne Sabol helped to serve the soup kitchen's first meal. Liz Allen, Staff Writer, talked to Sister Dianne about her experience in a fledgling ministry.

When Sister Dianne Sabol began volunteering at Emmaus Soup Kitchen in 1974, the meals were bare-bones. "We'd serve the guests homemade soup, peanut butter sandwiches, and a cup of coffee. The guys were so hungry—after all, it was January in Erie—they would take plastic bread bags full of soup with them when they left."

In those early days, the soup kitchen bubbled with the idealism and determination of people who saw a need and answered it. At age 20, Sister Dianne wasn't yet a member of the Erie Benedictines, but was motivated to change the world by her brother who was involved in peace and justice issues, by the Benedictines who educated her, and by friends she met at potluck dinners. Because of these influences, she joined as an original member of the Pax Center.

Influenced by Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day—20th century American Catholic peace and justice leaders—the PAX community strived to live out their Catholic faith and put the Gospel into action. Agreeing that they had to do more than parcel out food to the hungry people who knocked on their door, they decided to open a soup kitchen.

Fifty years later, volunteering at Emmaus for a dinner marking the special year was emotional and rewarding, Sister Dianne said. From her post in the serving line, she witnessed the Emmaus community being sustained by dedicated volunteers and staff, and supported by generous donors so that guests are welcomed with hospitality and treated with dignity.

In its half-century of existence, Emmaus has moved several times, including a site at the corner of 4th and Holland streets, before finding its current home on East 11th Street. Throughout all those changes, the spirit of community among guests, volunteers, and staff has remained as durable and visible as it was when a handful of guests came to the first meal at Immaculate Conception Church, at East 16th and Division streets.

"People are hurting and we have to take care of each other," she said. Seeing Emmaus still going strong "makes my heart glad."

Top: Sister Dianne, serving at the 4th and Holland site
Bottom: Sister Dianne poses with the photo 50 years after the moment was captured!



In Our Own Words

...Marking 50 Years

"It occurred to me that 'anniversary' was not the right word for what we are marking this year. An anniversary is the celebration of a significant milestone...and the fact that after 50 years we still have hungry people in Erie is certainly not something we want to celebrate. So, we are marking 50 years of generosity on the part of volunteers and benefactors who remain committed to easing the pain of hunger. Maybe in another 50 years we'll find the political and economic will to dismantle the systems that create and sustain hunger. Now that would be a milestone to celebrate!"

-Linda Romey, OSB; Board Member

"Above all, we want our guests at Emmaus to feel that they are part of a community that loves and supports them. In this special year, we are creating more moments of joy and surprise in each of our individual ministries, with raffles and giveaways and special meals. Your generosity—your undeniable relationship with our guests—makes it possible for us to offer these extra experiences of connection and care. Emmaus marking 50 years of outreach is a true testimony to the goodness of the people who are faithful to our ministry."

-Valerie Luckey, OSB; Director



50th Year Planning Committee Members

(Front, L-R) Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, OSB, Staff; Valerie Luckey, OSB, Director; Darlene Feeney, Volunteer; (Back, L-R) Rita Scrimenti, Staff; Emily Ingram, Volunteer; Catherine Simon, Staff; Mary Hoffman, Board Member; Linda Romey, OSB, Board Member. Not pictured: Pam Eckberg, Volunteer; Margaret Kloecker, Staff; Lenora Lewis, Former Board Member; Amy VanScoter, Staff; Kitty Welton, Volunteer

COMING THIS FALL!



Urban Garden Bike Tour

"The Erie community has an amazing network of community gardens and local food businesses serving its citizens while working to provide a sustainable and healthier alternative in food items. Nowhere is this more evident than at Emmaus Grove. To commemorate the 50th year serving the hungry in Erie, we are hosting a bike ride in the Erie area to many other gardens and businesses. Join us to experience these gardens, better understand how all are interconnected and have an enjoyable, informative bike ride."

-Kathy Dahlkemper, Board Member

For the Record:

A Feast at 50 for Emmaus Soup Kitchen

“How thrilled we are to be here tonight!” Sister Valerie Luckey, Emmaus Director, exclaimed to staff and volunteers as they gathered before serving a special meal on January 9, marking 50 years since the first dinner was served at Emmaus Soup Kitchen on that date in 1974.



(L-R): Margaret Kloecker, Sister Dianne Sabol, Sister Lucia Surmik, Sister Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, Sister Marcia Sigler, Sister Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski

Three of the women who served that meal in 1974 returned: Sister Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski, the first director of the soup kitchen; Sister Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, a current staff member; and Sister Dianne Sabol. Sister Lucia Surmik who worked on staff for more than three decades; Sister Marcia Sigler, a longtime volunteer, and Margaret Kloecker, staff member, joined them, treating guests to a festive meal. Soup Kitchen Cook, Carly DiFuccia, prepared pot roast, homemade mashed potatoes, a vegetable soup made from scratch, and some of the serving team contributed freshly baked bread. Dessert was ice cream sundaes.

Flowers and gingham tablecloths on the tables created an atmosphere reminiscent of soup kitchen in the 1970s, and as the meal ended, the smiles of joy and gratitude beamed across faces of volunteers and guests alike. But no one could have predicted the rainbow that appeared over the soup kitchen as dinner came to a close after a gray and snowy day in Erie.

For the Record:

A Feast at 50 for Emmaus Soup Kitchen



Clockwise from top left: The volunteer team scoops up ice cream to make sundaes; A guest enjoys his festive meal; Special flower pins with wooden spoons created and donated by Lares Floral Design were given to each of the servers and staff—a special reminder of what unites them, as well as an extra touch of beauty.

Emmaus Ministries Remembers

We are grateful to family members who asked that memorials be made to Emmaus in the names of their deceased loved ones:

- Geertruida “Trudy” Q. (Valentyn) DeCarolus
- Lena M. (Ferretti) DeLaura
- Adam Jacob Esper
- Marcia Kay Frisina
- James A. Guarino
- Katherine “Kay” Hosterman (Volunteer)
- John Wesley Hughes
- Elizabeth A. (Betty) Babbitt Latimer
- MaryAnn Comita Miles
- James Christopher Nutter
- Anita Evanoff Robson (Volunteer)
- Robert A. Wehrer, Ed.D



We Give Thanks

Emmaus Ministries offers its gratitude to: **The Knights of Saint George** for supporting summer field trips at the Kids Cafe... **AmeriHealth Caritas** for their annual grant to Emmaus Grove and its onsite programs... **TOPS Market** for grocery gift cards... **American Tinning and Galvanizing** for donations of bottled water... **Mary Ann and Chuck Santi** for new basketballs at the Kids Cafe... **ServErie** for their deep clean of the soup kitchen... **Denny's Ice Cream Stand** for the donation of end-of-season ice cream and novelty treats... **Saint Stephen's Nursery School** for Halloween candy... **Saint Jude School first- and second-graders** for organizing a Halloween candy drive...



Saint Luke's Girl Scouts drop off peanut butter and jelly sandwiches at the soup kitchen.

Saint Luke's eighth-graders for their day of service at Emmaus... **Yeshuwa Myers** for donating canned goods from his concert food drive... **Erie County Medical Society** for naming Emmaus with its Community Service Award and donating ticket sale proceeds... **Susan and Steve Drabant** for their supply of winter boots... **Mercy Center for Women Participants** for their help at the food pantry and soup kitchen... **Erie Times Old Newsies** for selecting Emmaus to receive proceeds from their annual drive... **Erie Day School** for bags of toiletries and food... **Sarah Glennon and her neighborhood friends** for their food drive...

Mary and Jim Dollard for proceeds from their Christmas party... **Gordon's Butcher and Market** for their donation of meat... **The Staff of MacDonald Illig Attorneys** for their Christmas drive of personal items and monetary support... **The "Tuesday Crew" and CA Curtze** for their ice cream sundae donations for the 50th year dinner... **Erie Federal Credit Union** for selecting Emmaus to receive support from its "Give Hope—Feed the Need" program... **Joe Askins and KIA Auto Express** for support through its "Loving Giving Local" program... **The Rothrock Family** for keeping Kathie's candy cane tradition alive... **Debbie and Mark Woods** for regular donations of toys and clothing for the Kids Cafe, especially at Christmastime... **Gretchen Miklonis and helpers** who worked the Kids Cafe Christmas Store, donating toys and gifts, helping wrap presents, or accompanying the children as they shopped... **Melanie Shufuran and Ralph Edes** for regular food donations... **Mabel Howard and the "HEY! Program"** for Kids Cafe coat donations... **The Sunshine Group** for its donation of Christmas buttons and bookmarks... **Sue Wick** for Kids Cafe clothing donations... **Our Lady of Peace School and Kathy Weaver** for dozens of book donations at the Kids Cafe... **Dovetail Gallery** for tickets to the Nutcracker for the Kids Cafe... **Saint Jude and Saint Luke's Parishioners** for their annual coat drive at the food pantry... We couldn't do this all without you!

Children at the Kids Cafe get ready to shop for Christmas!



STAFF: Valerie Luckey, OSB; Margaret Kloecker; Rosanne Lindal-Hynes, OSB; Rita Scrimanti; Catherine Simon; Jane Wagner; Susan Doubet, OSB; Liz Allen; Carly DiFuccia; Amy VanScoter
Companion Staff: Valerie Luckey, OSB; Jacqueline Sanchez-Small, OSB; Liz Allen; Amy VanScoter

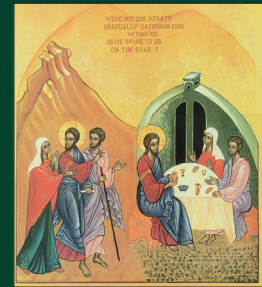
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Image provided by The Printery House of Conception Abbey



They came to know Christ in the breaking of the bread.

Luke 24:35