



Gratitude for 70 years of Invitation and Response

Dear Friends,

“You will receive this letter in the beautiful time of autumn when we look forward to Thanksgiving and experience the change of seasons that can take our breath away with its beauty. At the same time, we still experience as a global community our vulnerability to a virus, our lack of control over our lives, and the myriad of experiences and emotions that come with a pandemic. No one is left untouched, but each person’s experience is different.

At the same time, **MMM celebrates 70 years of presence in the USA.** From our beginning in 1950 on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, through our time in Winchester MA, Chicago IL, Clinchco VA, City Island NY, Brighton MA, San Ysidro CA, Somerville MA, Malden MA, the common theme has been **Invitation and Response.**

We were invited and we responded and it brought both adventure, challenge, and certainly helped our Congregation in the early days to grow and expand across the globe providing healing to many people. Now 70 years later, much has changed and the future is an adventure best understood by living fully in the present. What has not changed are the relationships built over those years. . .neighbors, collaborators, friends, family and like-minded persons like yourselves who have created a network centered around the healing of our suffering world.

That does not change and is a precious gift we celebrate this year! We invited you to partner with us and you responded. . .and the results are seen in the lives of MMM Sisters, Staff, Associates, and volunteers who minister in Ireland, USA, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, Malawi, Nigeria, Republic of Benin, Angola, Brazil and Honduras.

We celebrate the lives of **Sisters Bridget Canavan, Carol Breslin, and Bernadette Kenny** all of whom celebrate **jubilees** this year. As well, we both grieve and celebrate the life of Sister Paula Smith who died on 25 July in California in a world of pandemic which meant we could not visit and be with her.

And finally, we introduce you to *Hidden Harmony*, a lovely book of poems written by our **Sister Ekaete Ekop** which is available on Amazon Smile. I end with a quote from her poem Frontlines (for the 2020 Corona Virus Pandemic):

**The universe has indeed shifted
Frontlines erupt everywhere
In this battle the roles do differ
But we remain in one Big Unfolding.**

May the unfolding nature of God’s care for us be a comfort for you. As always, we are deeply grateful to each of you,



Sister Joanne

Sister Joanne Bierl, MMM
Development Director

Outside panel photos:
images of MMM life
from 1950

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Autumn
Newsletter
2020

MMM News



Sister Ekaete Ekop is one of our Nigerian Sisters who was trained as an ob-gyn, practiced medicine, and then was called to MMM Leadership where she continues as assistant to the Congregational Leader. She is gifted in many ways and one of them is writing with poetry being her unique gift. Recently, 20 of her poems were compiled and published in a book called *Hidden Harmony* which is available on Amazon Smile. Of the book, Ekaete writes: "All through life, I've been drawn to the places behind "stories". It is as though the place where things really happen in life is the "backstage" and that is where I like to go. Why, where, what?"

Even in my medical practice, this has been the pull, the call, the real playground. Why does this person heal and not that person? Why does this method work and not that method? The placebo effect - what is really going on here? Those scientific research results - what is the missing 'x' in the equations and formulas?

This is a collection of some of my "backstage explorations" into this beautiful mystery called life. They are waves and glimpses that I try to express as words and stanzas. It will resonate with anyone who has wondered about the mystery of life yet loves the unsolved puzzles that they meet daily."



**Now available at
Amazon Smile**

(smile.amazon.com)

Sister Paula Smith RIP

As early as four years of age, Paula dreamed of being a missionary, a nurse or doctor, a sister going to far-away places. Paula lived a full and rich life and God called her home on 25 July 2020 at 86 years of age. Like so many during this time of pandemic, Paula had to let go of having her family, friends and her cats near her and surrender her life into God's hands and live her final days in the care of the staff of Fredericka Manor Care Center in Chula Vista CA with Sonata Hospice support.

Paula was born in Charlestown MA on February 4 1934 and made her first vows on 4 April 1955 surrounded by family and friends. That October she left Boston for Ireland by ship



in Anua, Afikpo, returned to Ireland to study midwifery and then back to Obudu during the Biafran war. In 1970-72 she did post graduate studies in London and Birmingham, spent some time in Ethiopia and returned to USA to do graduate work in Boston and Chicago leading to a Master's Degree in Public health. In subsequent years with these skills and experience, Paula worked with

and began her nursing studies and was assigned to her first mission in Nigeria traveling by boat in January 1960. She worked

IRC and UNHCR in Pakistan for some years and then in New York and Boston in various nursing positions, and finally to the USA/Mexico border area in 1994 where she has lived and worked until her death.

She had wonderful friends and companions on her journey especially in the last decades in southern California and across the border in Tijuana Thank you to all whose kindness and help allowed her to stay in her home with her beloved cats. Paula had a great love for the poor, an infectious laugh, and a great sense of humor. She will be remembered affectionately for her irreverent and colorful language! May Paula, who loved life, rest in peace.

Our Jubilarians - 160 Years of Service



Sister Bridget (Bridie) Canavan celebrates 50 years as an MMM.

Sister Bridie is from Galway. She worked in the USA as a nurse's aide before joining MMM in Winchester, MA. After profession in the USA she trained as a state enrolled nurse in London and then as a nurse-midwife in Ireland.

She was assigned to Kenya in 1982 and worked there for most of the next twenty-four years as a nurse and in community-based health care, mainly in Turkana.

Bridie was then director of nursing in our nursing facility Áras Mhuire from 2006-09. She returned to Kenya in 2010 and worked at our dispensary in Mukuru, Nairobi, for four years. She returned to Ireland in early 2015 for health reasons. After convalescence she was assigned to the Motherhouse where she helps all feel welcome to our home.

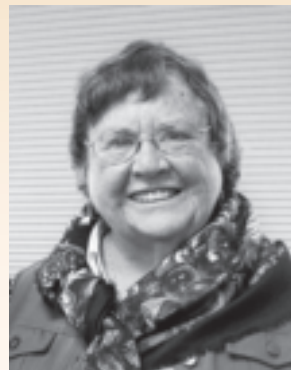
Sr. Carol Breslin was born in Rockville Centre, New York and celebrates 50 years as an MMM.

She lived in several towns in New York State and now calls Bloomington home. She joined MMM in Winchester, MA. Carol qualified in medicine in Ireland and in 1982 was assigned to Nigeria, where she worked for 12 years in a number of missions. In 1996 Carol was assigned to Ethiopia. For 14 years she was administrator of the MMM Counseling and Social Services Center in Addis Ababa, which provided HIV-related services. During that time she was also administrator of St. Mary's Laboratory and worked for 4 years as a physician at Catholic Cathedral Clinic. Carol served at various times in local MMM leadership and did mission awareness. She was assigned as director of MMM Communications in Dublin in 2011. Since 2016 she has been coordinator of MMM publications. She maintains our photo archive in Dublin and is Assistant for child safeguarding in Ireland.



Sr. Bernadette (Bernie) Kenny hails from Somerville, MA.

While attending college, she felt the call to join the Medical Missionaries of Mary and celebrates 60 years. After completing her nursing and midwifery at the then International Missionary Training Hospital in Drogheda, Ireland, she was missioned to Tanzania. Later, becoming certified in Public Health, she went to Ethiopia.



Upon the completion of further studies as a Nurse Practitioner in 1983, Sister Bernie took up her mission in Appalachia, USA. There she started the St. Mary's Health Wagon in Dickenson County, VA, which at the time had no health care facilities for its people. Sister Bernie drove the Health Wagon, a converted Winnebago motor home, throughout Dickenson County bringing health care to many who would normally not be able to access it. The winding and mountainous roads would test the skill and endurance of the best driver.

Every summer, RAM (Remote Area Medical) holds a health fair in this southwest corner of Virginia. Sister Bernie works untiringly with the other organizers to bring free health care to thousands of people. This event is staffed by hundreds of volunteers and it is Sister Bernie who organizes and prepares them to care for the people who will have traveled long distances for this opportunity to be seen by health care professionals. This service is provided free of charge.

Still she continues her ministry to the community in Appalachia and has recently written about her own experience there and how it has formed her to care for each person as a whole human being. *The Better for Being with You* combines memoir and philosophy of health care rooted in the Appalachian culture.

Congratulations, Bernie!

GRATITUDE

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