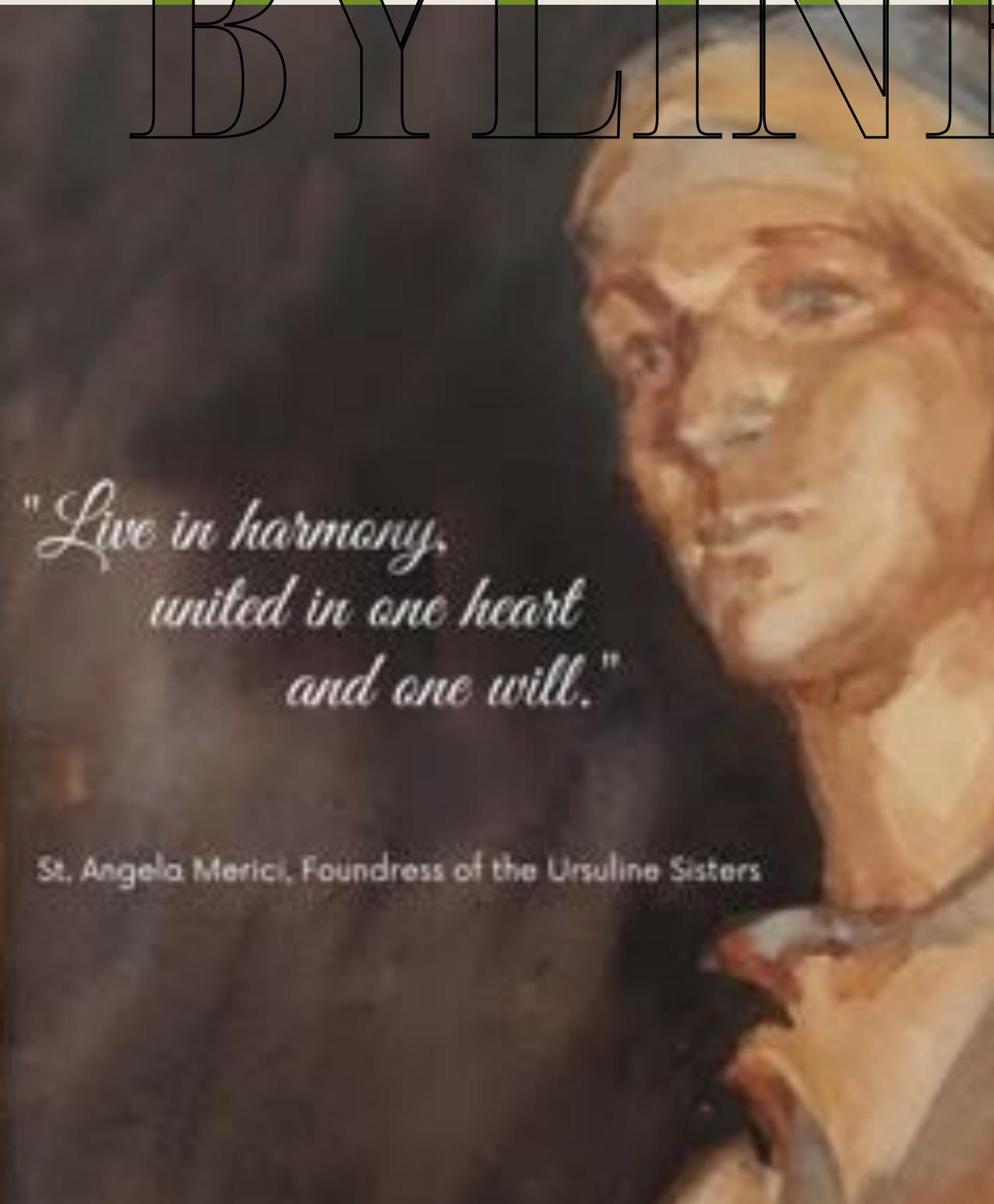


# BYLINES



*"Live in harmony,  
united in one heart  
and one will."*

St. Angela Merici, Foundress of the Ursuline Sisters

WINTER 2024

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THE URSULINE SISTERS OF THE EASTERN PROVINCE

# A Note From The Leadership Team

Dear Friends,

We are forever grateful for the kind words and generosity of our supporters, donors, colleagues, and those we have known through our ministries. It warms our hearts that so many are partners with us in our Ursuline mission.

Our foundress, Angela Merici, had a mission to develop and empower young women, and we are honored to have carried on that mission. Our Sisters continue to serve in various ways, such as volunteering to help the hungry, visiting those who are homebound, caring for the sick, advocating for justice, and taking care of our planet, our common home.

But being an Ursuline is not just about what we do at home. We are part of a global mission. There are Ursuline Sisters at the border providing comfort and support to migrants. We stand with our neighbors in Ukraine amidst war and destruction. We work in partnership with organizations to ensure sustainable land use, to fight against human trafficking, and to advocate for social justice and racial equality.

In this issue of our Bylines, you will learn more about the Ursuline Global Mission and the impact we are making internationally. You will also read about Sr. Sandy Wardell's dedicated life and ministry.

Once again, we are incredibly grateful for your ongoing love and support.

Peace & Blessings,

*Srs. Maureen Welch, OSU, Brenda Buckley, OSU and Patricia Schifini, OSU*

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## In This Issue

- In Memoriam
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- The Ursuline Global Mission
- Sister Spotlight: Sr. Sandy Wardell, OSU
- Winter Highlights

## In Memoriam

We remember the Sisters who entered into eternal life this year. Their dedication to the Ursuline mission and generosity of spirit and love deserves our appreciation. Their memory will live on forever in our hearts. May their souls rest in peace.

[Click Here](#) or visit [www.osueast.org](http://www.osueast.org) to read their obituaries and view their service.



**Sr. Mildred Hapt, OSU  
70th Year Jubilarian**



**Sr. Carole Marie Keaney, OSU  
70th Year Jubilarian**



**Sr. Marie-Celine Miranda, OSU  
70th Year Jubilarian**

# Congratulations To Our Jubilarians

Srs. Mildred Hapt, OSU, Carole Marie Keaney, OSU, Marie-Celine Miranda, OSU, and Dolores Yanshak, OSU celebrated their 70th Year Jubilee on January 16th. Srs. Mary Alice Duggan, OSU and Eileen Finnerty, OSU will celebrate their 60th Year Jubilee on March 17th and Sr. Jeannie Humphries, OSU will celebrate her 25th Year Jubilee on August 29th. The warm wishes posted on our Facebook page are a testament to the profound impact these Sisters have had on countless lives. These special occasions remind us of the importance of recognizing and appreciating those who have dedicated their lives to serving and inspiring others. Congratulations to these remarkable women.



**Sr. Dolores Yanshak, OSU  
70th Year Jubilarian**



**Sr. Mary Alice Duggan, OSU  
60th Year Jubilarian**



**Sr. Eileen Finnerty, OSU  
60th Year Jubilarian**



**Sr. Jeannie Humphries, OSU  
25th Year Jubilarian**

# The Ursuline Global Mission

The Ursuline Sisters of the Eastern Province are a group of religious women who are part of an international community. We are dedicated to following the vision and teachings of our founder, Saint Angela Merici. Our mission is centered around the love of God and others, and we strive to fulfill it through our various ministries. We are particularly committed to supporting the poor, seeking justice, collaborating with laypeople, and advocating for the principles outlined in *Laudato Si'*. Additionally, we provide support for our retired Sisters and assist our Sisters in provinces around the world.

As an international community following the example of Saint Angela, we believe in creating community wherever we go. This means being responsive to the needs of those around us and serving in areas where our help is most needed. While our ministries reach people of all ages, races, and income levels, we have a special focus on women and children, especially those living in poverty.

Saint Angela understood the value of educating women at a time when their roles were often limited to domestic life. The Ursulines established schools where girls could receive a well-rounded education, encompassing religion, academics and practical skills. Through these efforts, societal barriers were broken down and women were empowered to become leaders in their communities.

The Ursulines are a global organization, consisting of over 1,300 Sisters in 37 countries across six continents. Though religious life is evolving, we believe that it still has the power to bring about significant change in the world. That's why we actively collaborate with others to address the ever-changing needs of society and work towards creating a better life for people of all faiths.



# Saint Angela School in Cameroon

## *A Member of the Ursuline Global Mission*

**Groupe St. Angele D’Afrique for Saint Angela’s School** located in Bamyanga, Ngaoundere, Cameroon was founded by an Ursuline nun in 1993 and is a ministry within the **Ursuline Global Mission**. Saint Angela's School provides underprivileged children with a quality Catholic education in an environment that promotes faith, knowledge, and respect for themselves and others. The school strives to develop critical thinkers, change agents, and leaders who possess the wisdom, justice, and compassion necessary to navigate an ever-changing world.



Initially, the school only admitted girls, but in 2022, opened its doors to boys as well. However, the school's primary focus remains on educating girls due to cultural expectations. In the region, families often prioritize the education of boys over girls. This educational gap is evident in statistics from 2011, which show that only 47.7% of girls attended primary school in Cameroon, compared to 56.7% of boys. Saint Angela's School plays a crucial role in bridging this gap. With an enrollment of around 700 students and a roster of 16 teachers, the school previously relied on Italian benefactors who can no longer provide financial support. Recognizing this critical need, the Ursuline Sisters of the Eastern Province have pledged their support at the request of the General Counsel of the Ursuline Roman Union.

The 2023/2024 academic year has been a busy and exciting time. Saint Angela enrolled 629 primary school students - 164 boys and 465 girls. Of these, 192 are between the ages of three to five and attend kindergarten. Eight out of 15 classrooms were furnished with

new tables and benches. Students celebrated the Feast of Saint Angela and won Excellence Awards in a bilingualism competition. Students also participated in the annual Youth Day celebration, where schools in the city come together for a parade, dressed in traditional





Cameroonian costumes, accompanied by music and singing, and is attended by government officials.

Despite these positive occurrences, Saint Angela's School faces various challenges. For instance, some classrooms still need new furniture, the playground needs repairs to ensure safety, and a sports field is needed so the children can play sports. However, the biggest challenge for Saint Angela's School is raising awareness among parents about the importance of prioritizing their children's education. Many families cannot afford tuition resulting in them keeping their children at home instead of sending them to school, but this negatively impacts the children. Therefore, the Sisters end up allowing students to return, regardless of whether tuition is fully paid or not, opting to handle financial difficulties on a case-by-case basis. Nonetheless, tuition is necessary to cover operational costs and pay teacher's salaries. The Ursulines believe education is a human right and is committed to keeping this vital institution



Today we extend an invitation to you to become a **Partner** in the **Ursuline Global Mission** and help us to continue our important work. You can make a one-time gift or sign up to be a monthly sustainer by visiting our website at [www.osueast.org](http://www.osueast.org). As a Partner you can:

- Support the retired Sisters in their ministry of prayer.
- Provide scholarships for school children as well as training for teachers in Cameroon and other developing countries.
- Empower young women worldwide to be leaders and catalysts for change.
- Provide disadvantaged students with a quality Catholic education that fosters growth in faith, knowledge, and respect for themselves and others.
- Help to create a just and equitable society and protect the Earth and all its inhabitants.
- Help foster connection and unity among Ursuline students around the world, transcending cultures, languages and distance.

# Sister Spotlight

Sr. Sandy Wardell, OSU

## Faith In Purpose



Sr. Sandy Wardell, OSU



Sr. Sandy meeting with Pope Francis

***“I always present where I believe the spirit is leading me. If there is any doubt, I pray about it. My life belongs to the Ursulines.”***

Sr. Sandy Wardell, OSU grew up in a poor neighborhood riddled with drinking and violence. As a child, she recalls covering her ears to block out the sounds of women screaming because their husbands had come home drunk. “I told myself, I will never again live in a neighborhood where this is happening. However, no matter how much I fought those memories, I realized I was being called to be among the poor because among the poor is where God is most tangibly present to me.”

Sandy was born in Wilmington, DE, the ninth of ten children to non religious parents. Her journey into religious life began in High School when she found the book *The Greatest Story Ever Told* that introduced her to someone she aspired to emulate. This encounter sparked her curiosity, leading her to explore various churches.

Despite her parents' objections, Sandy found herself drawn to Catholicism. Conversations with a priest piqued her interest in religious life. One day she mused, “it must be wonderful to be a nun because you get to give yourself to God and have time for prayer.” This surprised the priest who upon discovering she didn’t know any nuns introduced Sandy to Sr. Vera Marie, a nun at the Ursuline Academy where he taught religion. After a period of discernment and visits to various congregations, ultimately at the age of 24 Sandy decided to join the Ursulines.



**Sr. Sandy feeding migrants in Laredo, TX**

perception. I gained an appreciation for the City, particularly the Bronx.” Sandy earned a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts with a major in Psychology and minor in Sociology, and started teaching at Saint Angela Merici Middle School.

One day, Sandy went to hear Bruce Ritter give a talk about runaway teens and was inspired to serve at Covenant House. She reveled in her work there reuniting teens with their families and providing counseling. Following two

years of service, Sandy decided to returned to teaching. She was able to get a teaching position at Saint Athanasius School in the South Bronx despite it being January, a time when schools rarely hire. She taught there for 32 years and credits this to divine intervention.

After helping a friend care for her young children while her husband was in school, Sandy wanted to help women who lacked support. So, she joined forces with the Sisters of Saint Joseph who founded Providence House IV in New Rochelle, a shelter to help women with children. Sandy and three nuns created a nurturing home for these women and delighted in watching the babies grow from their first steps to their first words. She lived and volunteered there for ten years while still teaching at Saint Athanasius. Eventually the other nuns moved on, and the shelter transitioned into a 24-hour operation with hired staff.

Finding herself at a crossroads, Sandy reflected upon her time at Saint Angela's Convent, when she aspired to live in the neighborhood in an apartment building. Then, as a young nun, she would not have received permission to do so on her own. Seeking inspiration through prayer, the spirit of Saint Angela spoke to her saying “go and live among the poor and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

Sandy studied in Washington for two years, then taught at the Ursuline Academy Lower School in Wilmington, before continuing her studies at Lehman College. She chose Lehman because of its proximity to students from the South Bronx and Harlem, and while there she lived at Saint Angela's Convent in the South Bronx. Sandy enjoyed courses like contemporary urban writers, and valued the diverse perspectives of her fellow students. “During a poetry class, a student described how beautiful the East River was and it challenged my



**Sr. Sandy with Ralph, a homeless man who lives in a tent behind Lincoln Hospital**

An apartment became available and Sandy moved in on October 21st on the Feast of Saint Ursula.

***“When I lived at Saint Angela, I remembered the scripture where Jesus was walking on water and Peter said “if it is you, command me to come.” That’s when I realized other people weren’t being called to step out of the boat. It was such a revelation. I was saying why aren’t we doing this when I should have been asking why am I not doing this?”***

In July 2014, Sandy was troubled by images of women chasing a bus full of unaccompanied minors crossing the border yelling obscenities. She rushed to join two Ursuline Sisters at the border who worked with Catholic Charities at a holding house run by the Methodist Church. Churches and organizations served as transitional places for migrants released from detention before they moved on to be with family. Sandy and the Sisters provided the migrants with food, helped them contact family, gave them showers, clean clothes and some money for their journey. Sandy initially spent a month in Laredo and made regular trips, but her plans were halted by the COVID-19 outbreak.

During the COVID pandemic, homeless individuals lost access to soup kitchens and shelters due to closures to protect the mostly older volunteers from the virus. Sandy, her neighbor Marty Rodgers and Sr. Patrice Owens, SCC risked their health by bringing sandwiches, water and fruit to the homeless. “I couldn’t look out my apartment window and see these people and not do something,” she said.

Sandy no longer does this, but her commitment to aiding the homeless is unwavering. What began as a Lenten promise to acknowledge and greet homeless individuals has evolved into a mission to provide not just change, but genuine connection and compassion. She believes in collecting "God bless you" as a measure of a job well done, knowing that a simple act of kindness can make a world of difference to someone in need.

From 2013 to 2014, Sandy experienced immense loss and health challenges leaving her compelled to pursue her dream of doing missionary work in South Africa. She retired from teaching and searched for volunteer opportunities. Three years later the call came when the Ursulines announced that they opened a new mission in South Africa.

***“After my cancer diagnoses, I thought I don’t know how much time I have left, but if I don’t retire now, I’m not going to be able to do the things I want. “***

In South Africa, Sandy settled in a retreat house run by Sr. Elizabeth Marie in the tourist town of St. Lucia. She worked at the training center, where locals learned to weave and sculpt and taught at the after-school program and Sunday School program in the nearby village of Khula. A stark contrast to St. Lucia, Khula lacked basic amenities like running water and had dirt roads and floors. Sandy did her best despite the challenges. To address the lack of supplies, Sandy would collect school supplies and story books donated by her teacher friends whenever she returned to the US. In South Africa schools would promote children whether or not they grasped fundamental concepts. Six graders would be given complex mathematical concepts when they didn’t even know their multiplication tables, which led to the tutors simply providing them with the answers.



**Sr. Sandy teaching school children in South Africa**



**Sr. Sandy with her students in South Africa**

One day a girl asked Sandy for her pen. Sandy agreed only if the girl learned her six times tables. This sparked the idea of implementing a reward system with items like pencils, paint kits, and chocolate to motivate the children to learn. The results were astounding, with the children eager to show off their new knowledge. One even surprised her teacher with her sudden improvement in math skills.

Sandy's face lit up as she shared photos of her time in South Africa. Despite the hardships she witnessed, she spoke of hope and transformation. She reflected on how the children she worked with and the communities she served have left an indelible mark on her heart. Unforeseen circumstances, including the transition of the program to the Marist Brothers thwarted her plans to return leaving her disappointed that her work there would not continue. "What I was doing in South Africa no one else would be doing and when I left, I knew there would be no one to replace me. It's not an ego thing, it is to say make a difference if you can no matter how small. It's so important," Sandy emphasized.

Sandy's journey into religious life shines as a beacon of hope and inspiration for those who aspire to make a difference. It is a testament to the subtle yet impactful ways in which God communicates with us and leads us toward our true purpose. Today, Sandy continues her mission in the South Bronx, residing among and assisting the less fortunate. Everyday she prays, and listens to where she may be called to next."



**Sandy with one her students in South Africa**

***"I often ask God how I can demonstrate my love and gratitude. It is during these moments that doors of opportunity open, revealing where my presence is most needed. I'm thankful that I'm still able to respond the call and to be of service."***

# Winter Highlights



**Srs. Alice Marie Giordano and Jeannie Humphries at the Mass of Remembrance**



**Eastern Province Sisters at their Nov. 9th Chapter Meeting**

## **The Feast of Saint Ursula**

On October 22nd, the Sisters celebrated the Feast of Saint Ursula by coming together to share a meal and pay homage to Saint Ursula, a symbol of courage and devotion to faith.

## **Eastern Province Chapter Meeting**

On November 9th and 10th, the Ursuline Sisters of the Eastern Province held a chapter meeting at the Province Center in New Rochelle. Srs. Jeannie Humphries and Jane Finnerty were elected as delegates to attend a special Chapter in Rome with Sr. Maureen Welch, Provincial.

## **Mass of Remembrance Dec. 10th**

On December 10th, the Ursuline Sisters of the Eastern Province gathered for their annual Mass of Remembrance to honor the lives of their beloved Sisters who went home to God in 2023. Mass was held in the Province Center's Chapel followed by a delicious meal in the dining room.



**Cake baked by Lourdes for the Fest of Saint Ursula**



**Sr. Jeannie Humphries, second from right at Bridges of Hope/Puentes De Esperanza**

### **Bridges of Hope/Puentes De Esperanza**

On January 25th to 28th, Srs. Jeannie Humphries and Pat Schifini attended Bridges of Hope/Puentes De Esperanza, an event sponsored by the Leadership Collaborative for women religious under the age of 65. Sr. Jeannie participated in person in Chicago, while Sr. Pat joined via Zoom. The gathering brought together 150 women religious under 65, with over 100 others participating virtually from 108 congregations and 28 countries. The focus was on discussing, discerning, and embracing the future of religious life, with lively and meaningful discussions and prayer sessions. Simultaneous translation was provided, strengthening connections among attendees.

### **Celebrating The Feast of Saint Angela**

On January 27th, the Ursuline Sisters of the Eastern Province celebrated their founder, Saint Angela, on her feast day. The day began with mass held in the chapel and was followed by a festive dinner in the Province Center's dining room. The day was filled with a sense of gratitude and unity, reminding the Sisters of the importance of their work and the legacy of Saint Angela that they carry on.



**Srs. Kathleen Finnerty, Ann Dumas, Jackie DaSilva and Associate Mary McShane Celebrating the Feast of Saint Angela**

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