



Nuns on the Bus: Journey in Faith

dear members

I want you all to know that there are a LOT more of you than there were three months ago! It is strange to say, but the Vatican censure of LCWR and naming NETWORK as a suspect organization really can be seen as a gift.

In our culture of democracy, when a group is criticized by authority there is curiosity about them. Additionally, we discovered that while I thought Catholic Sisters were anonymous and unseen in society, this is FAR from the truth. I'm not sure what it is, but Catholic Sisters touch some deep respect and even longing in the general public. It is treasure, but mystery for me.

Our Nuns on the Bus adventure was able to touch so many as we traveled 2700 miles...and it also caught the imagination of many. I have heard of numerous additional trips that people are doing in the same spirit and that they are looking for nuns to join them. Sr. Diane Donoghue, SSS, is going on a three-day California trip. Sr. Richelle Friedman was asked to go to Mississippi on a Methodist bus trip. In New York, there is an effort to have "city-wide" bus trips, all with the message of lifting up responsible programs.

Here at NETWORK, we are organizing follow-up with more pressure on the Ryan Budget and a new push to ensure that states sign up for the Medicaid expansion. These are essential policies for our nation, and we are so glad that you are partnering with us in seeking **a more perfect union!**

Simone Campbell, SSS

Faithful to the Gospel Then and Now NETWORK 40th Anniversary 1972-2012

ON APRIL 14, WE CELEBRATED the 40th anniversary of NETWORK's founding. With this issue, we honor the 2011-12 NETWORK/NEP Board and Staff Members who helped make our celebration a vital milestone. We didn't know it then, but we now understand that this was a turning point for us. We have begun an exciting new journey into the future.

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If We Stay Faithful...

BY SIMONE CAMPBELL, SSS

When we gathered on April 14 for our fabulous 40th anniversary celebration, none of us could have predicted what was to come. In simple ignorance we rejoiced in our amazing 40-year-old mission, danced with Carol Coston, OP, relished Diana Hayes's theological reflection, were energized by Frida Berrigan's insights, and savored E.J. Dionne's questions and obvious caring. We sipped wine and treasured friendship. The recurring theme was: How can we get NETWORK's mission and ministry better known? How do we spread the good news of our work?

A mere four days later, the Vatican answered the question for us by naming NETWORK as a questionable group that the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) collaborates with. This criticism catapulted NETWORK into the spotlight along with LCWR. It was quickly clear to me that because NETWORK has no direct connection to the Vatican we here had the freedom to speak out while LCWR has the very difficult work of finding a way forward in their direct relationship with Rome. Therefore, our effort was to provide a "public face" of women religious and our work.

But after a few days of that notoriety, it was abundantly clear that we are not used to having the spotlight just on us. We don't go seeking the limelight. We try to use everything for mission. So the question was how can we use this moment to further our mission? In meditation, what came to me was that at NETWORK we had a 40-year-old imagination and we needed bigger insights. So I asked our high-level colleagues here in DC for help. The response was

overwhelmingly generous.

On May 14, we gathered to brainstorm what we could do to lift up mission. We don't remember who first said "bus trip," but by the end of the meeting it was clear that we were going to go on a bus trip to speak out against the Ryan/House budget and to lift up the works

pushed me to embrace radical acceptance as a spiritual practice. To know that there is no difference between the God alive in me and the God alive in you so I can't be at odds with you. This then led to him pushing me to add in "fighting" as part of radical acceptance. I can't tell you what a struggle it was to



Sister Simone Campbell holds up a copy of "Faithful Budget."

of Catholic Sisters. The whole event was a gift of the Holy Spirit—from coming up with the idea and the money (10 days later), getting the beautiful "wrap" for the bus, setting up all of the stops, etc., etc.! In the following pages, you can read of the amazing things we learned and the entire "village" that it took to make it happen. In the midst of all of the amazing collaboration, three scriptural images have emerged for me.

The first comes from my December retreat where my meditation teacher

live beyond the dualism of fighting and find some unity. But what I discovered is that the combination is fire: fuel and flame, heat, light, purification and ash.

But with the Vatican assessment of LCWR and criticism of NETWORK and the voracious interest of the media, the image that came to me is that we are called to be the burning bush. If we are faithful and let God flame up in our lives, the bush will not be destroyed. And as Yahweh says in Exodus "I have indeed seen the misery of my people...

I have heard them crying for help on account of their taskmasters. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings.” This is reason enough to strive to be the burning bush.

This led to the second image on the bus trip, which is from Ezekiel. Remember the story as Ezekiel walks through the valley of the dry bones? Over and over on the bus trip, I experienced our people as these bones parched for breath and moisture. When we gathered each evening at our “friendraisers” with folks who came just to be connected, I experienced the great hunger abroad in the land for candor, nourishment and loving community way beyond the bounds of the current fear-based politics. Since coming home, I look back and realize that we saw Sisters building community in the places where Sisters worked. So often in those low-income communities there is a sense of connection.

But it is in the middle-class communities that there is isolation and fear. It is so bad that in Hershey, PA, one young

woman asked me if she joined NETWORK could we give her the names of some people she could talk to? What anguish! These are dry bones desperate for breath. “Breathe on these dead so that they come to life!” (EZ 37:9) It is this hunger and hope that I marvel at, and in the process I find joy in the midst of the anguish.

Finally, the third image came to me as the bus trip was drawing to a close and people were starting to ask, “What next?” The image is that of five loaves and two fish and the apostles wondering “what are these among so many.” This is how I feel as we come back and try to find the next step forward. NETWORK will never be the same. We have lived vibrantly from our roots a passion for mission, a connection with direct service and the public demonstration of the consequences of proposed policy choices. We can’t go back to “business as usual.”

We are very small and I feel a bit insignificant in the face of the expectation, but I take comfort in Jesus’s action

in the Scripture and in us. Jesus takes the food, blesses it and breaks it, and all are fed. It is enough. So I am trusting that if we are “blessed and broken” we will be enough for whatever the next step is. This then has become my mantra: Blessed and Broken.

I trust that together we can be the burning bush and let God flame up in our lives. Together we can breathe new life into these very dry bones. And with the action of the Spirit we can be blessed and broken and given to the very hungry people around us. If we stay faithful to this amazing spiritual journey then all can be fed, community will be nourished, and the Spirit of God will be seen alive and well in our midst.

It was only a bus trip, but it touched a hunger and a vision in our land that gave life! Let us stay faithful to that life and live it in a joyful community that knows we will not be left orphans!

Simone Campbell, SSS, is NETWORK’s Executive Director.

Fifth century mosaic inside the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and the Fishes, Tabgha, Galilee, Israel.



BOGDAN LAZAR



INSET: Greeting party that includes (from left) Sister Jeanie Hagedorn, CHM, with Sister Elaine and other CHMs—holding signs prepared by Holy Trinity pastor Fr. Michael Amadeo.
 ABOVE: Supporters in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin.

COURTESY SISTER JEANIE HAGEDORN

Nuns on the Bus—Journey in Faith

BY STEPHANIE NIEDRINGHAUS

“It all happened so quickly!” Sister Jeanie Hagedorn, CHM, was right.

In April, NETWORK joyfully celebrated our 40th anniversary at Trinity Washington University. Just four days later we were shocked to hear that we were mentioned in the now-famous Vatican assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR).

In May, barely recovering from dealing with an avalanche of international media coverage that came out of the assessment, we began to look at how we could use our sudden fame to further our social justice mission. Someone suggested a bus tour to publicize our dis-

agreement with the “Ryan Budget” and promote an alternative budget rooted in faith and fairness. It also would raise up the work of Catholic Sisters along the way and their ongoing commitment to stand with people at the economic margins.

And by June (June 18, to be exact), we were on the road.

Looking back, we now realize that the Holy Spirit was at work. Somehow, despite feverish, often chaotic planning for an event unlike anything we had ever undertaken, we made it through. The challenges were many, but the gifts were enormous.

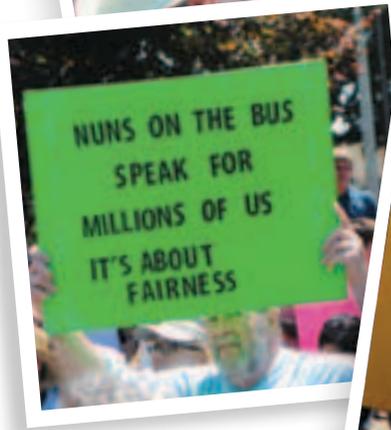
Here then, mostly in the words of some of those who played a part in our journey, is a brief chronicle of what turned out to be a life-changing event for many of us. We deeply regret that we don’t have the space to include the names and accounts of all the people who contributed in some way to Nuns on the Bus. We humbly thank you all.

Preparations

While NETWORK staff rushed to prepare for the tour, connecting with people with far more bus tour expertise than we possessed



SHANE MCCARTHY



(“wrapping” a bus—what does that mean?!), we hastily enlisted the help of dozens of wonderful people out in the field.

Jean Sammon: One of the secrets of the bus tour was that it started before planning was complete. We NETWORK staff members learned that it takes more than two weeks to plan a two-week bus tour. Although many offers of help came, it was still a challenge to answer all the phone calls and emails that came with more questions than answers. We scrambled to find places for ministry visits, press events, overnight accommodations, and public “friend-raising” events (even though we weren’t sure at first what a “friendraiser” was). When the tour started in Iowa, we pretty much had the first week planned, but as the nuns rode the bus, we were still working to set up events in places where the bus was heading. Thanks to heroic efforts by people like Pat Wynn Brown in Columbus, Anne Searer in Hershey, and Rosemary Thompson in Baltimore, and many others, the first-ever NETWORK bus tour turned out to be a huge success.

Sister Jeanie Hagedorn, CHM: It was June 8th when Lisa Martin (CHM Communications) emailed asking me to coordinate

the Des Moines arrival of the Nuns on the Bus. Sr. Elaine and I were in a whirlwind for those ten days, rearranging our schedules and setting up their schedules for their brief 20-hour stay in Iowa’s capital city. What an exhausting joy and honor it was!

A real blessing in all of our planning was our pastor at Holy Trinity parish, Father Michael Amadeo, who shared our excitement and offered to host the prayer service we were planning. He also surprised us with twelve professionally-made signs and badges for everyone to wear. We took the signs to the airport where six CHMs and about a dozen other friends joined us in welcoming the Sisters.

Yes, the signs. Everywhere the “Nuns on the Bus” traveled, they saw people holding signs, signs hanging from buildings, signs everywhere. They appeared again and again in the media coverage. Their messages buoyed everyone’s spirits—including those of us in the NETWORK office—when we faced exhaustion during the trip. We were and are grateful.

Sunday, June 17—Des Moines, IA

The first gathering was an evening prayer service at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Des Moines.

Sister Jeanie Hagedorn, CHM: We didn’t know what kind of a turnout to expect because of the short notice. Lo and behold! Over 300 people from many faith traditions arrived, not only from the Des Moines area but from over a hundred miles west, to stand in solidarity with us! Our Intentional Eucharistic Community provided music, a friend made three beautiful banners, the congregation offered their blessing (and very generous donations), and Sr. Simone’s challenging and humorous remarks touched the minds and hearts of all. After receiving our warm welcome, Simone bowed appreciatively and said to the congregation, “You humble me. And I’m not even a Sister of Humility!”

Sister Sandy Rodemyer, BVM: Sr. Simone’s address to the assembly was interrupted several times by spontaneous applause. She received a standing ovation when she first approached the ambo, and when she finished. All of the Sisters riding the bus were introduced individually, and the service concluded with the assembly blessing them. . . .The Nuns on the Bus tour [was] off to a spirited and Spirit-filled start.

Len Cockman: I was fortunate to have witnessed the send-off service in Des Moines. Like so many other older lifelong Catholics, I just don’t understand why some of us (meaning mostly my fellow men) haven’t learned anything about gender in the last 2,000 years. Or shared leadership, or the downside of power over caring and love. Or... well, you get the point. But on that evening when Sr. Simone so eloquently offered words reflecting on those who have been learning and acting the heart of Christianity, I felt like some have learned something about love and justice... but why can’t we (meaning mostly men in “power”) put it into action? May their bus trip be an inspirational beginning to renew genuine caring for all of God’s people. Thank you, Sisters...you are not fighting alone!

Sister Jeanie Hagedorn, CHM: Following the prayer service, Elaine and I delivered Simone and her companions to Hotel Fort Des Moines where they were given, gratis, overnight accommodations. As we drove up to the hotel, Elaine and I were excited to see the huge NUNS bus parked out front. It was also exciting to see CHM Sr. Marilyn Schierbrock's picture on the side of the bus, right near the banner, "Nuns Drive for Faith, Family & Fairness."

Sister Marge Clark, BVM: Outside the hotel was our home-away-from-home, a very large bus beautifully adorned.

As the bus. It was amazing to watch as it became a symbol of what the tour was all about—hope and faith in a better future. When I first talked about it with the designers who

knew about "wrapping" a bus with images, I only had one request: it should be uplifting, showing the dignity of people who serve and are served. No pathetic images too often used in charity advertising—images that exploit and undermine the dignity of those portrayed.

We also sent out requests for pictures of Sisters, and I was delighted when the photo of Sr. Marilyn Schierbrock was chosen to appear.

The bright blue bus served as a backdrop for hundreds—probably thousands—of photos, both private and in the media.

And now a little-known story about the famous "Nuns on the Bus" name. That was actually supposed to be a placeholder while we looked for a permanent title. After consultation with

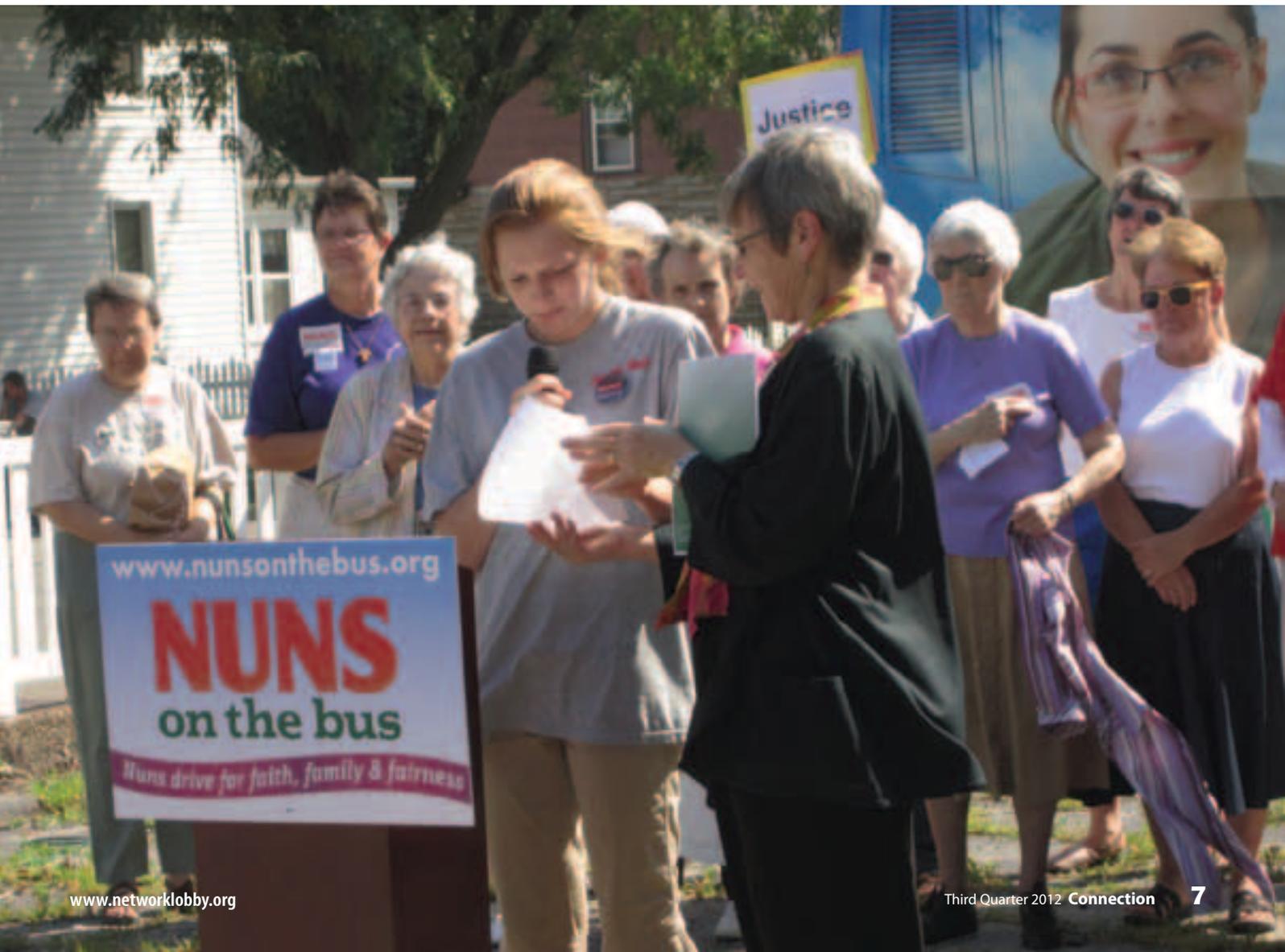
others, it was recommended that "Nuns drive for faith, family & fairness" be the official name of the tour. Eugenia Kim, who designed the bus logo, misunderstood me when I gave her the new official name. She still used "Nuns on the Bus," which I had given her earlier, and added "Nuns drive..." only as a tagline.

A true gift of the Spirit. "Nuns on the Bus" was surely the best choice!

Monday, June 18— Des Moines to Ames to Cedar Rapids to Dubuque, IA

Sister Marge Clark, BVM: The Nuns on the Bus met for quiet shared prayer before we started the day's venture. At 8:15 we loaded the bus before media and another 30 or so supporters, and by 8:45 were on the road.

Tia shares her story in Dubuque, IA.





ABOVE: "Friendraising" in Sinsinawa, WI. BELOW: Sr. Simone Campbell leaves the Faithful Budget at Congressman King's office in Ames, IA.

Gathering for morning prayer became an important part of the daily routine for the Nuns on the Bus. The one morning they weren't able to do this, tensions on the bus were noticeably higher during the day. In Washington, NETWORK staffers also gathered each morning for a sharing time. Nuns on the Bus was an authentic community effort.

Sister Jeanie Hagedorn, CHM: Our sister Mary Jo Reed and I raced to HyVee to buy helium balloons and a bouquet of flowers for the sendoff. Holding down the balloons was a challenge on a very windy Iowa summer day! Simone had said to all of us numerous times, "You are AMAZING!" So it was only appropriate that we give her a special balloon that said, "You Are AMAZING!"

After the exciting sendoff, attended by a number of CHMs and numerous other friends and media, several of us (including our faithful pastor) followed the bus to Ames where there was another excited crowd waiting. In spite of a scheduled appointment, Simone and the Sisters found the doors to the office of Republican Congressman Steve King locked.

Sister Marge Clark, BVM: We were shocked to find that the promised staffer was not at Congressman King's office. It was locked with a note on the door saying the staff would be visiting areas of the district all morning. We left copies of the *Faithful Budget Preamble* and *Iowa Platform*, developed with input from Iowans. There were nearly 100 Iowa witnesses to the lack of follow-through from Congressman King's staff. These included many Catholics, Protestant Women Clergy and laypeople, and



a wonderful Jewish woman on an electric scooter. She strongly objects to Congressman King's anti-immigration policies, saying that if they had been in effect when her family was coming from Russia, she would not be alive today.

Sister Jeanie Hagedorn, CHM: Finally, singing "Alleluia," they posed for one final photo before releasing the balloons. As the balloons flew upward, the nuns drove onward to Cedar Rapids, Dubuque and points east delivering a message of hope, commitment for social justice, and a challenge to citizens and Congress alike.

After a visit with the editorial board of the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, the Nuns on the Bus traveled to Dubuque for a "friendraiser" (an opportunity to gather and speak with current and potential friends).

Sister Marge Clark, BVM: Moving east, we realized that our path is a reverse of so many of our congregations' arrivals in the Midwest—many generations ago. The bus pulled into the Mt. Carmel complex moments before the first official friendraiser, attended by over 200 BVM, Franciscan, Dominican, Presentation and Humility Sisters,

and faithful laypeople. There was great enthusiasm as we told stories of our first 24 hours on this journey.

The Nuns on the Bus were given overnight hospitality by the Sisters of the Presentation.

Tuesday, June 19— Dubuque, IA, to Sinsinawa, Janesville and Milwaukee, WI

Tuesday morning included visits to Maria House, founded by six Catholic women's religious communities, which provides support services for homeless women, and the Lantern Center, sponsored by the Sisters of the Presentation, which is a drop-in center offering services for immigrants.

Sister Marge Clark, BVM: We joined the Sisters for breakfast, boarded the bus and headed to the Dubuque Food Bank, followed by visits to the Lantern Center and Maria House. About 75 Dubuquers and friends joined us in already scorching heat. We listened as Tia shared the benefits of Maria House for her two children as she had completed high school and is preparing to move to an apartment in two more weeks."

Nuns on the Bus then moved on to the "Sinsinawa Mound" in Wisconsin.

Sister Kathleen Phelan, OP: Even weeks following the appearance of THE bus at Sinsinawa Mound, Wisconsin, the Dominicans of Sinsinawa are still recounting the excitement of the event! You had to be there...seeing that large, creatively wrapped bus being led down a country road by a small car filled with Sisters holding a sign out the car window declaring, "Nuns on the Bus, follow us!" And follow they did, rolling down County Road Z and up to the entrance of Sinsinawa Mound, home of the Dominicans of Sinsinawa. As they emerged from the bus, our guests were engulfed with hugs and cheers from Sisters, Mound staff members, partners in ministry who happened to be meeting, and a few of our neighbors. Regrouping indoors in a packed gathering space, we introduced our guests and heard a mini-version of the spirited purpose and plans for the trip. Besides all those present, Sisters in assisted living and skilled care joined in via live-stream TV, making it all the more enlivening and inclusive. Knowing our guests were on a tight timeline, we concluded the moment, presenting our guests with our version of the "keys" to Sinsinawa:



a donation to help support this compelling mission and, as important, a basket of fresh baked goods from the Sinsinawa Mound bakery! As is our tradition, we drew this "prayerful pep rally" to a close by praying together a Prayer for Travelers and singing of the Dominican Blessing...being part of the Nuns on the Bus was a not-soon-to-be-forgotten blessing-event.

And then it was on to Janesville, Wisconsin, the hometown of Representative Paul Ryan, author of the "Ryan Budget" that sought to cut needed funding for safety net programs.

Sister Marge Clark, BVM: Hundreds who are frustrated by the actions of their representative to Congress met the bus. As "the Nuns" proceeded to the congressional

BELOW: Supporters rally outside of Rep. Paul Ryan's office, Janesville, WI. ABOVE: Young supporters greet the bus in Ames, IA.



office, hundreds followed. Only those of us with an appointment were allowed to enter, and we were welcomed into the office of the director. During the conversation the director took pages of notes and seemed genuinely interested in our perspective. We left the office to find hundreds crowded into the hallway, and hanging over the balcony from above. Leaving the building, we spoke with the people.

The next stop was a community meal at St. Benedict the Moor, a truly moving experience. At St. Ben's, a Capuchin Franciscan ministry, more than 85 religious groups and organizations provide hot, home-made meals six nights a week for hundreds of people in need.

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS: I came to know that a large percentage of the folks who are served by these programs are working at least one job. They are not making enough money to care for their families. Many face the situation that Billy faces. Billy, whom I met at St. Ben's, has enough money in his downsized salary to either put food on the table or a roof over his family's heads. He and his wife chose a roof for the family so that the kids could stay in their school. Every evening they go to St. Benedict the Moor's dining room for dinner.



That evening included a fundraiser at St. John's on the Lake in Milwaukee, followed by overnight accommodations provided by the Sinsinawa Dominicans in Whitefish Bay.

One of the most unique experiences of the tour also happened that night. The Nuns on the Bus met with the Overpass Light Brigade, which describes itself thus: "The Overpass Light Brigade was forged in the activist climate of the Wisconsin Uprising. Our messages shine over highways at night... We are a loose and inclusive affiliation of people dedicated to the power of peaceful and playful protest."

As recounted by Lane Hall on the Daily Cos (excerpts): When the Overpass Light

Brigade contacted the D.C coordinators for Nuns on the Bus, we didn't really expect to get the busy Sisters out to one of our bridge parties. We really just wanted to extend a warm Wisconsin welcome to their tour, where they are highlighting the human side of politics by reminding people that the poor are the most asymmetrically affected by the current systematic dismantling of public services. We were delighted with their response. "See you on the bridge Tuesday night!"

Word got out. The nuns have gained some real momentum, and progressives in Wisconsin are hungry to continue and build, amplify, tweak, sustain our own momentum.

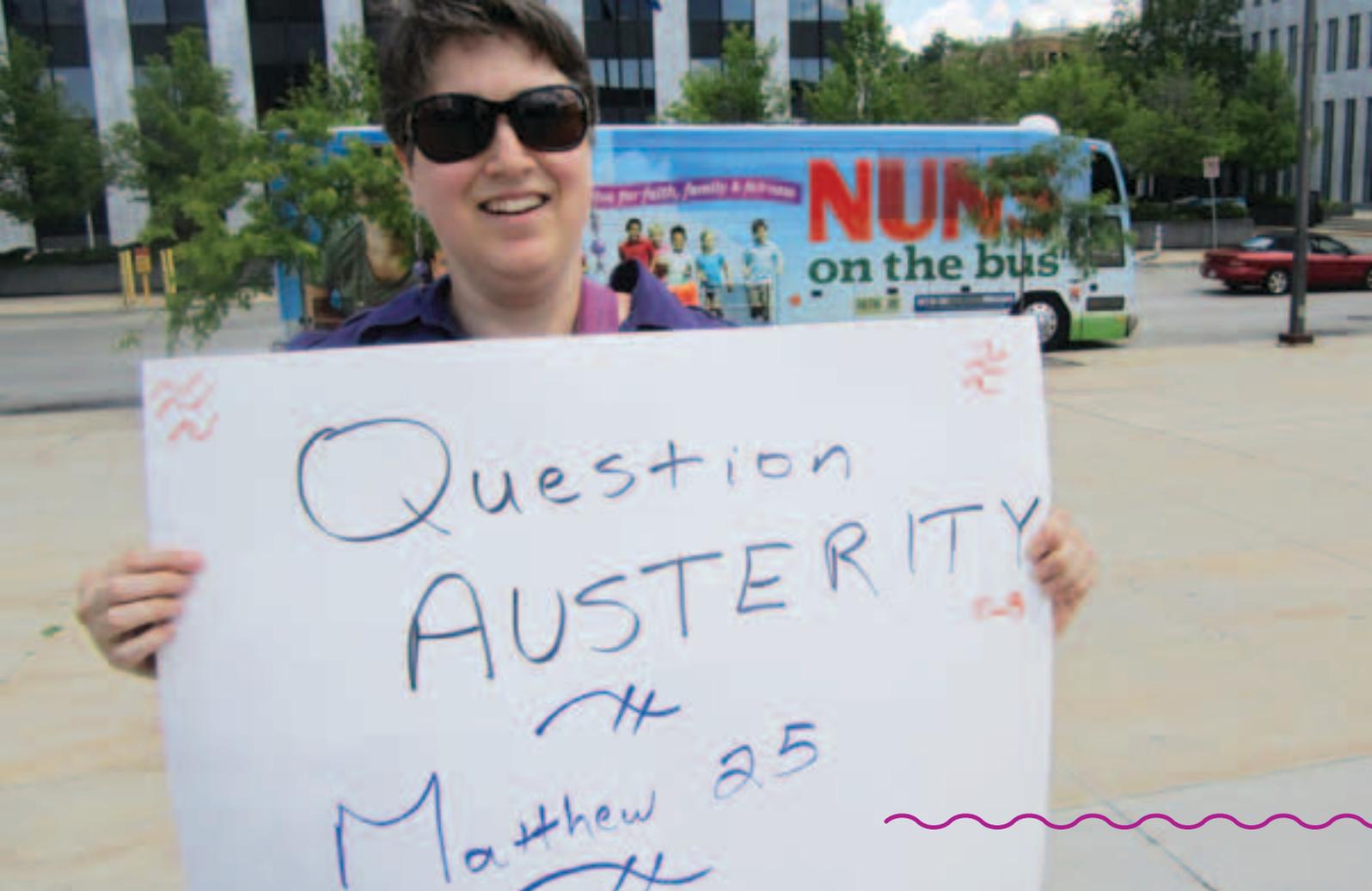
There were ninety people on the bridge. I was trying to get some pictures from ground level when I heard a massive cheer, sounding like a winning Badger touchdown at Camp Randall. It was 9:00, and the bus was spotted, heading for our exit. Wow.

We had worked to figure out a good message that would resonate with the nuns' tour. They had spent the day in Janesville, bringing visibility to Paul Ryan's ridiculous budget proposal. Austerity. Question Austerity. That's it: simple, to the point, and the beginning of a social media campaign.

It was Sister Mary's 72nd birthday, and she looked profoundly happy holding the

Friendraiser at St. John's on the Lake in Milwaukee.





South Bend, IN.

letter “E” when everyone kicked into a rousing version of Happy Birthday. It was simply wonderful looking at this community that we’ve been building, and its growing interconnections with other peace/justice activist groups. This Nuns on the Bus tour is a powerful thing, because the Sisters are creating a context for their own essential visibility. They will not let their moral compasses be dictated from disconnected hierarchies, and their insistence on civil engagement is their core power.

Sister Mary Wendeln, CPPS: How better to celebrate another year of life than walking down the sidewalk with a group singing Happy Birthday and being serenaded by someone playing the bagpipes. A night I will remember.

Wednesday, June 20 — Milwaukee, WI to Fox Lake and Chicago, IL

The first stop on Wednesday morning was the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Dental Clinic in Milwaukee.

Sister Marge Clark, BVM: We had the pleasure of meeting staff and touring a

state-of-the-art dental clinic, dedicated to those with serious conditions and the least resources for obtaining care. The morning we were there, several of the cubicles were dedicated to treatment of children. There were also spaces reserved for those with critical problems. Dental and dental hygiene students assist the staff. In addition to work at the clinic, they serve in the schools with the highest poverty rates, doing training and initial check-ups. It is an amazing public-private partnership.

After a stop at Palermo’s Pizza factory to show solidarity with those protesting a government decision to seek more documentation on workers’ immigration status, the Nuns on the Bus visited the office of Rep. Joe Walsh in Fox Lake, and they then headed on to Grace Place in Chicago for a fundraiser. Along the way, they pulled into a Target parking lot for a brief rest.

Peggy Becker: I was shopping at the Target in Gurnee, IL after dropping my grandkids back at home. When I came out of the store I saw this huge bus parked in front and I knew right away, it was Sister Sim-

one and the Nuns on the Bus. I kept looking around as no one else seemed to be paying attention to what I thought was a huge event. I took a couple of photos of the bus from my phone and went to the front door to ask the bus driver to send my thanks to the nuns for doing what I think is the most important work being done in this age and time. He nodded to me and then, all of sudden, here comes this wonderful lady down the steps of the bus. She shook my hand and thanked ME for stopping to thank them. I asked her name and it was the wonderful Sister Simone who I had been following on TV shows in the week past. I was so excited. I know I blurted out to her that “I am not a Catholic but I truly appreciate what you are doing” and she came over and gave me a hug—gave me a hug!! We talked for a minute and then they had to go as they were on their way to Chicago. My greatest thrill was being a part of this great event and being able to do this one-on-one, instead of in a big crowd. They made me feel as important as I am sure they did to the really famous people they met on this trip.



Fox Lake, IL.

Thursday, June 21 — Chicago, IL to South Bend, IN

After a breakfast stop at Ina's Restaurant in the West Loop, the Nuns on the Bus had an editorial board meeting at the Chicago Sun Times, followed by a memorable visit to Mercy Housing.

Sister Marge Clark, BVM: On the south side of Chicago, there is a safe refuge and sign of hope amidst tragedy and vacancies. Mercy Housing Center provides fresh, well-designed small apartments for single men and women who might be living on the streets without it. Several spoke of their previous homelessness. Not only do they have a clean place to call home, but also classes with an emphasis on leadership training. A gentleman in a classy suit spoke, telling us of his experience and expectation that he would have been on the street—and perhaps in prison—without this ministry of the Sisters.

Sister Mary Wendeln, CPPS: I was struck by the tenant leaders of the Mercy Transi-

tional Housing, who showed us their apartments, explained the programs and their dreams for further activities. Symbols of a program that will diminish if the Ryan cuts are enacted.

The day concluded with a visit with the Holy Cross Sisters, followed by a pot luck dinner and fundraiser at the Good Shepherd Montessori School in South Bend.

Dorothy Pedtke: It poured (desperately needed) rain, but quit about a half hour before the arrival of The Bus. The Sisters handed out their Nuns on the Bus stickers, so we all proudly displayed the proof that we had been in on this. It was hard to get the Sisters away

from the welcoming crowd although they knew the time was short. They were already almost too tired to eat the elegant supper. But they choked up when they came in and saw the packed hall and gave a bang-up performance that people were sad to have come to an end. Everyone went out engrossed in serious conversations, each proudly sporting a Nuns sticker.

Friday, June 22 — South Bend, IN to Grand Rapids, MI

Friday's first visit was to the Sister Maura Brannick, CSC, Health Center in South Bend, where bilingual staff provide primary healthcare services to patients without healthcare insurance.

Dorothy Pedtke: Their funding comes largely from the area's Catholic hospital, St. Joseph's, but their clientele is already large, and the reductions in services that would result from the Ryan budget would dump a whole lot more low-income people into their clinic, which would force them to spread their funding a lot thinner. Unasked, the clinic had set up donuts and coffee, which was a good break for us all.

From there we went to the South Bend office of Rep. Joe Donnelly, who has been the 2nd District congressman for two terms—and is now running for the Senate seat held for so many years by Richard Lugar. Donnelly was in Washington, but his staff was very welcoming, press people came and talked to everybody, the Sisters had more Nuns on the Bus stickers for everyone, and lots of signatures were collected. Sr. Simone had left early in a rented car to get to some meeting in Detroit, but almost no one realized that, until the remaining Sisters came out and got on The Bus. Whoosh, the Bus was gone. It took me a few days to calm down and get used to



Greeters in South Bend, IL.

the silence in my house. No more phone calls. All good things come to an end.

After a visit to the office of Representative Justin Amash in Grand Rapids, the bus headed to the Dominican Center at Marywood, where 160 people heard about NETWORK and the Ryan budget cuts.

Sister Joyce Ann Hertzig, OP: Thank you for asking Dominican Sisters-Grand Rapids to host the Nuns on the Bus and provide space for the education session. It was the RIGHT TIME! The energy of our Sisters for advocacy, interest, and hospitality was outstanding. Over 160 people from Grand Rapids, Lansing, DeWitt, Holland, Muskegon, and the surrounding area participated in the education session conducted by Marge Clark, BVM. The MESSAGE—our voice needs to be heard by our lawmakers—was of enduring significance.

Saturday, June 23— Jackson to Detroit, MI

Since congressional offices were closed on Saturday, the Nuns on the Bus had a morning press conference at Jacksonburg Park Square in Jackson to discuss the Ryan budget. This was followed by an inspiring visit to the Dominican Literacy Center in Detroit.

Sister Janice Brown, OP: The Dominican Literacy Center enables adult learners to transform their lives by acquiring basic reading, math, and computer skills which makes it possible for the adult learner to be a successful parent, productive worker, and responsible citizen. This mutual collaboration in adult literacy is a contemporary expression of the Adrian Dominican Sisters' commitment to education. The services are offered to those most in need; 93% of the student body are low-income

and struggle to improve their lives as they overcome great challenges. Having the Nuns on a Bus highlight this ministry was an honor.

The word got out and on Saturday morning, 200 to 300 people gathered in front of our building in order to be heard. Representative Hansen Clarke said a few words of support for such ministries and spoke of his disagreement with severe cuts proposed by the Ryan House budget. The crowd was thrilled that Sr. Simone Campbell and her group of Sisters were speaking out.

The visit was also an opportunity to say a few words about the good realized through ministries that are sponsored by women religious.

Along with a video crew, the Nuns on the Bus walked with me through the center. I was able to say a little more about the ministry.

Outside of Rep. Justin Amash's office in Grand Rapids, MI.





DICK HERBST

Sister of Dick Herbst by the bus in Detroit..

The people we serve are not necessarily looking for a handout; they are looking to be self-sufficient community members.

I heard someone say this was one of the better stops thus far. I am not sure if it was because of the number of people who turned out, if it was because it seemed to move along so smoothly, or if it was because we had food waiting for them (smile). I can tell you, though, that it was an inspirational day for all of us!

That evening, another fundraiser—this one at the Gesu Church in Detroit.

Sister Angela Hibbard, IHM: I think three things stand out for me. The first is the overwhelming support the Nuns had everywhere they went. As we prepared for the bus to come to Detroit, emails were flying in every direction telling people the news, and the church had by actual count 355 people present on Saturday evening.

The second thing is the witness of faith given by Simone Campbell. She wasn't speaking as a political activist—although what she and NETWORK are doing is certainly at the intersection of faith and politics. It seemed as though every hurdle, every roadblock, every impossible situ-

ation was handled through the leading of the Holy Spirit. Simone would pray, and then she would be led to do some simple thing. When she did that thing, it was as though Jesus was repeating the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Ideas, money, contacts—whatever was needed—came pouring forth. I'm sure Simone isn't the only woman of prayer in this important ministry, but her witness truly challenged all of us to pray faithfully and to believe the Lord's promise of abundance.

My final thought is that this work illustrates Jesus's advice to be wise as serpents and gentle as doves (Mt 10:16). The whole project was done respectfully, without anger or rancor. No one could accuse the NETWORK team of negativity as they carefully and reasonably threaded their way through the challenges presented by the Roman critique. Bravo!

Dick Herbst: I read about you online and saw that you were going to stop at Gesu Church in Detroit. That is the parish I grew up in. I was interested about what you stand for and made plans to attend. By chance, my sister who is an RSCJ had just come in from St. Louis and she came with me. Sister Simone's speech was electrify-

ing and the proposal of a moral budget is something I believe in and can get behind. Thank you for stopping in Detroit.

Sister Gloria Rivera, IHM: The idea and event, Nuns on the Bus, has been for me one of the most creative and right-on-target responses one could use to bring the message across with beauty and dignity. The response was overwhelmingly supportive. I was invited to speak at the evening event and used my two minutes to suggest how the Ryan budget would directly affect those who are poor in my city. Thank you, NETWORK, for your courage. I have no doubt that you will continue to engage all of us as we follow the gospel mandate of justice for all.

Sunday, June 24—Monroe, MI to Toledo and Cincinnati, OH

Sister Alice Baker, IHM: On Sunday morning, the bus took a slight detour. Since the other IHM, Joan Mumaw, our Vice President, lived in Monroe, it only seemed sensible that the bus might stop at our Motherhouse in Monroe and pick her up on their way to Toledo. As we approached our Motherhouse, we couldn't believe our eyes. The front porch, steps and sidewalk

were filled with 100 or more women cheering for us, some standing, some with walkers, some in wheelchairs, and even some viewing from the windows. Though it was only a 5-10 minute stop, I know that Simone Campbell said it was well worth it, only to witness the IHM support of this justice project. I was so proud and happy to be a small part of it. My admiration of NETWORK's mission soared higher than ever.

Sister Brigid Wade, IHM: As I stood waiting for the arrival of the bus in front of the IHM Sisters of Monroe, I was excited and happy to be a part of something bigger than I could imagine, justice for the poor and those without a voice. As the bus drove up the driveway my excitement increased; this was a Holy Place where God was truly present. As the Sisters exited from the bus they were greeted with loud cheers.

The bus then moved on to Toledo, with a stop at St. Martin de Porres Church for Mass and a visit to the Padua Center. This wonderful ministry provides education programs, vision therapy, hospitality and other services.

Sister Virginia Welsh, OSF: We knew it was a special day at St. Martin de Porres when a retired Bishop, the retired founder of the Parish, and our present Representative, Marcy Kaptur, all came to pray with our small community. We knew it was a special day when



ABOVE AND BELOW: Supporters in Cincinnati, OH.

sisters, politicians, "lovers of nuns" and the "Nuns on the Bus" arrived with enthusiasm and dedication to galvanize support for their critique of the Ryan budget.

Matthew and Mark, fifth graders who attend the Padua Center summer camps, knew it was special because, although their mom was in the hospital, they walked over to the center to tell everyone that The Padua Center is important and the work that is done by so many Sisters in the central city is important. Greg Johnson knew this was a special group, because he came from his home to tell the audience that The Padua Center is making a difference.

We knew it was a special day because it is not every day that a big bus with a precious cargo of Nuns comes to us, on our streets, in our neighborhood to tell us that what we do is important and that our ministry is making a difference and "Washington" ears are listening. No, this was not an ordinary day. We knew it was

special. Truly, "this is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad."

It was then on to Cincinnati, with the first stop at the office of Representative Steve Chabot.

That evening, one of the most moving events of the bus tour occurred. Two days earlier, NETWORK had received a Facebook message from Jini Kai saying she would attend the Cincinnati fundraiser immediately after attending her sister's memorial service.

Jini Kai: It was such a blessing to meet the Nuns on the Bus at the Peaslee Neighborhood Center. As you well know, we were in Cincinnati to attend the memorial service of my sister, Margaret, earlier that very afternoon.

Margaret had lived her entire adult life on the economic margin. She'd always lived below the poverty line until she finally found a job that gave her a decent enough





*In memory of Margaret Kistler
May 29, 1956 – June 6, 2012*

From Jini Kai: “[Margaret] is wearing her Wisconsin 14 t-shirt I just delivered. She stood in solidarity with the 14 Wisconsin senators who fled the state in protest of the ‘budget bill’ our radical governor ultimately jammed through the state legislature. And, through our long conversations, it was clear that she supported the Affordable Care Act.”

wage and, more importantly, health insurance. But a few years ago she lost that job, and her health insurance went with it. For two years before her diagnosis she knew that she was ill. But she told no one as she could not afford to go to the doctor anyway. By the time she was diagnosed (via a near-death trip to the emergency room), her colon cancer had spread throughout her body, and her fate was sealed.

To meet you brave women taking care of those who cannot take care of themselves, living your faith rather than professing it, was pure Grace.

While Margaret’s loss is deeply personal to our family, it is by no means isolated. In fact, her death is emblematic of the failure of the health care system in our rich land to care for the less fortunate among us. Our prayer is that your work will save other families from enduring the loss we have experienced, solely due to lack of adequate health care.

Thank you so much for holding our family as we grieved Margaret. And thank you for taking her picture with you as you continue your journey. She would (and does?) appreciate her life and death being held as an example of what happens to those who lack access to health care. This is not a political issue, it is a matter of life and death.

Sister Simone Campbell has carried Margaret’s photo in her Bible since that day, and has shown it to many people, inspiring all.

That evening, the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati provided hospitality, and many heard Margaret’s story.

Monday, June 25— West Chester to Columbus, OH

The first stop on Monday morning was at the office of Speaker John Boehner in West Chester.

Jean Sammon: I was able to join the nuns for the visit, and so were two young women who rode the bus on the short trip from Cincinnati. They had just been received into the Sisters of Charity for the first steps toward becoming nuns, and were invited to come along for the lobby experience. In the office, the nuns talked about the needs of people they were meeting on the tour. I could hear the crowd outside chanting “nuns on the bus!” and realized what a unique lobby visit this was turning out to be. As we came back out to talk to the crowd and the press, I asked one of the young women what she thought. She replied “Pretty good for my second day in the convent!”



Sister Mary Ellen Lacy, DC: Rep. Boehner’s staff was polite and listened. I suspect they are not going to adopt our faithful budget, but we sold it hard.

As I was getting on the bus, an atheist who was a vet gave me CDs for Sr. Marge, whom he met last night. I thanked him for his service; he thanked me for mine. Then we hugged. He had the warmest, most appreciative smile. I think we gave him a little hope. I suspect he remembered why he fought for this country.

The Nuns on the Bus later visited the office of Rep. Pat Tiberi in Columbus and ended the day with a fundraiser at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, followed by overnight accommodations with the Dominicans of Peace.

Tuesday, June 26—Cleveland, OH

The first stop on Tuesday was at St. Augustine Church in Cleveland.

Jean Sammon: Being a native Clevelander, I was very familiar with St. Augustine’s ministry to people who are deaf, and their hunger center. They not only feed people in the surrounding neighborhood daily, they also prepare dinners for thousands of people across the city on holidays. But they do much more than feed people. Sister Corita Ambro, who has been running things there for many years, seems to be able to help people with whatever needs they have. She graciously welcomed the Nuns on the Bus, the press and other interested people, even though it was the

BELOW: The Dominican Sisters of Peace hosted the Nuns on the Bus in Columbus, OH. Rev. Tim Ahrens speaks to the crowd. INSET, RIGHT: Meeting with Rep. Pat Tiberi.



first day of day camp for over 100 children! It was a lovely day, and I was able to meet with many who gathered outside the church, including some of the children, a man who credited Sr. Corita with helping him get his life back on track, volunteers who made lunch for us, and representatives from the offices of Senator Sherrod

Brown and Representative Marcia Fudge. What a great way to bring so many people together.

An editorial board meeting followed at the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*; and that evening the Nuns on the Bus joined friends at The River's

Edge, a ministry of the Congregation of St. Joseph. Among those attending was Sister Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ, who recently retired from many years as a NETWORK lobbyist.

Sister Rita Petruziello, CSJ: Personally, I was so taken with the overwhelming support and goodness of so many of our lay brothers and sisters present that evening that I was near tears. The whole event made me very proud, grateful and excited that I am a part of something much larger than I could imagine on behalf of creating a world where all can thrive. The Bus was a real symbol of the leadership that is moving us forward!

Sr. Cecelia Moran, SIW: Two of my most unforgettable experiences included sharing their bus ride to Saint Joseph Wellness Center for an evening program, and our morning prayer together on the day they left Cleveland for their next stop. Their commitment to faith, justice and community are inspiring.

**Wednesday, June 27—
Youngstown, OH to Pittsburgh, PA**

Wednesday morning began with a visit to the Dorothy Day House in Youngstown, a Catholic Worker initiative.

Maureen A. Drummond: I was thrilled to learn that Sr. Simone and the Nuns on the Bus tour would be coming to Youngstown to visit the Dorothy Day house, and took the morning off to join other community leaders in celebration and advocacy.

For years, I have been struggling with the outright oppression of the Catholic Church. I married a Baptist man and together we joined the Presbyterian Church where I was ordained as a lay minister of the church, but I missed the joy of the sacraments. As my career in the nonprofit sector has grown, I have had the opportunity to work with people all over the U.S., and have seen some of the toughest situations. In the middle of most, there has been a gentle light of an order of Sisters caring for those on the fringe of society.

Sr. Simone's message speaks to so much of what I see and what I have experienced in my upbringing, education and



career; and what I have worked to promote: **ADVOCACY, JUSTICE, COMPASSION and ACTION.**

I drove to Pittsburgh that evening, with my 78-year-old mother (and like-thinker) to the gathering at the Sisters of Divine Providence convent at the LaRoche College Campus. My mother is a retired professor from LaRoche and it was like coming home as we crested the hill toward the convent drive.

We were greeted by a room full of like-minded people who believe that the Church is its people. As Simone spoke, you could feel the spirit and energy of people who:

1. Want to stay committed to the Catholic Church, but see the oppression and distancing of the papal hierarchy and need inspiration and purpose to continue the work of transformation
2. Work with populations who need advocates to make the changes that will provide them with life-sustaining services and supportive communities of growth.

I realize the Nuns on the Bus tour was about the Ryan Budget and cuts to significant services that assist people in survival. But peppered in Simone's comments were clear indicators of the larger issue impacting the Catholic Church.

So what did the Nuns on the Bus tour offer me? Hope. Hope that many voices can continue to move forward supporting people who act on Christ's teaching.

Rev. Monica Beasley-Martina: On June 16, I presented a workshop at the *Don't Frack Ohio* conference entitled, "Called to Worship & Action." My research on the workshop's subject matter led me to the Nuns on the Bus. They were the example used when I shared that God requires we speak out against injustice even when it occurs inside our own churches. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that the Nuns on the Bus Tour was stopping in my town, and only five minutes away from where I live, that next week. Of course I made sure my face was at The Dorothy Day House. I am inspired by their courage and fortitude.



Sr. Simone Campbell with St. Augustine day campers, Cleveland, OH.

Later in the day, the bus traveled to the office of Rep. Tim Murphy in Pittsburgh and a wonderful friend-raiser with the Sisters of Divine Providence, Providence Heights in Pittsburgh.

Sister Mary Ellen Lacy, DC: Next, we went on to Rep. Tim Murphy's office. It was fun. We pulled up to huge crowds. After we stopped, the police pulled up and asked why we were parking there in the street even though they had placed cones for us to park there. It must have been the crowd who put the cones there. The priests were out in full support. We love Pittsburgh priests. Pittsburgh Priest Association held a big sign with their name. They thanked us. The meeting with his office went well. The chief counsel said he would try to get the representative himself to meet with us when we get back to DC.

Sister Diane Guerin, RSM: As the bus approached the offices, nothing prepared me for the sight. Hundreds of people were gathered, cheering and bearing signs of support. I was truly overwhelmed and could feel myself on the verge of tears. This experience and the accompanying emotions as people shared their stories with us were to become a familiar feeling. It was so humbling to be greeted by these folks who are truly "salt of the earth."

Thursday, June 28—Clairton to Harrisburg and Hershey, PA

The first visit on Thursday morning was to Sister's Place in Clairton. Founded by a group of 14 Catholic religious communities, this wonderful group provides housing and support services for poor clients, many of whom have suffered from abuse, addiction and mental illness, and have no high school diploma or GED.

As the bus rolled along the highway, the U.S. Supreme Court announced its historic decision upholding President Obama's healthcare reform. Just like earlier in the week, when the immigration decision was announced, the Sisters had waited anxiously for the decision. Initial cable news reports about a negative decision were met with groans, but the bus riders erupted in cheers when those reports were corrected. A press conference had been arranged in front of the Pennsylvania State Capitol, and the healthcare decision was applauded.

And then it was on to Hershey for a friend-raiser at Briarcrest Gardens, where a standing-room-only crowd assembled.

Anne Searer: I was on vacation on Long Island when I learned that the bus was going to make a stop in Harrisburg. I was so excited that I could not wait for my vacation to be over so I could get home to help organize and plan an event for

Hershey. The meeting allowed so many who are exceptionally committed to social justice to meet some of these outstanding women in person. We were inspired and motivated by the stories of their lives in public service and how they have represented our Church so admirably during some very bad years.

While in Hershey, the nuns were staying in an old home that was built about 1915 and was surrounded by stately old trees. About 4 A.M., there was a sudden, very localized, and unexpectedly severe storm. Some called it a mini-twister. A huge tree just east of the old home, a power line and a second very old tree just south of the old home, and a third old tree just west of the home were all hit by the storm. Huge major limbs of all three trees came crashing down right next to the house, closing roads and cutting off power. As far as anyone can tell, not a branch fell on the roof of the old home. So our group of meeting planners (maybe we really are community organizers!) enjoy believing that the nuns had saved the house. For sure, they were a powerful presence and we were honored to have them in our town.

Friday, June 29— Langhorne to Philadelphia, PA

On Friday, the bus traveled to the Langhorne office of Rep. Mike Fitzpatrick and then on to Philadelphia for a spirit-filled friendraiser at Chestnut Hill College.

Sister Mary Beth Hamm, SSJ: Energizing, inspiring and simply overwhelming are three words that come to mind as I reflect on the Nuns on the Bus friendraiser. I was touched in so many ways: that our local Rabbi encouraged the entire Jewish Community in Philadelphia to support the effort of the Sisters and come out to this event; that every request I made for help in organizing the Philly lap of the trip was answered with an unhesitating “yes”; that so many people expressed the esteem they had for



FROM TOP: St. Martin de Porres Church, Toledo; on the way to The Dorothy Day house in Youngstown; Nuns on the Bus outside Mercy Housing in Chicago; Dan speaks at Mercy Housing.

NETWORK. However, the sheer number of people—almost 600—who participated in this event was the biggest surprise of all! I learned from those in the audience that they travelled from all parts of New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and many places in eastern Pennsylvania...and all of this in Friday-night traffic during a heat wave. To be in the company of such a host of kindred spirits with hearts on fire for economic justice clearly affirms for me the hunger of so many people to put their faith (no matter what that faith is) into action. A profound experience of God’s Spirit permeated this friendraiser, and truly it was a moment of grace.

Saturday, June 30— Philadelphia, PA to Baltimore, MD

The new day began with a visit to Mercy Neighborhood Ministries of Philadelphia, a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy.

Sister Richelle Friedman, PVBM: Eleven-year-old Josiah asked his mom if he could come to Mercy Neighborhood Ministries even though it was Saturday and there would be no classes.

He’d heard there were going to be visitors and he wanted to be there. I noticed him standing close to his teacher, Sharon. As a middle-school teacher, Sharon knows how important it also is for Josiah and her other students whose lives are full of conflict and turmoil to learn peace and tranquility. She asked if I wanted to see their classroom. Josiah proudly led the way. In a brightly painted and decorated classroom Sharon uses music, beautiful pictures of nature, breathing techniques, and exercises to assist the children in developing inner peace and strength she knows they will need to face adversity and make hard choices.

Children as young as three come to MNM for daycare, children are taught in afterschool classes, adults learn computer skills and complete GEDs, and eldercare provides a place of dignity for seniors and a

respite for caregivers. Sister Ann, a Sister of Mercy and director of MNM, found a way to purchase an old warehouse in the neighborhood and transform it into a beautiful, green-certified building with a welcoming and beautiful learning space that is respectful of all who come.

Sister Mary Ellen Lacy, DC: The director introduced a young participant. His name was Mikhail. He is of a slight build, his hair is close-cut and he wears little wire glasses. He radiates beauty. He proudly walked up to the director, took the microphone, and walked around to the front of the podium. He stood erect and announced to the large gathered crowd, "I am Mikhail. I'm a second grader here and I am a shining star." He went on to explain that he had learned at the facility that we are called to be bright lights for each other on our journeys. He concluded, "So, I am a brilliant star." He had recently won an award for fulfillment of this role.

A previously scheduled stop in Frederick, MD had to be canceled due to storm damage, much to everyone's regret. So it was on to Baltimore.

Sister Marge Clark, BVM: Baltimore offered us tremendous support and hospitality, from the Jesuit Community at Loyola to the Quaker community, which

hosted the evening fundraiser. We had a delightful dinner with the Jesuits living at Ignatius House. We had wonderful sharing before dinner, during which we lamented the diminishment of the spirit of Vatican II. We shared our vision of Church as the People of God.

After dinner we went to Stony Run, a beautiful Quaker meeting house, where we were joined by a couple of hundred friends yearning for the positive energy we seem able to bring. The quiet spirit of that space brought a deep centering as we shared stories of those we carry in our hearts.

The Sisters then spent the night in the Dorothy Day dorm at Loyola University.

Sunday, July 1—Richmond, VA

On Sunday, the bus traveled to Virginia.

Sister Marge Clark, BVM: We pulled out of Baltimore about 8:00 a.m. in order to get to Congressman Cantor's office by noon. It was critical to come to this place, as Congressman Cantor is very supportive of the Ryan budget. About 100 folks showed up to greet us even knowing no staff would be there on a Sunday. Many had come long distances in 100-degree temperatures and been at our other events.

Personally touching was looking out into the crowd and seeing a beautiful face from long ago: Marci Neimann (former BVM, sister of Maribeth, BVM), one of my early role models. While still a scholastic, I lived with Marci at the Immaculata High School convent.

Another powerful experience was meeting a woman with cerebral palsy, in an electric wheelchair accompanied by her service dog. Before getting off the bus I secured water for both her and the dog. Simone learned that the beautiful dog was from a training program in which her congregation is involved in California. The woman was accompanied by several members of her family, one who works with families of children with autism. A form of crippling arthritis is beginning to affect her, as she continues her work. Both women are so grateful for the upholding of the Affordable Care Act!

Sister Richelle Friedman, PBVM: I met Charlie and Donna who drove five hours roundtrip to be present. They told me they have done financially well and believe that they and others like them can contribute more to maintaining programs vital to vulnerable families and individuals. They inspired me.

Sister Marge Clark, BVM: From Rep. Cantor's office, we traversed the farm and forestland to visit Shalom Farms, a ministry of the United Methodist Urban Ministries of Richmond. The farm produces food, teaches about growing food, cooking and care of the land—both on the farm, and in Richmond. Their goal is to eliminate as many food deserts as possible.

Sister Mary Ellen Lacy, DC: It is a remarkable program and it was a great "last stop" for our tour. Steve Miles is the farmer, and his three- and one-year-old boys, Eden and Asher, welcomed us warmly and played happily in the fruit rows of the organic farm.

I walked with the three-year-old into the blackberry row. At one point, Eden looked at the plant and cautiously surveyed the branch to find a ripe berry. He picked a berry and without hesitation, he turned to me, held out his open hand and offered the berry to me. It was sweet.

Amazingly, the youngster did not take



Sister Mary Ellen Lacy with Mikhail.



Sister Richelle Friedman on the tractor at Shalom Farms.

the first taste of the fruit of his labor. Nor did he try to fill his own belly or pockets in order to save some for a later date. No, Eden was generous and he trusted that there would be enough for all of us.

Growing up here had taught the three-year-old to respect the gift of earth, to recognize the fruits of life, and to generously own his responsibility to share his resources with his neighbor. And Jesus said, "Be like the little child." Amen.

Sister Marge Clark, BVM: Leaving the farm, we headed to St. Augustine's for a Spanish-language Mass. Our hope was to stay in the back, and sneak out in time to get to the final friendraiser on time, at 7:00. Clearly, we should have not held that expectation. At the end of the Mass, Simone was asked to introduce the Nuns on the Bus; we were each given a special pin with a medal, and left the church near 7:30.

This final friendraiser was at the Virginia Interfaith Center, which is a hub for those providing services to people struggling with poverty. The very patient and enthusiastic group made this last evening event very special.

Monday, July 2— Richmond, VA to Washington DC

On Monday, the Nuns on the Bus were greeted by an enthusiastic crowd in Washington, along with representatives of several faiths.

Kim Smolik, written for Franciscan Mission Service blog (excerpts): I put aside my own schedule to make sure I was present. It was inspiring and motivating to witness how a small group of people

captured the attention of a church and, really, a nation.

What's admirable is that these women used their time in the spotlight not to talk about the Vatican, but to command change for the "least among us."

The Sisters remain committed to living out the Gospel, renouncing the proposed federal budget because of its misalignment with church teaching about solidarity, inequality, the option for the poor, and the common good.

Greeting Nuns on the Bus in Washington.



In the crowd gathered outside the United Methodist Building, I was surrounded by the familiar faces of our partners, collaborators and friends: Pax Christi USA, the Maryknoll Center for Global Concerns, Holy Name Province members, Franciscan Sisters and Friars, and Franciscan Action Network, which helped gather attendees for the rally.

There is a movement going on and a sense of a need to organize, collaborate, and support each other, and the passion and energy surrounding the Nuns on the Bus encourages us to continue to live out our faith in solidarity with the poor.

Thank you, Sisters, for continuing to set a strong example of Gospel-living in standing up for the poor.

Epilogue

Sister Diane Guerin, RSM: Throughout this journey, many images found their way in and out of my consciousness. Yet, one has been vivid and remains with me. It is the image of Pentecost with its accompanying tongues of fire which rested upon the head of each one.

All were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in their own language and each one heard them speaking in their own native tongue.

When one speaks from the heart, sharing their deepest pain, how can hearts not be touched with compassion? Each



Sister Simone Campbell greets the crowd (in back: Sisters Marge Clark, Mary Wendeln, Mary Ellen Lacy and Diane Donoghue).

story different, circumstances varied, but a thread of connection in all the stories. I believe that it is in that connection that we can find hope. We need to hear, but more importantly we need to understand what has contributed to making these stories. In many instances it has been the policies initiated by our government. Policies that have worked for the few but abandoned the majority. This is not who we are as a nation and as a people. How have we wandered so far from our values of human dignity, fairness, family?

What then is the challenge we face? Our Constitution begins: "We the People..." There are no qualifiers; it means ALL the people. Policies, procedures or laws that exclude some of the people from the benefits of a democracy or leave people behind is not who we are called to be as a nation. Our leaders need to not only hear the stories of the people, but they need to open their hearts so that they can truly be touched with compassion and understand the full impact of stories people are sharing. Until they learn to understand, there is little hope of change. We must keep on holding up these life experiences of "the people" and encouraging our leaders to put aside partisan politics and begin to represent the people at the grassroots, not just corporate interests. This is an almost overwhelming challenge, but we saw as the Nuns on the Bus traveled that there is a groundswell at the grassroots and people are demanding a more just and equitable world for all.

And may the ears of all be open to hear, the hearts of all be receptive to the message, and the will of all be moved to change so that all on Earth may know the blessings of life.

Stephanie Niedringhaus is NETWORK's Communications Coordinator.

(L TO R) Sisters Mary Wendeln, Mary Ellen Lacy and Diane Donoghue at the Washington celebration.



Meanwhile, Back in Washington

BY NETWORK ISSUE STAFF

The federal budget was the big issue on the Nuns on the Bus tour. During the tour, two key Supreme Court decisions were also announced—on healthcare and immigration. Here are Washington updates for these three critically important issue areas.

Budget & Appropriations

Congress is in recess August 6 to September 6. Neither chamber will be in session for more than nine days in September, with the end of the fiscal year fast approaching. Although both chambers have been working on FY 2013 appropriations bills (the annual spending bills that finance operations of government agencies), Congress appears unlikely to clear many bills before Election Day. This means, once again, moving into the new fiscal year on a Continuing Resolution—extending current funding levels for some period of time.

Final agreement between the House and Senate has been delayed because their committees are working under different appropriations caps. The Senate adheres to the Budget Control Act cap (\$1.047 trillion for FY 2013), passed last August while House members work under a \$28-billion lower cap. Moreover, the House budget resolution calls for an \$8.1 billion increase for Defense. In order to allocate this additional money, the House has designed deeper cuts in non-defense spending programs, which disproportionately harm low-income working families and seniors.

One egregious example is the House Agriculture Committee bill that contains a \$16.5 billion cut to SNAP

(formerly known as food stamps). This cut would result in up to three million people being denied SNAP benefits, with another 500,000 SNAP participating households losing \$90 a month in benefits, and 280,000 school-age children no longer being eligible for free school meals. The SNAP cuts would eliminate 19,000 jobs and deprive low-income Americans of nearly one billion meals.

Another large difference is the House's \$7.7 billion cuts in the Labor-HHS bill. Given the vast differences between House and Senate funding levels, agreement on all individual appropriations bills is unlikely. Therefore, we expect passage of an "omnibus" bill containing many individual appropriations.

Taxes

The Senate passed a tax bill similar to the one President Obama has been promoting. This means anyone with an income will continue to get a tax cut, including millionaires (who get it on their first \$250,000 in income). The Senate bill also continues low-income tax credit improvements enacted in 2009, to prevent low-income workers with children from seeing a large increase in their taxes.

The House GOP plan (H.R. 8) takes away credits for low-income families, but gives LARGER tax breaks to the wealthiest estate heirs, and is expected to pass! Indeed, many Republicans in the House and Senate have opposed allowing any

of the tax cuts to expire—except for the low-income credit improvement.

Lawmakers from both parties are also hoping for a broad structural overhaul of the tax code in 2013. The House is also voting on legislation (H.R. 6169) that will instruct the Ways & Means Committee to develop comprehensive legislation by next April. Although tax reform is needed, H.R. 6169 outlines dangerous combinations of lowered tax rates and elimination of deductions and credits for low-income families.



Misguided Fiscal Cliff

The combination of tax and spending changes, scheduled to take effect in January 2013, would produce what many refer to as a "fiscal cliff." However, numerous economists believe there would be more of a "slide," providing time to adapt to current law, thus avoiding a renewed recession. The "fear factor" is being publicized to justify massive cuts to government spending (as in "sequestration"—money being taken away from affected federal agencies) while continuing to exempt the wealthiest from paying previous levels of taxes.

August is an important month for NETWORK activists. District office visits and attending town hall meetings are two of many ways to stay informed and active.

Immigration

On June 16, President Obama announced the Department of Home-



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land Security would no longer deport undocumented immigrants under age 30 who arrived in the U.S. as children (before age 16). In addition, they must also meet one of these criteria:

resided in the U.S. for at least five years, graduated from high school, attained their GED, or served in the military.

Those qualifying can apply for deferred action for two years and are able to apply for a work permit. This is not the DREAM Act because it does not provide a pathway to citizenship. However, in a gridlocked political climate, removing the deportation fear is a major step for DREAMers. We must continue to advocate for passage of the DREAM Act.

On June 25, the Supreme Court ruled that three of four provisions in Arizona's SB 1070 immigration law were uncon-

stitutional. The remaining provision, Section 2B, requires local police to ask for proof of immigration status whenever they have "reasonable suspicion" that a person is undocumented. This will affect all Americans as it takes time and resources away from police in order to fulfill this requirement.

NETWORK firmly believes that these actions show the pressing need for Congress to establish a working immigration system for our country.

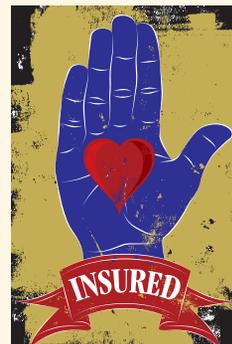
Healthcare

In a greatly anticipated ruling, the Supreme Court upheld most of the Affordable Care Act on June 28. While the individual mandate was kept intact, the

requirement for states to expand their Medicaid programs to include those with incomes up to 133% of the federal poverty line is now optional. NETWORK firmly believes that states should move beyond politics and ensure poor people have access to the healthcare they need.

Six million young adults have already benefitted from this law and those with preexisting conditions cannot be denied coverage. The act also does not provide federal funding for abortion as enforced

through the Hyde Amendment and affirmed in a ruling by Federal Judge Timothy Black. As Catholics who believe healthcare access is a human right, it is now our responsibility to ensure full implementation of the law to ensure the undeniable moral imperative to guarantee healthcare for all.



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