



"Ut In Omnibus Glorificetur Deus."  
"That in all things may God be glorified."  
(1 Peter 4:11)

# St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter

Vol. 39 No. 1 Spring and Summer 2018



"Ora et Labora"  
"Prayer and Work"  
(Benedictine Motto)

## Catholic weekly ends century of dedicated journalism

"The *Prairie Messenger* is a family newspaper. The people involved in the production of the newspaper have always been very dedicated to their work," Fr. Lawrence DeMong, OSB said to 100 attending the open house, April 28, of the *Prairie Messenger* (PM) and St. Peter's Press.

Speaking on behalf of the monastic community, DeMong recalled the sacrifice it took to produce the Catholic weekly which was officially closing on May 9. He remembered former editor, Fr. Wilfred Hergott, OSB wearing many hats. Hergott,

already busy with his newspaper duties, was the abbey porter and was responsible for answering phone calls. He then had to relay the messages. Hergott had a classroom in St. Peter's College where he taught English. Fr. Augustine Nenzel, OSB had to learn the role of editorship on the job, he said. Fr. Andrew Britz, OSB struggled with writing and managed to pen some of the best editorials in the newspaper. DeMong worked at the PM in the 1960s as a proofreader when all the staff involved Benedictines. The only lay staff were in the printing shop.

Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, who served as the final PM editor, said he is still amazed at how the Benedictines managed to begin a newspaper in 1904, only months after arriving in Canada. He is impressed with their ability to operate two newspapers for 24 years beginning in 1923, one in German and one in English. Many readers have expressed their appreciation for the service of the PM, Novecosky commented. He has been receiving letters from subscribers

*Continued on page 5*



LAST PM – Randy Weber, St. Peter's Press operator, holds the last *Prairie Messenger* to be printed by St. Peter's Press. The final printing took place on April 25. The next two editions of May 2 and 9 were printed in Melfort. Weber has been an employee of St. Peter's Press for 43 years.

# A message from Abbot Peter's desk

This past year we have experienced death in all sorts of manner.

The deaths that affected the community most immediately were the deaths of two of our senior members. Prior Rudolph Novecosky, OSB and Br. Wolfgang Thiem, OSB both died in October, as indicated in the Abbey Events section of this newsletter.

Fr. Rudolph spent a decade as a teacher and prefect at St. Peter's College high school. He made many friends among the students and some became regular visitors. He then spent several decades as pastor of neighbouring parishes. He was able to stay independent after suffering a hunting accident in 1977, which left him as a paraplegic and dependent on a wheelchair. He returned to the abbey in 2008 and served as formation director and as prior.

Br. Wolfgang was our oldest monk, at age 93. Born in Germany and growing up during the Second World War, he came to Canada in the 1950s. He arrived at the abbey in the early 1970s and made profession of vows in 1973. He was a faithful carpenter, gardener and made his reputation growing succulent tomatoes in his greenhouse.

Another "death" the monastic community is mourning is the closure of the



*PM EDITOR – Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB was the last Benedictine editor of the Prairie Messenger. He served as editor from 2004 to 2018.*

weekly *Prairie Messenger* and St. Peter's Press. Once, the entire staff was all monks, but I was the only monastic staff member left, as editor of the *Prairie Messenger*. Our readers and supporters have written to share sorrow over losing their weekly source of news and inspiration. The Messenger, while published in small-town Saskatchewan, had a reputation as the "best Catholic newspaper in Canada."

Except for a few years, the editors were always monks. The *Messenger* reached a peak of 16,000 subscribers during the Second Vatican Council, and later declined to 4,000. Changing technology and financial challenges led to the paper's demise.

As indicated in the Abbey Events section, our area gained international attention with the death of 16 young people in the Humboldt Broncos bus crash, April 6. Expressions of grief poured in from around the world and donations to a GoFundMe site exceeded all expectations. Humboldt was put on the map and the reaction from the community and support

for the surviving families earned our area widespread acclaim from the media.

The community is interested in "downsizing" our energy footprint. Along with adding insulation to our abbey, adding triple-pane windows, using low-flush toilets and energy-efficient furnaces, we have recently changed most of our lighting to LED bulbs. This is an investment for the future, to lower our bills and to lessen our carbon footprint.

We are also investigating the possibility of using solar energy. It has a large capital cost at the outset, but the saving will prove positive in the future. Several monks have attended workshops and we are encouraged by steps other religious communities have taken, including St. John's Abbey in Minnesota, which has a 25-acre solar field. A recent workshop in Saskatoon explained how a solar co-op can be set up. Several farmers and acreages in the area have already set up solar panels.

This past winter gave us a lot of snow and cold weather, especially in the second half of the season. However, the snow melted in record time, it seems, and farmers and gardeners are already planting the seeds of new life. Hope continues to spring eternal at this season of the year.

We pray that God bless all of you.

Please see our abbey website: [stpetersabbey.ca](http://stpetersabbey.ca)



*ABBOTS' WORKSHOP – Abbot Peter attended the workshop at St. Joseph's Abbey in Louisiana Feb. 6-8.*



# St. Peter's Bote promoted German-Catholic traditions

The Benedictines came to Canada in 1903 to provide German-speaking priests for second-generation German-Catholic settlers from the United States. One year later, after barely getting a foothold in their new land, the monks established a newspaper – *St. Peter's Bote*. The first issue of the German-Catholic weekly rolled off the press in Winnipeg on February 11, 1904. The printing operation became established in Muenster in September of 1905 after the Benedictines purchased a printing press.

The editors of the *Bote* were Benedictine priests who were fluent in both German and English. Prior Alfred Mayer, OSB served as the first editor for four months when he was replaced by Fr. Benedict Steigenberger, OSB. Fr. Bruno Doerfler, OSB took on the role as editor when the newspaper moved to Muenster. He resigned after being elected prior of the monastery in April of 1906. Steigenberger became editor again until 1908 when Fr. Peter Windschiegel, OSB assumed the editorship, remaining in the position until 1922. Fr. Joseph Sittenauer,

OSB served as editor for the next 12 years. Windschiegel took over the helm again until the newspaper ceased production in 1947. He had served as editor for more than 27 years.

The first editors of the *Bote* began their terms by announcing they would avoid getting involved in politics. Their goals were to defend justice, freedom and the welfare of Catholics. The Benedictines soon learned that it was impossible to separate religion and politics. It did not take long before they changed their policy of political neutrality.

The Catholic weekly served two important roles in St. Peter's Colony: it provided news, and information on the Catholic faith and German-Catholic traditions. The first publications encouraged the settlers to persevere. A 1904 editorial reads, in part, "You settlers in St. Peter's Colony, don't be timorous. Go ahead with the work; be busy and persistent. Don't shy away from the burdens and privations of pioneer living."

The *Bote* was a strong supporter of the colony and rebuked criticisms of the

settlement. Encouragement was given to the pioneers, as well, by the correspondents of the *Bote* who praised the work ethic of the settlers and the quality of their crops and gardens. The reports reinforced the importance of the colony as a place where German-Catholics could share their traditions.

The *Bote* soon became entangled in politics over the issue of education. The *Bote* urged colonists to support schools that taught the German language and Catholic faith. The provincial government was criticized for enacting a tax system which supported public schools over separate and private church-run schools, and allowing only a half hour of religious instruction at the end of the school day.

Church life was given extensive coverage through reports of special liturgical celebrations, meetings of church organizations, parish fundraising picnics, donations of furnishing to churches, and the building of new churches. A common experience of settlers was building churches and later replacing them with larger more ornate structures. Articles often revealed that life in the colony was far from ideal. There were reports of fires that destroyed homes, businesses, crops and property. Injuries or deaths occurred from freezing weather, blizzards, fires, accidents and illnesses.

A constant concern of the *Bote* editors was meeting expenses. Prior Peter Windschiegel, in an address in 1914, said, "*St. Peter's Bote* has not been a financial success. Rather, it has been a painful child for its publishers. Were it not for the consolation we get from serving a noble cause ... the publishers would long have given up."



PM/PRESS STAFF – Members include: from left, Kevin Reiter, press production; Randy Weber, printer; Don Ward, associate editor; Kelly Wittke, press manager; Abbot Peter Novecosky, PM editor; Maureen Weber, associate editor; Gail Kleefeld, advertising, circulation, proofreading; Lucille Stewart, layout artist; and Karen Kolkman, graphic artist and accounting.

# St. Peter's Messenger defends Catholic faith

The Benedictines, 20 years after arriving in Canada, added another service to their apostolates – *St. Peter's Messenger*. The first edition rolled off the press on May 24, 1923, some 19 years after the first issue of the German newspaper, *St. Peter's Bote*, was printed. The monks were now publishing two broad-sheets, one in English and one in German. *St. Peter's Messenger* became known as the *Prairie Messenger* in 1928.

*St. Peter's Messenger* (*Messenger*) continued the two-fold mission of *St. Peter's Bote* (*Bote*) in providing news and teaching the Catholic faith. Similar to the *Bote*, the *Messenger* often defended the Catholic Church against outside attacks. The first anniversary edition of May 22, 1924, stated the *Messenger's* mandate: "The watchword of the *Messenger* is service in the defense of the church and the advancement of its interests."

The terms "defense" and "interests" had very different meanings in the 1920s than what would be understood today. The Catholic Church was struggling to find acceptance and legitimacy in a society that was suspicious of Catholics and people of German heritage. Canada was largely British and Anglo-Saxon Protestant and its establishment wanted Canada to remain that way. The *Messenger* became a vehicle to explain traditional Catholic values and defend them against criticisms and false accusations.

The first editor of *St. Peter's Messenger* was Fr. Lewis Gwynn, a Benedictine Oblate, who served briefly in 1924. He was followed by Fr. Cosmas Krumpelmann, OSB (1924-26) and Fr. John Hable, OSB (1926-31). The first two Benedictine editors had a common zeal for promoting Catholic teachings and pulling no punches in defending them.

The *Messenger* was born in a society where there were sharp divisions along denominational and ethnic lines. The Catholic weekly made it known in front-



PM EDITORS – Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, served as the editor of the *Prairie Messenger* since 2004. With him are associate editors, Donald Ward (2001), left, and Maureen Weber (1994).

page stories and editorials who the friends and foes were of the church. The editors of the *Messenger* were well informed about local, national and international news events and were outspoken in sharing their views on them. Editorials presented opinions on issues and events, and they were used to teach religion.

The *Messenger* was a family newspaper. There was a Letters to the Editor page and pages devoted to international, national and local news. Columns explained faith issues. Front-page stories were always complimentary to the church, often reporting on addresses of church leaders or successful church projects and missions. Stories reminded readers of the struggles and persecution of the church. A Juvenile Page was devoted to youth where pious stories were written on saints and topics that taught morality. Editorials to youth explained morality and proper behavior.

Fr. Wilfred Hergott, OSB succeeded Fr. John Hable, OSB as editor in 1931. Hergott became the longest-serving editor of the *Prairie Messenger*, managing the editor's desk for 24 years from 1931 to 1955. The *Prairie Messenger*, under

his tenure, became more focused on social issues. Concern for the rights of the individual came to the fore during the economic depression of the 1930s. The term "new social order" entered into discussion following the Second World War as world leaders struggled to rebuild Europe and prevent future conflicts. Hergott and his successor, Augustine Nenzel, OSB (1955-1962), were well versed in political and social issues which become the subject of commentary in editorials.

Aware that the Catholic Church opposed atheistic socialism and communism, The *Prairie Messenger* was cautious in its analysis of new social movements in Canada such as the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). Hergott agreed with the stance of the CCF on issues of social justice and the rights of workers. He reminded readers of *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of Labour), a ground-breaking encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, and *Quadragesimo Anno* (Reconstructing the Social Order), an encyclical of Pope Pius XI, which defended the rights of workers and fam-

*Continued on page 5*



# Catholic weekly ends century of dedicated journalism

*Continued from page 1*

explaining how important the weekly has been to them. Readers have been very generous to the *PM*, he added, donating \$75,000 each year.

Maureen Weber, associate editor, said the *PM* had a far-reaching impact across the nation and beyond. The weekly not only offered news stories, but its content engaged the readers. She thanked the staff for their dedication and the Benedictines for their support. Weber expressed her appreciation to the late Fr. Andrew Britz, OSB for hiring her and serving as a mentor.

Sr. Marian Noll, OSU, former associate editor, expressed her heartfelt thanks to all the staff and the Benedictines. Sr. Miriam Spennath, OSU, presented a Certificate of Honour from Development and Peace to the *PM* for its work in promoting social

justice. The Leo Kurtenbach Pen was presented to DeMong, on behalf of the *PM*, for his many letters to the editor in support of social justice issues.

The Catholic weekly was born in 1904 in St. Peter's Colony, a small German-Catholic colony in the Northwest Territories that was opening to settlers. The Benedictines came to Canada in 1903 to provide German-speaking priests for second-generation German-Catholic settlers. Only one year later, after barely getting a foothold in their new land, the Benedictines agreed to establish a newspaper. The weekly, one of the apostolates of the monks, was more than a local source of news. It was an instrument for promoting St. Peter's Colony and German-Catholic traditions. On February 11, 1904, the first issue of the German-Catholic weekly, *St. Peter's Bote* (*Bote*), rolled off the press in Winnipeg. The printing operation moved to Muenster in 1905 when the Benedictines purchased a printing press.

Another newspaper, *St. Peter's Messenger*, was established 18 years later to meet the needs of the readership who were speaking English. The first issue of *St. Peter's Messenger* was published on May 24, 1923. The *Bote* continued publishing until July 31, 1947.

The editors of the *Bote* and its English successor were all Benedictines. (During a few transition years there were non-Benedictine editors.) All the Benedictine

editors had a common baptism and vocation in a religious congregation famous for its promotion of church life and education. The men had an understanding of events within and outside of the colony and they illustrated this knowledge in editorials and articles.

The Benedictines came to Canada to live in a monastic community that was immersed in German-Catholic traditions and supported a German-Catholic colony. The Catholic weekly was an important instrument in upholding these traditions. The monks soon realized that the local community was intertwined with the outside world. It was impossible to ignore the rest of the country and the nations beyond Canada's borders when outside events and decisions affected issues important to the local colony. The vision of each editor was transformed as he came to see the church and its mission in a new light through each passing decade.

The May 22, 1924 issue marking the first anniversary of *St. Peter's Messenger*, proclaimed that the newspaper was continuing to grow "sturdy and strong." Its four pages had developed into eight, and the number of subscribers had increased from 37 to many times that number. "The watchword of the *Messenger* is 'Service' – in defense of the church, and the advancement of her interests," a front-page article read. In 1928, the name of the newspaper was changed to the *Prairie Messenger*.

## Messenger defends Catholic Church

*Continued from page 4*

ilies while condemning unbridled capitalism, communism and atheistic socialism. Readers were encouraged to be informed about political issues and to vote.

Society was in flux, not only politically, but morally. Traditional church teachings were being challenged by new social movements. The *Prairie Messenger*, an important voice of the church, criticized the increasing acceptance of contraception, divorce, sterilization, mixed marriages, immoral movies, reading material, false modesty (improper dress) and euthanasia. The *Prairie Messenger* emphasized the authority of the church as an essential moral and spiritual guide.

The 1950s brought a stronger economy and a new wave of optimism in Canada where dioceses fund-raised to build new Catholic schools, hospitals and nursing homes. Church attendance was strong and pilgrimages and rosary crusades were popular. The church leadership was looked upon as a moral guide and it began to address new moral issues.



PM MAIL ROOM – Gail Kleefeld, left, Kevin Reiter and Lucille Stewart prepare the April 25 *Prairie Messenger* for mailing. The April 25 edition was the last to be printed by *St. Peter's Press*.

# People and events around the abbey

2017

Sept. 11 – Students of St. Therese Bible School in Bruno helped the Benedictines harvest potatoes. There were only enough potatoes for the Benedictines and St. Therese School. There was enough corn for both the abbey and area residents. A U-pick was available for corn.

Sept. 12 – Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk, OSB completed his final extraction of honey. The bees produced 350 lbs. of honey.

Sept. 13 – Very good harvesting weather was interrupted by the first harvest rainfall.

Sept. 20 – New identification signs for buildings and parking lots were placed around the abbey and college grounds.

Sept. 23 – Students were honored at the annual St. Peter's College

Scholarships and Awards Day. Students received more than \$70,000 worth of awards. The awards ranged from \$250 to \$7,000. Fr. Paul Paproski, OSB took photos of the presentations and Abbot Peter Novacosky, OSB asked the blessing before the noon luncheon. A special meeting of the Grounded in Faith Council was held at the college library, following the noon luncheon. Vern and Helga Hoing of White Rock, B.C. announced they were donating another \$100,000 towards the college renovations. They had already given \$100,000. They pledged another \$300,000 to the college over the next three years, bringing their total contributions to \$500,000.

Sept. 24 – St. Peter's Parish Choir sang with the accompaniment of a new grand piano, purchased at Yamaha Piano Centre, Saskatoon. Vern and Helga Hoing of White Rock, B.C. donated \$20,000 towards the \$40,000 piano and were present at Mass.

Sept. 25-29 – Abbot Peter Novacosky, OSB attended the annual meeting of the Canadian bishops in Cornwall, Ontario.

Sept. 27 – Saskatchewan Synod Lutheran Leadership Conference joined the Benedictines for vespers and then supper. Dirk Lange, associate professor of Worship of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, addressed everyone in the Jerome Assembly Room on the theme: *Common Prayer: Liturgy and Life*. Everyone gathered in the abbey church, afterwards, for an evening service. The theme of the service was: *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017*.

Sept. 28 – Fr. Paul Paproski, OSB, chair of campus ministry, presented a PowerPoint on the history of the Benedictines and St. Peter's College, to 25 students and staff of St. Peter's College. Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk, OSB and Br. Pierre Rouillard, OSB of campus ministry were in attendance.



**FINAL PRINTING** – The final printing of the *Prairie Messenger* at St. Peter's Press took place on April 25. The next two editions were printed in Melfort. Sorting and stacking the newspapers are Lucille Stewart and Kevin Reiter.



Sept. 30 - Oct. 2 – Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB and Kathy Tumback, business manager, attended the annual ATRI meeting for finance officers and religious superiors in Ottawa.

Oct. 1 – Fr. Daniel Muyres, OSB and Br. Basil Schaan, OSB attended a Development and Peace fall campaign workshop in Bruno. The theme was *Women at the Heart of Peace*.

Oct. 7 – Fr. Richard Meidl, OSB celebrated his 25th anniversary as a priest with family and friends at Mass and a festive dinner afterwards.

Oct. 11 – A meeting of 12 religious superiors from Saskatchewan was held at St. Peter's Abbey.



*Fr. Joseph Ackerman, OSB*

Oct. 12 – Fr. Joseph Ackerman, OSB was honoured by the community of Bruno. Fr. Joe Park was named in his honour. Fr. Joseph, 93, served the parishes of St. Bruno in Bruno and St. Agnes in Peterson for 19 years before retiring in Bruno. He is well known for supporting community events.



*Fr. Rudolph Novecosky, OSB*



*THANKSGIVING DISPLAY – Oblate Annette Zawada of St. Gregor, left, Br. Basil Schaan, OSB and Francis Nguyen put up the 2017 Thanksgiving display outside of the abbey church.*

Oct. 13 – Funeral Mass was celebrated for Fr. Rudolph Novecosky, OSB at St. Augustine Church, Humboldt. Prayer Service was held, Oct. 12, at St. Peter's Parish, Muenster. Fr. Rudolph, 80, died on Oct. 9, Thanksgiving Day.

Oct. 18 – Strong winds blew some trees over, broke branches off trees and spread leaves across the landscape.

Oct. 21 – Bernie and Shirley Karstad of Saskatoon were the guest speakers at Oblate Day. They discussed their work in ecumenism with the topic: *Inter-church Families/Double Belonging*.

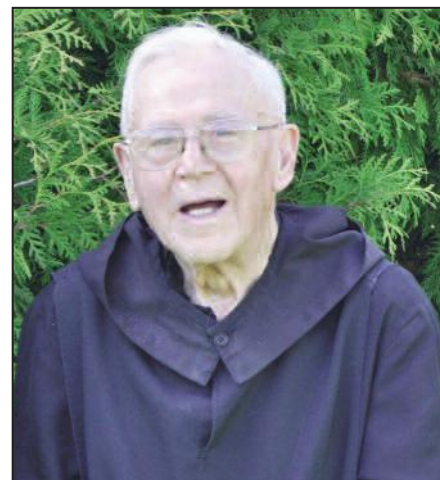


*BENEDICTINE OBLATES – Bernie and Shirley Karstad of Saskatoon were guest speakers at St. Peter's Abbey in October during Oblate Day. The Karstads, Oblates of St. Peter's Abbey, discussed their life as an interchurch family and their involvement with inter-church families for the past 25 years.*

Oct. 21 – The staff of the *Prairie Messenger* were presented the St. Thomas More Medal in recognition of more than a century of journalism at the annual corporation banquet. Accepting the medal were: Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, editor, Don Ward and Maureen Weber, associate editors.

Oct. 24 – Funeral Mass was held for Br. Wolfgang Thiem, OSB at Sts. Peter and Paul Church at St. Peter's Abbey. Prayers were held on Oct. 23 in the abbey church. Br. Wolfgang, 93, died on Oct. 17. Gisbert Thiem of Germany, nephew of Br. Wolfgang, OSB was present. He had visited Br. Wolfgang in April for Br. Wolfgang's 93rd birthday.

*Continued on page 8*



*Br. Wolfgang Thiem, OSB*

# People and events around the abbey

*Continued from page 7*

Oct. 25 – Local residents woke up to snow which covered the ground. Snowfall began the previous day on Oct. 24.

Oct. 26. – Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk, OSB gave a noon hour presentation, on behalf of campus ministry, to students and staff of St. Peter's College. He addressed the topic: *All Hallows Eve*. Also attending, on behalf of campus ministry, were: Fr. Paul Paproski, OSB and Br. Pierre Rouillard, OSB.

Nov. 5 – Renee de Moissac of St. Benedict, on piano, and Martha Kashap of Huntsville, Ontario, violin, performed sonatas for violin and piano in Sts. Peter and Paul Church. The concert, at the abbey, was the last in a series of concerts in Saskatoon, Prince Albert and the local area. Br. Benedict van Ginkel, OSB assisted with the music.

Nov. 8 – Abbot Peter attended the meeting of Saskatchewan bishops and religious superiors in Saskatoon. The meetings have been held annually for the past three decades.

Nov. 15 – Fr. Demetrius gave a presentation on Benedictines and monastic life to the Christian Ethics class of Holy Cross High School, Saskatoon.



*CAMPUS MINISTRY – Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk, OSB gave a noon hour presentation in October to students and staff of St. Peter's College. He addressed the topic: All Hallows Eve. The presentation was on behalf of St. Peter's College Campus Ministry.*

Nov. 18 – Abbot Peter attended the Saskatchewan Knights of Columbus Charitable Foundation gala at St. Augustine's Parish Hall, Humboldt. The KCs celebrated Mass in St. Peter's Parish, Muenster previous to the gala. Fr. Anthony Dizey of Regina, KC chaplain, was the celebrant. Fr. Paul con-celebrated.

Nov. 22 – Abbot Peter and Fr. Lawrence DeMong, OSB attended the 90th birthday celebration of Sister Celine Graf, OSU in Humboldt.

were: Abbot Peter, Fr. Demetrius, Fr. Richard Meidl, Fr. Lawrence DeMong, Br. Kurt Van Kuren.

Nov. 24 – Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon gave a noon hour presentation to students and staff of St. Peter's College. Bishop Bryan was sponsored by campus ministry and addressed the topic: *The Idolatry of Technology*. Among those attending were: Most Rev. Luigi Bonazzi, apostolic nuncio to Canada, Abbot Peter and the Benedictines.



*WELCOMES BISHOP – Bishop Mark Hagemoen visited St. Peter's Abbey, November 24, after being installed as bishop of the Saskatoon Diocese. Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB welcomed the bishop on behalf of the monks.*

Nov. 23 – Fr. Demetrius gave a presentation on Benedictines and monastic life to the Christian Ethics class of Bishop Mahoney High School, Saskatoon.

Nov. 23 – Abbot Peter celebrated the funeral of Patrick Lawrence Grennan at St. Paul's Co-cathedral in Saskatoon. Grennan is the former Br. Patrick (1978-1989) of St. Peter's Abbey.

Nov. 23 – Bishop Mark Hagemoen was installed as Bishop of Saskatoon. Attending



*Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR*





**APOSTOLIC NUNCIO** – Most Rev. Luigi Bonazzi, apostolic nuncio to Canada, signs the guest book, November 24, at St. Peter's Parish, Muenster. The apostolic nuncio visited the parish and St. Peter's Abbey. He was in Saskatoon the previous day to attend the installation of Bishop Mark Hagemoen as bishop of the Saskatoon Diocese.

Nov. 24 – Most Rev. Luigi Bonazzi, apostolic nuncio to Canada, visited St. Peter's Abbey. He met with the Benedictines at a social. Abbot Peter gave him a tour of the *Prairie Messenger* and monastic grounds. Fr. Paul led a tour at St. Peter's Parish, Muenster.

Nov. 28-30 – Br. Basil Schaan, OSB attended the Annual General Meeting of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan. The meeting was held in Regina.

Dec. 8 – Fr. Paul sang in the St. Peter's Chorus Advent concert at North Star Church, Drake and St. Augustine Parish, Humboldt, Dec. 10.

Dec. 9 – Fr. Demetrius attended the 90th birthday party of his aunt Nina Waselenak in Lethbridge, Alberta. His twin brother, Alex, and Alex's wife, Rita, of Saskatoon were among the family members there.

Dec. 24 – Christmas decorations were placed in the abbey church and abbey to begin the Christmas Season.

Dec. 26 – Family Day was celebrated at St. Peter's Abbey with visiting, cards and games.



**DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE** – Sr. Miriam Spenrath, OSU, presents a Certificate of Honour to the *Prairie Messenger* in recognition of the PM's legacy of promoting social justice and human rights. Accepting the certificate are: Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB, PM editor; Maureen Weber and Don Ward, associate editors.

## 2018

Jan. 1 – A special service was held, beginning at midnight, to welcome the New Year.

Jan. 8 – Br. Basil Schaan, OSB was installed as prior, and Br. Benedict van Ginkel, OSB, subprior, at vespers on the feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

Jan. 26-27 – Approximately 15 cm of snowfall blanketed the area.

Jan. 26-28 – St. Thomas More College held its annual retreat at the abbey, attended by 23 students and staff. Fr. Paul attended on behalf of campus ministry.

Jan. 27 – St. Peter's College hosted its annual open house.

Jan. 30 – A luncheon was cancelled by campus ministry when blizzard conditions prevented travel by the guest speakers from Saskatoon.

Feb. 6-8 – Abbot Peter attended an Abbots and Priors Workshop at St. Joseph's Abbey in Covington, Louisiana. The topic for the workshop was: *Building a Culture of Vocations Within the Monastic Community*.

Feb. 7 – Fr. Paul, a member of St. Peter's Chorus, sang in Marysburg. A

concert was held by the Canadian Chamber Choir with guest, St. Peter's Chorus. St. Peter's Chorus accompanied the Canadian Chamber Choir in two numbers. St. Peter's Chorus sang three numbers on its own.

Feb. 13 – St. Peter's College Campus Ministry sponsored its annual Medieval Feast where guests attended a medieval banquet with medieval costumes and music. Approximately 70 students, monks and staff attended.

*Continued on page 10*



**MEDIEVAL FEAST** – Br. Kurt van Kuren, OSB performs, February 13, at St. Peter's College Medieval Feast. The feast, held the day before Ash Wednesday, was attended by college students, staff, Benedictine monks and visitors.

# People and events around the abbey

Continued from page 9



**60TH BIRTHDAY** – Donna Remenda, kitchen manager at St. Peter's Abbey, made a 60th birthday cake, Feb. 13, for Fr. Demetrius. The cake recognized Fr. Demetrius for his work as the beekeeper of St. Peter's Abbey.

Feb. 13 – A moose was spotted walking around Muenster and the grounds of St. Peter's Abbey and College. The moose remained in the local area for a few days until being shipped south about 8 kilometres.

Feb. 18-25 – Diego Barba, a math student of St. Thomas More College, Saskatoon spent a week as a live-in at St. Peter's Abbey. Diego is from Mexico and is the first Mexican to come to the abbey as a live-in. He is planning to earn a PhD in mathematics.

March 3-5 – Driving was difficult throughout the province due to heavy snowfall and blowing snow. Approximately 30 cm of snow fell in the Muenster area. Southern Saskatchewan received up to 40 cm of snow.

March 10-11 – Fr. Demetrius led a Lenten retreat at St. George's Ukrainian Catholic Church in Prince Albert. The theme of the retreat was: *Benedictine Spirituality and Charisma*.

March 16 – Fr. Andre Poilievre and Devan Napope of Saskatoon discussed the work of STR8 UP at a noon hour luncheon at St. Peter's College. They were sponsored by St. Peter's College Campus Ministry. STR8 UP is an organization that helps people leave gangs.



**COMMUNITY WORKERS** – Devan Napope, left, and Fr. Andre Poilievre of Saskatoon explain the work of STR8 UP, in March, to a noon luncheon of St. Peter's College. STR8 UP assists people who want to leave gangs and criminal activity. Poilievre is the founder of STR8 UP and Napope is a member and spokesman. Poilievre was awarded the Order of Canada in 2008 for his community work.

STR8 UP was founded by Poilievre. He was presented the Order of Canada in 2008 for his community work.

March 11 – Approximately 25 deer were spotted on the grounds of St. Peter's Abbey.

March 26 – Abbot Peter attended the annual Chrism Mass and banquet at Holy Family Cathedral.

April 6-8 – Fr. Demetrius and Fr. Paul were among the facilitators who addressed the Engagement Encounter held at St. Peter's Abbey. The event was attended by 14 engaged couples.

April 8 – A memorial service was held at the Humboldt arena in memory of 15 people killed, April 6, on the Humboldt Broncos bus that was travelling to Nipawin for game 5 of its SJHL semifinal series. The bus, with 29 people, was struck by a tractor trailer travelling west on Hwy. 335. The crash killed 10 hockey players, their coach, assistant coach, bus driver, play-by-play radio announcer and statistician. (A 16th person died April 11. She was an athletic therapist.) The Broncos had been scheduled to play



**HUMBOLDT STRONG** – A large model hockey stick is placed alongside Hwy. 5, west of Muenster. The memorial is in recognition of 16 members of the Humboldt Broncos killed, April 6, in a bus accident, and the other 13 who were injured. There were 29 people on the bus. Hockey sticks were used as symbols, locally and across the nation, to remember the victims of the tragedy.





*VESPERS MEMORIAL – A special Vespers Memorial Service for the Humboldt Broncos was celebrated, April 11, at St. Peter's Abbey. St. Peter's College President Robert Harasymchuk lit 16 candles in memory of the 16 killed in the Humboldt Broncos bus accident. Harasymchuk presents a candle to Prior Basil Schaan, OSB. There were 29 on the Humboldt Broncos bus.*

game 6 at their home arena the evening of April 8. Thousands of people filled the arena, as well as local halls to watch the broadcast event. Among those in attendance were Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Premier Scott Moe. The tragedy gained international attention with condolences expressed across the world. Pope Francis and U.S. President Donald Trump were among the world leaders who expressed condolences to Canada. A pancake breakfast was held Sunday morning at St. Augustine Parish Hall to raise money for the Broncos. A Go Fund Me campaign, initiated just after the accident, raised more than \$15 million for the Broncos.

April 11 – A surprise farewell was held for Brenda McNabb, SPC librarian, who was retiring after 37 years of work with the college. Her employment ended on April 30.

April 11 – Seven staff members of St. Peter's College joined the monks at vespers. Candles were lit in memory of the 16 people who lost their lives in the April 6 Humboldt Broncos bus crash. Eleven Broncos had been taking classes at SPC. Three of these students were killed.

April 13 – Frs. Daniel, Demetrius and Paul attended a pancake breakfast at Muenster School to raise funds for the family of Dana Brons who died, April 11, as a result of the Humboldt bus accident. Dana's mother, Carol, is the secretary at Muenster School. Dana was the Broncos athletic therapist.

April 15-20 – Gisbert Thiem of Germany, nephew of the late Br. Wolfgang, OSB visited the abbey.

April 20 – Bishop Mark Hagemoen presided at a Memorial Mass for the Humboldt Broncos at St. Augustine Church, Humboldt. Concelebrating were: Fr. Joseph Salihu, pastor of St. Augustine, and Benedictines Frs. Daniel, Demetrius and Paul.

April 25 – St. Peter's Press printed the final edition of the *Prairie Messenger*. The press rolled off 5,000 PMs. The next two editions were scheduled for printing in Melfort.

April 26 – Water levels were high from melting snow. Runoff in some areas filled ditches and overflowed onto roads and highways.

April 27 – The Muenster Post Office moved from the abbey grounds to the community of Muenster. The post office had been operated by the Order of St. Benedict, through St. Peter's Press, since October of 2009.

April 28 – Approximately 100 attended an open house at the *Prairie Messenger* and Press, commemorating the past 114 years of journalism by the Benedictines. The public was treated to

*Continued on page 12*



*POST OFFICE – Kelly Wittke sorts mail in the Muenster Post Office at the Prairie Messenger-St. Peter's Press office of St. Peter's Abbey. The post office moved, April 27, to Muenster. The post office first opened on the abbey grounds in October of 2009.*

# People and events around the abbey

*Continued from page 11*

wine and cheese, and viewed press equipment, and pictorial displays. Abbot Peter was the emcee for a program where presentations were given by Fr. Lawrence DeMong, OSB, on behalf of the monastic community; former associate editor, Sr. Marian Noll, OSU, and associate editor Maureen Weber. Sr. Miriam Spenrath, OSU, presented the *PM* an award on behalf of Development and Peace for its promotion of social justice. DeMong received the Leo Kurtenbach Pen for his many contributions to the Letters to the Editor where he addressed issues of social justice.

April 29 – St. Peter's Chorus presented its annual spring concert at St. Augustine Church, Humboldt. Fr. Paul was among the choir members. On April 27, the choir sang at Knox United Church in Lanigan.

April 30 – Fr. Demetrius retired as manager of St. Peter's College Student Residence. He held that position for 18



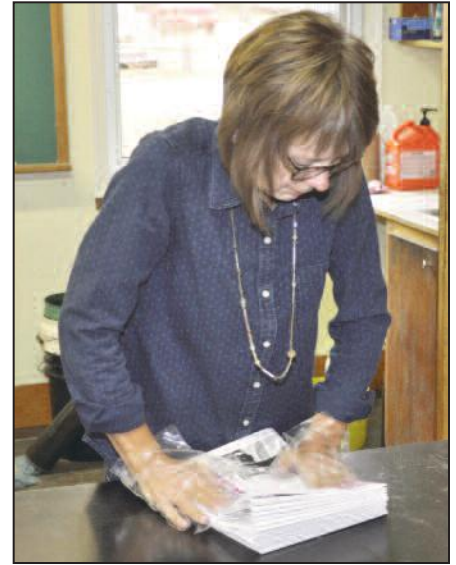
**FORMER EMPLOYEE** – Sr. Marian Noll, OSU, former associate editor of the *Prairie Messenger*, addressed the open house, April 28, of the *Prairie Messenger* and St. Peter's Press.

years. He continues as manager of St. Peter's Abbey Guest Wing.

May 2 – St. Peter's Abbey hosted a staff appreciation luncheon.

May 8 – The final edition of the *Prairie Messenger* was printed in Melfort.

May 9 – The final issue of the *Prairie Messenger* was mailed: Vol. 95, No. 45.



Gail Kleefeld compresses *Prairie Messengers* after they come off the press.



**ST. PETER'S PRESS** – The April 25, 2018 copies of the *Prairie Messenger* await to be sorted and mailed. The final printing of the *Prairie Messenger* by St. Peter's Press took place April 25. The two final editions were printed in Melfort.



# Prairie Messenger goes through conversion

St. Paul is famous for going through a conversion on the road to Damascus where he made a dramatic change in his way of thinking. The *Prairie Messenger* went through a transformation in its January 25, 1962 edition, a special feast day of St. Paul.

"The feast of the Conversion of St. Paul marks the conversion of the *Prairie Messenger* also," editor Fr. Augustine Nenzel, OSB said in the headline story. "And almost as radical a conversion, at least so far as outward appearances go!"

The weekly went from an eight-page broadsheet to a trim 16-page tabloid. The pages, once seven-columns wide, were now five-columns. The decision to change the newspaper came after much discussion and careful preparation, and "some pressure from within the Benedictine community," Nenzel wrote. The change in appearance was approved to help the newspaper better serve the readership and make it easier to read, he said.

The new look gave a new appearance to the masthead where the article ("the") was dropped from the *Prairie Messenger* and the letters P and M were transformed. The "P" became a monogram for Christ and "M", a symbol for Mary. The Catholic weekly was dedicated to Christ and His Blessed Mother.

The Archdiocese of Regina, the dioceses of Saskatoon and the Abbey of St. Peter were given their own separate pages, and the dioceses of Prince Albert and Gravelbourg shared a page. Columnists provided insight into church teachings, family life and issues affecting community and rural life. Regular submissions on spiritual and moral issues were provided by a bishop and two clergy. Two lay persons were among the columnists and both were women. One wrote about traditional family life and another answered questions on the Youth page. Bro. Ben answered letters from children on the Junior page. Noted columnist, Grant Maxwell, gave a lay person's perspective on church life. A columnist wrote about rural issues while movie and television shows were submitted by another.

The change in the look of the *Prairie Messenger* was the second most important story for the newspaper in 1962. The first edition on January 4 announced that Pope



ST. PETER'S BOTE – St. Peter's Bote, a German-Catholic weekly, began publication in 1904 to provide news for pioneers of St. Peter's Colony and promote German-Catholic traditions. The Bote closed in 1947.

John XXIII was convoking the Second Vatican Council. The pope, in announcing the council, spoke of his desire for the sanctification of church members, Christian unity and world peace. Pope John made a dramatic gesture to Christians, asking both Catholics and non-Catholics to pray for the council's success. Pope John had been elected pontiff in 1958 and was transforming the way the church looked on the world. He was ecumenical, a

proponent of church unity, peace and social justice. Other church leaders shared the pontiff's openness to church unity.

Fr. James Gray, OSB was associate editor when the *Prairie Messenger* underwent a facelift, and became editor several months later. Gray expressed his support for the pontiff's call for renewal and change in the church and world. He

*Continued on page 14*



ST. PETER'S MESSENGER – The first edition of St. Peter's Messenger rolled off the press in the Diocese of Muenster (St. Peter's Abbey) on May 24, 1923. The English-Catholic weekly was an important source of local, national and international news. It provided information on the Catholic faith and church issues. In 1928, the weekly's name changed to the *Prairie Messenger*.

# Prairie Messenger goes through conversion

Continued from page 13

embraced the pope's invitation to the clergy and laity to re-examine their roles in the church, and their relationships among Christians and non-Christians. He encouraged laity to become involved in the church.

"Renewal" was in vogue and it was embraced wholeheartedly by Gray who, in his editorials, encouraged the clergy and laity to dialogue and re-examine their relationships and roles in the church. A strong proponent of social justice and peace, the editorial page became a voice for the poor, forgotten and exploited. Closer to home, Gray supported the concept of universal health care, co-operatives, justice and reconciliation.

The 1960s ushered in a new age of renewal and optimism and the *Prairie Messenger* became part of that, in 1966, by revamping its masthead. It dropped the religious symbols on the P and M and enlarged its name to *Prairie Messenger*, Saskatchewan Catholic Weekly.

Along with the optimism of the era were new challenges and struggles. Traditional moral values were being rejected by a new generation that was losing interest in religious institutions. Church attendance was dropping and vocations to reli-



**PM HAS CONVERSION** – *The Prairie Messenger* underwent a conversion in its January 25, 1962 edition, the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. The weekly went from an eight-page broadsheet to a trim 16-page tabloid. The pages, once seven-columns wide, were now five-columns.

gious life and the priesthood were on the decline. Current vocation trends pointed to a future shortage of clergy.

Fr. Michael Pomedli, OSB, who succeeded Gray in July of 1972, embraced the challenges of reform and renewal of Vatican II by inviting readers to share their opinions and experiences of church life. The church, he believed, was a holy

institution in need of renewal and reform and everyone had a say in its direction.

The *Prairie Messenger* of the 1970s, under Pomedli (1972-1976) and his successor Br. Bede Hubbard, OSB (1976-1981) disclosed that the church is diverse and multicultural, a kaleidoscope of many peoples with many stories to tell. There are many understandings of church life and they may not always be in harmony with one another.

Columnists made known the diverse opinions on church life, some of which challenged church traditions. Contributors, among them Benedictine priests, answered questions about church teachings, and wrote meaningful articles on scripture, Sunday readings, liturgy and the sacraments. Others discussed family life and issues from a woman's point of view. Feature articles gave in-depth stories on a myriad of topics. Editorials supported a society that was more just and socially conscious. Greater cooperation was urged among churches and a greater role for women in the church.

Readers expressed their approval of the new direction of the *Prairie Messenger* in their letters. Many said they appreciated the discussions and stories which gave different points of view. Some cancelled their subscriptions after expressing disgust and embarrassment with the content of the newspaper.



**PM IS PROPHETIC** — Fr. Andrew Britz, OSB was chairman of the *Prairie Messenger* Advisory Board when he wrote an article, 'A time to dream new dreams' commemorating the 60th anniversary of the *Prairie Messenger*. He believed that anniversaries are good occasions to evaluate the past and dream new visions for the future. The *Prairie Messenger* has a prophetic role, he believed. It serves as a mirror for the People of God, reflecting their experiences and commenting on them.



# ***Prairie Messenger* had prophetic role in church**

When Fr. Andrew Britz, OSB was chairman of the *Prairie Messenger* Advisory Board he wrote an article in 1982 entitled, 'A time to dream new dreams'. The article commemorated the *Prairie Messenger* on its 60th anniversary and explained the mandate of the Catholic weekly. In 1983, Britz became editor of the *Prairie Messenger*, serving in that position for 21 years. He was succeeded, in 2004, by Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB.

"The *Prairie Messenger* seeks to mirror for the church on the Prairies the whole reality of our lives as God's pilgrim people," Britz explained in his anniversary article. "There is so much that is beautiful and is a pure joy to mirror: the vigor of the faith of our forefathers, the intuitive sense of justice that has marked Prairie life throughout most of its history, the abiding love for the Eucharist on the Lord's Day, the willingness of people to work together on local concerns – to name just a few."

The Catholic weekly, he added, has faced many challenges because of its role as a mirror which reflects everything, whether celebrations and triumphs or conflicts and failures. This policy has stirred controversy and upheaval. Readers have expressed disapproval with editorials, articles and photos.

The *Prairie Messenger* entered the 1980s with the charism of being prophetic, a mirror which reflected the stories of people from all walks of life, within and outside of the church. The Catholic weekly strived to be of service to everyone while not being subservient to anyone. The *Prairie Messenger*, in the 1980s, responded to the optimism of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) which opened the church to renewal. The Catholic weekly was aware that a new generation was bringing new experiences and expectations into church life. The weekly invited them to share their stories of faith life.

The Second Vatican Council was a momentous event for the Catholic Church. It not only brought renewal to the church, but encouraged Catholics to re-evaluate their place in church and society. The council reminded the People of God of the church's concern for: social justice, the dignity of all people, the role of the laity in the church, the call to conversion, the importance of understanding scripture and liturgy. The church began to dialogue with other Christians and non-Christians.

The *Prairie Messenger* continued its tradition, under editors Britz and Novecosky, of maintaining a keen interest in societal issues. The editors, sharing

a social-Gospel outlook, challenged attitudes which viewed success as more of everything, whether more: development, jobs, material goods, money or power.

The Second Vatican Council was held in a decade when society was in flux and people were questioning and/or rejecting Christian beliefs. The church began to lose its place in society as church attendance declined and vocations to the priesthood and religious life dropped. St. Peter's Abbey, in 1998, facing an aging priesthood and lack of vocations, was absorbed into the Saskatoon Diocese. St. Peter's Abbey, the religious jurisdiction of the former St. Peter's Colony since 1921, was gone. The Benedictine community, not able to support the deficits of the *Prairie Messenger*, and aware that subscriptions had been declining, decided to close the apostolate in May of 2018.

The loss of the Catholic weekly will end more than 100 years of prophetic journalism by the Benedictine monks of St. Peter's Abbey. The church is always in need of prophets, Britz once wrote. Prophets encourage us to dream and look to the future with hope and courage. There have always been prophets in the church. More prophets will come who will remind us that there is 'a time to dream new dreams'.



**OPEN HOUSE** – Approximately 100 attended the open house, April 28, of the *Prairie Messenger* and St. Peter's Press. The public viewed displays of staff, former staff and scenes of the past. Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB was the emcee of the afternoon program.

# Brenda McNabb retires from SPC library

"St. Peter's College (SPC) is a fascinating place to work. It is great to have this kind of complex in rural Saskatchewan and I hope it continues to thrive well into the future," Brenda McNabb, library manager said, when reflecting on her 37 years as a librarian at SPC. McNabb was recognized at a farewell gathering in the library on April 11 where she completed her final day of work on April 30.

The career of McNabb at SPC began in 1981 when she worked as a secretary and part-time in the library. She was then hired to manage the library under the title Managing Librarian. The title later became Circulation Librarian. The job descriptions have changed over the years, she said, but her responsibilities have always been the same. McNabb's work entailed cataloging books, purchasing library materials, hiring and training students to work in the library, teaching students how to use the library, and overseeing the library book collection. Since 2011, she has coordinated the College Scholarships and Awards Ceremony.

There are approximately 50,000 volumes in the library, she remarked. The influence of the Benedictines has brought the library to include a lot of material on monasticism, she said. The overall collection of books is large by library standards, which sets SPC library apart from other rural Saskatchewan libraries. The college library has many old books in its collection, she added, the oldest of which dates back to the 1700s.

The SPC library is in an ideal location, just down the hall from the south wing of the college, she remarked. The library is in a quiet, reflective space that was once the chapel for the Benedictine monks. The library was relocated there in 1990 when the present abbey church was built. The previous library location was in the basement of Severin Hall.

The rural location of the SPC library

makes it accessible to the local population, in addition to the students, she commented. The library's attachment to a Benedictine monastery makes it unique.

Technology has brought many changes to the library since 1981, McNabb commented. She remembers cataloging material using a manual typewriter and then graduating to an electric typewriter. A card catalogue

once contained the names of books. The collection and loans are now catalogued on computers and the internet.

When asked about any memorable experiences, McNabb said she likes to go for walks during her lunch break on the college and abbey trails where she feeds chickadees. She once came across a coyote and noticed it only when she

was a few metres apart.

"I had thought it was a dog. I'm not sure who was more surprised! My co-workers suggested I take my cell phone with me after that."

Another memorable event was the 2008 collage fund-raising gala banquet. She remembers the large crowd and excitement.



**RETIREMENT** – Brenda McNabb was honored at a retirement gathering, April 11, in St. Peter's College (SPC) Library. McNabb retired as the SPC librarian at the end of April after serving the college for 37 years.

## Donations and Bequests

*We seek to provide prophetic witness through a monastic lifestyle of prayer and work that gives priority to the praise of God. We embrace service to God's People through hospitality to guests, involvement in parish ministry, education, the press and sustainable agriculture.*

*Please remember the monks of St. Peter's Abbey when considering making donations to charities or bequests.*

*Donations will help, in particular, towards helping us finance needed improvements to our infrastructure, promoting vocations and providing for the needs of our elderly.*

*Donations can be sent to: St. Peter's Abbey, Box 10, Muenster, SK, S0K-2Y0.*

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Editor: Fr. Paul Paproski, OSB

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Fr. Paul Paproski, OSB

