

School Sisters of St. Francis, Group 59, Missionary Cooperation Plan 2020

“For what does your heart long?” This is a question that our God asks each of us every single day! God gently invites us to long for justice, for peace, and for love of God’s people in our midst. In this way, God calls us to missionary service in the ways that are most appropriate to our lives. Since our founding in 1874, the School Sisters of St. Francis (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) have longed for a world transformed by peace, justice and love. Beginning with ministry in the United States, then expanding to Europe, Latin America, India and Africa, the School Sisters’ legacy of service lives on today in our sisters, associates, and faithful mission partners like you!

School Sisters of St. Francis serve internationally in a variety of ministries, particularly in the areas of education, health care, and social service. We are excited to share news of some of our missions with you, including:

Assisi Special School, Bangalore, India. Inspired by the words of one of our foundresses, Mother Alexia, to respond to the needs of the times, the sisters working in the poor villages of India saw a need to educate and care for the mentally and physically challenged children surrounding Bangalore. The vision to start Assisi Special School became clear after seeing a child restrained to a tree to keep him safe while his parents went out to find daily work. The sisters soon discovered that this one child was not the only special needs child who needed their care and with six children in 2009, Assisi Special School began. Since then, Assisi Special School has helped hundreds of children with intellectual, cognitive, and physical impairment to attend school, achieve greater independence and reach their potential. The children range from 6 to 17 years old, have varying degrees of neurological and physical disabilities and come from different cultures, rituals and languages.

Tanzania Mission, Songea, Africa. In 2014, three sisters from our Assisi Province in South India traveled to Tanzania to begin the School Sisters of St. Francis’ presence in Africa. They made the arduous journey to Songea after accepting an invitation to teach at a parochial school. The sisters learned the local language, began teaching in the school, and provided pastoral service to the village families. Responding to the needs of this mission, our sisters dug a well to help provide clean water to the entire village. To keep our mission in Tanzania alive, several local young women have begun their studies to become School Sisters of St. Francis.

Guadalupe Homes, Santa Apolonia, Guatemala. Guadalupe Homes was founded in 1985 in response to the needs of victims of Guatemala’s 36-year civil war. In each home, sisters and volunteers care for the daily needs of orphaned and abandoned children. The children attend local schools for primary and secondary education, and also receive training in practical skills: carpentry, shoemaking, tailoring, agriculture, domestic arts, and computers.

Finally, where it all began...and continues today! The place where life as a sister began for most of our U.S. School Sisters of St. Francis, St. Joseph Center has transformed into an anchor for the surrounding neighborhood by providing local employment and a home for nonprofit organizations. Many of our retired sisters live at St. Joseph Center, and our international leadership offices are located here. St. Joseph’s Chapel, a place of prayer, music, and inspiration, is on the second floor of this historic building. This grand old building is truly blessed - the place where the mission spark was ignited for many School Sisters of St. Francis and from which the inspiration for our worldwide missions was born.

School Sisters of St. Francis are committed to the stability of the neighborhood surrounding St. Joseph Center. One example of this commitment is the founding of Layton Boulevard West Neighbors (LBWN), one of our sponsored ministries. In the early 1990s, after the sisters had decided to keep St. Joseph Center located in its south side Milwaukee neighborhood, they engaged with our neighbors by going door to door and meeting people in their homes. The sisters even hosted ice cream socials in the St. Joseph Center garden to meet with neighbors in a relaxed and fun setting! It was out of this type of mutual engagement and sharing of ideas that LBWN was born. Since 1995, LBWN has maintained strong roots with our neighbors while evolving into one of the preeminent community development organizations in Milwaukee.

We ask for your support in the mission work of the School Sisters of St. Francis – both at home and internationally. First and most important – we ask for your prayers. If you have the ability to do so, please consider making a donation to the School Sisters of St. Francis for this year’s Missionary Cooperation Program. Your gift will make a forever difference to the people of God that our sisters serve. May God bless you!