

AMMI *Lacombe* Canada MAMI

Oblate Spirit



November 2016



A Helping Hand

Why?

Every year at this time, we sit down to prepare the Christmas issue of *Oblate Spirit*. In all of our publications we attempt to reach out to those in

need at home and around the world, but it seems we do it with a different heart as we approach the Christmas season.

Christmas! That is the answer to one of the why questions. It is a season of hope, of sharing, of family.

But there may be a bigger 'why'. For most of us, our Canadian roots were established when our grandparents, or older generations, came to this great country in search of a better life. Our grandparents emigrated from the Ukraine (John) and Germany (Emily). They were more than pioneers. They were adventurers who had to endure great hardship to survive. John's father was only an infant when his parents brought him to Saskatchewan during a brutally cold spring. The family survived under the wagon that brought them from the train at Moose Jaw to their homestead. The temperatures reached minus 40.

Our forefathers came to understand hardship. And that is perhaps the answer to the bigger 'why'. In the soul of our being, we understand hardship. And we can relate to those less fortunate in the world and attempt in small ways to help them out.

That is what this issue is about ... reaching out. That is the Oblate way ... the Oblate Spirit.



John and Emily Cherneski
Communications Coordinators

Christmas Wish List



KENYA

Water (bore holes)	\$75
School (supplies/desks)	\$50
Church pews	\$100
Parish sanitation	\$50
Community library	\$50
Women's prison supplies	\$50

PERU

Milk/oxygen/water purification	\$50
Beds & blankets	\$50
Groceries	\$50

CANADA

Prairie Flower House of Prayer	\$50
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A large, circular, natural rock pool in a dry, hilly landscape. The pool is surrounded by a low stone wall. In the background, there are trees and a person standing on a hill.

A gift of water

When the brilliant minds on earth send spacecraft into the far reaches of our universe, we hear about the possibility of establishing life on another planet. First it was Mars, then one of the moons of Neptune. What they have in common is the apparent presence of *water*, a building block of life that could help support life.

Now back to earth.

As St. Eugene de Mazenod did 200 years ago when he sent young men to Canada to spread the Oblate message, so have the Oblates of Canada come to take that message to other countries around the world.

The Canadian Oblates, in their missionary spirit, have particularly made their presence felt in Kenya and Peru. They helped establish a water project in Kenya that was integral to their mission and the establishment of a parish in Kionyo.

That mission in Kenya has now grown to include a new





parish in Kisaju, a semi-arid desert-like region. A source of water would be a huge benefit to the mission, and we can help!

In Peru, Oblate doctors Moe Schroeder and Jack McCarthy established a hospital in Santa Clotilde, where there is an abundance of water. But the hospital needs equipment to help purify the water for medical treatment, and we can help!

Here at mission control (we call it MAMI) we aren't reaching for the stars. Our projects are much closer to home, and water is just one of the small ways we hope to make life better for our neighbors on this great planet called Earth.

Call it a Mission to Earth, not a Mission to Mars.

Please join us on this journey.

God bless.

Water, a precious commodity

In Canada, we tend to take fresh water for granted. In Kenya, the gift of water is a gift of life.

With that in mind, the Catholic diocese of Méru recently honoured Br. Guiseppe Argese, an Italian Consolata missionary, for initiating the building of the Tuuru water project that serves nearly half a million people in Méru and Tharaka Nithi Counties.

It was a forerunner to the smaller Mt. Kenya East Water Project initiated by the Canadian Oblates after they established their Kenya mission 20 years ago. The Kenya East project serves 2,400 families on small farms.

“We have made him one of our own,” said Fr. Andrew Mbiko, the chairman of management for the Tuuru Water Supply. Brother Argese was made a Méru elder by the Méru Council of elders – the Njuri Ncheke.

“The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate join in expressing gratitude to Bro. Argese for his great contribution to the Merian People,” wrote OMI Provincial Ken Forster. “The Consolata Missionaries were our first partners some 20 years ago when we arrived in Méru. They welcomed us in their Regional House in Nairobi before we had our own accommodation in the city.



Br. Guiseppe Argese

“Let this celebration of water in Kenya remind us as Canadians to be grateful for the beautiful fresh water we have and protect it always from chemical and other forms of pollution. The country of Kenya is especially grateful for the water they have because it is so scarce.”



Today, there is another need for water in Kenya. Kisaju, the new Oblate parish near Nairobi, is located in a semi-arid location. It is desert-like, and water is scarce.

A parish in its infancy

In the mid 1980s, when there was no nearby Catholic parish, two Catholic families agreed to meet in their houses to pray the rosary and share the word of God. Soon Catholics nearby heard about this and asked to join. As the congregation grew in numbers, they longed to be able to celebrate a mass.

A missionary priest from a neighbouring parish celebrated the first Eucharist under a tree because the school administration would not allow them to use a classroom.

From the seeds planted by the first two families, six other prayer houses have emerged



Oblates in Kisaju



and now comprise the new Kisaju Parish. The diocese asked the Oblates to come and minister within Kisaju and a temporary iron-sheet church was built. Since the arrival of the Oblates parish life has slowly changed for the better. The consistency of the Holy Mass, and seminars and workshops for the newly-formed church groups and leaders has helped considerably.

Kisaju Catholic Parish covers a vast area and, as described by many, is an area of desperation. The terrain is expansive, hot, and often drought stricken. The area is populated by the Maasai, who move from place to place in search of pastures for their livestock, and immigrants from several parts of Kenya, who come from poor backgrounds and have sought refuge here because their ancestral homes are crowded and poor. Because financial resources are scarce and the need is great, Church development moves at a slow pace.

Following is a summary of parish needs provided by Susan Gitau, the MAMI liaison in the parish.

WATER

As you're aware we're in a semi-arid place and water is of utmost importance. With the allocation of the church land, it is critical that the parish centre has its own water supply. The source of water is usually the digging of a borehole. This water from the church would benefit the neighbouring school and some of the church community members who live in the town. The cost of digging the borehole is about \$18,182.

Support the water project ... \$75

SCHOOL

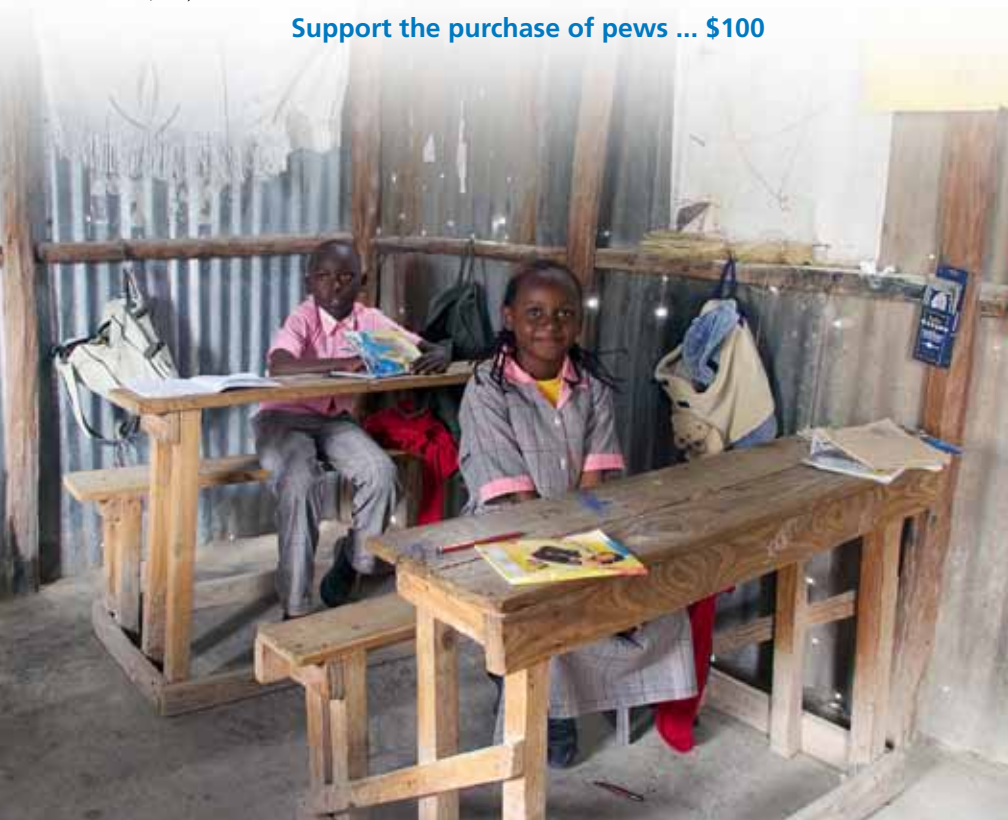
Kepiro Primary School and Deepak Secondary School are our immediate neighbours. Historically, this is where the land for the church originated after consultation with the concerned communities that included the Maasai elders, parents and government officials. The two schools have started boarding facilities for their students but don't have the necessary beds or bedding. The students sleep on mattresses. We would like to support the two schools with this donation. The cost would be \$3,636.

Support the school project ... \$50

CHURCH PEWS

As the Christians continue to build the church, they may have to stand for a while as there are no pews. The parish would like to start off with 100 pews at an estimated cost of \$13,636.

Support the purchase of pews ... \$100



PARISH SANITATION

Hygiene is critical to the health of the community. The congregation is growing and this would need to be added to the parish centre in consideration of the various needs of people in the community including the physically challenged, children, men and women. The cost for this is estimated at \$5,000.

Support for parish sanitation ... \$50

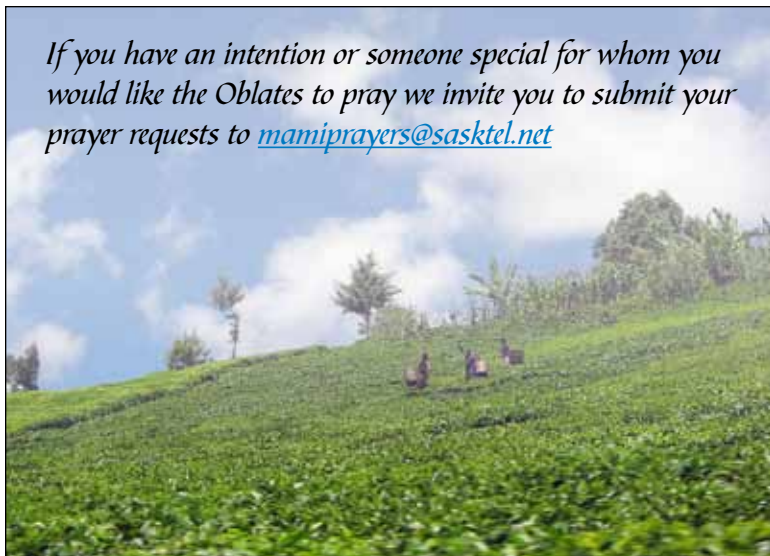
COMMUNITY LIBRARY

To encourage a reading culture at the parish centre and the communities that live around us, we propose building a community library. This would also serve as a resource centre for the two neighbouring schools. We would appreciate receiving books and even computers that could help with e-learning or research. The estimated cost is \$2,727.

Support the community library ... \$50

We would categorise our parish as a 'baby' who has started crawling and has many needs and wants before we can stand on our own. We sincerely appreciate your support and gifts.

If you have an intention or someone special for whom you would like the Oblates to pray we invite you to submit your prayer requests to mamiprayers@sasktel.net





Diane Lepage with prison staff

Life in Méru Prison

BY DIANE LEPAGE

MAMI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Being inside the walls of the women's prison in Méru was nowhere near what I had expected. First, the prison is located in the middle of the city and the inmates just need to look up to see the lush palm trees overhanging the cement walls, the open sky above and hear the noises of the bustling city all around them.

The atmosphere of the prison is geared toward rehabilitation rather than focusing on punishment. Society realizes it has played a part and has a responsibility to work with those who have committed crimes. The crimes are varied and include theft, murder, assault and domestic violence. When a person is charged with a crime, they are sent to prison until their trial, which can take up to three years.

The prison has two sections, one for men and the other for women. The men's section was built to house 300 prisoners. When I visited there were 1,200. This extreme overcrowding meant the men had to take turns sleeping. We saw work crews

of inmates in the yard with a guard foreman teaching them skills for building additions to the present structures. There are watchtowers for other guards to oversee the entire complex.

The women's section had approximately 250 prisoners, most of whom are single mothers. Some are there because they stole food to feed their children; others were caught making moonshine to sell for their families to survive. If women are pregnant or have a young baby, the child is kept with the mother until the children are four years old. Then the child is placed with a family member on the outside and contracts are drawn up giving custody back to the mother upon release. A medical team provides prisoners and children regular check-ups and necessary medication.

Prisoners are allowed visits from their family for 10 minutes every two weeks. Visits are done through a small meshed hole of a heavy steel gate. Family members are allowed to give money to the guard for the prisoner, who can then use it for the canteen and basic personal purchases inside the prison. Some have no family and no money, so there is a need for toothpaste and toothbrushes, blankets, socks, shoes, hygienic supplies, children's clothing and school support for children of those incarcerated.

It is a prison in every sense and corruption is found on all levels. Yet we saw special play rooms for children that were brightly painted with Disney characters and designs. There were story books, toys and comfortable areas for the children



Gift Payment Option



We have the ability to accept donations by way of credit card! Please complete the gift form enclosed, visit our website at www.oblatemissionassociates.ca to give on-line, or call our office toll free: 1-866-432-6264 and we will be pleased to assist you in facilitating your donation to the Oblate missions.

to nap. The women have a sewing and knitting room where clothing is made and then sold. The men have a carpentry area allowing them to craft beautiful tables and other furniture.

I was surprised to see grass, flowers and bushes growing in a small area of this crowded compound and was deeply touched when a group of inmates welcomed us with song and dance, praising God's name. They even shared a lunch consisting of potatoes in some sort of liquid that they had prepared themselves, not on a conventional stove, but over a campfire.

We were not allowed into the women's sleeping quarters or any of the men's section, which made me wonder how deplorable those areas must be.

There seemed to be a real sense of community that I was not expecting. We saw signs of life in the children running around laughing, the green vegetation being tended to, and the staff working closely with the inmates, teaching them new skills to someday use when they are back in the bustling city that surrounds them.

Supplies for women in prison... \$50

WANTED YOUR STORIES!

There are many charities and good causes that solicit your support. Yet for some reason you have chosen to offer the Oblates your prayers, friendship and assistance.

We are curious:

Why did you choose us?

How did you hear about the Oblate missionary work?

How have the Oblates supported, inspired and encouraged you?

What are some of your best memories of Oblates and their missionary work?

Send your stories (and photos) to: lacombemissions@yahoo.ca



Mercy in the women's prison

BY FIDELE MUNKIELE, OMI

NAIROBI, Kenya – Missionaries from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate are involved in prison ministry in many locations in the world. It follows our charism *to evangelize the poor, the most abandoned*. In Kenya, the Missionary Oblates are ministering in Nairobi Langatta women's maximum security and remand prison.

Our ministry consists of attending to the prisoners' spiritual needs, pastoral needs, social welfare and psychological care. It's a challenging ministry because it involves time, material means and presence. We assist them with their basic needs including soap, toiletries, shoes and medicines.

Many women are convicted because of crimes (minor or major) committed on the basis of poverty and joblessness in their lives. Desperation leads them to do anything they can to



Fidele Munkiele, OMI, and pre-novices distribute necessities to female prisoners



survive. Many are single mothers, and many are there because of poor legal representation due to poverty.

Our ministry gives them the opportunity to reform their lives, to counsel them so that once they are free they can live a normal, healthy life. Those who leave after serving their sentence, often after many years, receive no help from the government or society. They are often rejected by their own families.

The Oblates try to assist them with small amounts of money so they can start a small, simple business to survive. Some have children who, unfortunately, cannot access education. Usually, we have little means to assist them.

Here are the stories in brief of some of our sisters in the prisons who have been helped through the assistance of the Oblates and our donors. May God bless them!

Mrs. Jane, a mother of three, was sentenced for seven years. She changed her life while in prison. She became committed to the Church, and was able to learn some skills. Her release was well celebrated by all the inmates and the prison staff. We celebrated mass for her and her family. The Oblates presented her with a small amount of money so she can start a small income-generating activity at home.

Miss Belange was released in June. She comes from the Democratic Republic of The Congo and was arrested at Kenya airport and convicted for life because she had drugs. She was released on a special pardon by the president on National

Remembrance Day and deported to Kinshasa via Uganda. The Oblates assisted her with the transport cost to Uganda and the visa.

Miss Florence is a single mother who was imprisoned for five years. She is poor and struggling with her life. After release this year, she was reunited with her four children who are unable to attend school, and even obtaining food is a real problem. We assisted her with a small amount of money from our supporters, but it was not sufficient to start an income-generating activity.

Miss Pauline is a young woman who was convicted for one year and released in September. She was convicted for a minor offense. She is now reformed and has resolved to live a normal life with the support she may get. She seems happy and determined to change her life.

The Water of Life: We all know that water means life. In June we were able to provide an 8,000-litre tank for the prison that has a problem providing adequate water to the women, some of whom are caring for small children and babies. It brought tears of joy to the prisoners and staff alike who struggle with a prison system that, somehow, loses a lot of its proper funding for infrastructure and services.

The assistance from our donors not only helps the women, but helped me as an Oblate to feel like I am an authentic missionary in the spirit of St. Eugene de Mazenod. For that, I and all our Oblates here in Kenya say a big thank you.

Fr. Munkiele is the Kenya mission formation director and prison chaplain

Supplies for women in prison... \$50



Help for babies and mothers

BY MOE SCHROEDER, OMI

SANTA CLOTILDE, Peru – Because of the great response to our milk request last year, we would like to build on that life-line by also including water and oxygenators for this Christmas season.

Milk is essential for babies, but the clinic at Santa Clotilde sees mothers who cannot breast feed for many reasons, among them poor maternal health, multiple close pregnancies, abandonment, and so on.

The African word Kwashiokor means “the first of two” referring to a baby who is weaned too early to make way for a younger sibling. Often, in our culture in the Amazon, these children are fed on a substitute of a fermented drink of manioc roots called masato.

Your generous gifts to these children have provided for roughly 20 cases per year for the last number of years.

This year we would like to add the gifts of oxygen and water.

Clean water, especially for mixing powdered milk, is essential. We are starting a clean water project for the hospital and in the villages, based on filtration and dependable chlorination.

Oxygen for the newborns and children with respiratory infections is life-saving. In the past we have had oxygen concentrators that take room air and output five litres of oxygen per minute. They were gifts from a generous donor, and they have served us well. Now they must be replaced. One of these machines can cost up to \$1,000.

This year I would like to ask you, who so generously responded to the needs for milk last Christmas, to permit us to widen the destination of those same gifts this year to the triple needs just described

We thank you in advance on behalf of our people of Santa Clotilde and the Napo River in the Peruvian Amazon.

Milk, oxygen and water ... \$50





A touch of warmth

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – Our noble mission never takes a rest. A few weeks ago we visited five state schools. As our weather can get cold, many people suffer from the effects, especially children and the elderly.

We asked the directors of the five schools to make a list of poor children, 10 from each classroom.

A few days later my team returned to these schools with a truckload of nice, warm blankets. The children came out of their classrooms. Many did not have a clue they were about to receive blankets, so when they saw the loaded truck their eyes opened wide.

My three team workers stood beside the truck handing each child a blanket. While this was happening I was taking pictures ... my camera is closer to me than my shadow! I was not only taking pictures but was studying their attire and their physical state.

Upon receiving their blankets the children hugged them as if it was their mother. This scene brought tears to our eyes.

Some of these tots wore only sleeveless shirts. And there I was wearing two sweaters and a thick jacket.

We delivered a total of 700 blankets. Now that we have the list of the children who received a blanket from each of the five state schools, we plan to return with another truckload of blankets before winter really sets in.

So, my dear great Canadian friends, thank you for your support because without it we can do but little. You may and should feel happy that your funds went to a worthy cause. Be assured God takes note of your acts of love for the warming of these little ones that you may never meet in this lifespan but, yes, in Heaven.

Each day I pray for you and your loved ones and don't take for granted all the help you send me. I, myself, am a very stingy person but it works in my spiritual favour. I try to be generous with others but at the same time to be prudent in the use of your funds knowing that money does not fall out of the sky but rather from your hard years of work.

Beds and blankets ... \$50





Feeding the poor

BY BLAISE MACQUARRIE, OMI

CHINCHA ALTA, Peru – Food is something we should never take for granted.

Off the beaten path, one finds people living in extreme poverty and in need of food. I meet elderly women and men seated on a bench, with a blank stare and unsmiling face.

Elderly women and men push three-wheeled carts, sometimes with the help of children, filled with stale fruit to sell, or buckets of swill for a skinny pig. I find large families where the needs of food are greater.

Thus begins the process of what I call Day Care. Teresa, the wife of Marcos who is my right-hand man, knows how to shop and take advantage of food prices. I give Teresa 1,000 soles (about \$400 Canadian) for each shopping outing.

She purchases sacks of rice, sugar and beans, boxes of cooking oil, canned fish and more. Marcos loads the little par- ish car with these items and takes them home, where Teresa



fills large plastic bags with close to 40 pounds of food. When the bags are close to full, she adds potatoes, carrots and other fresh fruit and vegetables.

Each shopping excursion produces about 35 bags of food. Then comes the distribution.

Each day we normally put five bags in the parish car. Before distribution I pray to the Holy Spirit to guide me through the slums to those most in need of food.

For example, I found a woman with four boys preparing to give birth within days. She cried when I presented her with a bag of food. Her husband had not received his full pay in more than three months. Because of the lack of money she and her children were forced to go out in the dirty streets collecting plastic bottles or anything else they might sell in order to buy bread. (By the way, she did give birth and it was a girl.)

I don't make a habit of giving food to the same people, but that is not to say they are forgotten. They need to eat.

Many thanks to the good souls who provide funds for this food. God will bless you.

Feed the poor ... \$50

Nurturing the seeds

Prairie Flower House of Prayer

*Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;
yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory
was not clothed like one of these.*

(Luke 12:27)

BY DOUG JEFFREY, OMI

WILKIE, SK – Have you ever planted a garden? Have you noticed how the seeds you place in the soil never look at all like the plant they eventually become?

In January 2015, God brought Dan and Janice Lamoureux to The Oblate Hill in Battleford, intent on helping the Oblates there. At the same time as they were responding to that Spirit prompting, I was returning from ministry east of The Battlefords (Mayfair, Hafford, Muskeg Lake and Blaine Lake).

I was not listening to God's prompting. I was engaged with God. I was asking God for help in moving the idea of a house of prayer forward. When I arrived home, Dan and Janice were visiting with Brother Don Claerhout. What a surprise we had when we met and they shared their desire to help, and I shared my prayer and our need. From that moment, it was obvious that the hand of God was at work.

In April 2016 God's grace intervened, as new doors were opened for us when Dan and Janice purchased a small 100-acre farm just west of the town of Wilkie in West Central Saskatchewan. The dream of an Oblate Associate/Oblate con-

templative community began to be realized. It is our dream to live and work and pray and minister together.



Today the community is taking shape. Our beginnings are small. There is a two-bedroom house and a two-bedroom trailer. There are several buildings on the property, a good supply of water, and 100 acres of good Saskatchewan soil. Our community life and ministry is characterized by Oblate values, by self-sustainability, and choices that are eco-friendly. Our focus is contemplative prayer and faith formation (in-house/outreach).

Together we shape a communal way of life – work, prayer and ministry that enables us to answer in word and deed the question posed by Jesus, “Who do you say that I am?” What the future holds for us is only partly known to us. Today we are focused on following the Spirit of God moment by moment. We recognize that the seed has begun to grow. We know that the invitation to draw nearer to God is clear and that in some small way we are being invited to share God’s life and love with others, enabling them to be more fully alive.

Since receiving the encouragement of the Oblate district and the Provincial Core Team leadership to move forward with this idea, we have met with the leadership of the local Diocesan churches (Prince Albert and Saskatoon) and have received further encouragement, support and blessing. Our meeting with the local pastor has also been a wonderful encounter. His openness and his support is a source of encouragement for us. We look forward to assisting him, when we can, in his work of building up the Body of Christ.

We know that we want to welcome others who share a need for contemplative prayer and community life. Because of that, visitors and enquirers are always welcome for prayer, to enjoy the life and work of the farm, and/or for some Oblate hospitality around the kitchen table. There is always a quiet place, a pair of work gloves or a waiting chair. Come and see!

What are our needs? At this point in time we are in need of resources to install a septic tank and the pipes for the sewer and water to the trailer (\$12,000); purchase and installation of a

propane tank and the necessary lines (\$2,500); connecting the electricity, including labour, materials and trenching (\$1,000); enclosed porch/entrance deck for the trailer (\$3,500 for materials); and a small cabin (materials and furnishings \$1,000).

At a later date we hope to build and furnish a chapel, three hermitages and a common washroom/shower. In all things we want to be mindful of the environment and the principal of simplicity. It may be of interest to you that the desert fathers and mothers inform our way of life and our understanding of simplicity.

If you would like to assist us in the development of our community life and vision here at Prairie Flower House of Prayer, please contact the MAMI office in Saskatoon toll free at 1-866-432-6264.

If you would like to know more about our work and our life you can visit our website at www.wilkieprayerhouse.com or phone us at 306-480-2536 and stop in for a visit. We look forward to seeing and meeting old and new friends.

Assist with prayer house needs ... \$50

Doug Jeffrey, OMI, and Janice and Dan Lamoureux



Publishing change

After many years of publishing *Oblate Spirit* in both English and French, it has been decided to cease the French print publication because of the significant cost of a limited run of copies. For example, in February 2016 it cost \$2.15 per issue to produce the English publication, while the cost for the French publication was \$8.07 per issue.

Because it is our desire to channel as much of your generous donations as possible to our missions, this will be the last French printed version of *Oblate Spirit*. We will continue to provide the identical French version online at <http://omilacombe.ca/mami> thus reducing the printing costs, and we will send our dedicated French supporters an English copy of *Oblate Spirit* unless they choose not to receive it.

We wish to acknowledge and thank our French supporters for their ongoing support and ask for their understanding as we make this extremely difficult decision.

DONATING SECURITIES

to *Oblate
missionary
works*



Do you have publicly traded securities that you would like to donate to the benefit of the Oblate missions? With the tax law introduced in 2006, you can directly donate your publicly traded securities (shares) to **AMMI Lacombe Canada MAMI** and receive an official income tax receipt while avoiding the payment of capital gains tax.

To take advantage of this tax-saving offer, please call Diane Lepage (1-866-432-6264) at our office for further information. A minimum market value of \$5,000 is suggested. We would be happy to facilitate this exchange that benefits you and the poor of the Oblate missions.

AMMI Lacombe Canada
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spiritual and humanitarian
works – feeding the
hungry, caring for the sick,
clothing the naked and
bringing the love of God
to those most in need.

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*You could even specify an Oblate mission that
is dear to your heart.*

*Oblate
Spirit*

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