

# VOICES: A century on Salem Avenue



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By Sarah Aisenbrey  
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On Aug. 28, 1923, Sisters of the Precious Blood were welcomed with the pealing of bells upon their arrival at the new motherhouse on Salem Avenue.

Now, a century later, Sisters of the Precious Blood invite the local community to join them as they celebrate 100 years of presence in Dayton. A Mass will be held Oct. 1 at 2 p.m. at Precious Blood Catholic Church, with a reception following in the parish activity center.

Founded in 1834 in Switzerland by Maria Anna Brunner, Sisters of the Precious Blood first arrived in the U.S. in 1844 when three Sisters journeyed to northern Ohio to minister to German Catholic immigrants. Over the next 12 years, the religious community established convents throughout northern Ohio and Indiana; for nearly 80 years, the site of their motherhouse was Maria Stein in Mercer County.

By the early 1920s, Mother Emma Nunlist, the Mother General of the Sisters of the Precious Blood, was familiar with Dayton because the Sisters were already involved in ministry there. She felt that they needed to be closer to the amenities the city could provide, including health care and education. She also thought that being close to the city would allow the Sisters to find more volunteers to help with perpetual adoration of the Eucharist, a hallmark of the Sisters' lived vocation since their founding.

She purchased 75 acres of farmland two miles north of Dayton, and construction began.

"The feast of St. Augustine, August 28, 1923, will go down in the annals as a memorable day for the community, since it marks the departure of the Sisters from the old motherhouse to the new," reads the community's historical record. "Knights of Columbus of Dayton offered to transport the Sisters to Salem Heights, where they were welcomed with the pealing of bells and the greetings of the Sisters who had arrived earlier."

The motherhouse on Salem Avenue now houses the Maria-Joseph Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. The Sisters' central house is located next door in the building known as Salem Heights. It comprises a retirement center, chapel and gathering spaces for the community.

Over the past century, Sisters of the Precious Blood have been active in numerous ministries in the Dayton area, including education, parish ministry, food and domestic service, health care and social justice.

In 1983, Sister Dorothy Kammerer and Joe Bettman founded the House of Bread, which serves a hot lunch seven days a week at its

location on Orth Avenue.

In 1988, Sister Dorothy and other volunteers founded The Other Place, today known as Homefull. The organization's original mission of providing a place for the homeless to go during the day has expanded to take a comprehensive approach to addressing poverty as the root cause of homelessness.

Brunner Literacy Center was founded in 2011 by Sisters Maryann Bremke and Helen Weber. The center provides numerous programs, including Adult Basic Education and GED preparation, at locations on Shiloh Springs Road and in the Reibold Building on W. Fourth St.

The Congregation and individual Sister volunteers have also supported Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley; St. Mary Development Corporation; Food for the Journey Project; Brigid's Path; Miami Valley Meals; and numerous additional agencies and organizations.

Sisters of the Precious Blood love Dayton. They love their location in Trotwood and their neighbors there. And they love calling this place "home." As they look to the future, Sisters of the Precious Blood remain committed to being a part of the fabric of the community, collaborating with the city and local agencies to serve wherever they are needed.



Top, Sarah Aisenbrey is the archivist for the Sisters of the Precious Blood. Photo provided. Bottom, two Sisters of the Precious Blood in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament in the Motherhouse chapel in Dayton, Ohio, ca. 1955. Photo courtesy of CPPS Archives, Sisters of the Precious Blood, Dayton, Ohio.