**Interview with Barb Arland-Fye**

**Our Lady of the Prairie**

April 27, 2022

**Question #1**: Tell us about the Prairie. What are your general impressions?

* Peaceful, calming, centering in nature.
* Uplifts my spirit because I am in God’s country.
* A sanctuary.

**Question #2**: What are the strengths of the Prairie?

* Sense of hospitality.
* Feeds me spiritually and physically.
* Allows for small faith communities to come together
* Good leaders.
* Good stewards.
* Staff are empowered.
* Attentive to how God is calling them to be stewards of nature.
* Stories they tell about the food and the place.
* People crave the programs around prayer and spirituality.
* It’s a place for conversations, not for lectures – that is not the draw.
* The outdoors, the trails and labyrinth.
* Sr. Margaret’s Facebook posts are awesome, captivating.

**Question #3:** What are the weaknesses of the Prairie?

* Driving to a place that is not familiar, especially at dark.
* Marketing could be better, although they already do a lot.
* Website could be more dynamic, easier to access.

**Question #4:** How would you improve upon these weaknesses?

* Offering hybrid programs for those who cannot travel there.
* They need to tell their story about how they are bringing back flowers and bees, etc.
* Hold programs that just focus on their own land and what they are doing there.

**Question #5**: Anything they should stop doing?

* N/A

**Question #6:** What do you see as the opportunities to grow the Prairie?

* Programs on prayer and spirituality.
* Society is looking for more connections to nature, to God and each other.
* Zoom opportunities.
* Hybrid programs.
* Parish meetings there.
* Business meetings there.
* Strategic planning sessions there.

**Question #7:** What do you see as the greatest obstacles to growing the Prairie?

* People need things but don’t always know what they want and need.
* Our lives are so over-scheduled, we miss these opportunities for retreat.
* Need to schedule far in advance for small group use.

**Question #8:** What do you suggest as strategies moving forward?

* More opportunities for individual retreats (like New Melleray).
* Become a “mecca” where people want to go there every year for their retreat.
* Open the place up for “bed-and-breakfast” private retreats.
* Open up to more children’s programs.
* Banding together with other nearby religious communities for programs and for long-term sustenance, i.e. co-sponsorship.

**Question #9:** What else would you like to share about the Prairie.

* This place reminds us that God is at work in the world.
* They bring a sense of hope and light to a dark world.