



Collaboration

Volume XVI ♦ Issue 3 ♦ Spring 2021

Sisters of Providence, Holyoke

Special Gifts Enable Unique Cancer Care Program

For the past two years, Sr. Elizabeth Oleksak, SP, has found herself in a unique position. She has received two generous donations to Genesis Spiritual Life Center with the ability to use the funds at her discretion.

As foundress of Genesis 45 years ago, Sr. Elizabeth could envision many ways to expend these funds, but among them, she wanted to select an approach that touched on the Sisters of Providence mission to bring hope and healing to those in need. One program she chose is using the funds to offer free stays at Genesis Spiritual Life Center for individuals, whether living with cancer, in remission from cancer, or people caring for loved ones or family members with cancer.

“I usually talk to the persons initially after the inquiry since everyone has a remarkable story to tell,” commented Sr. Elizabeth who herself is a breast cancer survivor. “I have had seven people in my immediate family with cancer so I’ve had a lot of experience with cancer in my family.”

Sr. Elizabeth arranges for persons selected to design

their own stay, such as an oncology massage, a spiritual direction session or a BioSpiritual Focusing session, or an appointment with Genesis’ in-house yoga therapist. Others may take advantage of the opportunity to do

artwork, journaling or reflecting about their process. The respite stays, which include lodgings and home-cooked meals, can be for one or two nights from Monday through Thursday. During a stay, visitors also can enjoy their comfortable bedrooms, walking the spacious, meditative grounds, and spending quiet time in chapel.

Commenting on the encounters to date, Sr. Elizabeth said that “Eight women have experienced the presence of a loving God through the warmth of human caring, a listening ear, and the natural beauty that surrounds them at Genesis. In the words of

one guest: ‘I feel like I have been hugged.’”

“I am honored to have received these very generous donations,” she added, “and feel my friends have blessed, not only the recipients of their goodness, but all at Genesis Spiritual Life Center.”



contents

2

Letter from
Sister Barbara

5

Connecting with
Creation

6

Transfer of St.
Vincent de Paul
Hospital

9

Sisters
Celebrate
Earth Day

14

Earth Day
Every Day



From the director

Sister Barbara McMullen, CDP
WPC executive director



Recently in an LCWR Region X meeting I heard this statement in the ritual prayer: “Spring is a metaphor for change; change arrives often uninvited yet opens possibilities.”

As I have been pondering that statement it speaks of a wakeful practice—to be attuned to all that is happening in our lives. It invites us to notice the changes around us, to drink in the sunshine, hear the sounds of daylight and night, delight in the songbirds each morning or gaze at the beauty of the stars each evening. There is so much wonder that might just pass us by if we are not aware and we miss the invitation to be astonished. Our Provident God invites us into abundance and gives us the capacity to receive.

The stories within our Spring/Summer issue of Collaboration also speak of Sisters being awake, engaged, fully connected to what is happening all around us. We see a community letting go of property and a long-established healthcare ministry; painful yes, but also open to the mystery and possibility of what new avenues it will bring. We hear about Sisters who continue to minister in pandemic times and who find creative ways to reach people by being “citizens of the digital territory” and using media platforms to reach neighbors. Whether you are raising funds in new ways or simply reaching out across miles, you are witnessing Providential love to others.

Other stories speak of WPC members committed to creation, to planting trees, producing Facebook Live Videos in collaboration with a local TV station and giving ideas for children’s activities as well as calls to action on behalf of saving our planet.

2 *Collaboration Spring 2021*

Education based ideas are never far from our members either. We have stories that tell of bringing hope to poor Latina women, collaborating in a training program for the city’s poorest, hosting an annual food drive, and the college professor who guides students to deeper reflection on Jesus’ gospel message.

To be awake and fully engaged in life is evident in the Sister featured on our front page. What a wonderful idea to reach out to individuals with cancer now, who are in remission, or caretakers of those suffering with it. That is thinking outside the box and no wonder people feel “hugged.”

So, let us all be more awake to the changes right before us—to see the shifting shades of green as summer approaches, the sunlight on the tree leaves swaying in the wind, the myriad colors of flowers, the infinite possibilities a Provident God places before us. If we are really listening, awake to the changes, then we will be changed too, and truly present to all that is before us.

Happy Spring and Summer!

Barbara

P.S. I want to thank you for your cards, wishes, prayers, and emails during my recent surgery for total knee replacement. I know it was your prayers that got me through those first two very painful weeks! I am back at the WPC office now and look forward to continuing my ministry.

Emerging From Covid Restrictions

Spring is coming into full bloom and temperatures are rising. Also budding is the hope of new life - with the relaxing of strict COVID protocols - that is lifting the spirits of staff and residents at all Sisters of Providence facilities.

April 19 was a special day at Providence Place, the Sisters of Providence 119-unit independent residence (former Motherhouse), where retired Sisters of Providence live as well. Finally, the dining room was reopened for residents to eat together as in the past. During the lock down, meals were brought to the residents rooms. For the past two months, the dining room welcomed residents with 6 foot distances between them, reducing the number in the room and prompting loud conversations across the distances! This day - with few restrictions - was another small step toward normalcy.

The Providence Place residents are all vaccinated now, staff is tested regularly and all follow COVID protocols. Also visitors, for the first time in over a year, may visit two at a time in the residents' rooms, though gathering outside is preferred.

Even Mary's Meadow, the nursing and rehabilitation facility that follows detailed Federal, State and Department of Health requirements, recently is allowing two guests at a time to visit residents, if the guests

meet the COVID screening criteria and make appointments. With all residents vaccinated, family and friends are thrilled to be with their loved ones visiting outside or in their rooms.

Genesis Spiritual Life Center, too, now welcomes guests onsite with up to 50% of capacity use of the dining room, chapel and meeting spaces. Following carefully required protocols, Genesis staff enjoyed having 28 participants in the Easter Triduum Retreat and hosted its Board of Directors' Annual Meeting overnight retreat recently.

Hillside Residence, 34 units of affordable elder housing, is making similar adjustments with two guests allowed to visit residents in their apartments. In addition, instead of receiving their noon meals in their rooms, staff soon will be reopening Hillside's dining room. Providence Ministries' Kate's Kitchen food program is continuing its Meals-to-Go approach for now, for the nearly 200 people who come for lunch each day.

The gradual reopening across these ministries is being greeted with smiles of gratitude and touching moments of reunion as staff, residents, and guests rejoice in the return of the simple gifts of sharing a meal, playing cards or dominos again, or taking a leisurely walk with a friend. Simple gifts we now are treasuring.



The photo was taken on April 19, the day when the Providence Place dining room reopened fully and our Sisters did not have to be seated 6 feet away from one another. Even had tablecloths again. Seated left to right: Sr. M. Cecilia Vallee, SP; Sr. Madeleine Joy, SP; Sr. Geraldine Noonan, SP; and Sr. Constance O'Brien, SP.

The SP Mission and Social Networks

By Marie Éméline Ezami Atangana, SP
(original in French)

Every beginning is difficult. The story of the miraculous catch of fish in the Gospel of St. Luke (5:4-5) has profound implications for all those who, like Peter and his companions, have the primary vocation to become fishers of men. Jesus said to Simon: "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men. When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him." Luke 5:10b-11.

I, too, am called to cast my nets in deep waters rather than in shallow or warm waters. Indeed, Christ's call for me is to cast my nets in deep water. This deep water is that of my multiple ministries. Among others, Vocation Ministry, my involvement in the Cartier Emilie team, one of our charitable organizations of which I am a secretary and member of the board of directors, and in spiritual animation at the Pavillion Providence (infirmery) of the Sisters of Providence Motherhouse.

I welcomed these ministerial assignments with an attitude of interior availability and following in Virgin Mary's footsteps. I cannot but say: "I am the handmaid of the Lord". At the same time, I confess that I shudder a little when I consider the importance of these different ministries. That is true especially with the expectations of a growing number of people in the process of broadcasting funerals on our Facebook page and the projection of spiritual and congregational activities proposed by the Provincial or General Councils using the Pavillion Providence's closed circuit broadcasting.

This deep water is one of my multiple challenges related to our closed circuit sound system at Pavillion Providence as well as the sound system for recording and livestreaming the funerals via social media. The pandemic offered us this opportunity to continue our activities using the Zoom platform. This is one of the reasons why the Vocation Ministry of which I am a member is currently done through our Facebook page called Pastorale Vocationnelle Montréal where I can

make the congregation known through all of its historical dates. In response to the goals of the vocation ministry committee, I make Jesus known and loved through a commentary on the Word of God and I participate in the virtual meetings organized by Centre PRI (Intercommunity Religious Presence). The meetings with the members of the board of directors are done via Zoom.

I am becoming more and more aware that virtual communication can be at the service of a culture of encounter. While respecting health measures and despite all my limitations in the face of the mastery of modern means of communication, how is it possible to be truly close to those to whom my ministries are dedicated? I find an answer in the parable of the Samaritan, which is also a parable about a communicator. The one who communicates indeed becomes close. And the Good Samaritan not only comes close, but he takes charge of this man whom he sees half-dead on the side of the road. Jesus reverses the perspective; it is not a question of recognizing the other as my fellow human, but rather of my capacity to make myself like the other.



Marie Éméline Ezami Atangana, SP

Today, we run the risk that certain media conditions us to the point of making us ignore our true neighbour. It is not enough to pass along the digital roads, that is to say to be simply connected; the connection must be accompanied by a real encounter. In the current context of the pandemic, we are not able to live alone, "confined in body and mind" and withdrawn into ourselves. We need to love and be loved. Moreover, the world of media is no longer strange to the concern of communication for humanity. I wish with all my heart that the icon of the Good Samaritan, who heals the wounds of the wounded man by pouring oil and wine on them, will be our guide to revitalize our charism and our SP mission and adapt them to the current dimensions of our humanity.

Let us not be afraid to become citizens of the digital

Continued on page 5

Connecting with Creation

Ever since Sister Sue Orlowski was a little girl growing up in Massachusetts, she has been fascinated by the natural world. She recalls being one of those kids who pestered her mother with questions about the birds, insects, animals and plants she encountered in the backyard and at the city parks. Even as a young Girl Scout, she was more excited to receive her bird and nature badges than her sewing badge.

Birds, especially, captivated Sue into adulthood. When she moved to Portland, OR, in 1974, she learned quickly that the flora and fauna of the West coast is much different from the East. This prompted her to join the Audubon Society of Portland and to purchase a set of CDs about local birds so she could learn how to identify them. Researching birds led to a curiosity about butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. It grew from a hobby to a passion.

Around this time, as Sue was studying bird calls, she heard another intriguing call – to religious life. It was an unexpected, yet persistent, urge that set Sue on a two-year path of discernment. In 1981 she joined the Sisters of Providence, drawn by the charisma, mission and constitutions that define the sisters' commitment to those who are poor and suffering – encompassing not only God's people, but also the Earth.

Now a resident of Spokane, WA, Sister Sue's official ministries over the years have included nursing, teaching, managing a college medical assistant program, parish ministry, coordinating provincial chapter events, assisting women experiencing homelessness, volunteering at Sacred Heart Medical Center as a nanny in the neonatal in-



A life-long nature lover, Sister Sue Orlowski is especially drawn to birds and butterflies. Here she enjoys a day out with the Washington Butterfly Association learning more about God's beautiful creatures.

tensive care unit with premature babies and drug-affected infants, and participating on various environmental committees. Woven throughout are numerous activities integrating Sister Sue's more specific passion for creation: avid birder, butterfly enthusiast, supporter of local conservancy associations, published nature photographer, cultivator of a certified pollinator garden and wildlife habitat, and cheerful resource for information on all of these subjects.

It will come as no surprise that Sister Sue is an active member of the Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province, Earth Committee which relaunched in 2020

Continued on page 6

The SP Mission and Social Networks

Continued from page 4

territory. The attention and presence of the Church through dialogue with internet users is important in order to bring them to meet Christ. As a Congregation within the Church, we respond to this need. In the current Coronavirus context, the revolution of social networks is a great and exciting challenge, which requires dynamic energies and new imagination to convey the beauty of God to others.

Through the pandemic, I have learned to be patient with myself, patient with my local community sisters,

patient with my ministry colleagues, patient with the authorities, and patient with the sound system when it does not work. I remain aware of my limitations and possibilities in operating the communications tools that are available to me to reach the world via the live-streaming and broadcasting of spiritual activities through the Pavillion Providence's closed circuit. I am convinced that the pandemic brings hope and that together we will succeed in demystifying these modern means of communication, encouraging each other rather than criticizing, judging and condemning the fruit of our efforts. Every beginning is difficult.

Transfer of St. Vincent de Paul Hospital

The Sisters of Providence have always helped the most vulnerable in our communities by addressing the needs of the times. The St. Vincent de Paul Hospital, which had in the past been leased to Brockville General Hospital, found new purpose in a plan to fill an unmet need in the Brockville area. Once Brockville General Hospital had vacated the building, the land and building were transferred to the Marguerita Residence Corporation for use as affordable housing for seniors.

An outdoor ceremony was held at the St. Vincent de Paul Hospital site on December 11, 2020, with Brockville General Hospital President Nick Vlacholias; Bruce Hynes, Chairman of the Marguerita Residence Corporation; Ahmed Hussen, federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development; and MPP Steve Clark, Ontario's housing minister. Sister Sandra Shannon, General Superior, spoke to the group on behalf of the Sisters of Providence.

Sister Sandra Shannon's message

"This day, the day the Sisters of Providence of St.

Vincent de Paul officially sever our ties to St. Vincent de Paul Hospital has long been coming as we came to Brockville in 1887 to establish our first "hospital," a house on Schofield Hill. The Pine and Garden Street building opened in 1892 as St. Vincent de Paul Hospital. Over the years we not only served the sick in mind, body and spirit but also taught nurses in RN and Certified Nursing Assistant programs. I believe the Sisters instilled in their staff and students the ethic of service to the vulnerable in an attitude of humility, simplicity and charity.

If we personify the St. Vincent's building as a woman, she has been a "good old girl." She has seen the birth of countless Brockvillians; experienced the joys and sadnesses of life; celebrated life's passages of young and old and the transition of many from this life to the next. During all its years of activity, a Spirit, both tangible and deeply felt existed between her walls. The staff always had an inner joy, unexplained, but evident in their service to others.

Continued on page 7

Connecting with Creation

Continued from page 5

with a focus on integral ecology and a direct link to Sisters of Providence Constitutions and Rules No. 28: "As we foster the human, social and environmental connectedness of God's creation, we become more authentic signs of God's loving Providence."

Earlier this year Sister Sue joined other Sisters of Providence in an online retreat with Professor Patrick McCormick from Gonzaga University to explore the biblical and theological roots of the call to care for creation, the link between social and ecological justice, and some of the ways the sisters might engage and sustain themselves while protecting the poor and our Earth.

What struck Sister Sue during the retreat was just how intricately we are all connected. "I'll never look at the Genesis stories the same way again," she says. "We all come from the earth."

Just as Pope Francis challenges us to practice an integral ecology in "Laudato Si," Sister Sue hears and addresses the cries of the poor and the Earth, doing her part by transforming her personal lifestyle and

encouraging others to learn about and change their practices. "Being pro-life is not just about babies, end of life and prisoners," she says. "It's also about our Earth."



A silver lining of the pandemic: Sister Sue Orlowski expanded her backyard pollinator garden. It attracted many species of bees, butterflies, dragonflies, wasps, moths and beetles, resulting in a prolific garden in 2020!

Transfer of St. Vincent de Paul Hospital

Continued from page 6

Over her years she saw health care change. There was a time when the doors of the hospital opened to the most vulnerable of our society without all the paperwork and protocols of today. They opened because people were in need. There was a time when, if a patient was discharged to their home in Smith's Falls but had no way of getting there, the Sisters would drive them home. There was a time when a Sister in the x-ray department was called to the parking lot with the portable x-ray machine to find the patient to be a horse of one of the doctors. There was a time when Sisters would sit through the night, keeping vigil, when someone was near death. Yes – there was a time. In 2006, Brockville General Hospital leased the building and continued the ministry of health care between her walls.

But now, the “old girl” is tired and needs to be put to rest herself. We, the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, are more than pleased that the holy ground on which St. Vincent de Paul Hospital stands will see the creation of apartment buildings for seniors, a vulnerable population of today. These buildings will, like a Phoenix, rise from the ashes.

So in a different way, but a meaningful way, the transfer



Sister Sandra Shannon, General Superior, and Sister Barbara Thiffault, General Secretary, signed the transfer of ownership papers.

of building and property of St. Vincent de Paul Hospital to the Marguerita Residence Corporation ensures that a vulnerable population of the people of Brockville will continue to be cared for. We have seen to the continuation of our original mission.”



Holding symbolic keys of the transfer are Brockville General Hospital President Nick Vlacholias; Sister Sandra Shannon, General Superior; and Bruce Hynes, Chairman of the Marguerita Residence Corporation. Photo Courtesy Dale Kenney.

History of the St. Vincent de Paul Hospital

In December 2020 the Sisters of Providence transferred the former St. Vincent de Paul Hospital site in Brockville to the Marguerita Residence Corporation to be repurposed as affordable housing for seniors. St. Vincent de Paul Hospital was the first hospital founded by the Sisters of Providence and marks their entry into institutional health care.

A railway accident in April 1887 made it clear to the people of Brockville that they needed emergency facilities. As a result of that accident, Archbishop Cleary of the Archdiocese of Kingston asked the Sisters of Providence to found a hospital in Brockville. In November of 1887, the Sisters of Providence opened St. Vincent de Paul Hospital with 12 beds, 7 doctors and 17 nurses, in a repurposed house on Schofield Hill, in Brockville.

Five years later, in 1892, the hospital had outgrown its Schofield Hill location and the hospital moved to a former convent at 42 Garden Street. Over time several additions were built including the east wing in 1896 that included a surgical unit and obstetrics ward, another wing in 1912, a nurses' residence in 1924, a new surgical unit in 1948, and a new wing in 1958. In 1968, the old east and west wings were demolished and replaced with a four-storey addition, which included new operating room facilities, an intensive care and cardiac unit, and service areas.

In the early 1900s contagious diseases were prevalent in Brockville and the hospital frequently had to deal with cases of Scarlet Fever, diphtheria, typhoid and deadly small pox. This meant that Sister nurses were confined to isolation wards with the patients and, in cases of small pox, often accompanied the patient to the isolation hospital. Sometimes the outbreaks overwhelmed the staff, as noted in the Brockville Annals in May 1901, "We had four kinds of contagious diseases and had to have a Sister for each. We were obliged to ask at the Mother House for an extra Sister. Two were sent down, Sr. Mary Ephrem and Sr. Mary Isidore. The contagious diseases in the hospital are diphtheria, Scarlet Fever, mumps and erysipelas."

A Training School for Nurses opened at the hospital in 1904. The first class graduated in 1906. That same year, Sister Mary Eulalia, a 1906 graduate, took over as superintendent of the nursing school. During her twelve years running the training school, Sister Mary Eulalia earned a reputation as an excellent organizer and disciplinarian. The training school ran for more than forty years until 1946 when it closed due to a



St. Vincent de Paul Hospital, Brockville in August 1933



St. Vincent de Paul Hospital, Brockville in 1972.

change in government regulations. The training school reopened in 1950 to train Nursing Assistants. The School for Certified Nursing Assistants operated at St. Vincent de Paul Hospital from 1950 until 1972.

In 1996, the hospital became part of Providence Continuing Care Centre and the Sisters moved out of their hospital residence into apartments. Acute care services ended at St. Vincent de Paul Hospital Brockville in 1998 and the hospital focused on complex continuing care and rehabilitation services. In the 119 years that the Sisters of Providence ran the hospital, 32 Sisters served on the governing board and 20 Sisters served as administrator of the Hospital, including Sister Mary Clement Shea, who held this position for 17 years. The hospital services were transferred to Brockville General Hospital in 2006, who then leased the site and ran it as the BGH Garden Street site until December 2020.

by Veronica Stienburg, Archivist for the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul

Sisters Celebrate Earth Day

On April 22, 2021, Earth Day was celebrated around the world, and the CDPs participated by spreading awareness throughout the community.

CDP Sisters were invited to celebrate in Regan Community Room at Our Lady of the Lake Convent Center. The day began with an Earth Day prayer service and was followed by a special Mass, which was livestreamed to the Sisters' Facebook page and made available to the public. Earth Day is celebrated to promote knowledge that Earth's protection and restoration is human responsibility. And for the CDPs, it also provides an opportunity to honor the Sisters that began this impactful initiative.

The Congregation of Divine Providence advocates for the protection, preservation and restoration of Earth through its Earth Care Committee. In 1993, the Sisters adopted the following mission statement which outlines their commitment to ensure all care for Earth. Recognizing that the earth is a living organism and a sacred trust impels us to commit ourselves as stewards for the restoration, preservation, and survival of the Earth.

We will, as individuals, and as a community, join with others to save this planet for future generations by: educating ourselves; making appropriate changes in our lifestyle; addressing the public, systemic dimensions of this issue.

Established by the CDP Sisters in 2002, the CDP Earth Care group was initially to be part of the CDP Social Justice committee until it was officially recognized as a committee by the Congregation in 2002. Sisters Frances Lorene Lange, Martha Rose Lange, Jane Marie Gleitz, Louise Miksch, Marlene Queensbury, Anna Marie Vrazel, Mary Opportuna Hoelscher (deceased), Janez Schonfeld (deceased), Lucille Ann Fritsch (deceased) and Benedict Zimmerer (deceased) pioneered what is known today as the Earth Care Committee.

In its beginnings, the Earth Care Committee was formed for members to educate themselves on efforts to treasure and respect Earth as a revelation of God's self. The committee serves as a resource to the community, to educate about harm done to Earth and to advocate for healthy environmental practices for all. Some of these practices include recycling, limiting waste, simplifying lifestyle, planting and tending trees, urging conservation of resources, writing public officials to advocate for Earth and more. Today, the Earth Care Committee maintains activism in the community by releasing public statements addressing climate change, urging state and federal governments



Sisters of Divine Providence represent Earth elements.

to acknowledge climate change and participating in global strikes.

In 2019, the City of San Antonio (COSA) launched the development of its first Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP). The plan was designed to meet the challenges of climate change and encourage the city to contribute to a better-quality living environment. Water and energy conservation, transportation options and clean air prioritization are encouraged by the CAAP. According to the 2019 San Antonio Climate Ready Report, the goal of this initiative is to make San Antonio carbon neutral by 2050.

Because this project aligns with the CDP's commitment to sustainability, the Sisters decided to help fulfill the City of San Antonio's goal of planting 20,000 trees in 2020. COSA awarded the Sisters of Divine Providence a grant for twelve trees to be planted on the Congregation's grounds. The CDPs were permitted to make their own selection of trees such as Mountain Laurel, Lacey Oak, Bur Oak, Texas Red Oak, Monterrey Oak and Mexican White Oak. These large and long-lasting trees will absorb greenhouse emissions, limit soil erosion, promote sustainability, and further beautify our campus while providing much needed shade.

The Congregation of Divine Providence is supportive of the efforts of the Earth Care Committee as its service continues to touch many lives. The Sisters of Divine Providence believe that God created Earth and entrusted each of us who inhabit this land to treasure it as a gift, as well as enjoy and care for it.

Solid Advice for Erik Walsh: Talk to the Nun

The following article was written by Rick Casey and used with the permission of The San Antonio Report.

I figured San Antonio City Manager Erik Walsh is at least half Irish Catholic. His last name is as Irish as Paddy's shamrock, even if "Erik" with a "k" is decidedly un-Gaelic. I was right. His father came from Ireland as a young man 60 years ago on a six-month tourist visa and never left. He planted himself in this country first with a stint in the Army, and then with one in the Air Force, which brought him to San Antonio and Walsh's mother.

Erik Walsh attended Central Catholic High School but went to a public elementary school. This interested me because I had planned to offer the wisdom that comes from having experienced nuns early in one's life.

Nuns are the human embodiment of the old saying that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. They have thrived in a global institution in which all formal power is wielded by men who don't have wives to tame their testosterone. Within the church, nuns have been treated accordingly through history.

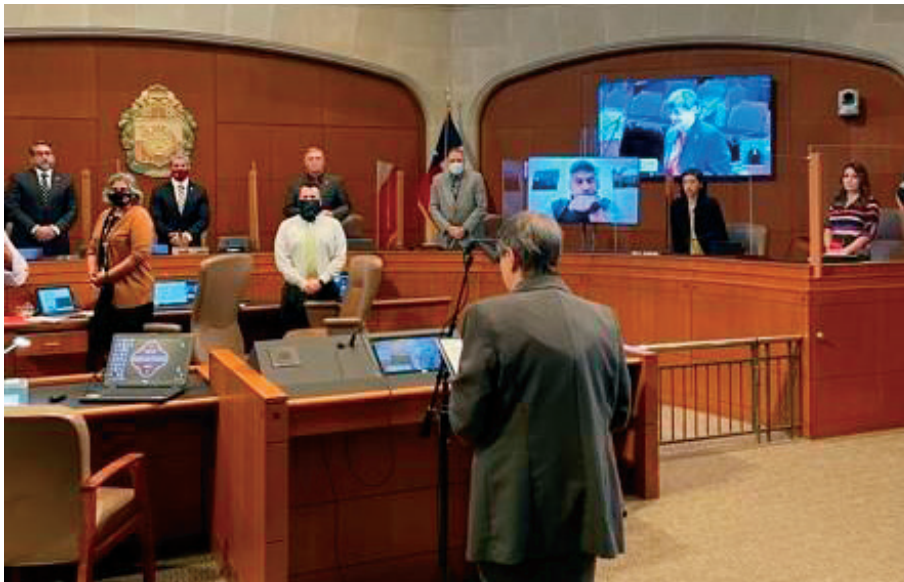
Yet anyone who was taught by nuns as a child knows how strong they are. So I was planning to suggest to Walsh that he needed to talk to a nun. I had a particular nun in mind – and a particular topic. Sister Pearl Ceasar is the Superior General of the Congregation of Divine Providence, the nuns who founded San Antonio Providence High School and Our Lady of the Lake University, among other things.

Back in 1992, she was an organizer for COPS/Metro Alliance when the powerful community organization designed and persuaded the City to financially back Project Quest, which early on and to this day has been

recognized as one of the the most successful job training programs in the country. In 2011, when Project Quest was plagued with controversy from failings due not to corruption but to incompetence, Sister Pearl was brought in to turn it around. She did and ran the organization for six years.

Now the City of San Antonio is embarking on SA: Ready to Work, a program approved by the voters last November that will spend \$154 million over five or six years in an effort to train the city's working poor for good-paying jobs that the city is now generating. It's an exciting idea, but hardly one that is easily accomplished. The City and the nation have over the years poured big money into ineffectual job training programs. San Antonio has already had hiccups with a \$75 million job training program funded by federal COVID-19 relief funds.

And in its new, more ambitious effort, City Hall has already had one public clash with COPS/Metro last December when documents indicated the City would be hiring a 63-member staff to run the program. COPS/Metro blasted it as "a bloated bureaucracy," and the City backed off.



Sister Pearl Ceasar, CDP Superior General delivers the invocation at a City Council Meeting on April 15, 2021.

Another controversy was brewing when another document indicated that under its new program various agencies would receive funding, but the screening for their programs would be done either by the City or by an agency it delegated. That was a major problem for Project Quest. A strong majority of its clients get training for well-paid jobs, mainly in the medical field, through rigorous programs at the Alamo Colleges. Candidates for Project Quest must have at least a GED or high school diploma and must show a willingness to work hard in the full-time program. Candidates are carefully screened to maintain an 80 percent graduation rate.

Continued on page 11

Solid Advice for Erik Walsh: Talk to the Nun

Continued from page 10

COPS/Metro doesn't run Project Quest. It created the program, then recruited an impressive nonprofit board to run it. But it is very protective of its baby. It told City staff that its screening proposal would be very bad for Project Quest and suggested that nobody wanted a public squabble 10 days before early voting in the mayor's race. The universal screening notion was dropped in a presentation to City Council.

Still, I thought Walsh should talk to the nun. I told him during an interview that's why I had asked about his Catholic school background.

"Funny thing you should mention Sister Pearl," Walsh responded. She had been one of many people he and City staff had met with last fall, but he recently received a text from COPS/Metro urging him to meet with her.

"We ended up having a nice long conversation and talked about some of the history I was peripherally aware of," he said. "We talked about the importance of starting the trajectory in the right way."

Sister Pearl was also pleased with the conversation, saying she believes Walsh wants to do the program right. She stressed that doing it right was much more important than doing it fast.

Before COPS/Metro took Project Quest to City Hall, she said, it held 500 house meetings with 5,000 people, including many who would be candidates for the training. In addition, then-Mayor Nelson Wolff set up meetings for them with 60 employers and attended many of the meetings himself. The process, Sister Pearl said, took two years but was crucial in designing a successful program.

In an earlier conversation, I asked what her advice would be for those shaping the city's program. One was careful screening. Setting up candidates for failure helps nobody. Some applicants need remedial work. That's not part of Project Quest's program, but other agencies might take it on.

A second important component, she said, was weekly group counseling sessions in which participants report how things are going and seek help when they need it, help the program provides. She said counselors must be well-trained and must have a workable caseload.

I asked a national expert what advice he had for the program. Paul Osterman is a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor of human resources and management. He has been following Project Quest since its early days and considers it one of the best programs of its kind in the country.

He was in one of the groups City staff talked to last fall, but as with Sister Pearl, a longer session with him would be good for Walsh or other City staff to have. The most striking idea Osterman put forward was that the City should not see itself as managing the program, but as a foundation awarding grants to agencies who would be screened either by City staffers with expertise or by outside panels organized for that purpose. Any grants awarded would come with performance standards so that agencies that weren't succeeding could be replaced.

One advantage is that this approach would discourage politics from becoming part of the process. Another relates to the fact that voters approved a proposal that after the City raises \$154 million through a one-eighth-cent sales tax, the ensuing revenue from that tax will be directed to VIA Metropolitan Transit. This is different from Pre-K 4 SA, the successful early childhood program whose sales tax revenue must be periodically renewed by voters.

Under the grant approach, successful agencies will be able to use their track record to seek grants from other sources, like a \$1 million Rockefeller Foundation grant Project Quest won three years ago. Agencies could also seek funding from major corporations that have benefited from their work.

Walsh seemed open to the foundation model. And he has slowed the process down. The next round of requests from agencies, he said, will seek information on how best they would see the program working. Only then will his staff put out final requests for proposals. He doesn't have two years to do the kind of research with potential participants and employers that COPS/Metro did, but the City could ask grant applicants what kind of research they had done.

Meanwhile, Erik, keep talking to the nun.

Sister Leads Theology Department

Around the Spring Hill College campus in Mobile, Sister Nelida is well-known and highly respected, though many on the outside may not be aware that the college has a Woman Religious heading the Department of Graduate Theology and Ministry. Sister joined the faculty in fall 2019, as assistant professor of Biblical Studies. At present she is the only Woman Religious serving on the faculty.

A native of Peru, Sister Nelida joined the Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence at age 15.



Later, Sister transferred to the American Providence in Kingston, MA. A former high school teacher, she received her master's degree in Biblical Studies from the University of Notre Dame and later, her Doctorate in New Testament and Early Christianity from Loyola University in Chicago.

About her work at the college, Sister Nelida said: "what I truly love about my ministry is that Spring Hill College's mission converges with my Community's

charism: make God's Providence more visible in our world, the care for creation and our commitment to social justice. In light of Ignatian spirituality and through a deeper reflection of Jesus' teachings, I invite students to appreciate the beauty of creation, the dignity of life and the needs for social justice."

"My ministry at Spring Hill has given me great joy, and I am grateful for having wonderful professional colleagues supporting me in the various programs that benefit the people we serve."

Sister Nelida highly values biblical research and is the author of two books and three scholarly articles for noted biblical journals. Recently, Sister has submitted another manuscript for publication and is presently working on a new one, entitled "The Parables of Jesus and Human Transformation." Though a busy and deeply involved professor, Sister Nelida is not "all work and no play." She makes time for some of her favorite past-times: cooking, gardening and dancing.

In addition to Sister Nelida's educational qualifications and scholarship, Rev. Christopher Viscardi, S.J., chair of the Theology Department, said "Sister brings energy and enthusiasm to her ministry, as well as an international perspective by virtue of her Peruvian upbringing."

By Sister Deborah Kennedy, RSM | The Catholic Week

Catholic Sisters Week 2021: Challenge to End Hunger

Sister Betty Sundry, Director of Social Concerns, coordinated the Sisters yearly food drive during Catholic Sisters Week. Nonperishable foods—especially cereal, peanut butter, jelly, pasta, rice and crackers—as well as toilet paper, paper towels and tissues, were collected and donated to Pittsburgh's North Hills Community Outreach and Providence Food Pantry at La Roche University. Food donations from the public were dropped off in barrels located at the main entrance of Providence Heights from March 8-14.

Sister Janet Folkl, campus minister at La Roche University, helps stock and track food items donated to La Roche University's Providence Food Pantry which is available to full-time and part-time students, and staff and faculty who do not have adequate food. The pantry accepts monetary donations and gift cards to local grocery stores as well, to help ensure no one in our community is food insecure.



Ministering in the Pandemic

Sister Karina Conrad was awarded funding from the Catholic Extension's Sisters on the Frontlines program. Sister Karina, a mental health counselor at the Society of Helpers The Circle/El Circulo Resource Center in the Brighton Park area of Chicago, ministers predominantly to Latina women.



The women, many of whom are immigrants and heads of household, have struggled to maintain employment during the COVID-19 pandemic, making it difficult for them to buy food, and to pay rent, utilities and medical bills.

The funds Sister Karina received helped to rescue one woman who was seeking counseling due to being threatened with eviction and facing homelessness. Last year, this woman was diagnosed with COVID-19 and eventually lost her job, further impacting her daily stress and trauma. Sister Karina's intervention with counseling, education, social opportunities and

financial help brought hope and relief to this woman, as she was able to pay her rent and purchase food. Sister Karina reflected, "As a Sister of Divine Providence...I am reminded of the call to mission we have as women religious to ease the suffering of those most in need and to bring God's love and care to all.

Vocations Team Holds Discernment Events

In celebration of World Day for Consecrated Life, Sisters Karina Conrad, Wendolyn Lopez-Santos and Bertshabe Palomino Montalvo invited single women between the ages of 18-45 to reflect on how to listen to the Spirit in vocational discernment. This virtual event was offered in both English and Spanish:

- What is Discernment? with Sister Carole Riley, CDP
- ¿Qué es el Discernimiento? Con la Hna. Ana Lydia Sonera Matos, CDP

Ten women participated; one in the English event and nine in the Spanish event. The participants in the Spanish event were from Puerto Rico and Peru. As a result of these events, a Spanish Discernment Group has begun monthly meetings.

Gift Shop Acquires Laser Etching Device

Thanks to a Foley Fund Grant through the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Linden Leaf Gifts acquired a new addition — a Glowforge high capacity digital-lasering machine. Ryan Sheehy, manager of the shrine gift store, explored the Glowforge's capabilities and mastered techniques during the slow winter months while the Shrine of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin was closed to the public due to COVID-19.

This precision-cutting instrument will engrave on glass, ceramic, leather, metal and wood, as long as the material is no greater than 2 inches thick. It offers the gift store a myriad of product development opportunities for mementos and customized pieces.

Ryan can create original works from line drawings of photographs, etch text or combine both images and text such as a logo. Popular pieces include the oval glass platter featuring the Church of the Immaculate Conception, The Lord's Prayer inscribed into a slice of authentic Saint Mary-of-the-Woods timber and the "Recipe for a Special Mom" cutting board released

for Mother's Day. Ryan will be expanding the line to include customizable pieces for weddings, showers, anniversaries and jubilees.

For more information visit LindenLeafGifts.com or email rsheehy@spsmw.org.



Alpaca and dream catcher created by Glowforge

Earth Day, Every Day

When the staff and interns of the White Violet Center for Eco-Justice, a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, gathered for planning the 2021 Earth Day celebration, they put on their thinking caps and thought outside the (litter) box. [That reference is for Sage and Hazel, the resident felines in the White Violet Center educational center.]

Knowing that Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb would still be limiting gatherings of persons by April 22, when we celebrated Earth Day in 2021, the planners came up with the concept of introducing a different educational component of restoring our Earth each week of April.

In collaboration with a local television station that offered to do Facebook Live videos each Monday, each week we released a different theme and drew the community to our social media and website for activities, blogs and resources. The group began the month of April by announcing the overall plan and followed with the second themed week of "Land and animals." The third week was themed "Food and Farming," and the fourth week was themed "Care for our Common Home Climate Change." The final week was themed "Community" and highlighted our network of collaborating organizations. During each week, the planners scheduled blogs, conducted children's activities, organized a call to action and more.

The farm animals theme included the informational blog post entitled, "How land, animals, plants and poop are all connected" by John-Michael Elmore, garden manager of the White Violet Center for Eco-Justice.



John-Michael's article begins, "It all starts when our alpacas lift their tails," and continues with his amusing yet understandable explanation of how our choices in the types of food we eat and the way in which we manufacture and package them impact the Earth and our health and well-being.

In addition, an entire new web page on our website was created and dedicated to Earth Day Every Day activities and more.

Visit WhiteViolet.org for more information about the 2021 Earth Day Every Day festivities.

Phonathon Reimagined During Pandemic

With sisters aching for company during the extended restrictions on the campus of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, the Mission Advancement office found a new outlet by transforming its annual phonathon. Volunteers, comprised of Sisters and Providence Associates, felt the love this Valentines Day when they kicked off the three-week long phonathon. This was quite an



undertaking for Diane Weidenbenner, the new Annual Fund & Donor Relations Manager. Not only was this her first phonathon as manager, also the inability to gather in Providence Hall with sisters working as clerk and staff present to answer questions presented quite a few challenges.

The upside, though, was that allowing callers to initiate calls from home rather than campus, opened volunteer opportunities for sisters living out-of-state and Providence Associates who previously had not been invited. The callers reported that, on the receiving end, alumnae/i and donors were also hungry for news from the Woods and responded generously.

We say repeatedly that the pandemic forced us to operate differently. This is one example of a positive outcome that we will carry forward with next year's phonathon format.

St. Joseph, the Provider

Images of St. Joseph commonly represent him with the child Jesus in one arm and a lily (symbol of integrity) in the other, or as Joseph the Worker holding tools of his carpentry trade. But in Immaculate Conception Chapel, a vigil light burns daily in thanksgiving and in petition for particular intentions before a statue depicting Joseph carrying a loaf of bread and a pitcher. This is an image of “St. Joseph the Provider.”

Blessed Jean Martin Moye, our founder, chose St. Joseph (whose name means “May God give increase”) as a special patron for the Sisters of Divine Providence, directing us to ask Joseph’s intercession for personal and congregational needs.

To say that this man closest to Christ has proven wonderfully reliable over the years would be an understatement. When the sale of the St. Anne Convent property was first discussed, Divine Providence Sister Mary Joan Dohmen composed a special prayer which the Sisters prayed daily asking the intercession of St. Joseph for a successful and appropriate use of the convent and land. The answer to those prayers came when the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky purchased the facility and converted it to St. Anne Retreat Center. The property now serves as a spiritual hub for all the people of the diocese.

Immaculate Conception Chapel was dedicated shortly after the Holy Family Retirement Home was completed in the late

1950s. Since the sale of St. Anne Convent, it has been serving as the liturgical heart of the Province. Sisters living at Holy Family and nearby continue to gather there on a daily basis for Mass and to pray the Divine Office, and on occasion for a funeral. But now the Chapel also serves Sisters throughout the Province when they return “home” for visits and retreats, as well as for celebrations that mark jubilees, assemblies, Chapters and the like. Each is greeted by the image of St. Joseph the Provider, the statue of which stands guard in the chapel’s sanctuary area. During this year honoring St. Joseph, a special prayer was composed and shared with the Sisters to be used during morning and evening prayer:



Prayer to St. Joseph

“Joseph, with Jesus and Mary, you knew doubt, hunger, uncertainty and illness. You turned your heart to God to lift up your needs and those of your family. In faith you accepted God’s response as events unfolded. We pray through your intercession for an end to the pandemic. May God continue to heal and bless the sick and their caregivers and families. We pray through your intercession for our Congregation. May Providence guide us into our future and if it is God’s will bring new vowed members and associates to join us in our mission. We rely on your continued protection and in gratitude we pray in the name of Jesus, the Son you nurtured and loved. Amen.”

Remembering the Way We Were

Since 2000, on the third Saturday of May, the “Evening Under the Oaks” event has provided the Sisters of Divine Providence, their friends and supporters with a much-anticipated annual opportunity to get together and share prayer, delightful conversation, a great dinner, and an all-around good time with each other while fundraising for various of the Sisters’ projects and needs. Spearheaded each year by the dedicated and talented members of the Province’s Development Board, the EUO (as it has come to be known), was sadly claimed by the pandemic in 2020 and again this year.

Development board members were not to be deterred, however. Determined to find a way to continue to support the Sisters’ projects and needs, they reached back to revisit wonderful EUO experiences of years past and noticed the success enjoyed by a new element first introduced at the EUO in 2018. At that time, sound panels were badly needed for Providence Hall, where major gatherings of the Province and many of its programs are held. A simple video about this was made available at the event, and people responded with overwhelming generosity! With sound panels soon in place, communication in the Hall was tremendously improved.

In 2019, this fundraiser morphed into a major raffle

dubbed “Funds for the Nuns,” with the drawing to be held at that year’s EUO. Once again, it was very successful. But when the pandemic came on so quickly in March 2020, there was little clarity at first around whether or not the EUO could be held. Alas, even the “best laid plans” sometimes come to naught, and the event had to be canceled.

As the new year dawned, it was apparent to the Development Board that, while the EUO could not happen in 2021, “Funds for the Nuns” could! And so, a simple raffle was organized: friends, relatives, and other supporters of the Province were made aware that it was happening and were invited to contact the Development Office if they were interested in participating. On the third Saturday in May (the traditional date for holding the EUO), the drawing for the raffle (once again, a smashing success!) was held with few people in attendance...but for the first time, it was also live-streamed on Facebook, making it possible for interested parties to watch!

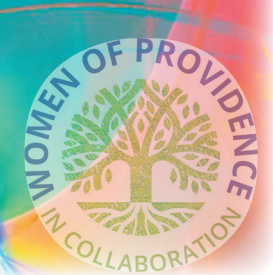
The wonders of technology continue to expand our capacities to communicate with each other. But needless to say, we are all most surely looking forward to when we can all actually be with each other again—sharing prayer and conversation, breaking bread together, and just having an all-around good time!!



Photos of past “Evening Under the Oaks”



Shop for these and other
WPC publications on
the WPC website.
www.wpcweb.org

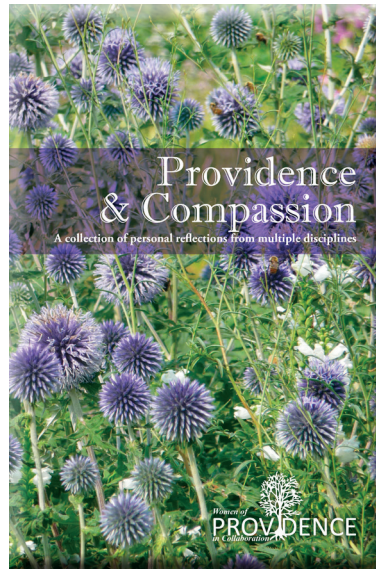


Providence and Peace: Connecting and Co-Creating for Justice



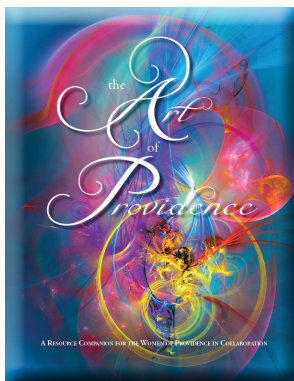
Providence and Peace: Connecting and Co-Creating for Justice is the second in a series featuring authors who look at specific topics through the lens of Providence and their lived experience in ministry and community life.
\$13.65

Providence & Compassion



Nine Women of Providence share their understanding of Providence and Compassion through the lens of their lived experience in ministry and community life. These personal reflections will expand awareness and appreciation of the intimate link between Providence and Compassion in the lives of not only the author but also within the life of the reader.
\$13.65

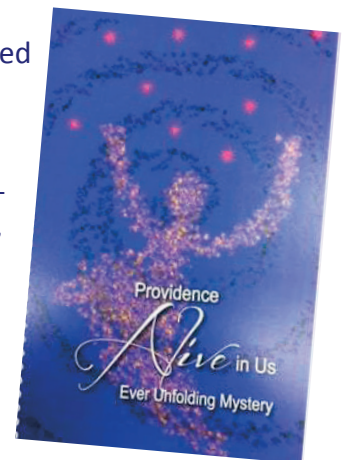
The Art of Providence



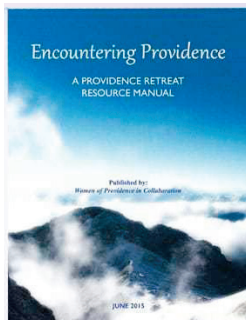
The Art of Providence is a beautiful resource book of prayers, poetry, prayer rituals, music, photos, reflections and artwork by various Sisters and Associates in our Providence congregations. The authors have shared their talents with us in a variety of ways. Each of them seeks to express their understandings of Providence through particular art forms.
\$18.90

Providence Alive in Us: Ever Unfolding Mystery

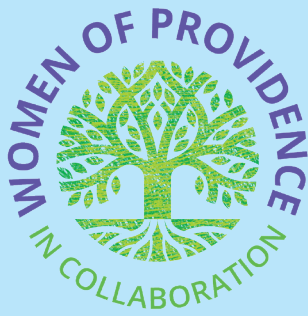
"Providence Alive in Us: Ever Unfolding Mystery" is designed to promote and broaden the understanding of Providence theology and spirituality and how, over the years, it has affected our lives. The authors, some of whom are previous contributors to other Providence published books, will lead us in this search for still deeper engagement with Ever Unfolding Mystery.
\$15.75



Encountering Providence



This compiled retreat resource manual features a flash drive with presentations, videos, prayers, reflection and leader templates.
\$52.50



Calendar

2021

September 13-16: WPC Associate Leadership Conference, Kearns Spirituality Center, Allison Park, PA. May be a virtual conference. Watch for further details.

November 30: Executive Committee Meeting --ZOOM
Montreal hosts

2022

Spring: WPC Board meeting Dates TBD
Terre Haute, IN, hosts

Fall: Executive Committee Meeting Dates TBD
Westfield, MA, hosts



WOMEN OF PROVIDENCE IN COLLABORATION

Collaboration is published by the Women of Providence in Collaboration ♦ www.wpcweb.org

Executive Director: Sister Barbara McMullen, CDP

1621 Tenth Street ♦ Madison, IL 62060 ♦ 618-550-8884 ♦ bmcnullencdp@gmail.com

Member Congregations: Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, Allison Park, PA; Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, Melbourne, KY; Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, San Antonio, TX; Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, Wakefield, RI; Oblate Sisters of Providence, Baltimore, MD; Sisters of Providence, Holyoke, MA; Sisters of Providence, Montreal, QC, Canada; Sisters of Providence, Seattle/Spokane, WA; Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute, IN; Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, Kingston, ON, Canada; Sisters of Providence, Edmonton, AL, Canada