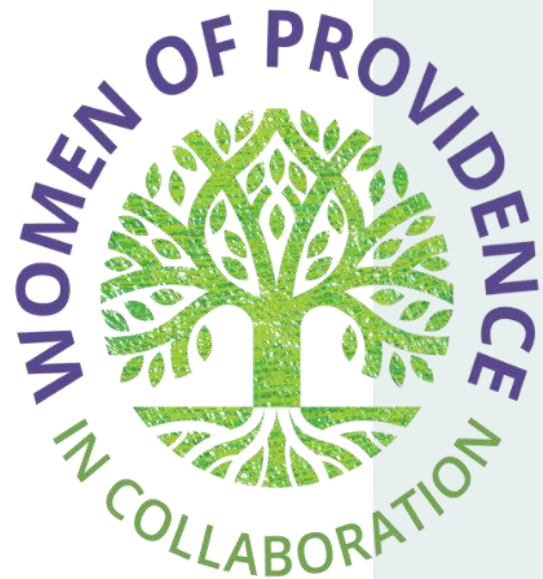


COLLABORATION



FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Sr. Mary Stanco HM, WPC Executive Director

Greetings! As we continue our rotation around the sun and for many of us we experienced the total eclipse. If you were in the path of totality and had a chance to witness with your special glasses the darkness, the birds going silent as if dusk and groups of people gathered to witness this phenomenon it seems that somehow it is possible for people to gather in peace. To share what impacts us all, the sun and the moon and give witness to light turning into darkness and light again. While the eclipse is not an unusual or rare phenomenon, it depends on time and place to witness it. Even if no one noticed, it still will happen. Much like Providence. The universe, the stars, the moon, the sun will continuously align and move and create unknowns to be explored and discovered if we but take a moment to experience it's wonder. Providence continuously unfolds before us (and in spite of us) the unknown wonders to be explored and discovered. To think, all we have to do is stand still, look around to know God is in our midst through our encounters with others, bearing witness to the faithfulness of the founders and being open to the charism of Providence.

In March 2024, the WPC Governing Board for the Women of Providence in Collaboration met in Allison Park. Sr. Judy Connor CDP and the Sisters of Providence living at the new center hosted WPC's Governing Board. Sisters serving on the Governing Board are Sofia Berrones MCDP, Judy Connor CDP, Rose Kruppa SP, Pauline Lally SP, Alba Letelier SP, Barbara McMullen CDP, Kathleen Popko SP, Barbara Rohe CDP, Barbara Chamber SP and Dawn Tomaszewski SP. To help focus our discussions we reflected *On the Verge of Hope and Change: Continuing Emergence of WPC* using Sr. Barbara Reid, OP 2023 LCWR keynote *Drawn by Sacred Mystery: A Journey into Hope* and themes from Adrienne Maree Brown's work *Emergent Leadership*. We asked ourselves "What of the interconnectedness and transformation of WPC?" to discuss the vision of WPC while grounded in the present reality. Adrienne Maree Brown shares key learnings from Margaret Wheatley's *Leadership and the New Science* (1992) that "...everything is about relationships, critical connections; chaos is an essential process that we need to engage; ... and vision is an invisible field that binds us together, emerging from relationships and chaos and information." The vision for WPC is to continue to be a nexus for building relationships for connections in ministry development, sharing an understanding of the charism of Providence and continuously asking the question "What is Providence asking of us now?"



2024 WOMAN OF PROVIDENCE GOVERNING BOARD

STANDING: ROSE KRUPPA, CDP; BARBARA McMULLEN, CDP; ALBA LETELIER, SP; DAWN TOMASZEWSKI, SP; BARBARA SCHAMBER, SP; KATHLEEN POPKO, SP SEATED: JUDY CONNOR, CDP; PAULINE LALLY, SP; MARY STANCO, HM; BARBARA ROHE, CDP

Emerging Future of Religious...

WPC was awarded funds from LCWR's Emerging Future of Religious Grant for sisters under 55. These funds will help support the planning process for a 2025 gathering for Sisters of Providence under 55. This will be an opportunity for Sisters to continue the conversation started in 2020 during the pandemic on their present and future as women of Providence. The sharing that came out of the 2020 virtual gathering was summarized by Sr. Karina Conrad, CDP and Dina Bartos, SP: "How

can we come together to manifest Providence in our world moving forward? ...confirmed in us all the need to strengthen our community bonds with each other and propelled us

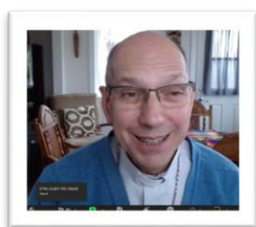
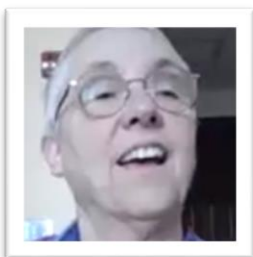
to explore ideas on how to do that. We look forward to our future gatherings and hope to grow and strengthen our sisterly relationships with one another." Building on this conversation, I invited Sr. Kristin Matthes, SNDdeN of Threshold and enlisted the consultation of Sr. Mary Ann Zollman, BVM to assist WPC in facilitating a planning process for a 2025 in person Gathering. The process has started February 22, 2024 with an initial focus group followed up with an April meeting to discuss the vision for the gathering and a planning team will be put in place to discuss and implement details of the event. Additional funds will be requested from LCWR as it was recommended that we implement a plan for sisters under 55 over the course of three years.



SISTERS AT THE JANUARY 2024 THE LEADERSHIP COLLABORATIVE GATHERING ON HOPE / ESPERANZA

Providence Leading Us In A New Reality What Is Providence Calling Us To , Now?

During the 2024 Providence Event, *Providence Leading Us in a New Reality*, Sr. Barbara Battista, SP asked the question “What is Providence / your faith or spiritual tradition saying to you? To us?” as we unpacked the implications of the Doctrine of Discovery Then and Now with Archbishop Donald Bolen of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada on February 3



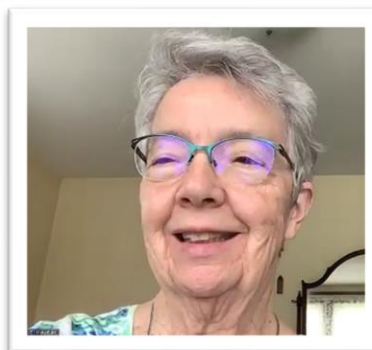
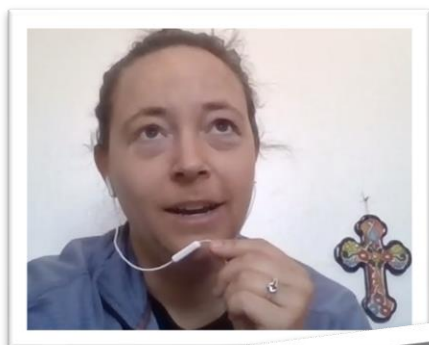
Springer, PhD on Who is “Other”, Then and Now?



The question also belongs to the greater Providence communities to engage, further reflect upon and discuss. What can each community do locally in light of what has been discussed during these presentations.?

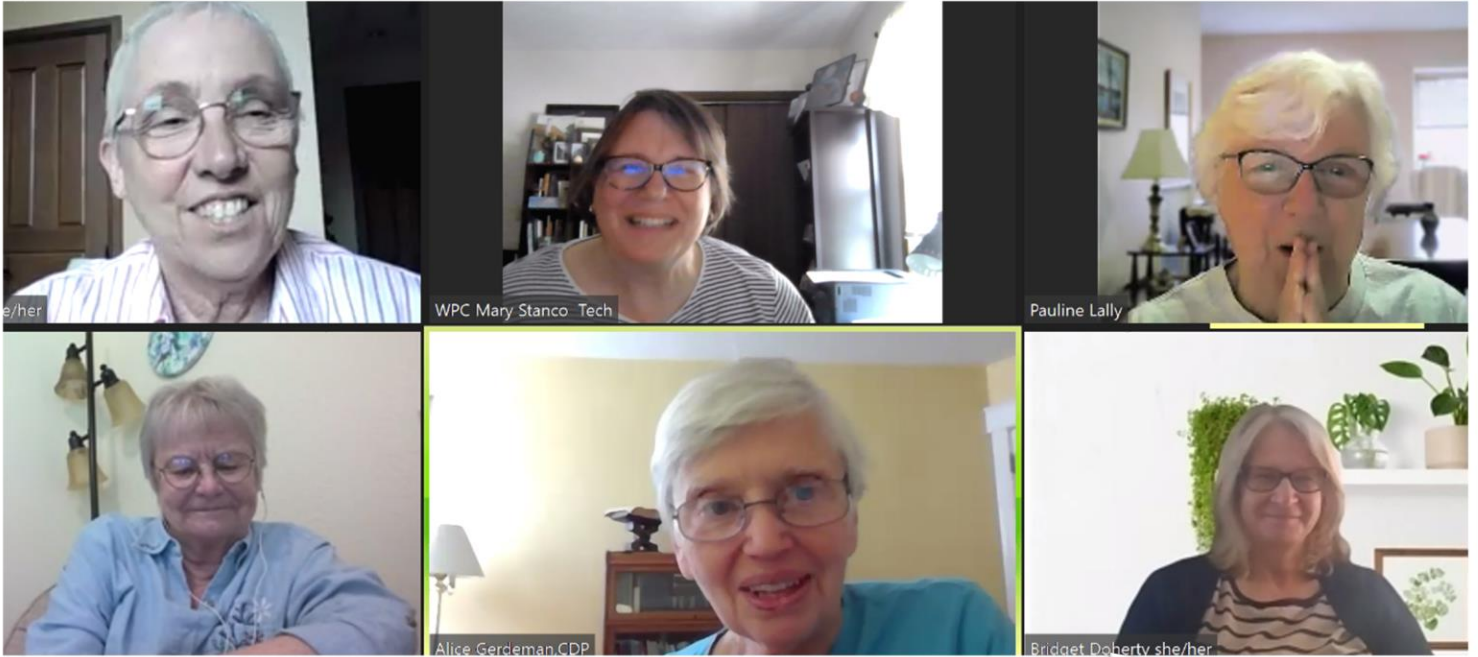
We hope to continue to answer the question of , the Providence Justice Committee (Barbara Battista SP, Anita Brenek CDP, Bridget Doherty, Alice Gerdemann CDP, Pauline Lally SP, and Carol Stenger CDP) look to communities to continue the conversations in local communities.

The question was asked again as Patty Krawec spoke to us about *From Treaties to Borders* on March 16 and the same question was asked on April 27 after listening to Dr. Pearlette





THANKS TO ALL WHO ATTENDED AND MADE THE 2024 PROVIDENCE EVENT VIRTUALLY POSSIBLE!



SPECIAL THANKS TO THE PROVIDENCE JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE:

(FIRST ROW) BARBARA BATTISTA, SP; MARY STANCO, HM (WPC DIRECTOR); PAULINE LALLY, SP

(SECOND ROW) ANITA BRENEK, CDP; ALICE GERDEMAN, CDP; BRIDGET DOHERTY

CAROL STENGER, CDP



**SPECIAL THANKS TO SR. KRISTIN MATTHES, SNDden AND DEBBIE DILLOW, PA
(NOT PICTURED) FOR TECH SUPPORT.**

**FRENCH AND SPANISH INTERPRETERS (NOT PICTURED): ALBERT BEAUDRY,
SYLVIA ESCARCEGA, ISABELLE MARTILIANI, MAGDALENA NAVARRO, MAGALY
SALA, AND SAMANTHA VILA,**

SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE, MOTHER JOSEPH

LIVING THE MISSION DAY TO DAY

To read the article in its entirety, please follow this link [Living the Mission Day to Day – Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province](#). View the YouTube channel [Sisters of Providence Mother Joseph Province - YouTube](#) to learn more.

The mission of the Sisters of Providence is to proclaim Providence as the loving presence of God, active in us and through us, watchful over the created universe and attentive to the needs of all.

It seems that when people experience that mission – often through working with the Sisters in a medical setting, a school or other ministry– they want more.

And so, in the 1970's, the Sisters of Providence recognized the desire to continue living the mission in their lay partners and formally organized the Providence Associates.

To be sure, Sisters have worked with lay people since the founding of the congregation when they ministered to the suffering people of Montreal with the help of the Society of the Ladies of Charity.

The Providence Associates are heirs to that work and take it to an entirely new level.

“Associates are women and men, married, single, widowed or divorced committed to joining hands with the Sisters of Providence in

faith, prayer, spiritual growth and solidarity with the poor and marginalized people of society,” explains **Kathe Boucha, PA**, executive director of Providence Associates of Mother Joseph.

“Associates live in a freely chosen commitment to be in communion with vowed members as companions on their spiritual journey,” she explains.

“Together with the vowed sisters, associates are called to be prophetic witnesses in our society, seeking truth, recognizing that justice and service to the poor are baptismal imperatives,” she explains.

Many congregations have associates or an equivalent and Kathe estimates that there are more than 55,000 associates in communion with vowed communities around the world.

About 1,000 of them are Providence Associates in four Provinces (Montreal, Calgary/Edmonton, Alberta, Mother Joseph and South America) who come from various ethnic, educational and faith traditions.

The associate way of life is evolving, and what it may be is not yet known.

If we believe that Divine Providence brought us together, then we must believe that Divine Providence will continue to guide us into the future.

*~Kathe Bouche
Director of Providence Associates
Mother Joseph*

Mother Joseph Province has about 250 Providence Associates in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Montana, Georgia, Central America, Tanzania (yes, where Mt. Kilimanjaro rises) and the Philippines.



Kathe Boucha, PA, reports to the 2022 Provincial Chapter on the status of the Associates.

[New associates], especially since video conferencing skyrocketed with the COVID pandemic, have found their way to the Associates through the internet. **Venance Mmassy, PA**, lives in the shadow of Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania.

“People who live in Tanzania and East Africa are learning about Catholic organizations on the internet and in African news,” Verance says. “People who want to help the poor now have access to training via the internet.”

“Three of our regions meet monthly by Zoom,” explains Kathe. “We are developing online orientation and a new E-Region to welcome associates who are not geographically close to others.”

Venance was one of the first who experienced our online orientation program

ADVANCING THE CAUSE OF BLESSED EMILIE

The Congregational Leadership Team has invited Sr. Karin Dufault to become the Vicepostulator for the Cause of Blessed Emilie Gamelin.



“In light of her experience, her many talents and, above all, her energy and great love for the Congregation and her devotion to Mother Gamelin, we believe she is the right person to bring new momentum to the Cause,” wrote Sr. Alba Letelier, Congregational Leader, in making the announcement.

As vice postulator, Sr. Karin will work with an official postulator to represent and guide the congregation through the beatification process for Blessed Emilie. Sr. Karin has already taken up her new duties. She will live in Montreal

SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE
ST. MARY OF THE WOODS

BON VOYAGE: PRAYERS FOR SAFE TRAVELS

April 3, 2024, Sister Anne Therese Falkenstein

For the first time in the history of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, two sisters have been invited to attend the General Chapter of Foundress Saint Mother Theodore Guerin's original community, the Sisters of Providence of Ruillé sur Loir in France.

Today [April 3, 2024] the leadership team gathered at the Shrine of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin to pray for General Superior Sister Dawn Tomaszewski and Vicar Sister Jeanne Hagelskamp, before they left for France. Sisters at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods concluded the prayer by praying our Prayer of Reunion, prayed still today daily by our sisters and those in France.



The Sisters of Providence leadership team, from left Sisters Laura Parker, Jeanne Hagelskamp, Dawn Tomaszewski, Carole Kimes and Anne Therese Falkenstein, gather for prayer at the shrine of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin as Sisters Dawn and Jeanne prepare to leave for France.

Prayer of Reunion

The Prayer of Reunion has been in use by the Sisters of Providence since before the sisters left France in 1840 to found the Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind., congregation. Small changes have been made over time, including a change made by the 2011 General Chapter to include all who share the charism of Providence as part of the prayer.

We unite with all our sisters
and all who share the charism of Providence,
wherever they may be,
to praise you, our living God,
present to us in your Word, Jesus Christ,
holy, wise, humble, amiable and merciful.

We give, we consecrate and immolate ourselves
to you and your loving service.

Deign, O God, to send your Spirit
to receive, possess, purify, enlighten and
sanctify our hearts.

O Divine Jesus, keep us yours always. Amen

WIDENING THE HORIZONS OF OUR HOPE: GENERAL CHAPTER, 2023

The Congregation of Divine Providence held its General Chapter from July 16 to August 6 at its Motherhouse in St. Jean-de-Bassel, France. Its theme: "With God Providence in the heart of the world, let us widen the horizons of our hope." In her opening address, outgoing Superior General Sr. Susan Baumann challenged the delegates: "Now it is time to turn toward what is before us.

The work of this general chapter will be to confront this wounded and wonderful world with the energies of the fundamental virtues that impassion us. We stand on the edge of a new beginning. Do we dare step forward?" Left: CDP Motherhouse at St. Jean-de-Bassel, France. With the help of professional interpreters and a generous dose of sign language communication between Sisters coming from four language groups (French, English, Spanish, and Malagasy) proved no barrier to the deep discussions and interactions that took place during a Spirit-blessed three weeks. Delegates prayed and reflected individually and together as they contemplated and shared around questions focusing on mission, spirituality, community, and governance, while working to discern the call of the Spirit. Who in the world is crying out? How is the world itself crying out?

Many Chapter highlights were captured on video and shared shortly afterward with Sisters in the provinces via the Sisters' private page on congregational website. The entire opening of

the General Chapter was also streamed live for the first time, enabling Sisters across the world to view the event in real time. Sisters living at Holy Family in Melbourne gathered as a community to experience the opening. Many observed that seeing this event as it happened accentuated their feeling of unity with all CDP Sisters throughout the world and deepened the sense of their own participation in the General Chapter. Delegates arrived home energetic and enthused by the experience, which all agreed was a true experience of solidarity as an international congregation.

PICTURED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: GENERAL CHAPTER DELEGATE SR.



LESLIE KEENER; OUTGOING GENERAL COUNCILOR SR. JANET CARR; AND GENERAL CHAPTER DELEGATES SRs. MARGARET STALLMEYER, BARBARA ROHE, MARGIE VERHOFF, KAY KRAMER (NEWLY-ELECTED GENERAL COUNCILOR) AND MARY AGNES CASHMAN.

Elected to the new General Administration for the 2023-2028 term are: Sr. Anny Deutsch, Superior General; Sr. Perline Soamanambina, Vicar and General Councilor; and Srs. Kay Kramer, Marie Jocelyne Rasoamananjara, and Daniele Ziegelmeier, General Councilors. The Chapter Orientation, which will be the focus of the entire congregation for the next five years, will be promulgated on November 1, when the newly-elected General Administration will be installed

CDP ASSOCIATES: INTO THE FUTURE, FULL OF HOPE!

Following up on recommendations that emerged from a reflection and consultation process that began in early 2020 and involved every member living in the U.S. province, the CDP Associates have now reconfigured into small groups that meet in a new “hybrid” format using video technologies like Zoom. This enables associates to come to know and share with members living outside their own geographic areas. Associates unable to use video technologies meet regularly by phone.

The new leadership group, known as the Providence- or “P”-Team, sets a spiritual focus for the year and offers resources meant to guide and supplement spiritual and outreach activities planned and carried out by each small group. The P-Team also schedules and implements an annual calendar of online and in-person events. Although the reorganization is still in its early days, the use of digital technologies to become more widely and deeply connected with each other are already helping Associates find new and creative ways to support each other in their common quest to be the heart and hands of Providence in daily life.

On Sunday, June 25, many Associates and Sisters gathered after Mass in Immaculate

Conception Chapel in Holy Family Home, Melbourne to honor and gift Donna Esposito, who retired after fifteen years of faithful and dedicated service as Associate Director of the U.S. province. Donna came to know and love the CDP spirituality and charism during the mid-1960’s while working with the Sisters serving at St. Vincent’s Infant Home in Donna’s native Rhode Island. She is also one of the first members of the Associate group, which began in 1976. Donna, who became the first lay director of Associates in the U.S. province in 2008, moved to Northern Kentucky in June, 1993 and is steeped in the charism of the Congregation. Many blessings, prayers, and thanks, Donna!



DONNA ESPOSITO

WALKING WITH MIGRANTS

By Sister Josephine Macias, CDP

From March 7 to April 8, 2023, I returned to the land that my own parents migrated from almost 100 years ago. They suffered pain and want but would not recognize the extreme violence and deep deprivation that current migrants endure. I chose to participate in Caminando con los Migrantes (Walking with Migrants), a program sponsored by the Hilton Foundation to involve Religious Communities with the work of Kino Border Initiative (KBI), to honor their quest for a better life and to be of service to those today who struggle to save their very lives and those of their children.

Programs throughout this month brought me face to face with courage and endurance. Migrants shared stories of struggles that included painful memories of relatives who disappeared; rape; murder; and loss of work, land, and dignity. They traveled from Central and South America, Haiti, and Mexico, relying on word of mouth that there was refuge at KBI in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. Here they found security and a wholistic approach that includes food, healthcare, shelter, legal advice, and, most importantly, a welcoming smile. I saw faces that were transformed from stoicism or fear to glimmers of hope. I saw the resilience of children bring new courage to their families.

Along with working in the kitchen to chop vegetables for approximately

180 people a day, serving meals, and organizing donations of clothing, I participated in a daylong visit to a ranch along the Arizona/Mexico border where trails have been forged by Border Crossers, a term that is used to differentiate them from Migrants. Border Crossers are men who are volunteers, or conscripted by threat, to carry drugs to the U.S. Cameras on the ranch show men in camouflage making a perilous journey for the dangerous cartels that control the area. On the other hand, migrants are usually family groups who walk together for safety, led by a coyote.

I shared a house with four other religious women, who are all more fluent in Spanish than I am! Our international community included Sisters from India, Taiwan, Mexico, and U.S. (Indiana). We enjoyed many adventures together and, like me, will always treasure this life changing experience.



SISTER JOSEPHINE (CENTER) MINISTERED WITH OTHER RELIGIOUS WOMEN AT INICIATIVA KINO PARA LA FRONTERA (KINO BORDER INITIATIVE) IN NOGALES, SONORA, MEXICO.



SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

FINAL CHAPTER OF THE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE

Sister Frances O'Brien

In late October, the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul took a monumental step in our 162-year history by convoking our final General Chapter. For almost 3 years, we had been meeting regularly with facilitator and Canon Lawyer, Sister Bonnie MacLellan, a Sister of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie. Bonnie helped us to understand various options we could take if we could no longer elect a Leadership Team according to our Constitutions. Much prayer, deep

listening and discernment went into all of the meetings held over this time. It was paramount to ensure that all of the sisters had a good understanding of the reality we were facing and the options available to us. At an Extraordinary General Chapter on

Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul in attendance at the final Chapter

June 16, 2023, the delegates voted 100% in favour of petitioning Rome to appoint a Pontifical Commissary to fulfill the canonical leadership responsibilities of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul.

Over the course of the summer, all sisters who were able participated in a process of discernment to decide one or two possible candidates we could approach to be a Commissary for us. The end result was a 92% consensus to invite only one person to consider serving in

this ministry. That sister also entered into personal discernment as well as discernment with her congregation. She agreed to have her name submitted to Rome after the Final General Chapter had completed its resolutions.

Chapter began on October 31, 2023, with 23 voting delegates and many non-voting active participants contributing to the process. A spirit of unity and excitement for the future was tangible among us.

In the end, three resolutions were passed unanimously by the Chapter.

We have petitioned the approval of Rome to suppress the requirement in our Constitutions to hold a General

1. Chapter every 4 years and to elect a General Superior and Council
2. appoint a sister from another Congregation selected by this Chapter to be Commissary for our Congregation and therefore our canonical leadership.

In addition we created direction for the canonical leadership to distribute to charitable organizations of our designation any assets remaining when the last Sister of Providence dies.

We have taken steps to assure our future governance and care of our members. Our legacy is well underway with the development of Providence Village Inc. and

the planned autonomy of our Providence Associates. We have discerned together the person that we hope to have appointed as our Commissary and she has accepted the invitation. Our next step is to discern the names of 3 Sisters of Providence who will serve as an advisory team for the Commissary.

Once we have received approval from Rome for our 2 petitions, the current Leadership Team will enter into dialogue with the Commissary to create a Memorandum of Understanding regarding details of her ministry to our Congregation, along with the advisory team of three Sisters of Providence. Other business of the Congregation regarding Corporations, Investment portfolio, our own ministry staff, etc. will be carried on internally for as long as we need.

We are so grateful to Providence for guiding us through these uncharted waters. While most religious congregations in Canada are in the process of this work, we are often told that we have led the way as an example to others. As a small group of Sisters (43 members), it seems safe to say that we have experienced transformation and have great hope for the future.

The Closing of Providence Spirituality Centre and the opening of Providence Presence Ministry

By Lucy Bethel, SP

It was with a mixed sense of 'sadness and gratitude' that the Sisters of Providence of Saint Vincent de Paul announced the closure of Providence Spirituality Centre (PSC), September 6, 2022.

Sadness, because it means saying farewell to a spirituality ministry that has flourished, and nurtured countless hearts and souls for over 45 years. In the face of a significant decline in registration numbers the Congregation sensed a new call, an invitation to listen to possible partners in mission that the Spirit was sending our way.

Thus, we experience a sense of 'gratitude', as the closing of PSC is 'one more step in paving the way' for the unfolding of the Vision of Providence Village Inc, the non-profit organization created by the Sisters of Providence of Saint Vincent de Paul and designed to carry out the legacy of the Sisters into the future. 'Gratitude' that we are fostering/nurturing the creation of "a neighbourhood of people helping people, inspiring hope, fulfillment and care of the earth".

As I reflected on the closure of Providence Spirituality Centre and the 45 years of ministry to which so many persons have contributed and, in and



through which so many have been blessed, these words from Ecclesiastes (3: 1-8 in part) surfaced in me: *Everything Has Its Time*

This text seems to capture experiences of those who served and ministered in this sacred space, as well as the many people from all walks of life, from many faith traditions, from around the globe, who have shared life with us in this sacred environment over the past 45 years. Recently someone made the comment, “If these walls could speak what a rich story they would have to tell!” The task of sharing the story is left to us, and words fail to capture all there is to share. We will have to settle for the reminder held in this Scripture text,
“Everything has its time!”

Providence Spirituality Centre has indeed had its time! From early 1977 – December 31, 2022. Presence and prayer energy of the many visitors we have welcomed continues to permeate this space.

Our lives, and the lives, of our PSC clientele have been enriched by many guest facilitators & directors from across Canada and around the globe who have blessed us with their time and presence. We do believe that by our commitment to, and presence in the PSC ministry we have

indeed contributed to the creation of a just and peaceful world, BUT,
“Everything has its time!” What a blessed and privileged time the past 45 years have been for us all!

We pause and express our gratitude to each person who has blessed this sacred space. We thank our Provident God for all that the ministry of Providence Spirituality Centre has been.

As we bid farewell to Providence Spirituality Centre, we are happy to announce that something new has been created, “Providence Presence Ministry” through which the staff will continue a ministry of ongoing spiritual direction, as well, an online ministry of personal spiritual direction and retreats. Please check our website for additional information and updates re future programming
(www.providence.ca/presence).



THE FUTURE OF THE ARCHIVES



Veronica Stienburg, Archivist

The archives of the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul contains records concerning the congregation's history in Kingston, across Canada, and in Massachusetts, Guatemala and Peru. The archives are currently located in Providence Motherhouse, in Kingston. As the congregation moves towards completion and Providence Village takes over the management of the Motherhouse property, the archives is planning for its future.

Beginning in 2015 the archives began working with the Archdiocese of Kingston and the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph (RHSJ) to plan a new joint archive that would house the archival records of all three organizations. Originally the goal was to locate this new archive in the Church of the Good Thief, a closed historic church in Kingston. In late 2019 it became apparent that this plan was not feasible due to the high cost of restoring the church to heritage standards and incorporating the archives. An alternative plan was proposed in 2020 and all three partners agreed to the idea of building an addition onto the Diocesan Centre in Kingston that would house the new joint archives.

We hope to break ground on the two-level addition in the summer of 2024. The archival storage will be housed on the lower level in a temperature-and-humidity-controlled environment with high-density mobile shelving. The offices, reading room and work room will be housed on the upper level. Archival storage is being built to archival standards to maximize storage capacity and to ensure the long-term preservation of the records and artifacts.

In June 2023, all three partners signed a formal agreement to create and manage the joint archives. Each partner is contributing to the construction and to an endowment fund that will cover all ongoing operating costs for the running of the archives. The operating expenses for the project will cover all three archives so, although the collections will be maintained as separate entities, the operations will be managed as one. The sharing of resources will ensure long-term sustainability, preservation, and accessibility of records of all three partners. Each partner will gain from the presence of the others. The congregations will have a permanent home for their documentary heritage and the future care of their archives is assured long after the congregations have come to completion. Centralizing the three Catholic archives into a single site will benefit researchers, as the collections, while independent, are complimentary.

The new archives facility will be managed by two professional archivists, but we will manage all three collections. The RHSJ archivist, and the SP archivist, will be moving with our collections to the new facility. We will become employees of the archdiocese, while maintaining close working relationships

with our current employers. The archivist will still assist Sisters, Associates, staff, and external researchers with inquiries into the records and history of the Sisters of Providence.

Although the congregation is working towards completion, its history and stories will remain accessible in perpetuity through the new joint archives.



Sisters of Providence Holyoke

SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE MARK 150 YEARS OF SERVICE IN THE SPRINGFIELD DIOCESE

By Rebecca Drake

Note: Printed with permission granted by the Catholic Communications Ministry of the RC Diocese of Springfield, MA. The article appeared in The Catholic Mirror, Fall 2023.

HOLYOKE — When Sister of Providence Kathleen Popko speaks about her community, one thing is clear: The faith that brought four Sisters of Charity of Providence from Canada to Holyoke in 1873 has remained steadfast since that time.

“I think the aspect of our lives together that has been sustained over 150 years relates to our common charism of trust in the Providence of God. Somehow that charism touched the hearts of the women who gathered here,” said Sister Popko, who presently serves as president of the congregation. “And we have operationalized that charism into responding to bringing hope

and healing to those in need, particularly those who are poor and oppressed. And that charism, I think, has held us together in good times and bad.

“Those first four sisters, who came to Holyoke from Canada at the request of Father Patrick J. Harkins, pastor of St. Jerome Parish, found a city teeming with immigrants, working in mills and living in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions; orphans wandering the streets alone; and residents suffering from disease, especially typhoid fever. The sisters soon opened the House of Providence to care for orphans, the sick and infirm. They also cared for the sick poor in their homes, comforted the dying, and prepared the dead for burial.

At the request of Father Harkins, the sisters, already called “Sisters of Providence,” also accepted the task of teaching boys in 1875. Among the two sisters and four novices who came to fulfill this mission was Sister Mary of Providence, Catherine Horan, who in 1892 would become the foundress and first superior general of the Sisters of Providence of Holyoke in the Diocese of Springfield, Massachusetts.

“Mother Mary of Providence was known for her dynamic energy and vision,” Sister Popko said. “Within the first 15 years of her leadership, the Sisters of Providence established 20 works of charity. And these were not small things; these were hospitals, nursing homes, homes for working girls, and orphanages.”

Building a legacy

As the sisters worked to realize the vision of their foundress, the House of Providence became Providence Hospital, the first Catholic hospital in western Massachusetts and the House of Mercy became Mercy Hospital (now Mercy Medical Center) in Springfield. As the years went on, they established St. Luke’s Home in Springfield; Farren Memorial Hospital (now Farren Care Center) in Montague City; the Beaven Kelly Home, Holy Family Institute at

Brightside, an orphanage for boys, and Mount St. Vincent, an orphanage for girls, all in Holyoke; St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, Mass.; and St. Luke's Hospital in Pittsfield. The sisters toiled and ministered without a motherhouse until 1932 when they moved to the new Providence Mother House, situated on a hill in Holyoke, with a golden dome and cross visible from nearby Interstate 91. And their work continued.

Their ministries reached as far as North Carolina, where in the 1950s they opened a small, rural hospital in Murphy and St. Joseph of the Pines Hospital in Southern Pines. Back in the Springfield Diocese, in the 1960s and 70s, the sisters' work expanded to include drug programs, a Spanish Apostolate, working with disabled children, prison ministry, assisting in youth programs, teaching in community colleges and catechetical work, among other ministries.

In more recent years, the early health care facilities were joined to form the Sisters of Providence Health and Human Service System, Inc.; and eventually joined with two other Catholic health systems in the U.S. to form Catholic Health East, which later merged with the larger Trinity Health. And additional ministries were formed, including Providence Ministries for the Needy in Holyoke and Genesis Spiritual Life and Conference Center in Westfield.

In the late 1990s, with a smaller number of sisters remaining in Providence Mother House, the facility, with a central courtyard and stunning Byzantine-style chapel, was transformed into Providence Place at Ingleside, an independent living community with 119 units for those over age 55. Most recently, the congregation established the Mary's Meadow care facility in Holyoke and Hillside Residence in West Springfield.

A TIME TO CELEBRATE THE PAST, LOOK AHEAD



As today's Sisters of Providence gathered for an anniversary Mass with more than 280 guests at Our Mother of Sorrows Chapel at Providence Place on June 11, Springfield Bishop William D. Byrne, principal celebrant, said, "When we celebrate today, we celebrate not just the hospitals and the work, the number of people they've served, transformed lives and stood up for the planet, stood up for women — we thank them and honor their being Providence for us."

"They have not only been the loving arms of Christ, but, in reality, they've also been the brains and the brawn of the whole operation," Bishop Byrne said during his homily. "They built and designed each and every institute, raising the money themselves, from the ground up. They maintained these works of God, they did whatever they had to do to help the neediest among us."



Several of the sisters, interviewed just prior to the June 11 Mass, wanted to acknowledge the laypeople and associates of the congregation who have supported them in their ministries throughout the years.

“It is a day to celebrate, and people talk about the lives we’ve touched, but these are the people who touched our lives, helped us in our journey. We’ve not done this alone,” said Sister Mary Caritas Geary, who turned 100 in August and is vice president of the congregation.

Sister Margaret McCleary, founder of Providence Ministries for the Needy, acknowledged the work of the more than 750 Sisters of Providence who came before her, as well as the staff and volunteers who have worked, and are working, beside them. “And as we stood on their shoulders, I’ve also been thinking of the profound gratitude I have for the men and women who are now standing on our shoulders. I see them every day, working here so diligently and with our spirit and a real sense of our legacy.

“Sister Elizabeth Oleksak, a founder of Genesis Spiritual Life Center, offered her thoughts for the future of the congregation’s mission. “And now it’s a new day and our hope is, my prayer is, that it will continue with the energy and the intent that we Sisters of Providence have for it,” she said. “And I think that’s the best we could ask.

“Faced with the possibility that there may one day be no Sisters of Providence living and working in the diocese, Sister Popko has confidence in the laypeople who are now administrators and board members to carry on “God’s mission of being Providence in the world.”

And, never forgotten, are the people in every corner of the diocese who are served through the congregation’s many ministries — the people Sister McCleary calls “the heroes.”

“I learned compassion from them, I learned presence from them, I learned generosity from them. They had nothing and they would give everything, whatever they had, to someone,” she said. “And those are the things I come away with. They made me who I am today.”



SR. SENGA FULTON, SP AND SR. JULIE CRANE, SP

100 YEARS & FABULOUS!

Everyone seems to know it is Sr. Mary Caritas Geary, SP's 100th birthday! It is not surprising, since there have been multiple events, dinners, interviews and newspaper articles, all trying to tell her amazing story of being a "leader and inspiration" to many for so long in Western Massachusetts and beyond.

The Sisters of Providence hosted an event on August 16 for more than 120 Sisters, residents, and colleagues at Providence Place who joined in singing happy birthday and eating cake in honor of Sister's 100 years.

President Sr. Kathleen Popko presented a pictorial review of Sr. Mary Caritas' life in its multi-faced dimensions and then all watched a brief video of her interview with Sharon Roullier, host of the Diocesan television program called "Real to Reel." Sr. Caritas was invited to come forward to be dressed with a sash saying "100 and Fabulous!" - with a matching tiara - before she offered her spontaneous remarks that concluded with a bow.

Sr. Caritas' extraordinary career including serving as CEO of Mercy Medical Center for 16 years; as President of the Congregation for 8

years during the post-Vatican II changes; past chair of the Board of the Catholic Health Association, the Massachusetts Hospital Association; and multiple boards at the regional, state and national levels that have led to numerous awards and honorary degrees. Her remarkable civic involvement over the past 30 years since her "retirement" continues with her latest involvement with nuclear disarmament.



Recently, Sr. Caritas was interviewed by George O'Brien, editor of *Business West*, that resulted in a five-page article with photos in the widely circulated business journal. Another major event was held on September 14 hosted by Mercy Medical Center where Sr. Mary Caritas was honored with the establishment of an endowment for the

education of nurses at Mercy Medical Center, where she was born, graduated from nursing school, and served as its CEO. Also several legislators offered citations from the Massachusetts House and Senate and the Mayor of Springfield presented her with the keys to the City!

As Sr. Caritas celebrates her 100th birthday, we recognize that the pattern of her life of the past 100 years has been a spiritual journey, one where one can see that God's providence has guided her step by step though each part of her inspiring life of service. Congratulations and blessings to our centenarian!



L TO R STANDING: SISTERS KATHLEEN POPKO, MARY CARITAS, SENG FULTON AND
SEATING SISTERS ELIZABETH OLESAK AND RUTH MCGOLDRICK

Congregation of Divine Providence
San Antonio,

WE REMEMBER



Sister Mary Christine Morkovsky, CDP
December 13, 1931 – March 2, 2024

Sister Mary Christine Morkovsky (formerly Sister Theresa Clare), CDP, Ph.D., entered eternal life on March 2, 2024 at the age of 92. She was born on December 13, 1931, in San Antonio, Texas, to Henry J. and Mary L. A. (Kucera) Morkovsky. She had three brothers and six sisters and was proud of her Czechoslovakian heritage. Sister Mary Christine made her first profession of vows on June 22, 1951, and her perpetual vows on June 22, 1957.

Sister Mary Christine was a Sister of Divine Providence for 72 years. She ministered as a teacher, graduate student, researcher, historian, Congregational leader, author and spiritual director. She utilized her God-given talents to manifest God's Providence in all that she did.

In her early ministry Sister Mary Christine taught music theory at Providence High School and private piano and organ at St. Mary's. She was also an instructor of English, music, algebra, and journalism at the Our Lady of the Lake Aspirancy. This led her to become a formation director and attend graduate school. She obtained her M.A. in Philosophy from St. Louis University in 1961 and began teaching philosophy at Our Lady of the Lake College.

While working on her doctorate, Sister Mary Christine worked at Mission San Jose as an exhibit consultant. She earned her Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of St. Louis in 1966. Sister Mary Christine was conducting her post graduate research in Paris, France when she was asked by the Texas Parks and Wildlife to research information about the Spaniards who established the Missions. Researching in Madrid and Sevilla, Spain, she once again used her gifts where she was called.

After returning from Europe, Sister Mary Christine served as the Philosophy Department Head and taught at Wadhams Hall Seminary College in Ogdensburg, New York for nearly a decade. Her contributions also extended beyond the classroom. She was a respected author, historian, and spiritual director, influencing many with her deep knowledge and understanding. According to WORLD CAT Mary Christine is listed 47 times as author, translator, contributor, or creator of 23 print books, 14 ebooks, 28 articles, book reviews or other media.

From 1999-2005, Sister Mary Christine served on the General Council and was liaison for the Mexico region of the Congregation. She continued to serve the community at the Mexican American Catholic College in San Antonio, Texas, focusing on teaching, writing, and music until 2011. Her lifelong dedication to education, her commitment to her faith, and her unwavering support of the Congregation of Divine Providence left a lasting impact on all who knew her.

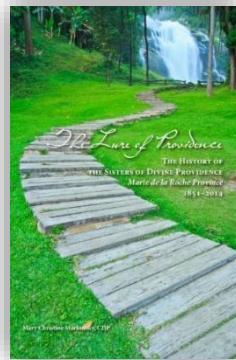
Sister Mary Christine collaborated on a regular basis with the national organization called the Women of Providence in Collaboration (WPC.) The WPC is comprised of the congregations of women religious who recognize Providence as their charism. She shared her writings and presentations exploring the applied theology of Providence and contributed regularly to their Providence retreats, conferences,

publications and events. Internationally she also shared her writings, knowledge and spirit with her sister congregations founded by Blessed Fr. John Martin Moye.

Her focus of manifesting God's Providence allowed her to move from one kind of ministry to another. She said, "I didn't enter the convent to do one particular thing. I entered because I wanted to be of service –

to follow Christ and manifest God's Providence."

LURE OF PROVIDENCE



"The Lure of Providence recounts the history of an international congregation of Sisters who have spent over a century and a half transcending boundaries of nation, culture, and ministry. Sister M. Christine Morkovsky brings these women to life and helps us to

appreciate their rich legacies as benefactors of both Church and society. She has made a significant contribution to our understanding of modern religious life, in the United States and around the world."

- Margaret Susan Thompson, Syracuse University

OUR MISSION

We, the Women of Providence in Collaboration, are an association of religious congregations bearing the name and charism of Providence.

We come together to share and promote the evolving theology and spirituality of Providence, witnessing a preferential option for the poor as we respond to the needs of our global society.



Women of Providence in Collaboration

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