

Volume XV ♦ Issue 2 ♦ Spring 2020



# Collaboration

## Providence Event Rescheduled for February 2021

The Providence Event, entitled “Providence ~ Where Justice and Radical Hope Meet!” originally planned by the Women of Providence in Collaboration to take place June 12-14, 2020, at the Kearns Spirituality Center in Allison Park, Pennsylvania, has been rescheduled for February 20, 2021.

The members of the WPC Governing Board also have decided to recreate the event in a new format that will enable greater participation of members across the WPC communities.

“Obviously, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated our changing the date of this event,” explained Dawn Tomaszewski, SP, board chairperson. “However, as we struggled to find a new time and a new venue to host an in-person event, it occurred to us that we might use technology to provide the event in a different format.”

“The use of live-stream and other platforms such as Zoom Breakout Rooms or Google Hangouts provide the opportunity for Sisters of Providence across the country to have access and interaction with the same speaker with local discussions to follow,” Dawn explained.

Sister Nancy Sylvester, IHM, slated as the keynote speaker for the original June event, has agreed to work with the planning committee to create a one day event that can be telecast to various locations.

What will remain the same is the theme of the Event: to look at the justice issues of the day through a Providence Lens.

According to Barbara McMullen, CDP, who serves as the WPC director, “We asked Nancy to help us consider our call to offer meaning in a suffering world. Where are we

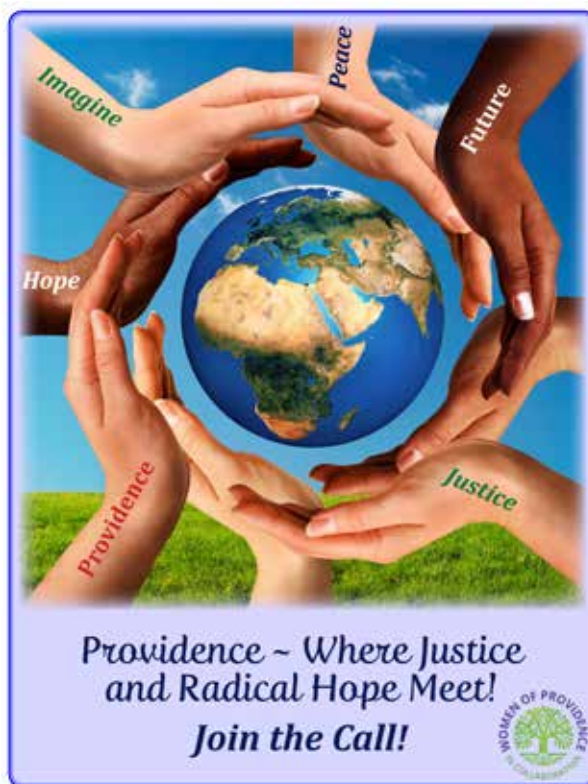
being invited to network, collaborate and build bridges with others? How can we be a people with a vision that restores creation, human dignity and peace, and engenders hope one little step at a time?”

Though all the details have yet to be worked out, the WPC board has set as high priorities interaction with the speaker as well as conversations between and among Sisters of Providence and Providence Associates of various congregations who participate in the Event. Please hold February 20, 2021, as the new date for the Providence Event. New registration materials will come in the Fall.

In the meantime, Sister Barb has returned the room, board and transportation fees collected from all sister participants as well as those fees for associate participants that were paid for by their congregations to attend the June event. These were sent to the leadership team of each congregation to disperse. Individual associates who paid their own fees will receive a full refund unless other agreements were made.

The WPC board has asked that each community allow the \$275 event fee of the sister participants to remain with WPC as seed money to create the new February event. In return, all members of these congregations will be able to attend the new event whether or not they paid for the June 2020 Event. Registration for the February 20, 2021, Providence Event will begin in the Fall of 2020.

For further information, contact Sister Barbara McMullen, CDP, Executive Director, Women of Providence in Collaboration, [bmcullencdp@gmail.com](mailto:bmcullencdp@gmail.com), 618-550-8884.



# *From the director*

Sister Barbara McMullen, CDP  
WPC executive director



## ***This and That...and HOPE***

As many of you know the pandemic has presented all of us with many challenges and changes in the way we live our lives now. For the WPC one of those challenges was the decision to cancel the 2020 Providence Event. It was a heart breaking decision at the April board meeting on many levels. Most importantly because it meant we weren't going to be together—as many relationships have been forged across congregations of Sisters and their Associates over the years—and getting together is so life-giving! Another heart-break was all the planning the Core Team had done. I had a GREAT Core Team and actually the planning was all completed, most tasks finished, and almost everything ready for the Event by March! The few tasks that remained were more logistical in nature and not in content.

The WPC board, after a lengthy discussion, decided to postpone the Event and try it in a new format. As many of you have heard by now, it will be a virtual event on February 20, 2021. It will be only one day, with our speaker, Nancy Sylvester, IHM, still presenting. The logistics still need to be worked out, but we hope to have an even greater crowd attend over cyberspace! Watch for new information on the WPC website's blog under "What's New" as it unfolds. I can tell you that all refund checks have now been mailed to those who had registered for the June 2020 Event.

Since we weren't doing the June Event, we decided to do a Spring/Summer edition of the Collaboration newsletter. In this issue you will find wonderful stories of how Providence Sisters and their Associates have been responding to the needs of people during the pandemic. Not at all surprising because when

it comes to meeting the needs of the day and its people—Providence Sisters are there! Whether it is through prayer, making masks or stocking food pantries, we are there! Creativity abounded as groups found ways to have virtual programs, celebrate the Holy Week and Easter rituals, conduct story time for children, help the elderly confined to their rooms and the beautiful story from a Peruvian Associate and his deep trust in a Provident God. If you like history, you'll enjoy a couple of stories that harken back to other days, too!

Hope was my chosen word for 2020. Who knew on January 1 how that hope would be tested!

Since then I have seen the word appear in many articles. It seems the Maryknoll Community designated 2020 as the year of HOPE and described it this way. "Hope is believing in two things: that God is always in control, and that God loves us. If we have this belief we can never be lost to despair, because we always have hope that everything will turn out for the best." A good friend of mine sent me this quote. "There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as the expectation of something better tomorrow." (Orison S. Marden)

I wish us all better tomorrows! I send blessings your way, and say thanks for the kindness, caring and generosity that brings hope to all the people that through you Providence touches!

*Barbara*

## ***Providence in a Time of a World Pandemic***

As of this writing, the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic has affected most, if not all parts, of the World Community. Certainly, it is present in all parts of the international Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence. As the units of our Congregation were affected at different times and made various responses to the threat of the virus, we will be recovering from the virus also at different times. As the Congregational Leader, I am not responsible for implementing directives of how to deal with the pandemic in the Provinces and Missions; these are issued by the country or states where the Sisters reside.

Union of International Superiors General (USIG) promulgated the Worldwide Day of Solidarity and Prayer and we observed it at the Generalate residence. We made copies of the prayer composed by Pope Francis for the day and made it available to the members of our local Community. We pray this prayer together daily. Much information has been made available for us and the units comprising our Congregation from all the Conferences and organizations that support religious life.

Regarding the “units of our Congregation,” the advice given is for each of us to do what is in our power to do. And, for those who have the capacity and opportunity to minister to our brothers and sisters, in accordance with provisions given us by the authorities in charge, they minister in full fidelity to our charism. We are grateful for all of these efforts and support them with our prayer and encouragement. Even if we cannot physically be of direct service, we all have the capacity to pray. In all that we do, we want to be a sign of hope and trust.

Our unceasing prayer is for all those health workers at all levels for their courageous ministry with respect to testing for the virus and treating those afflicted with Covid-19. We pray for all those who are suffering from the effects of the virus and we pray for all those who are experiencing isolation and loneliness as a result of being confined in their homes. Lastly, we pray for ourselves as our lives are on hold. Not knowing if, and when, we can carry out the plans made for the good of our Congregation causes anxiety and apprehension, as not only our plans, but our lives are on hold.

In light of the coronavirus, Otto Sharmer (of theory U fame) shared this, *The more the world sinks into chaos,*

*desperation, and confusion, the greater our responsibility to radiate presence, compassion and grounded confidence.* We take this to heart.

The week-long meeting of the Congregational Leadership Team scheduled in March was not able to take place because of travel restrictions for our Team member from Germany and her translator from England. We were able to conduct most of the agenda in daily Zoom Meetings lasting 2 to 3 hours each day of the scheduled meeting week. We miss the bonding and interaction that comes when we are together for a week, participating in daily meetings and also interacting with each other in meals and recreational activities.

Sister Marilyn Bergt, our staff member at the Generalate, participates in our parish St. Vincent de Paul Society. Early on she organized an effort with members of this group to make face masks. These masks were made available to members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society as they visited clients and also were given away to others who requested them. Some Team Members are willing to deliver meals to those who cannot get out to shop for groceries, but we have not been called on. Perhaps we are not called as we also appear vulnerable because of our presumed age.



All the outside meetings in which we were scheduled to participate, through June, of course have been canceled. It does make our lives a little more intense. While our offices and residence are in the same building and we are used to working “at home,” we never leave work. We don’t have the break that comes when we attend meetings in other places, meet different people and have the opportunity to engage with others, while leaving for a short time the other projects and plans in which we are engaged at home.

My personal prayer around the pandemic has led me to believe that this may be like the “Great Flood” of the Hebrew Scriptures. Maybe the pandemic is the “cleansing” event that will truly draw the countries of the world closer together as we respond to each other in this pandemic. Perhaps this unplanned world event will be the impetus to help us to truly become a Global Community. God has not left us to our own devices. We are in this together and God is in this with us.

## **The Melting Pot of Providence**

I have to admit, that I “stole” the title from a recent article that appeared in the Pittsburgh Catholic. Actually, I also took the first two paragraphs of the article that described the arrival of the Sisters of Divine Providence in the United States from Germany.

While the article was introduced with the beginning experience of the Sisters of Divine Providence, it went on to chronicle the fifteen religious communities who settled in western Pennsylvania, as Pittsburgh was transformed into a melting pot of ethnic cultures and traditions.

Attracted by jobs in steel mills and coal mines during an unprecedented industrial revolution, waves of immigrants settled in the region from Ireland, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Italy, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Serbia and other European countries. Catholic Sisters responded to the overwhelming need in the region to educate and care for immigrant families, establishing a network of schools and hospitals.

“It was 1876. As I stood on the dock to board the [S.S. W.A.] Scholten for New York, my heart was pounding and my legs were unsteady. I thought that I might be spared the trip by tumbling over the side of the swaying gangway, but God had other plans for me. We pushed and pulled our valises onto the ship and then the six of us turned for one last look at our beloved Germany. I could not have dreamed of the great adventure that lay ahead.”



***S.S. W.A. Scholten of the Holland America Line***

What lay ahead for the Sisters of Divine Providence, including for Sr. Borgia Schröck who chronicled the arduous transatlantic journey to America, was ultimately a profound call of challenges and opportunities to minister to the overwhelming needs of German immigrants fleeing poverty, job shortages, political conflict and religious persecution in the mid-19th century. When the *Kulturkampf* prevented the Sisters from teaching in schools in Germany, their Bishop-Founder, Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler, through his contact with the Jesuits who had conducted a mission at St. Philip Neri Parish in Dungannon, Ohio, heard that at one time German Sisters had been active there. The pastor, Rev. Edward Vattman, began corresponding with Mother Vincentia Schultheis and Bishop Ketteler about the possibility of Sisters of Divine Providence serving in the parish. Negotiations were completed by June 1876. There was no difficulty in finding six volunteers willing to go overseas and start a new mission.

As we know, beginnings are never easy. After an 18 day trip aboard the Scholten, the Sisters arrived in New York on June 25, 1876; no one was there to meet them. The ship's captain allowed them to spend the night on board. The next day, they tried to make contact with the Director of St. Raphael Society, established to protect German emigrants. He sent his daughter in a carriage and took the Sisters to a nearby hospital where they sent a telegram to Fr. Vattman stating that they would take a train to Cleveland on Tuesday. He was not at the station in Cleveland, but they found him at Hannover, the next station. After a rough four-hour stagecoach ride, they arrived in Dungannon, a remote farming community with mostly Irish parishioners. But that was not the end of their woes. Fr. Vattman had not met them, because he lacked money. Furthermore, he had not informed the bishop that the Sisters were coming. The house that he promised the Sisters was not available because a family was renting it. The Sisters stayed at the parish house for two weeks and then moved into a vermin-infested house with a garden that was a wilderness. The Sisters had no salary and had to beg for food. In spite of the hardships, the Sisters maintained optimism, founded on their confidence in God's Providence.

The Sisters opened a school on August 15 for pupils who ranged in age from six to seventeen. When Father Vattman finally informed the Bishop of the Diocese of Cleveland of the Sisters' arrival, he gave them permission to conduct a school but not to make a foundation with a Motherhouse. Early in October, 1876, Henry Meyer, from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, attended a funeral of a relative in Dungannon and was surprised to find certified teachers from Germany instructing a few students in English in a rather isolated rural district. He knew that in his parish school, Saints Peter and Paul in Pittsburgh, some German

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## **The Melting Pot of Providence**

*Continued from page 4*

Benedictine Sisters had recently withdrawn. After describing the situation in Ohio to his pastor, Father Anthony Hune, the Sisters were invited to his parish.

On October 11, three of the six Sisters came to Pittsburgh and opened a school on October 13, with 101 students from primary to secondary classes. While Mother Xaveria made arrangements, three of the six Sisters opened the school and staffed it in Pittsburgh, the other three stayed in Dungannon, and continued to staff the school they had originally opened.

The school in Ohio closed on September 8, 1877, but Father Vattman, who had warmed up to the Sisters of Divine Providence, continued to have good relations with them. Although this “first” mission lasted only a little over a year, the parishioners of St. Philip Neri, presently the oldest parish in the Youngstown Diocese, celebrated a grand centennial honoring the Sisters of Divine Providence on June 25, 1975.

In 1879, three years after the Sisters arrived in Pittsburgh, the Sisters were invited to take charge of St. Francis de Sales School in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1886, the Sisters opened a school in Scipio, Kansas, and a littler later one in Westphalia, KS. In 1887 they opened a school and an orphanage in Wheeling, West Virginia. By 1921 they went to Gadsden, Alabama and to Granite City, Illinois to open hospitals. In 1932, they went to Puerto Rico and would minister there in Arecibo, Orocovis, Ponce, Utuado and Bayamon. In the late 1940’ s they went to Massachusetts. In the 1950’s they went to Michigan and Connecticut. In the Pittsburgh area and in neighboring dioceses, the Sisters would eventually staff 43 parish schools and assume a variety of other ministries to meet people’s needs.

Three U.S. Provinces were established in Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Kingston, Massachusetts. And these Provinces also established multiple convents and ministry sites. Provinces in the U.S. established schools at all levels, orphanages, hospitals, and nursing homes. Germany would survive the *Kulturkampf*, and eventually form three Provinces: Mainz, Aschaffenburg and Oberursel. They staffed and established hospitals, kindergartens and schools. In 1882, the Bishop of Pittsburgh raised the question about having the Sisters in the U.S. separate from Germany, because he wanted the convents in his diocese to be independent of Europe. The only exception was, if their Rule was approved by Rome. Since the Rule was in process of being approved by Rome, the separation of the Sisters in the U.S. from Germany never occurred.

In 1961, the Peru mission began with six Sisters from Ger-

many. This was a response to at least two encyclicals of Pope Pius XII, *Evangelii Praeconis* (1951) and *Fidei Donum* (1957) addressing the serious obligation to give more effective assistance to the missionaries.

The Korean Mission began with a request in 1963 by Andrien-Joseph Larribeau, who had a diocesan dream of building a Catholic hospital and was looking for religious Sisters who could take charge of its administration. While he was told, the Congregation had no Sisters to send to South Korea, he began to recruit candidates for the Generalate in Rome. On January 19, 1964, thirteen Korean candidates arrived in Rome. On August 1, 1964, another group of eleven candidates arrived in Rome. While the hospital never materialized, the Sisters endured. Thus, the birth of a Korean Mission, which would eventually become a Province of 135 Sisters. A mission was also established in Santo Domingo, with strong support of the Sisters from Puerto Rico. For almost forty years, a variety of international programs have been held, giving the Sisters, opportunities to meet and learn from one another. The photo below is of the most recent group gathered



last June in Rome for an intercultural, intergenerational, ministry program.

Lured by Providence, the Sisters of Divine Providence spent a century and a half transcending boundaries of nation, culture and ministry. During their 170-year-history, they were able to read the signs of the time and respond to the Second Vatican Council. They recommitted themselves, in light of the charism, to poor persons in society. When opportunities presented themselves, the Sisters responded in the missionary field, even though they were not established as a “missionary” Congregation. This led the Congregation to a fuller understanding of the importance of an intercultural approach to their apostolic outreach. Even though the “numbers of Sisters” have changed, the Sisters are well-positioned to continue to respond to the needs of an emerging Global Community.

## **Provident Easter Planning During Pandemic**

*By Ann Boniferno PA, Director Of Liturgical Music, and Assistant to Liturgy Office*

Planning the Triduum liturgies is always a creative process, but this year required more innovation than usual as we adapted to the ever-changing challenges of COVID-19.

Providence Motherhouse in Kingston, Ontario, is a residence for three communities of Sisters - the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, the Congregation of Notre Dame and the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph. The Chapel of Mary, Mother of Compassion, is a worship space for those residents as well as for other Sisters, associates, and members of the broader community. The celebration of the Sacred Triduum is a highlight of the liturgical year. This year members of the Congregational Liturgy Committee found ourselves repeatedly modifying and revising the liturgies and rituals in response to ever tightening restrictions.

March 13 - Plan 1: Entry to the chapel would be limited to residents and staff, and gatherings restricted to no more than fifty people. This might work. The priest/chaplain, director of liturgical music, and staff in the Associates office would still be able to help plan liturgies and fulfill ministries. Seating was taped off so that appropriate social distancing could be maintained in the chapel. Only the presider would receive communion and venerate the cross, group processions would be omitted, and the ritual of foot-washing would be replaced with a video. We got to work adapting our original plans, selecting new ministers and preparing revised programs.

March 30 - Plan 2: A directive from the province of Ontario had now restricted gatherings to no more than five people. Since a camera in the chapel has regularly broadcast liturgies to Sisters' room via closed circuit tv, Liturgy

of the Word could be provided during the week by two Sisters. But could we honour the richness of the Triduum liturgies with only 5 people? And how might we provide spiritual support to the community outside of the Motherhouse? With the help of Mike Hammond, Communications Officer, we decided to pre-record liturgies for Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

A timeline of elements was created for each liturgy, and then a recording schedule which would limit the number of people in the chapel at a given time. On the Monday of Holy Week, with Mike as our videographer, three members of the Congregational Liturgy Committee gathered to begin recording scenes for the video to be played on Good Friday. Individual Sisters were called down one at a time to fulfill a particular ministry: proclaiming the Word, canting the psalm, incensing the cross or participating in a procession. Familiar hymns were sung by the small assembly of four.

On Wednesday morning we returned to decorate the chapel for Easter. Once again Mike recorded individual elements to be reassembled in order later for the Easter Sunday video. Although we were few, we sang joyful Easter hymns, ringing bells to highlight our Alleluias!

For each liturgy, a DVD was prepared to be broadcast to the Sisters in their rooms, and a YouTube link was emailed to Sisters, associates and members of the Sunday Faith Community. Friar Ed Debono, our chaplain, prepared written homilies for each day which were sent along with the text of the intercessions.

As this was our first-time recording liturgies, many lessons were learned that might improve any future recordings; however, we know from the many responses received that these resources were greatly appreciated by the community.

Providence Associate Carol Groten commented, "I have been mourning the lack of our rich liturgies. However, seeing the décor, the women I know and familiar surroundings did lift my spirits. I had a feeling of connectedness with my community by being able to 'participate' in the ... liturgies celebrated in the Chapel."

To learn more about our Liturgy ministry and to watch the Easter videos visit our website: [www.providence.ca/liturgy](http://www.providence.ca/liturgy). The boxes below the main video are the links to the videos.



**Good Friday reading of "The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ" according to John.**  
**From left: Providence Associate Barbara Baker, and Sisters of Providence Frances O'Brien and Jeannette Filthaut.**

## Remembering the 1918 Influenza Pandemic

By Veronica Stienburg, Archivist

The Fall of 1918 was a tumultuous time around the world, in Ontario and for the Sisters of Providence. The First World War wasn't over yet, but soldiers were starting to arrive home from Europe bringing with them an unwelcome guest – the Spanish Influenza. In Ontario alone, there were 300,000 cases of the flu and approximately 10,000 people died. The majority of those who died were previously healthy adults between the ages of 20 and 40.

The Sisters of Providence were directly affected by the influenza epidemic. Numerous Sisters were stricken by the flu, at least 25 at the House of Providence in Kingston alone, and one Sister died. The Sisters were also called on to nurse the ill in the hospitals they ran across the country and through home-nursing where they were needed.

The worst wave of Influenza in Ontario was from mid-October to mid-November 1918. Many school boards closed schools and churches canceled masses. According to the annals of Maryvale Abbey in Glen Nevis, "Owing to the epidemic of Spanish Influenza through parts of the country it was deemed advisable by the school board to close the classes to day pupils [in mid-October]. The boarders continued their classes as usual." In Glen Nevis, Maryvale Abbey reopened on November 11th and the elementary school reopened a week later. In Prescott, schools were closed on October 16th and didn't reopen until November 11th. According to the annals of St. Mark's Convent in Prescott "the churches as well as the schools are closed which makes the trial doubly hard without the consolations of Religion...The church was opened on Nov. 10th."

Sisters serving as teachers in small town Ontario were called to take up nursing duties, at great risk to themselves. For example, the Chesterville annals record that in December 1918 "Sister Mary Pauline and Sister Mary Aurea had been called to take care of a family of ten who had the flu. Their names were McDonald. Sister Mary

Pauline took the flu and had to return to Convent."

Due to the shortage of doctors and nurses caused by the First World War and the sheer impact of the Influenza epidemic, those suffering from other illnesses were also in need of medical attention.

According to the annals of the teaching mission in Prescott "in the evening of [October 16th], an urgent call came through ... for Sisters to care for a Dr. Mulloy who was very ill with Pneumonia. Sister Superior explained that the Sisters here were not trained nurses, but he said that would not matter, as no one whatever could be got to care for the patient. Sister Superior and Sister Mary Ursula volunteered to go and accordingly left on the early morning train [to Morrisburg]!

After living at Dr. Mulloy's almost two weeks, they were asked to take charge of a very poor woman, ill with Pneumonia in a dirty and very miserable house. As Dr. Mulloy still required the attention of Sister Mary Ursula, Sister Superior took the case. It was truly a great work of charity as no one could be got to risk contracting the disease as well as endure the mortifications necessitated on such occasion." At the same time as these two Sisters were away nursing three Sisters at the convent in Prescott became ill with Influenza, which meant that "Sister Mary Bernadine and Mary Pius were the only Sisters remaining [in Prescott] to care for the sick and perform domestic duties."

Numerous Sisters suffered from the Spanish Influenza and, unfortunately, one Sister died of the disease. According to her necrology, Sr. Mary Remigius (Catherine Egan) was "appointed to Arnprior Sept. 1st 1918. Little did the dear Sister dream that she was so soon to receive the reward of her labours. This was the year that the 'Spanish Flu' was to make such havoc among the people. It came to the school the last of September, both pupils and teachers were taken down. Sister had a very bad attack. Not improving, the Superior of the Convent thought better to bring her to the Mother House, which she did October 16th." She died at the House of Providence (which was then the Motherhouse) on December 4th, 1918 in the prime of her life. She was 32 years old.



*Sister Mary Ursula*



*St. Mark's Convent in Prescott*

## Spotlight on Peruvian Associates

*By Sister Gayle Desarmia*

From November 27 to December 13, 2019 Associate Wen Bogues and I travelled to Peru to visit the Sisters and Associates in Carabayllo. A highlight of the time in Peru was the opportunity to visit several Peruvian Associates in their places of work and witness their ministry to those in need.

### **Education**

Our experience in the field of education began with a pre-school operated by Associate Aurora Ángeles in El Progreso. The 3-5 year old children were delighted with our visit and we were delighted when they sang for us. The 5-year old children in particular were keen to have their photographs taken.

Our next experience was of a new and very poor high school in Torre Blanca. Each class had its own dilapidated wooden portable classroom. The school's location saves the students a daily trek to another high school further away. The people are hopeful that they will soon be able to access public funds to make the much needed improvements. Associate Marcela Esperanza teaches there in the morning and in another high school in El Progreso in the afternoon. We were privileged to visit and greet each class of students.

Our final school visit was to an elementary and high school in Collique, Comas where Associate Hector Reyes is the principal. This school was very large and well established but some of the wooden classrooms need to be replaced. Hector is hoping that they will soon be able to access the necessary funds for this work to proceed. Here we visited both an elementary and a high school classroom. At each of these two high schools classrooms are laid out around a central cement pad where the students play sports.



**Associate Hector Reyes**

The Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul through the Marillac Mission Fund sponsor a number of students in their educational endeavours. These students because of financial constraints would not be able to pursue higher education. These students meet monthly to discuss and share Christian values and other items of interest. Wen and I were privileged to be present for two such gatherings of these students and it was truly inspiring to hear these future leaders sharing and discussing their hopes for their country.

Peru has 145 universities. Of those able to give licentiates, 42 are private and 41 are public. The others are in the process of gaining accreditation.

### **Healthcare**

In the field of healthcare, medical doctor and Associate Jaime Sosa invited us to visit the Health Centre in Raul Porras Barrenchea where he works. We were able to



**Associate Jaime Sosa**

tour the facility, meet the staff and interact with some of the clients. In particular we were able to visit a seniors' program offered by the staff. Another day physiotherapist and Associate Maritza Oblitas invited us to be present during a physiotherapy session to assist a woman with cerebral palsy to walk.

One very special highlight of our visit was the invitation to be present at the 50th Anniversary celebration of the Health Centre in El Progreso. Sister Rose-Marie Bokenfohr who was instrumental in its establishment was honoured at this event.

### **Sightseeing**

On another day we visited a small shop in Los Olivos where local artisans sell their handiwork at a fair price. Associate Petit Fernández is involved with the operation of this tiny shop. The quality of the workmanship was indicative of the pride that these artisans take in their craft.

Two special outings rounded out our time in Peru. The first was a drive in the countryside north of El Progreso through small villages and large plantation fields where many campesinos (farmers) work from dawn each day. The second was the opportunity to spend a day in Metropolitan Lima as tourists. We visited the historic Plaza de Armas and toured the museums at the Cathedral and the Dominican Convent which features the Peruvian Saints Rose of Lima and Martin de Porres. The day was completed in the tourist district with a delicious meal at Café de la Paz and time to shop for gifts in the Indian marketplace.

Tucked into these very full two weeks was our participation at a meeting of the Peruvian Associates. The gathering included prayer and sharing of stories, mail from Canada and refreshments. We left the meeting with a better understanding of our Peruvian Associates.

## ***Coping with COVID – 19***

The Sisters of Providence and all our ministries have been focused on preparing for the arrival of the coronavirus in Massachusetts since February. Our Governor declared a state of emergency on March 24 and closed non-essential businesses and ordered all to shelter in place. Our congregational staff had the option of working from home or periodically coming to the office. We all have donned our masks and are armed with wipes and hand sanitizers and are following all the protocols for social distancing.

We had to face the difficult reality of making two small layoffs and assisting staff through the process of obtaining unemployment compensation and the additional federal enhancement of \$1,200. We worked to apply for the Payment Protection Loan Program for each of our ministries and completed the applications, assembled the required documentation and sought various board approvals. These funds provide a life line in the short run to support these non-profit organizations.

Since our ministries often focused on elders and those who are poor, we instituted tight restrictions on accessing the buildings by workers, guests, and vendors. Each visitor answers several questions, has his/her temperature taken, and uses a hand sanitizer. As the number of COVID – 19 cases has grown rapidly in Massachusetts and the total deaths have climbed, the intensity of all of these precautions has increased. Massachusetts is in its surge the week of April 27 and we now have the distinction of having the fourth highest rate of COVID – 19 cases, just behind New York, New Jersey and Michigan. Fortunately, due to careful preparations our hospitals in western MA have not been overwhelmed to date.



***Sr. Mary Caritas Geary, SP, vice president of the Sisters of Providence, demonstrating her compliance with COVID-19 precautions.***

Our Sisters at Providence Place have had to adjust to having meals delivered to their rooms or in the lounge with 6 feet of spacing; no gatherings of any kind and basically sheltering in place for the past several weeks. With all liturgical services curtailed, Easter Liturgy was experienced through television or other media. The death of one of our Sisters prompted us to face the current limitations of no wake or funeral, but only a simple burial service at the cemetery. In life and in death, our way of being and relating have changed.

## Genesis Offers Free Virtual Programs To Activate Hope, Healing

By Lori Szepek, Westfield News

**Introduction: Given the Massachusetts Governor's mandate to close all non-essential businesses, Genesis Spiritual Life Center, sponsored by the Sisters of Providence, closed its doors temporarily on March 24. Despite having to layoff 8 part-time staff members, Liz Walz, executive director (who is an SP Associate), and her key staff kept working to adapt their programming to function virtually, for example, during the Easter Triduum. The following presents excerpts from a news story appearing in the Westfield News and written by Lori Szepek on April 17, 2020.**

Ms. Szepek began by describing a unique virtual offering planned for April 18 to help area residents move from a sense of overwhelm and immobilization regarding the climate crisis and the pandemic, to a hopeful perspective with practical action steps. Called "Active Hope: The Spiritual Journey of Facing Climate Change – and Pandemic," participants were able to access the program through Zoom. A freewill offerings were made.

Westfield News Excerpts:

"The challenges of the environmental and social disruptions of climate change are hard enough," said Liz Walz, ASP, executive director of Genesis. "Now we are in the midst of an unprecedented (in our time) pandemic. How do we find our way through?" Walz explained the workshop offered an emotional and spiritual path that enables us to transform fear and despair into a sense of empowerment and clear action.

"Our feelings of pain and grief and fear are not meant to be borne alone," said Walz. "There is no more important time than right now to come together to support and renew in community."

Verne McArthur, a retired college teacher, as well as activist, workshop leader, singer and song leader, led the program, along with Dan Kivel, an educator, naturalist and musician.



**Elizabeth (Liz) Walz, Executive Director of Genesis Spiritual Life Center and an Associate of the Sisters of Providence.**

"These challenges offer openings for profound spiritual community growth which can help heal ourselves and the world," said Walz. "We use the approach of Joanna Macy – over 50 years in the making – called The Work That Reconnects, to face the difficult feelings of the present moment and to build the spiritual strength to participate in the healing of the world...."

Walz noted that through the facilitators, McArthur in his 70s and Kivel in his 30s, participants ....(were) able to take advantage of an "inter-generational look" at this time of profound change.

"On a related note, Walz ... joined by several spiritual directors to lead free meditation programs seven days a week at 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Once again, participants ... access the program through a Zoom link by registering on the Genesis website. Walz calls the program "Heart-Centered Meditation: Soul Connection in a Time of Social Distancing" which runs approximately 35

minutes with optional sharing afterwards.

"In this time of pandemic and social isolation, I knew many people were feeling disoriented, anxious, sad, scared and even angry," said Walz. "And, I was confident that spiritual practice and sharing with others would help transform people's experience of their situation – and it has."

Walz added that one's ability to meet with people as we have been accustomed to doing has been "radically altered" and she understands that meaningful connection with others facilitates "hope and healing."

## **Keeping Providence Mission Alive During the Pandemic**

***In order to highlight the work of our Sisters who are keeping the Providence Mission alive in spite of the constraints of our world today, we present a summary of the interview given by Sister Patricia (Pat) McKittrick, SP, to a Televised Town Meeting in Winooski, Vermont, USA.***

***The Town Meeting, moderated by Lauren-Glenn Davitian, interviewed Sr. Pat about the work of caring for the community of Winooski, Vermont, during the coronavirus, how she keeps herself centered, and the many ways people can get involved as helpers during this period and always.***

**L-G D:** You are such a community organizer that I imagine you have found many things to work on during this COVID-19 period.

**Sr. Pat:** Community organizing and community building are very dear to my heart. I am trying to stay in touch with people and, I do many telephone calls, I do many Zoom meetings; I do many Webinars. Then I actually go out to the community with my mask, my gloves and my hand sanitizer. In addition, I think about the other people that I want to support and that I think are important to reach out, too; for example, some of the local businesses.

So one of the things we have been doing recently is reaching out to Papa Frank's (Papa Frank's is a locally owned and operated family restaurant in the heart of downtown Winooski). I call ahead and say: Could I have 6 or 8 lasagna dinners? They bring the dinners out to my car and then I call different people and distribute them. Sometimes, it is people that I think would really need a meal. Other times it is to say thank you to somebody who really works out in the community all the time and always thinks of other people. In

addition, of course, as I am going through the people that I usually contact during the week, I think about the volunteers. Some volunteer because they want a place where they can feel useful in the community, and now they cannot do that, so I have tried to figure out how I can reach out to some of them.

However, I do want to say that people have been extremely generous. I have been surprised by the donations that came in the mail, gift cards saying: please give this to somebody that you think could use it.

**L-G D:** Please talk about some of the work that the volunteers are doing, the folks that you're observing.

**Sr. Pat:** The volunteers are actually calling other people or are helping when they are out picking up something for someone else. As long as they are safe, that work can continue. They are also writing to people; for example, to a woman who just broke her hip. The volunteers call other volunteers saying that this person just had an accident and can you send cards to her. They are sending cards and doing phone calls, many things like that. Just checking in on people. I think

that this important. It is staying connected and, with this virus, we realize how truly we are interconnected, more than ever. We realize how much we need each other and how much we have to keep reaching out.

The other thing that I think is important, at this time, is to share resources. From the hospitals or from the government, whatever is available? So people will know where they can get the help they need. In addition to the social isolation is the stress that it has brought upon people. Connecting is what I usually do in a session called "Humor and Health."

I was speaking to a young mother the other day, she has four kids in school who have special needs and it is difficult to balance their schooling with everything



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## **Keeping Providence Mission Alive During the Pandemic**

*Continued from page 11*

else, even with Skype. It's challenging for people to try to get everything done.

It's important to make sure that you are getting yourself up, bathed and dressed, watering a plant or taking care of someone else and the animals. Reaching out, doing something that is fun, and being creative, using your body, mind and spirit. I think holistic care is important. You know, we cannot just work or just worry about things we need to finish. I tell people not to be listening to the news all day long. Some people say, "I hear all these things and I am really worried." So I say: "Don't listen to the news all day long. You hear it once, you get all the information, and that is all you need."

**L-G D:** So, Sister Pat, you are involved in a lot of social justice. I don't mean that you are spreading yourself thin. I don't mean to suggest that, but I do understand that one of the areas that you work in has to do with Sex Trafficking and I wonder if you could talk about the kinds of provisions that are being made for that population during this time.

**Sr. Pat:** I am not the expert in that but I can certainly share what I know as well as what I was involved in this morning. At 11:00 we had a Zoom meeting on Human Trafficking. One of the things that has happened because of the virus is that the persons who are in direct contact with the trafficked victims are not able to meet with them. And raises a trust issue for the person out there who is thinking: I was supported by somebody and now I don't have that help. So we are really thinking about how we can meet differently.

Edith Klimoski is the director of Give Ways to Freedom (a foundation to support survivors of Human Trafficking, as well as those vulnerable to trafficking). If somebody has an issue or we know someone who has an issue, persons can call her, and she will certainly reach out to them. They volunteers can offer different ways to keep someone out of danger: they can put them up in a motel or hotel and get them out of a dangerous situation. And we never talk about rescuing someone on the phone because if the seller is there, they are

going to make life miserable for the other person. We don't want to put the victim in danger of harm. So it is important to try to do something less traumatic. That's one of the things we are doing.

Also, today we are thinking of people who may have gotten out of a situation, but are still in an unstable financial state. We might be able to provide them with gas cards or food cards...things like that, until they can get on their feet. We are trying to help persons so they don't feel so disconnected. And, we are trying to educate people about "what is trafficking". Finally, I think people understand that trafficking does happen here.

I love the Easter season, because it's about revelations and apparitions and for me, that's important. I ask, "Where is God working in my life today and in what way? What little bit am I being called to do?" I don't care what religion a person is or if they even have a religion. I just believe that we are all called to be our best selves and to help each other. So religious affiliation really doesn't matter to me.

I do want to say I'm really blessed to be working where I am. UVM Medical Center has been very good to me, trusting me to be out in the community. To meet the needs that need to be met and when we find something, I go back and say, I think this is something that we could be looking at, and they really take that information seriously.

Social justice and democracy are very important to us. We all know that.

So thank you very much!

To see the interview: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J0a-i1LzNCc&app=desktop>

## Reflections on COVID-19 by a Providence Associate in Caleta Olivia

**Julio César Romero, a Providence Associate since 1983, is a teacher who, with his wife, Providence Associate Maria Angélica Coñuecar, live in Caleta Olivia, Santa Cruz, Argentina (Bernarda Morin Province). The work of the Caleta Olivia Associate group is carried out in the San Juan Bosco Parish of that city.**

"Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?" (Mark 4:40).

The pandemic in Caleta Olivia puts us in quarantine! The official campaign "#Don't Leave Home" forces us not to move from our homes. We can only go out for health reasons or to buy groceries, and we must keep a distance of one to two metres between people. Furthermore, the Providence Associates of Caleta Olivia are part of the group at risk of contagion because of their age or their health issues... "Suddenly a violent storm came up on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by waves", as we read in Matthew 8:24. In his Urbi et Orbi address of March 27, 2020, our Pope Francis tells us: " We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, "

I stand in line to buy at the grocery store, in line with those of us who are afraid of running out of food for the next few days, and I think about those of us who don't have enough to support themselves for these next few days, and it comes to my mind: "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?" (Mark 4:40).

I remind you that what distinguishes those who do not have faith from believers who trust in Providence is that a Christian prepares for the future by living today in the light of the Holy Spirit. Then our Provident God will - in his due time - put the solutions in place, perhaps in the long term. This is where our faith comes into play.

I ask myself, "Do I have faith if I'm afraid?"... the situation that urged the disciples to wake up the Lord was fear... fear of the storm. Pope Francis, in his homily of July 2, 2013, in the church of St. Martha, tells us that fear (in the reading from St. Mark) is a temptation: fear of going forward on the path of the Lord. I believe that we are tempted to stay on safe ground.

"... all of us are called to row together," says the Pope. That is to say, called to be in solidarity with the weak, the fragile and the disoriented. Called to be in



solidarity as providers in a scenario where the only certainty is uncertainty.

We are living through a storm that reveals our vulnerabilities and exposes the false security that we have built. In the end, as at the beginning of human history, our strength is in our unity, because only together can we move forward, since individualism does not go hand in hand with our human species.

Let us row together among the vulnerable, let us stand in solidarity to overcome this pandemic; let us pray together and together we will overcome fear and reappropriate our forgotten faith.

*Julio C. Romero, PA /April, 2020*

## ***Sisters and Associates Show God's Providential Care to Elderly and Disabled Residents***

*By Sr. Lucy Zientek, CDP*

Sr. Francis Margaret Maag, CDP has served in various parish positions (teacher, principal, and director of religious education) during the course of her religious life. But in 2014, her discernment told her that it was time to try something different, so she took up residence at a 90-unit, privately-owned facility for the elderly and disabled poor in Dayton, Kentucky. Her hope? Simply that she could be a conduit of God's providential care for the people who lived there.

One of the primary ways Sr. Francis went about this was by providing opportunities for people to gather with each other. She invited them to share a simple meal with her from time to time. She offered occasional opportunities to share faith and to study the Bible. She organized parties for an upcoming birthday of a resident, or to celebrate a big holiday. Over the years, community-building among the residents became a specialty of sorts for her, and so when the Province Chapter of 2019 recommended that Sisters investigate new ways of forming expanded community, Sister

Francis already had a few ideas about this and was more than eager to get started.

Having recently discovered that a CDP Associate whom she knew through the Northern Kentucky Peace and Justice Committee lived just five minutes away, she decided it was time to ask the Associate to think and pray about joining with her in this adventure. And within a month, Divine Providence managed to arrange the perfect occasion for the invitation to be made.

At the Province celebration of Foundation Day on August 23rd, Associate Marilyn Schleyer took a seat next to Sister Francis Margaret. At the first opportunity, Sr. Francis shared the background of the Chapter's recommendation with Marilyn and made the proposal. The words were hardly out of her mouth when Marilyn joyfully expressed her enthusiasm for the idea. Marilyn had desired to live the charism more intensely for some time. Sr. Francis' invitation seemed to be God's response to this longing!

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***Participating in the Zoom meeting are, top left Sr. Francis Margaret Maag, CDP; top right Sr. Leslie Keener CDP; bottom left Antoinette Hummeldorf- Associate; bottom right Dr. Marilyn Schleyer- Associate***

## **Associates Consider Reorganization**

*By Sr. Lucy Zientek, CDP*

The global pandemic has not stopped Associates of the Sisters of Divine Providence of Kentucky from launching their plans to consider how the group's organizational structure and mission statement might be revitalized for the future. Everything began during January, when the group's Steering Committee gathered several times to work on outlining a process for this. At that time, the Committee also decided to rename itself the "P-Team" (the "P" standing for "Providence").

In mid-February, all Associates living in the U.S. received the materials needed to work through the initial step of this process, which will take about eighteen months to complete. After informal discussions among themselves, many were able at that time to still meet in area meetings for further sharing and processing. Members of the P-Team subsequently contacted any Associates not connected with a local group and offered them some friendly conversation and a chance to share their feedback, which the P-Team member recorded.

As pandemic restrictions took hold, the P-Team knew that they needed to try going digital. Although most of the Team had to overcome the challenge of learning how to "Zoom" on their devices of varied makes and operating systems, persistence paid off! Meetings are now regularly held online. Things have even gone well enough that the Team is now considering the possibility of holding the Associates' annual June retreat as an "e-retreat" in the event that the virus situation has not resolved.

The ideas, suggestions and comments elicited from the Associates during the first step of the revitalization process were many and diverse, rich with possibilities for the group's future development. The multitude of creative and enthusiastic contributions from respondents will require more discussion and discernment as the process continues, but also indicates that there is a lot of energy for moving into the future—along with a great deal of enthusiasm around finding new ways to share with others how they, too, can experience the many gifts that flow from intentionally living out of our providence spirituality and charisma, day-to-day.

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## **Sisters and Associates Show God's Providential Care to Elderly and Disabled Residents**

*Continued from page 14*

Immediately, the two began making arrangements to share prayer, a few meals and mutual visits on a regular basis. But this "expanded community" project got a big boost when it was time for the Sisters to work on their annual goals for local community. That's when CDP Provincial Barbara Rohe suggested to Sr. Francis that she develop those aims with Marilyn rather than with her local contact community of Sisters.

In line with the Chapter 2019 mandate and province-wide goal of becoming a *Laudato Si'* community, Sr. Francis Margaret and CDP Associate Marilyn Schleyer (a private practice psychologist) decided they would also take on educating the residents at the Dayton facility about the environment. So far, they have offered two events that have drawn about ten residents each time. The gatherings featured a video (first, *The Story of Stuff* and next, *Troubled Waters*), after which there was some great group conversation and an activity

that helped everyone get in touch with which commonly-used materials are most destructive of Earth. These events are sure to get even more creative in the future, considering the two women who are planning them. With the advent of COVID, their venture into "expanded community" has expanded even more, and in a digital direction. Prayer and faith sharing is now happening over Zoom, and Sr. Francis and Marilyn are being joined on a regular basis by a second CDP Associate, Antoinette Hummeldorf, and Sr. Leslie Keener, director of the province's Godspace ministry. Sr. Leslie often serves as Zoom host for the group now, spelled at times by Marilyn.

Where will all this go in the future? Things being what they are today, no one really knows. But what we can be sure of is that all we have to do to get to where we need to be in that future is to "follow the designs of providence"—one small step at a time!

## How Our Lives are Changing

*By Anne Hemstock SP*

“Wash your hands,” “stay home,” “social distancing,” “stay apart while staying connected,” are all themes repeated over and over everywhere.

Unfortunately, Anawim Place, a small food bank operated by the Sisters in downtown Edmonton, has had to close until further notice. The building is small making social distancing impossible and the volunteers who make such wonderful things happen are older men and women who are at particular risk for the virus.

We are in solidarity with those whose lives have been changed forever during this experience. Because Providence Centre has accredited, licensed continuing care beds, the regulations regarding cleaning protocols, service restrictions, a policy of no visitors (including major superiors of other religious communities in residence), social distancing (in the chapel, dining room and elsewhere) are all adhered to carefully. Nursing staff serve meals to the Sisters in their rooms if they are not able to come to the dining room. Dietary staff serve trays in the dining room and all food items are individually wrapped. (at one point, even a banana). Buffet service is not permitted anywhere at this time.

The Sisters are well and safe for which we are grateful. While staff working for Providence Centre itself are all considered essential services our retreat and conference centre, Providence Renewal Centre is closed with its programs cancelled until further notice, casual staff have been laid off to allow them to collect unemployment insurance, the same for Providence Centre library staff. Provincial Administration staff have continued to work until last week when the facility was declared to be in outbreak. Telephone contact and e-mail keep us in the loop and together while apart. Hopefully, everyone will be able to return to work soon!

The administrator meets regularly with all the Sisters of the house to update them on the current status of Alberta Health Services and Alberta Public Health requirements as they change almost daily. Among the requirements is that if a staff person is an employee of two sites, he/she must work at only one facility going forward to prevent community transmission of the virus from one facility to another. Several of our staff are now working elsewhere; we miss their friendly smile and warm greetings.

One of the stark realities which has come to light during this experience is that many, many long-term care centres are woefully short staffed with residents

being neglected. As a corollary of that, the wages paid to front-line health care workers are not sufficient to provide a decent living for them and for their families. Over half of the deaths recorded are of residents in long-term care facilities.

One of the significant changes the Sisters and the faithful of all denominations are experiencing is the closure of our chapel and churches throughout the country. In ordinary times the chapel at Providence Centre welcomes the broader community each day for the Eucharist and on Sunday there are often over one hundred people joining us. Our parish pastor consecrates hosts for our use, so we are able to celebrate the Liturgy of the Word and receive the Eucharist each morning at 9:00 a.m. Fortunately, Sisters are able to see the service on the closed-circuit television available in their rooms. We are careful with social distancing – we are about twelve or fourteen people in a chapel which seats six hundred.

Meetings, gatherings and celebrations of all kinds have been postponed or cancelled, among them our annual jubilee celebration held in June and the first vows of Sister Thuy Nguyen who was to celebrate her profession on April 26th.

Holy Week and Easter services this year were very simple: there were no palms on Palm Sunday, liturgy of the Word for Holy Thursday without the washing of the feet or a procession to the Community Room for repose of the Blessed Sacrament following the service and no adoration of the cross on Good Friday. We are in solidarity with those whose sufferings and loss are far more significant than our own. The Sisters of Providence Centre gather each afternoon to recite the rosary for those whose lives have been touched by the virus, those who have died and an end to the virus soon.

The two care centres in Calgary are closely following all the protocols prescribed by Alberta Health Services. While visitors are not allowed, iPads have been purchased and families are encouraged to be in touch with their loved ones. Recreation staff assist residents with staying in touch. Daily communications are sent to families and pictures of residents and activities are sent out each Friday. Staying in touch while staying apart has a whole new meaning. The Sisters who live in the convent next door are faithfully staying home and social distancing as a matter of course now.

Providence of God we hope in you.

## **CDP's Report on COPS/Metro Coronavirus Initiative**

The Congregation of Divine Providence of San Antonio is a member of the community organizing groups Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) and Metro Alliance. These groups are affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation, a national, faith-based organization. The Sisters of Divine Providence are involved in the issues for which COPS/Metro advocate. There is a regular report given at the motherhouse to keep all members informed.

On Tuesday, April 28, Sisters Anita Brenek and Jane Ann Slater met with the Sisters at the Convent to inform them about the COPS/Metro initiative in San Antonio around the Coronavirus. They reported on the four issues that COPS/Metro has been working on in preparation for the November 2020 election as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. These include Housing, Education, Immigration and Environment. Civic Academies, which are informational meetings for local residents, have continued with the goal of educating residents on these critical issues. Even with the present reality of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the need to isolate and stay safe in place, all meetings have been conducted using Zoom or other electronic media. It is definitely a new reality!

While the four issues continue to be the main focus of the organization, the main attention of the COPS/Metro leaders has, of necessity, turned to the immediate needs that have emerged in San Antonio as a result of fallout from the virus.

Many of the lowest wage residents have lost their jobs as house and business cleaning staff, restaurant wait-staff and cooks, and other low-paid workers.

Many of these individuals have Social Security numbers and pay taxes. Others have tax ID numbers and also pay taxes. However, the federal government CARES Act does not recognize tax ID numbers and thus, these workers are not eligible for any funds to cover rent, groceries, medicine, and other basic needs.

COPS/Metro has been working very hard with great success in advocating for all low-paid workers. Their efforts and hard work paid off on Thursday, April 23, when the San Antonio City Council voted to create the \$25 million Emergency Housing Assistance Program. This program will help people regardless of citizenship status. The city had initially discussed \$15.8 million, but COPS/Metro succeeded in securing an additional \$9.2 million for the excluded group of workers.

COPS/Metro is now strategizing with the city on how to access these funds to eligible recipients. Their efforts include getting landlords to accept rent payments from the city fund and not to charge late payment penalties. COPS/Metro is also continuing its negotiations with the city to help decide how further federal funds will be allocated.

All CDPs are engaged in supporting efforts to care for those among us who are most in need. This is indeed a new time in our history, and we must do what we can to care for the present and future well-being of our brothers and sisters who are excluded and most in need. This is the Gospel of Jesus, our Savior and the Christ.



## Unity in Community During a Time of Crisis

The Congregation of Divine Providence (CDP) is a community of religious women within the Catholic Church who dedicate their lives to furthering the mission of Jesus in the world. For more than 150 years, the Sisters of Divine Providence have impacted our community through educating, caring for the sick and ministering to those in need. The Sisters of Divine Providence have created such a community through their ever-present service and influence. Their confidence in Divine Providence, simplicity, charity, and dedication to community has in turn created a community of former and current students, CDP Associates and supporters in the United States and Mexico.

This year, our world turned upside down as we experienced a crisis like no other in recent history. In anticipation, the Congregation of Divine Providence followed CDC guidelines in all facilities of what was to come beginning in early March 2020. The safety of the Sisters was of utmost importance due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Protocols were in place to ensure their safety and security before other like facilities called for such measures.

With no exposure to visitors, limited access to supplies and need for extra resources such as personal protective equipment (PPE), McCullough Hall Nursing Center (MHNC) called on the community for support. McCullough Hall was in need of 1,000 face masks for MHNC staff and residents which would enable MHNC to continue its efforts in ensuring everyone's safety.

After communicating the need for support and 1,000 homemade face masks, the CDP community heeded our call by providing us with 2,648 masks. The positive feedback, assistance and supplies given to the Sisters was truly Providential. Homemade face masks and other necessary supplies were delivered to Our Lady of the Lake Convent nearly every day in the month of April. MHNC has received a sufficient number of masks to last through the rest of this global crisis.

The Sisters of Divine Providence express their gratitude to all who responded to their need in a time of crisis. As a result of the CDP's many supporters, the Sisters can continue to fulfill the mission of Jesus.

## *Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods*

### Runner-Up Status Earned

In January, the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods learned it had been named one of six national Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) 2019 Cool Congregation Challenge runners up.

The Sisters of Providence received the recognition in the category of Community Inspiration.

After learning about the competition, General Councilor Sister Jeanne Hagelskamp, along with Providence Associate Jeanne Rewa, submitted an application specifically detailing the Providence Climate Agreement and the work of the Climate Change Task Force.

"It is a recognition given to us for our work in inspiring the Sisters of Providence, our Providence Associates, and those in the broader community to reduce our consumption of greenhouse gases," Sister Jeanne said. "Jeanne Rewa has been the quiet driving force of the Climate Change Task Force since its inception."



To date, carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions have been reduced by 2,735,487 pounds, having exceeded the first 2019 summer goal of 2 million pounds.

IPL President Rev. Susan Hendershot said, "The Sisters of Providence and other national winning congregations are casting a vision for the kind of world in which they want to live, and they carrying out that vision with practical actions that make a real difference in creating lasting solutions to climate change."

The Providence Climate Change Agreement grew out of the commitment to the Environment made at the 2016 General Chapter, as the Congregation's justice focus for the next five years. In 2018, at the Congregation's annual meeting of sisters and associates, the Climate Change

Task Force introduced the Climate Agreement and the initial carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emission reduction goal.

If you haven't done so already, please considering signing the Providence Climate Agreement at [ClimateChange.SistersofProvidence.org](http://ClimateChange.SistersofProvidence.org)

## Love, Mercy and Justice in the Time of COVID-19

The Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods are following the recommended guidelines set forth by Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb and the CDC to help sisters, staff, family and friends stay safe during this coronavirus outbreak.

As an apostolic congregation, sharing “love, mercy and justice among God’s people” can be challenging during this time of social distancing. Saint Mother Theodore Guerin once advised her sisters to rely on “Providence, that so far has never failed us.” The SPs are heeding this advice as they become more creative, to stay in touch with each other, with donors and friends, and ministry partners who also need spiritual encouragement.

After announcing various safety protocols that needed to be put in place, General Superior Sister Dawn Tomaszewski also encouraged the Congregation to pray. “The work of the Congregation right now is to lift up in prayer all people who need God’s healing and help at this time – especially those with the virus and those health-care professionals tending to those with the virus,” she said. The sisters also committed themselves to praying the traditional SP Reunion Prayer every afternoon at 3:00 pm as a way of being united with one another and all who share in the charism of Providence.

The General Officers most recently are devoting time each week to pray for our benefactors’ needs and the needs of the world. They gather at 3:00 pm each Friday in the Church of the Immaculate Conception and each officer lights a candle and prays for the well-being of donors and their families, a vaccine/cure for COVID-19,



***Sister Ann Casper fulfills meal orders “to go” for her house, minimizing residents’ outside contact. Sisters and staff serve the food as ordered, following safety protocols.***

those suffering with the COVID-19 virus and their families, the safety and well-being of all health-care professionals, the safety and well-being of all first responders and other front-line workers and the healing of Earth. The Council has asked donors and friends to join them in prayer wherever they maybe. And, they have asked donors for specific prayer requests that will be included in this prayer time.

A few weeks into the stay-at-home order, the sisters began calling donors to check in with individuals and support and encourage them, during this pandemic. They collected prayer requests instead of donations and made that personal connection to help friends feel more connected to the sisters who are praying for them, and the outside world.

Sisters who would otherwise be busy at daytime ministries now have time to share their gifts differently – by writing prayers, articles and other reflections that are shared through the SP blog, website and social media. Again, the hope is to help those persons with access to the internet stay connected and encouraged in their spiritual journey, even during these difficult times.

Keeping sisters safe during mealtimes has had its own challenges. Sisters and staff have been serving sisters food, drinks and helping several with their meal trays. Staff and sisters have enjoyed this hot and steamy task, because they spend time with each other, albeit from behind masks, hair nets, aprons and plastic gloves. Social distancing has made every necessary “contact”

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***Sister Patty Wallace shares her love of books and her talent for engaging youngsters by featuring “Story Time with Sister Patty” on Facebook Live. She sings, plays the guitar and reads engaging stories.***

## Love, Mercy and Justice in the Time of COVID-19

*Continued from page 19*

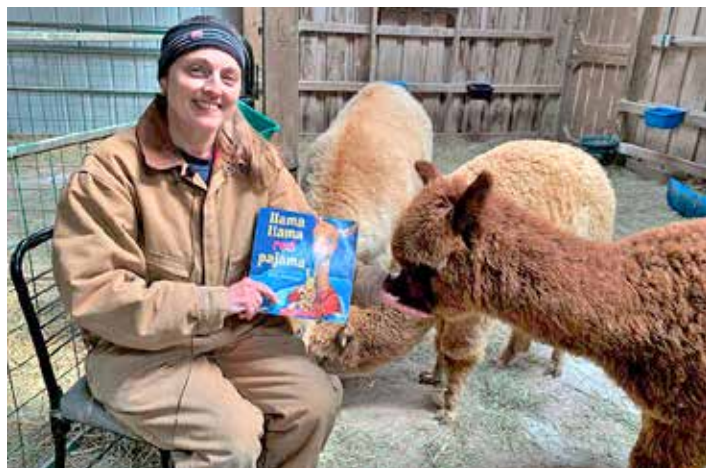
enjoyable because it creates meaningful connection. More recently, mealtime has meant room service for all those living at the motherhouse.

During this unusual time, the Congregation has also made accommodations so sisters, associates and staff can partake in important liturgical practices. Special Triduum services for Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil were broadcast via closed circuit and Livestream from the Church so all could participate from their rooms and off-campus houses. They have celebrated the lives of four SPs who have died during this time (unrelated to the coronavirus) with funeral liturgies at which the General Officers and other essential ministers have presided.

The sisters' spring "home retreat," April 26-May 1, was also broadcast. Because the Providence Associate spring retreat was canceled, the sisters graciously invited the PAs to participate with them, via Livestream. Sister Connie Kramer coordinated the retreat entitled "Put Yourself Gently into the Hands of Providence," which was perfect during this time of anxiety and stress.

Providence Food Pantry, a ministry of the Sisters of Providence that serves about 4,000 individuals in West Terre Haute annually, has remained open and sisters and volunteers are taking precautions to protect against the virus.

Sister Barbara Battista, a physician assistant and Congregation Justice coordinator, has worked with departments and the General Council to keep the Covid-19 web page updated, which has become one of our most visited website pages. Sister Barbara is also part of the task force that has been monitoring the virus situation and helping to develop protocols and other measures to ensure the safety of both sisters and staff.



***Returning volunteer Tara Elmore reads, "Llama, Llama, Red Pajama" to the Congregations herd of alpacas, and Facebook Live participants, quickly becoming a favorite outreach.***

To maintain an important connection to various publics, and provide essential food and other goods, staff and sisters have worked quickly to launch online ordering of produce and other items for curb-side pick-up from the White Violet Center Farm Store and have also encouraged increased online ordering from Linden Leaf Gifts. Creative video production has resulted in story time with volunteer Tara Elmore and Sister Patty Wallace reading popular children's books online, which have been shared far and wide, with young people and the young at heart.

Many other sisters are being creative in the way that they minister these days. Zoom is being used for connecting groups and committees, and even families with sisters. The next item on the agenda is to develop a way to conduct the SP Annual Meeting virtually. Whenever the new "normal" is determined, the SPs hope to be prepared.

***Watch the WPC website for registration information  
for the February 20, 2021, Providence Event  
with Sister Nancy Sylvester, IHM***

***[www.wpcweb.org](http://www.wpcweb.org)***



## ***Easter Reflections Witness to God's Abundant Providence During Pandemic***

Our co-foundress, Marie de la Roche, said "the darkest paths lead to light, through love and grace." This quote is particularly cogent during the 40 days of Easter, during which time we invite our sisters, associates and employees to contemplate Mother Marie's quote and share reflections of coping with their new realities due to the coronavirus. What gives you joy? What causes fear? What strategies do you use to cope? What do you miss? What have you learned? What inspires you? What prayer strengthens you, sustains you, calms you? How has the unexpected gift of abundant time stirred your creativity for determining ways to be present to others as we continue to make God's Providence visible in our world. Our reflections,



a witness to the abundance of God's Providence even in the pandemic, can be viewed on our website: [cdp-sisters.org/documents/providence-pandemic](http://cdp-sisters.org/documents/providence-pandemic)

## ***Prayer, Gratitude and Hope Unite Sisters, Partners in Mission During Pandemic***

The Sisters of the Marie de la Roche province reached out to our friends, supporters, and partners in mission during the pandemic to unite in our mission of making God's Providence visible in our world. Through emails, we invited our friends to submit their special prayer intentions, shared Cameron Bellm's Prayer for a Pandemic, and initiated a phone connection ministry for those who wanted to personally connect with one of our Sisters or Associates.

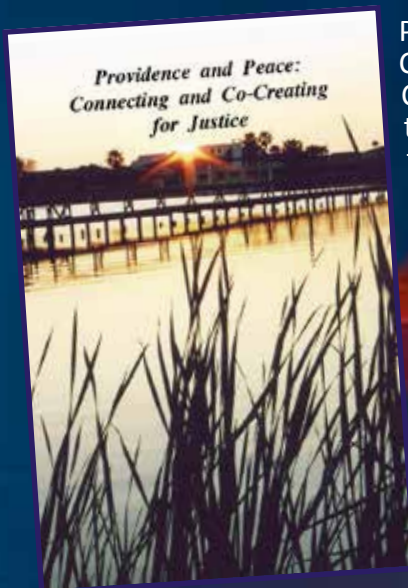
To show our gratitude to all who put themselves at risk to care for the rest of us, we, along with La Roche University, Providence Heights Alpha School and Kearns Spirituality Center have been displaying our luminarias on the lawn of Providence

Heights. From Easter Saturday until the end of the pandemic, we have candles lit in the windows of our homes as a sign of our hope and trust in our Provident God who is always Light in darkness. We have invited our partners in mission to do the same.



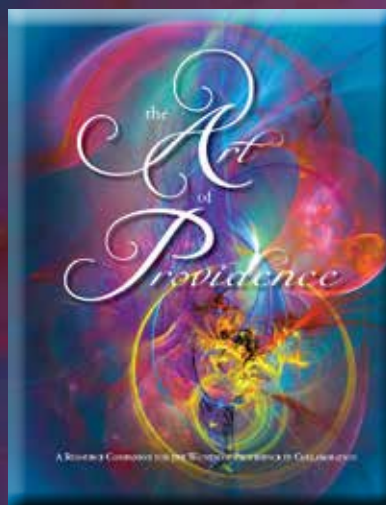
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### ***Providence and Peace: Connecting and Co-Creating for Justice***



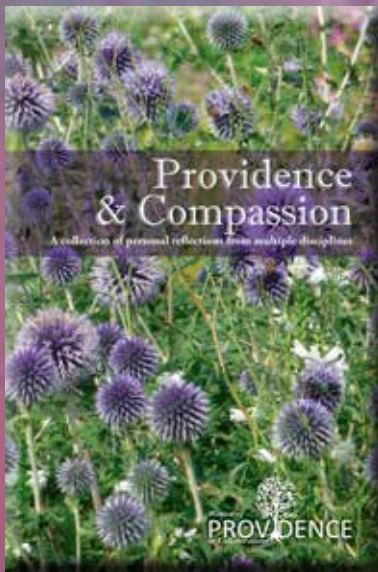
Providence and Peace: Connecting and Co-Creating for Justice is the second in a series featuring authors who look at specific topics through the lens of Providence and their lived experience in ministry and community life. \$13.65

### ***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

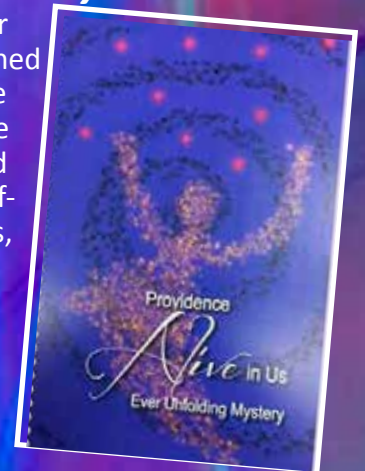
## Providence & Compassion



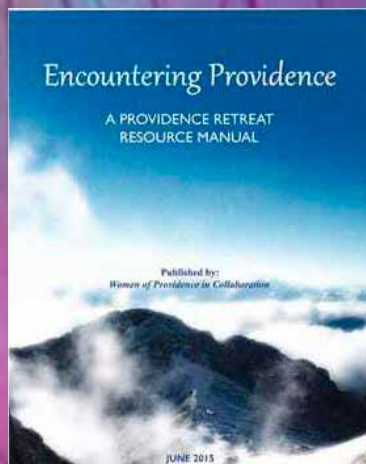
Nine Women of Providence share their understanding of Providence and Compassion through the lens of their lived experience in ministry and community life. These shared personal reflections will expand awareness and appreciation of the intimate link between Providence and Compassion in the lives of not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

## 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



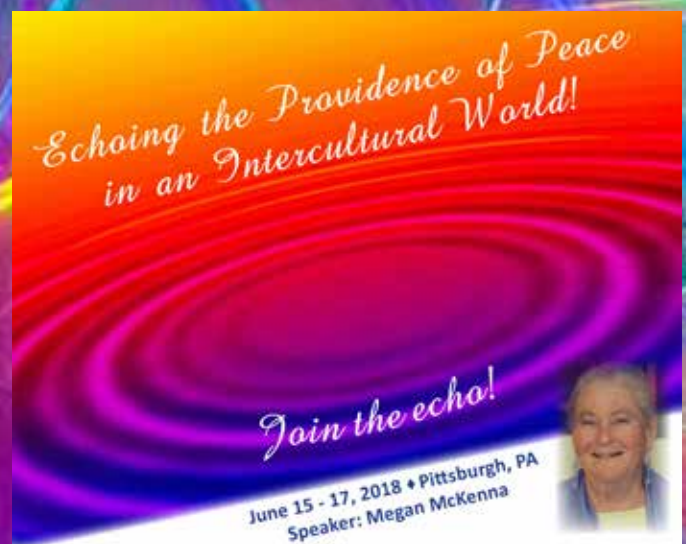
## Encountering Providence



Created for WPC's 35th Anniversary. This compiled retreat resource manual features a flash drive with presentations, videos, prayers, reflection and leader templates. \$52.50

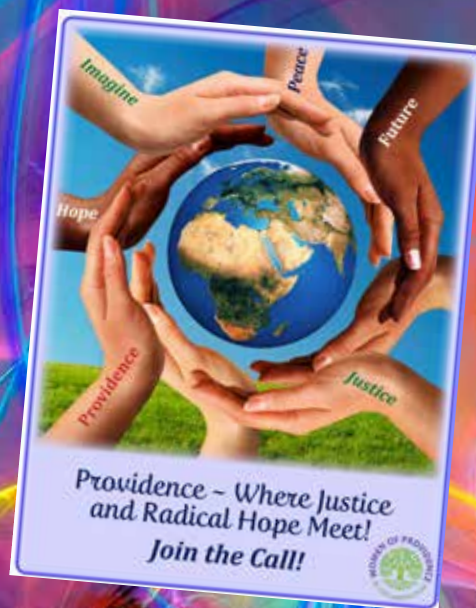
## *Echoing the Providence of Peace in an Intercultural World!*

If you were unable to attend the 2018 Providence Event, the Friday and Saturday presentations by Megan McKenna and Bishop Thomas Gumbleton are available on a set of five DVDs or on a USB/flash drive. \$31.50 for either media



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## **Calendar**

### **2020**

**November 12-5:** WPC Executive Committee Meeting, Montreal, QC

### **2021**

**February 20:** Providence Event~Where Justice and Radical Hope Meet  
will be live streamed

**March 19-22:** WPC Governing Board Meeting, San Antonio, TX

**September 13-16:** WPC Associate Leadership Conference,  
Kearns Spirituality Center, Allison Park, PA

***Collaboration*** is published by the Women of Providence in Collaboration ♦ [www.wpcweb.org](http://www.wpcweb.org)

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***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 (Emilie-Gamelin Province), 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