



# PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

*offering hospitality to the world*



# The COMMITTEE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY by the  
Sisters of the Presentation  
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## The PURPOSE

The purpose of Presentation Doorways is to further the mission of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our associates by sharing the news and views of the congregation with our benefactors, families and friends. Through this publication, we hope to share the charism of our congregation and to invite others to become involved in our mission.

## Your THOUGHTS & COMMENTS

We want your input. Please send or email photos, stories and information about our sisters, associates, former members, family and friends, or any ideas which relate to the aim of this publication. Submit to:

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## Cover PHOTOS

The doorways represented on the cover are snapshots of significant doors in the Presentation history and present day ministries: (Left to right) Doorway of Hotel Hope, a nonprofit hotel for homeless women and children in New Orleans, Louisiana; Doorway of St. Vincent's Academy (now St. Columbkille) in Dubuque, Iowa, in 1879; Doorway of Céad Míle Fáilte (100,000 Welcomes) located on the property of the Presentation Motherhouse at 2360 Carter Road in Dubuque, Iowa; Doorway of the Presentation Motherhouse at 2360 Carter Road in Dubuque, Iowa; Doorway of Casa Betania, home for retreats and a gathering space for students in Tarija, Bolivia.

# PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

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Sister Rita Menart presents Caroline Schmid with the Mother Vincent Hennessy Foundation Scholarship during an awards assembly at Wahlert Catholic High School in Dubuque, Iowa. This scholarship is awarded annually to a deserving Wahlert senior who exemplifies exceptional service and who plans to pursue further education.



# Openings A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

by JOY PETERSON, PBVM

Spring into summer in the Midwest is a messy season. On one day, a brilliant blue sky makes everything seem fresh and popping with potential. On the next day, gloomy skies seem to setback the flow of new growth and return everything to winter. The grace of living with the back-and-forth of dramatic seasonal changes is the reminder that the cycles of life, death and rebirth are planted in the DNA of creation.

Two years ago, when COVID-19 was just beginning its grip on the world, the Presentation Sisters posted a banner expressing our belief that we stand together in hope. Recently, a new banner replaced the hope-filled sign with an invitation to pray for peace, especially in Ukraine, reminding all that the cycles of life demand our commitment to hope and to peace.

Because we live in a world balancing the global and the local, the “local” concerns of the Presentation community continue with the internal cycles of community life, such as the General Chapter that happens every five years. The theme in preparation for the 2022 Chapter meetings in October, “Embracing the Journey,” invites sisters and associates into the cycles of reviewing, renewing and reinforcing our commitment to radical hospitality in this time. This journey is supplemented by the work of the long-range property and resource planning process as sisters gather in small groups to share insights into what vital living means as a congregation. Both the pre-Chapter and the vital living conversations call for a deepening trust as experiences of risk-taking and bold living are shared.

Early in his papacy, Pope Francis wrote, “We are not living in an era of change, but a change of era.” (November 2015) Even from his global perspective, one cannot imagine that Francis could have foreseen how prophetic that statement was. As the stability of governments both nationally and internationally seems fragile, families around the world face challenges from the personal losses experienced in the pandemic; the rising costs of living; shortages of everything from baby formula to essential car parts; disruptions in local communities; and, not to mention, dramatic climate changes. Rising income inequalities mean those who felt they had succeeded in gaining a modest lifestyle can find they are only a paycheck or two away from homelessness. Some days it feels as though the world has turned upside down, not just in faraway war-torn countries, but also close to home.

Is this what a “change of era” feels like? How can the challenges of a changing era be seen as opportunities to start again in making a renewed Earth? Taking a look at history might shed a light of hope on the current struggles. In the founding of the Presentation Sisters, there are many reminders that Nano Nagle faced a difficult world under the Penal Laws over Ireland. Catholics were prosecuted and threatened for practice of their faith, deprived of owning property and the dignity of education. Yet Nano found the courage to establish schools, serve the needs of the sick and dream of creating a safe home for elderly impoverished women. Perhaps one of the most important things to remember about her story is that she realized she could not do this work on her own. From her dream of service grew a religious community now serving in over 20 countries around the world.

In this issue of *Presentation Doorways*, you will find stories of the efforts of sisters, associates and companions working together to “Embrace the Journey.” You, our readers, are invited to join us in embracing the future with hope and a willingness to work for peace and justice.

*Sister Carmen Hernandez Sister Rita Menart Sister Joy Peterson Sister Marilyn Breen*

## Our MISSION

We, the Sisters of the Presentation, are Catholic women who dedicate our lives to God through evangelization, prayer, service and hospitality. Our way of life is based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We share in the vision of our foundress, Venerable Nano Nagle, who dared to dream of a better world for the poor, sick and uneducated of Ireland. We commit ourselves to the empowerment of women and children. We reverence and celebrate all creation as gift. We commit ourselves to confronting injustice and working for peace.

As we continue to keep Nano’s dream alive, we are pleased to share our vision with you.

## Our DIRECTION

Rooted in the Gospel, inspired by Nano Nagle and united to Presentation Sisters and associates around the world through the International Presentation Association, we, the Sisters of the Presentation of Dubuque, Iowa, are called to live our charism of radical hospitality in kinship with Earth and all people.

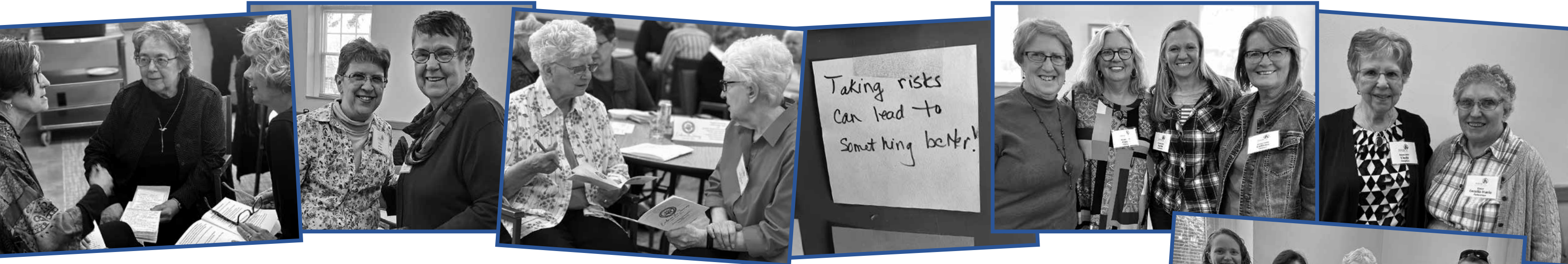
### *Sisters of the Presentation* LEADERSHIP TEAM

*Sister Carmen Hernandez*

*Sister Rita Menart*

*Sister Joy Peterson*

*Sister Marilyn Breen*



# Embracing the Journey: Dare, Trust, Begin

by CORINE MURRAY, PBVM

“It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question,” states Eugène Ionesco. Honoring the wisdom of this insight, sisters and associates gathered on April 8-10 for a pre-Chapter meeting to sit with each other and to be nourished by the questions that they held. Chapter, a significant meeting for sisters and associates that happens every five years, is scheduled for October 2022. It determines the ongoing direction of the community and elects a leadership team that will serve for five years.

The logo for this upcoming Chapter depicts individuals who are stepping lightly, almost dancing, in the shelter of each other. Their dance includes current and future partners. Steeped in the heritage of Nano Nagle’s legacy and their own founding story, sisters and associates explore mission-driven possibilities in an unfolding future.



After wisely heeding COVID-19 directives for what seemed like a very long time, people were excited to gather with faces in full view. Together they prayed, discussed, learned and played. Excitement was in the air.

On Friday, April 8, Lynn M. Levo, a Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet and a licensed psychologist, lecturer and consultant, addressed those gathered with an important question, “Who are we called to be now?” She acknowledged

that risk-taking is a choice that includes possible negative as well as positive outcomes and unpacked attitudes and obstacles to risk-taking. As sisters and associates face the future, risk-taking is clearly a part of that future. They listened as the speaker then named and explained four important motivators that drive risk-taking and obstacles that can hinder individuals and/or groups from taking a leap.

Sister Lynn weaved examples of listening and decision-making skills into her powerful stories. In conclusion of this section, she tapped into the wisdom of Oliver Burkeman, “There will always be too much to do. A viable solution is to make a shift from a life spent trying not to neglect anything, in favor of spent productivity and consciously choosing what to neglect, in favor of what matters most.” After a hard day of work, time was spent relaxing and playing a challenging trivia game about the associates and sisters.

Describing this coming together, Sister Maura McCarthy offers, “Sisters and associates gathered with abundant joy after the COVID-19 isolations. It was like a post-resurrection rendezvous prayer, listening and sharing. Sister Lynn Levo sparked our daring to welcome the challenges of the future.”

On Saturday, April 9, enlightening and sometimes entertaining reports were given by the four promise groups established at the last Chapter that focus on partnerships and resources, governance and communication, radical hospitality and non-violence. Additional reports were given about associate partnership, justice promotion and initial membership/vocation. Each group summarized its work

Taking risks  
can lead to  
something better!

Left to right: Associate Billie Greenwood shares insights while Sister Diana Blong and Associate Carol Witry listen closely. Sister Joan Brincks and Associate Mary Lou Mauss smile for a photo op. Sisters Janet Goetz and Hermann Platt engage in one-on-one discussion. Post-it notes display insights on the days’ learnings from those gathered. Associates Dianne McDermott, Cindy Pfiffner, Radie Roberts and Colleen Venter enjoy reconnecting in-person. Associate Linda Dolphin and Sister Cecelia Auterman catch up during a break. Pre-Chapter Preparations Committee members: (Clockwise) Sisters Jessi Beck, Mary Catherine Redmond, Marilou Irons, Joetta Venneman, Rita Menart, Ann Jackson and Corine Murray.

during the past five years and projected possible next steps. In the afternoon, there were opportunities for spontaneous small and large group discussions about structures and leadership. These sharings helped people dream out loud and point to future realities.

On Sunday morning, in the folds of morning prayer, four people witnessed to a risk-taking time or situation in their lives. These individuals shared part of their life journey and how they faced situations, assessed possible risks and made decisions. Two associates, Dianne McDermott and Janine Idziak, and two sisters, Linda Reicks and Maura McCarthy, graced all present with their stories. In concrete ways, they reflected the wisdom of Sister Lynn and courageously shared some of their vulnerabilities.

Next, the Chapter facilitator, Sister Mary Catherine Redmond, Presentation Sister from New York, explained the options for possible levels of participation at Chapter. After personal discernment, sisters and associates will determine their level of participation, all having the option to serve as supportive participants. In addition, sisters who discern their willingness, if elected, to serve as Chapter delegates accept the responsibilities to study all pre-Chapter materials and attend all Chapter sessions.

Reflecting on these days, Sister Cheryl Demmer shares, “The theme was very inspiring: *Embrace the Journey*. I could have a whole weekend listening to Sister Lynn Levo. The group of women that were at my table as we began our in-depth conversation were amazing. I left with ‘I cannot be joyful unless I am grateful – every day practice gratitude.’”



At the conclusion of the weekend, the energy level was still high. People were energized as they journeyed home carrying the wisdom offered by Sister Lynn and her invitation to reflect more deeply on many questions such as:

- Are we learning how to work collaboratively and to continue to define the roles of vowed members and associates in an emerging reality?
- Are we learning that the mission and vision need to have a clarity that inspires passion and ownership and invites all to join in the mission and action?
- Are we learning how responsibilities (care of sisters; property and buildings; sponsored ministries; pastoral attention to both newer and older members) impact energy and resources of leaders and members?

May these questions serve to enlighten all those called to embrace the journey.

Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving in a pretty and well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out and loudly proclaiming, “Wow! What a ride!”

Hunter S. Thompson



Sister Lynn Marie Fangman shares her vision of stewardship serving as general treasurer for her Presentation community, a position she has held for 32 years.

# Stewardship – A Way of Life

by ELENA HOYE, PBVM

## GOOD STEWARDS

**Gracious God, make us keenly aware of all the blessings of our rich lives. Help us to be good stewards of our time by putting prayer first in our lives. Help us to be good stewards of our talent by putting ourselves at the service of each other. Help us to be good stewards of our treasure by sharing our financial means to aid those in need. Help us be good stewards of Earth and of Earth's life-support systems by being faithful to act in ways that will restore and protect the environment. Amen.**

Biblical stewardship means being a caretaker of God's realm. As Peter said, in 1 Peter 4:10, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."

Sister Lynn Marie Fangman is a Christian steward. She grew up loving nature and she has been a good caretaker throughout her life. Sister Lynn Marie remembers going to her grandmother and grandfather's farm and loving being outdoors. This love of nature has been with her throughout her life. For years you could find her tending the grounds of Mount Loretto. Stewardship of the earth resides deep in her heart. "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." (*Psalms 24:1*)

Sister Lynn Marie applied the values of stewardship to her ministry in Catholic education. As a teacher and principal in Catholic schools, she prepared young students to receive the sacraments and guided teachers in carrying out the gospel mission in their classrooms. As a diocesan consult for

**We live in an interconnected world. The way we consume directly affects the lived realities of other people ... we have an opportunity to care for others across borders and cultures through our everyday shopping.**

*Sister Lynn Marie Fangman*

Catholic education, she worked with principals and school board members in maintaining and fostering the Catholic core values of acting for justice and creation.

After 20 years of service in several facets in Catholic school education and in the Dubuque Archdiocesan Office of Education, Sister Lynn Marie carried her vision of stewardship into a new realm. In 1990, Sister Julianne Brockamp, the congregational leader, asked Sister Lynn Marie to begin to shift her ministry from education to community service. Thus began Sister Lynn Marie's journey to become the general treasurer for the Presentation community, and for 32 years she has served faithfully in that office. She even spent 10 of those years serving concurrently as the director of the stewardship for the Archdiocese of Dubuque and working in the community's finance office.

She has dedicated much of her life to protecting and safeguarding the capacity of the Sisters of the Presentation to care for their members, to invest in the needs of the local community and the world, and to plan for the future.

Sister Lynn Marie believes that the goal of her office has two parts. The first part is to administer financial sustainability to support the members of the community and care of the sisters. Thus, the finances serve the purpose of supporting the mission, the dreams and the calling of the sisters. The second part is to nurture the reality that we are Christian stewards who recognize God as the source of all, and know that we will be held accountable for how we use the gifts God entrusted to our care.

Sister Lynn Marie has made stewardship a foundational value of the finance department. She sees stewardship as a call to discern wants from needs, a call to simplicity, a call to prioritize in order to spend time and resources on what is truly important. Stewardship is faith lived out in daily life. She believes that God will always provide what is needed. The response of the sisters will be to have the courage to live a disciple's life and to have the faith that God will always be there for them.

Over the last 32 years, Sister Lynn Marie has deepened her consciousness that the definition of stewardship is not limited to a 10 percent tithe. "Stewardship encompasses

100 percent of all that we have and it is not about 'us' as our Dubuque community, rather it is about 'us' as our global community," expresses Sister Lynn Marie. "We live in an interconnected world. The way we consume directly affects the lived realities of other people. Because our world is global, we have an opportunity to care for others across borders and cultures through our everyday shopping. We can care for the poor simply by being aware of the conditions in which they work to make our goods and by making purchases that help those behind the products."

As general treasurer, Sister Lynn Marie works with the congregational leadership team and trustees to seek good financial advice about investing the sisters' resources. Thus the Presentation congregation seeks out companies that embrace social justice values. Since 1981, the community has worked with Christian Brothers Investment Services, Inc. (CBIS) which is a Catholic, socially-responsible investment management firm. CBIS works exclusively with Catholic investors interested in unifying faith and finance. Catholic Responsible Investing (CRI) is designed to provide Catholic investors sound financial returns while remaining faithful to the moral and social teachings of the Church. Catholic investors avoid benefiting from company activities that violate Church teachings.

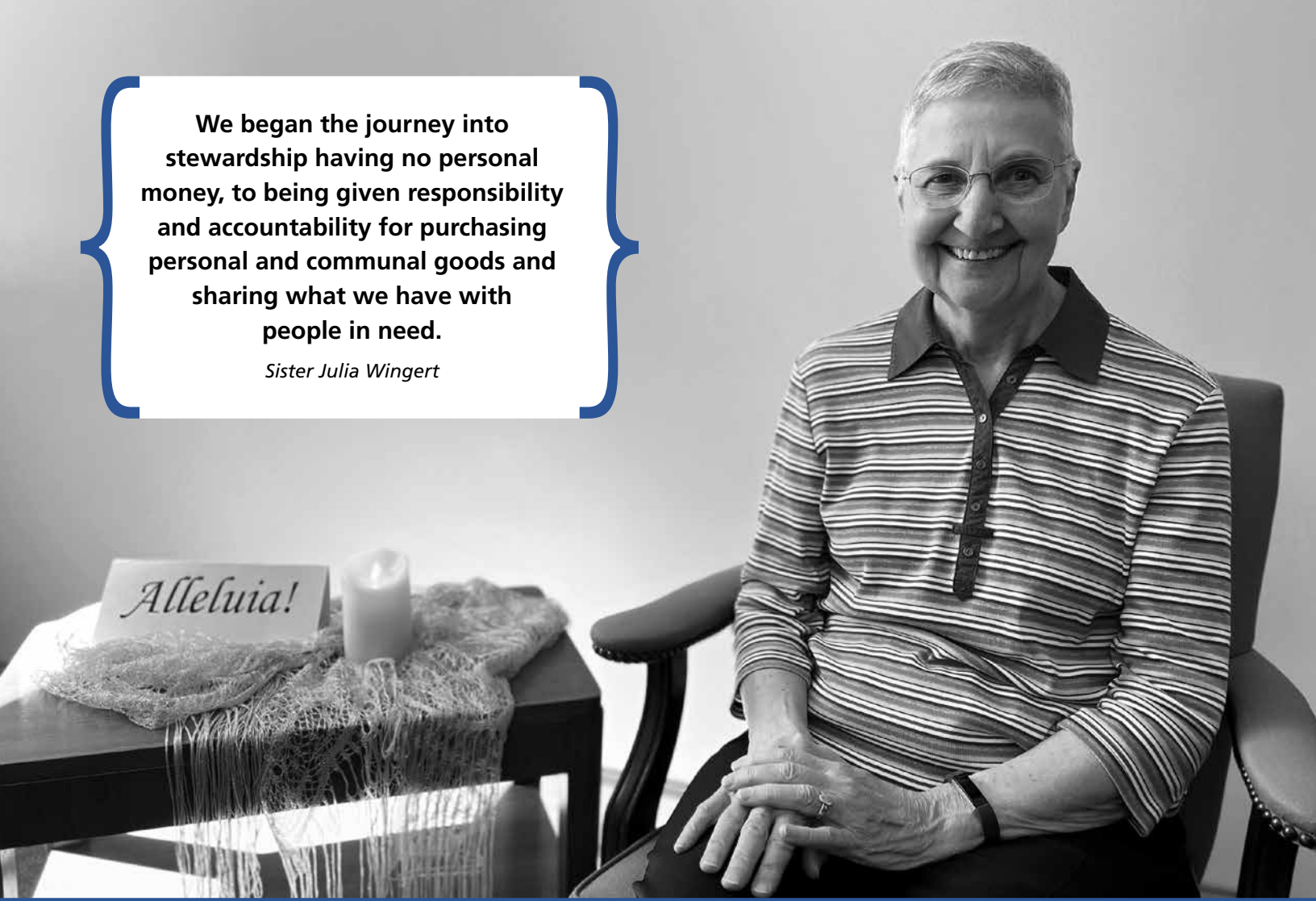
The Sisters of the Presentation make mindful and value-oriented financial decisions embracing Pope Francis' call that money should be at the service of human beings, not the other way around. "Once the economy loses its human face, then we are no longer served by money, but ourselves become servants of money. This is a form of idolatry against which we are called to react by reestablishing the rational order of things, which appeals to the common good, whereby 'money must serve, not rule.'" *Pope Francis, Vatican City, October 8, 2020*



Sister Lynn Marie Fangman still has that same welcoming smile, however back in the day, she used to keep her desk in the finance office much more cluttered than she keeps it now.

**We began the journey into stewardship having no personal money, to being given responsibility and accountability for purchasing personal and communal goods and sharing what we have with people in need.**

*Sister Julia Wingert*



*For many years, Sister Julia Wingert generously offered her gifts of selfless service, gentle presence and extreme patience as finance assistant.*

## Partnering as a Team; Serving the Mission

by BETH KRESS, PBVM

Selfless service, demonstration of hospitality, belief in sustainability, embrace of innovation and change and being a team player are some elements that foster Christian stewardship.

Jesus holds up good and faithful stewards in various Gospel parables. The head steward saved the best wine until last at the wedding feast. A wise steward stored grain to sell for a favorable market yield. Another steward doubled a month's wages by investing the master's resources. The wise virgins had foresight to have more oil lest their lamps would go out before the groom came. In each case, persons collaborated to realize an abundant or favorable outcome.

Using one's gifts for the community and responding to individuals' needs are specific actions of good stewards. Persons who join their individual gifts to form a team for a common purpose are key actors in a mission success story.

Sister Julia Wingert, who ministers as a spiritual director, served in a variety of other ministry capacities throughout 50 plus years. Her gifts have complemented those of others for the sake of the Presentation mission.

Teaching in Catholic elementary and secondary schools meant working with teams. At one time, Sister Julia did

double duty working as a high school business education teacher while handling the daily work of the finance office when community treasurer, Sister Helen Marie Feeny, was away. Sister Julia served as community secretary while serving in community finance. Partnership was essential in her years as finance assistant.

What skills does teaming and stewardship call forth? "Professionalism, approachability, confidentiality, efficiency, attention to detail, accuracy, patience," states Sister Julia as she notes some major qualities of service as a finance assistant. "In addition to taking an online accounting class through the University of Minnesota, everything was on-the-job learning when I started in the finance office in 1983, and especially through the last 12 years, right up to my last day in finance."

An insight for Sister Julia in serving in finance ministry was the growth of community members in accountability and stewardship that reflected an expanding awareness of the abundance of resources. "We began the journey into stewardship having no personal money, to being given responsibility and accountability for purchasing personal and communal goods and sharing what we have with people in need," she comments.

Throughout the years, Sister Julia has witnessed much change as methods moved from hand, to calculator, to computer data entry, to digitized accounting. The sisters went from receiving a monthly cash allowance to having a checkbook and more recently a debit card. During her years in the finance office, Sister Julia did data entry, paid bills, processed medical bills and medical insurance, handled deposits, worked with employee payroll as well as many other tasks. Good stewardship included other dimensions such as updating software, adjusting to changes in processes and procedures and caring for equipment.

"In the early years of finance ministry I don't recall there being any conversation about ministry related to mission and charism," she notes. "We all knew that Sister Estelle Pillard suggested to Sister Helen Marie to start a savings account which was the impetus for building a retirement fund." She remembers how Sister Helen Marie, an excellent business educator and finance officer, also served on boards as religious communities made their monies work together for responsible investing. Thus, Sister Julia had models of good stewardship.

"They were good years," she comments. "I am grateful for the time spent knowing that I contributed to our mission and to the congregation in stewarding our community resources. It was rewarding to work in partnership with others within and outside of the community. As I continue to minister in spiritual direction, I will also be creating greeting cards for the gift shop and decorative menus for use in the dining room on special days. I plan to take more time for prayer and reflection, reading, music, walks and enjoyment of nature, renewing relationships with family, sisters and friends and maybe even take up a bit of line dancing. And who knows what the Spirit might have in mind as life unfolds!"



## Sister Damian O'Brien Celebrates 102 Years

On March 30, there was great joy in the house at Mount Loretto as the community celebrated Sister Damian O'Brien's 102nd birthday. The day was complete with a sign in the yard, a delicious meal, birthday cake, a sing-a-long led by Sisters Paula Schwendinger and Rita Cameron and a blessing led by Sister Sheila Ann Dougherty. Jean Lange, house coordinator, shared some fun facts about 1920, the year Sister Damian was born, and how things have changed. It was the year prohibition began and the 19th amendment was passed, securing the right to vote for women.

All gathered were blessed by Sister Damian with a prayer of gratitude she prays daily. We are equally blessed to have such a gentle, grace-filled woman in our lives.

*Jesus, it is all too easy to take another day for granted. Help me to savor this moment and to cherish the gift of life, even in difficult times. I know that your promises are the only guarantees life holds for us. So help me to appreciate what I have, especially the people you have put in my life. May I never lose sight of how precious my time with them really is. Amen.*



*Sisters Therese Corkery and Damian O'Brien share a birthday, 20 years apart!*

# Leaving Our Footprints

by HERMANN PLATT, PBVM, ARCHIVIST

Nano's lantern continues to bring the light of Christ in places where Sisters of the Presentation have ministered, even after they are no longer physically present.

## ST. PATRICK CATHOLIC CHURCH, SHELDON, IA

Found in a parish history book lies the story of service and dedication by Presentation women to the St. Patrick Catholic Church in Sheldon, Iowa, and several surrounding parishes.

The arrival of five sisters in 1956 began a journey of 52 years, with 49 sisters sharing their lives with the children who came to them for education in both academics and faith. Their sphere of influence extended to adults as well, through sacramental preparation of their children, home visits, fundraisers, ecumenical prayer opportunities and hospice activities.

In October 1995, St. Patrick Catholic Church began its biggest construction since the original church building was complete in 1912. In honor of the Presentation Sisters who served there, the addition of a Presentation Room was constructed on the top level.

The final chapter of this story came in 2008 when the last Presentation Sister left the area. Though Sister Anne McCormick spent the last 11 years of her stay as the sole resident of the convent, she remarked that she always felt supported by the parishioners with whom she interacted daily. This sentiment was echoed by others who had ministered in Sheldon over the years, and who hold fond memories of their time there.



Sister Anne McCormick is gifted with a corsage for her farewell celebration in May 2007.

cards we send them brighten their days and that it means a lot to them that we do it.”

Caroline plans to join service-based clubs and continue to seek out opportunities to serve others as she pursues a degree in secondary education at Boston College in Massachusetts.

## Nano Nagle College Scholarship

The Nano Nagle College Scholarship rotates among Iowa high schools where Presentation Sisters have ministered. The \$1,500 scholarship, awarded to a student who models self-giving service helping to improve the lives of others, intends to aid graduates in the continuation of their education.



Anya Westhoff

This year's scholarship is awarded to **Anya Westhoff**, a student at Beckman Catholic High School in Dyersville, Iowa. Her contributions to her community, parish and school serve as an outstanding example for people of all ages.

Anya has been involved in serving meals to the homeless, volunteering at her local library, leading school retreats and distributing communion to the homebound. She has also aided struggling families through her local Right to Life office.

Grateful for the enrichment she has received in her service to others, Anya shares, “I never knew how much I would enjoy distributing communion to the elderly and homebound and giving back to my community until taking this opportunity. Though I would like to sleep in on Saturday mornings, the reward of going out to see, talk and engage with some of the sweetest people in my community is a real blessing.”

Adam Denner, band director at Beckman, testifies to Anya's leadership among her peers. “She always is curious, seeking new challenges, projects and interests to enrich herself and those around her. Even during these last two years, with all of the challenges that have occurred in education and life, Anya has continued to demonstrate leadership and drive, serving as a role model to her peers and to younger students as well. I am confident that she will find success at whatever she sets her mind to accomplish – a bright future is ahead of her. She has shown the capacity to achieve with a growth mindset and collaborate as a caring leader in a fashion that begets success.”

“She puts her heart and soul into everything she does,” adds Anna Durr, a teacher at Beckman. “Whether the activity is at school, work, the community, or most importantly, at church, Anya seeks to do her best for the good of those around her.”

Anya plans to continue her education at a Catholic college and is discerning religious life.



Sister Paula Schwendinger presents Anya Westhoff, senior at Beckman Catholic High School in Dyersville, Iowa, with the Nano Nagle College Scholarship.

## Exceptional Individuals Honored Through Scholarships & Awards

by LUGENE BERNING, CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Many years ago, the Sisters of the Presentation instituted a number of scholarships and awards to further the educational bequest of the congregation's foundress, Nano Nagle. In the spirit of her desire to serve, the sisters are delighted to honor the following admirable recipients.

### Mother Vincent Hennessy Foundation Scholarship

In celebration of Mother Vincent Hennessy and the Dubuque Presentation foundation, the Sisters of the Presentation offer a \$1,500 scholarship to a graduating senior from Wahlert Catholic High School in Dubuque, Iowa, which the congregation has actively supported since its inception.



Caroline Schmid

This year's recipient is **Caroline Schmid** due to her dedicated service to young children, her parish and the Dubuque community, especially at Mount St. Francis.

Caroline has enjoyed being of service since she was young, volunteering at the Sisters of St. Francis summer camps, at parish picnics and making food baskets for those in need. She has also partnered with her sisters (she is a triplet) to create a Sister Pal Club at Wahlert Catholic High School to write and make cards for retired and quarantined sisters at Mount St. Francis. The club has grown to over 30 members.

Julie Tebbe, inviting and discerning minister at the Dubuque Franciscan Sisters and a former member of the Dubuque Presentation community, shares, “Caroline is one of the most dedicated people I know. She is kind, compassionate and dependable. Witnessing her with the young campers, it is evident that she is an accepting and joyful person. She fulfills any task or commitment asked of her, and she does all with a smile on her face!”

“She is an excellent witness to service, compassion and faith,” adds Sister Kay Gaul, OSF.

“It's been so nice to know that my actions impact others in a positive and meaningful way,” states Caroline. “I've gotten cards back from some of the retired sisters stating that the

# Synodal Journey

## Embracing Vulnerability

Reflection by CARMEN HERNANDEZ, PBVM

The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) is currently composed of more than 1,900 female superiors general/congregational leaders of international and diocesan congregations worldwide. They are divided into 36 groups called Constellations, present on all continents. The purpose of the assembly is to promote deeper collaboration between women's congregations of apostolic religious life. More than 850 of the members met for the assembly in Rome or participated via Zoom on May 2-6.

Sister Carmen Hernandez recently travelled to Rome for the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) 22nd Plenary Assembly, an event held every 3 years. Centered in prayer and music, this year's theme, Embracing Vulnerability on the Synodal Journey, provided profound speakers, deep reflection, contemplation and stimulating table conversations, each day offering a different perspective of the theme. Sister Carmen shares an overview of each day's presentations which spotlight the essence of their foci. May their words give all fodder for deep reflection, contemplation and conversation.

### Day 1 – The Dynamics of Transformation

Ted Dunn, certified clinical psychologist and author of *Graced Crossroads: Pathways to Deep Change and Transformation*, shared, “Embracing our vulnerability requires that we embrace the fullness of our being: life’s beauty and austerity, the full cycle of surrender, gestation and birth, in all manner of anguish and love. With each new cycle of life, in order for us to grow, we must not only humbly recognize our vulnerability but we must also embrace it. In other words, embracing our vulnerability is part and parcel of the inner and interpersonal work of transformation. It is not a question of whether or not you like being vulnerable. The question is: Can you see value in it, and, therefore, will you choose to embrace this kind of heart-work for the transformative potential it holds?”

“What leads us into the future is our courage, creativity and tenacity to give life to our deepest longings called forth by the lure and love of God. Our future rests on our ability to make wise choices. We need to recognize the collective vulnerability we are all facing and to partner in this work of transformation. Transformation is an internal process, a journey that shifts the meaning and purpose of our lives. It shifts the patterns and practices of our lives and the structures that support them. It shifts our identity and realigns our soul with its outward expression.

“Embracing our vulnerability, living in the fullness of our humanity with hearts wide open, is what transforms us. Those who embrace it in themselves can embrace it in others. Embracing your vulnerability is key to the inner work of transformation. In what ways are you and your community embracing your vulnerability and engaging in the inner work of transformation?”



Left to right: A day of sightseeing include touring the Colosseum; Pope Francis is pushed in a wheelchair by his aide, Sandro Mariotti, as he greets participants in the plenary assembly of the International Union of Superiors General on May 5 at the Vatican; Nearly 520 sisters attended the opening-day session of the International Union of Superiors General's triennial plenary. (Global Sisters Report/Chris Herlinger)

### Day 2 – The Spirituality of Synodality

Sister Nurya Martinez-Gayol Fernández, a Spanish member of the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus, offered the following, “Synodal spirituality must be a spirituality of listening. Listening is one of the greatest needs that human beings experience; ‘the unlimited desire to be listened to’ (Francis); and it is demanding because not just any kind of listening is enough – we must listen well, with attention to those we listen to, to what we listen to and to how we listen.

“Listening calls for a disposition that begins with an ‘emptiness,’ by making space and the readiness to receive it. For what purpose? So that I may welcome what the other person says without listening to myself, without distorting what he or she tells me, without interpreting before it touches me inside, without pretending I possess, I control, I believe what I already know, thus remaining impervious to any novelty or astonishment. Emptying myself of my prejudices, of my polarizations, ready to make a free space that imposes nothing and is full of expectations. Listening is the recognition of others and, therefore, implies their dignity.”

### Day 3 – Wisdom for the Synodal Journey

Jessie Rogers, dean of the faculty of theology at St. Patrick's College in Ireland, states, “The only way to proceed in wisdom is to keep close to God and what God is doing. That requires both rootedness and openness. Can you hear the wisdom for your own synodal journey? You are nourished by the traditions that have shaped you, by your founding charisms, and by your own personal stories in which you have come to know God. That history gives you a firm place to stand. But, like a tree putting out new branches, you need to be open to the future, a future you cannot predict in advance. The God you have come to know is the God who will take the story further. But this God cannot be limited to what you know already.

“We are invited by the biblical text to create a space in our remembering to stop us from trying to trap the future in the cage of the past. We are called to be open and responsive

to the new thing that God is doing. In the present moment, which hangs in the gap between the past we think we know and the future that is still becoming, we can embrace uncertainty with curiosity. We are being asked to pay attention because what God is doing cannot be named in advance, but it can be perceived if we are alert and attentive.

“What will help us see the new thing that God is doing in our midst and in the world? An attitude of contemplative wonder, compassionate attentiveness and hope. How can we embrace the wisdom of vulnerability? It means risking ourselves and our future for the sake of the world and its future.

“Wisdom embraces the best goals and chooses the optimal paths to achieving them. What actions and values does living wisely and journeying synodally call for? Wisdom is found in accompaniment, in coming alongside. Where there are green shoots struggling toward the light, the wise woman waters, weeds and waits in hope. She pays compassionate attention and responds to needs by empowering and encouraging. She has the patience and courage to hold the tensions while something new surfaces. She taps into her God-given creativity and draws forth the creativity of others. She does not work alone. She builds community and is herself nourished and supported by others. She keeps widening the circle.

“To become a synodal church means journeying together. It means to open ourselves to others, to listen and to speak, to reflect and to discern, and to take the next step together.”

Sister Carmen states, “I am both blessed and grateful for the opportunity to have participated in this assembly. Moved by the words of these speakers, I find myself stretched by their questions and challenged by the invitation to embrace our vulnerability, to listen well and to walk together, asking God for what we need, as we begin the work of transformation.”



Sister Carmen Hernandez visits with Sister LaDonna Manternach, BVM, at the International Union of Superiors General 22nd Plenary Assembly in Rome.



# 2022 Presentation Associate Scholarship Recipients

by RADIE ROBERTS and COLLEEN VENTER, ASSOCIATE PARTNERSHIP CO-DIRECTORS

Presentation associates contributed money to offer four scholarships to individuals associated with ministries supported by the Sisters of the Presentation: La Luz Centro Cultural in Hampton, Iowa; Hotel Hope in New Orleans, Louisiana; Presentation Lantern Center in Dubuque, Iowa; and Hispanic Outreach Ministry of Evangelization (HOME) in rural Iowa. Three \$1,000 scholarships and one \$800 scholarship were awarded to assist individuals to further their education, to receive job training, or to help with immigration/citizenship expenses. Congratulations to the 2022 Presentation Associate Scholarship recipients.

### Elbia Martinez – La Luz Centro Cultural

Elbia, from Honduras, has lived in the United States for eight years with her husband and two young children. She hopes to pay for an intensive English course as she feels learning English is very important to contribute more to society. Elbia is currently studying in the La Luz Google certificate program to gain a certificate in data analytics that would allow her to work remotely for a technology company and provide for her children and family. Elbia states, “I have lived very beautiful experiences with the Sisters of the Presentation while evangelizing in Hampton. The creation of La Luz Centro Cultural has also become a great response for the Latino community. We are very grateful and we are not alone while someone from La Luz is accompanying us on our journey.”



Elbia Martinez

Liliana Velasco expresses in her letter of support, “Elbia is always looking for ways to better her life and her children’s future. She started cleaning at La Luz and we got to know her better by interacting with her more often. One of her goals is to learn English – every week she comes two days to learn with our English Language Learner class.”

### Isaac Nava – HOME

Isaac was born in the United States and lives with his parents and brother, as well as his aunt and uncle, two of their children and a cousin. Being bilingual, he has had to interpret for his parents at times. In her letter of support, Sister Paula Schwendinger affirms, “On any given day there may be cousins in the house. Isaac is very good at caring for them. I am impressed with his kindness and patience.”

Isaac is the youngest of three siblings and has aspirations of being a construction manager. He is hoping to attend Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids because they have a program suited to his interests. Isaac comments, “I want to own my own company in the future and make enough income to support my family. Being able to support my own family with no worries has always been a dream for me. I don’t want my own children to question if they can get a new pair of shoes, or buy jeans, or need something for a class.”



Isaac Nava

### Omar Montiel Barrientos – Presentation Lantern Center

Omar, born in Puebla, Mexico, was brought to the United States at the age of one by his parents with hopes for a better life and opportunity. Omar says, “Growing up, my parents were always working to provide for me and my brothers. Never did I think I would have the opportunity to do something both my parents could not do, attend college. Today, I have the privilege of studying business administration and finance with a minor in Spanish and religious studies. My one big hope in these next few years is to be the first to walk across the stage, receive my degree and make my parents proud. My parents have endured so many hardships throughout our time in the United States. Being the first to receive this degree, I feel, will give them the reassurance that coming here was worth it.”



Omar Montiel Barrientos

### Gul Naz – Presentation Lantern Center

Megan Ruiz, executive director of Presentation Lantern Center, describes Gul as a very pleasant and kind-hearted student. Fluent in five languages, Gul volunteers to interpret on occasion for members of a family who recently moved to town.

Gul reflects, “I am impacted by the Presentation Lantern Center in two ways: they are helping improve my American

English and cultural understanding, and they guide me for my career building.” Gul hopes to be able to start volunteering at the local school district and get accepted into an early childhood education program, thus allowing her the ability to begin paid work in the future.



Megan Ruiz, executive director of Presentation Lantern Center, presents Gul Naz with the Dubuque Associate Partnership Scholarship.

## CARMA Conference

On Saturday, April 2, 2022, 120 sisters and associates gathered via Zoom to explore friendships in the context of the Bible during the Conference of Associates and Religious of the Midwest Area (CARMA), an inter-congregational network in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. CARMA was formed to provide a bi-annual conference for associates and religious to meet each other and have an enriching experience at an affordable cost within an easy travel time.

Sister Laurie Brink, a Dominican Sister of Sinsinawa, presented two extraordinary claims: that life’s ultimate goal is friendship with God and the Scriptures provide the road map. The day included presentation, reflection and small group sharing.

Associate Deborah Barrett attended the conference and remarks, “To prepare for the CARMA Conference, we were asked to reflect on our experience of friendship. For me, this life review stirred up feelings of love, gratitude and joy as I fondly recalled grade school “best friends,” high school and college companions, special colleagues and life-long friends. Just as we experienced God’s presence in these friendships, we were invited to experience our relationship with God as Friend. We are familiar with God as Father, but less so with God as Friend. Sister Laurie provided a scholarly scriptural basis for this way of relating to God and to one another.”

## In Memory of Claudette Hill

March 18, 1940 – April 17, 2022

Claudette Hill became a Presentation associate on August 2, 2010, after connecting with Sister Marilou Irons in the Cedar Falls area. In her associate application, Claudette wrote, “I have always admired the spiritual gift and beliefs of all sisters of God. I would like to be around people of true faith and gentleness.”



Claudette was born in Worthington, Minnesota, and moved to Waterloo, Iowa, when she was young. She graduated valedictorian from Our Lady of Victory Academy (OLVA) High School in Waterloo, and moved to Cedar Falls with her husband, John, in 1960, where she resided until her passing. Claudette obtained her college education from Indiana University, worked tirelessly at the John Deere Credit Union, raised a family and devoted herself to her church. She was a true example of a woman who could do it all – raising her children and never missing a moment while also giving her all as an executive leader. She was the embodiment of hard work, full of faith and never knew a stranger.

Claudette was a woman of God, adored her large family, would do anything to help others and enjoyed a fantastic life full of love and laughter. She was a woman who never gave up and always pushed the envelope, breaking boundaries in the workplace while satisfying the needs of her family, friends and community. She was loved, feared, and, most of all, respected by all who knew and loved her. Claudette will be deeply missed.

### Presentation Associate Identity Statement

Dubuque Presentation associates are women and men called to share in the life, spirituality and mission of the Dubuque Presentation Sisters. Grounded in prayer, we support and encourage one another as we seek to embody the Presentation charism of radical hospitality both individually and communally. In the spirit of Nano Nagle, we reach out with hospitality and compassion as we seek justice and respond to the needs of the world.



For decades, Mary Pat and Michael Ament have partnered with the Sisters of the Presentation in a variety of ways.

# Make a Difference by Working Together

by KAREN TUECKE, PARTNERS IN MISSION COORDINATOR

Mary Pat (Lynch) and Michael Ament met more than 50 years ago, both born into loving, supportive families and raised in the philanthropic community of Dubuque. Their families are what helped shape them into the people they are today. They have also had the good fortune of having many wonderful friends along with a strong faith community.

“My relationship with the sisters began when I met Sister Joan Lickteig as a college freshman at Clarke College. I was then honored to help her teach CCD classes at Resurrection,” reflects Mary Pat. “This was when Sister Joan was the principal and CCD coordinator. I loved her gentle yet take-charge personality. She was so kind, so full of love for people and life.” Both Mary Pat and Mike attended Clarke College and Mary Pat remembers, “Sister Joan was always cheery and just huggable!”

The two completed college and became teachers in the community, Mary Pat right after graduation and Mike after serving in the military and then obtaining his teaching degree. Later in life, Mary Pat crossed paths with the Presentation Sisters again. “I was lucky enough to interact with Sister Joan later, after I became a teacher, when she worked for the Education Office at the Archdiocese of Dubuque,” states Mary Pat. “She was so knowledgeable, so eager to share, so dedicated in helping each one of us be better educators, and for that I am deeply grateful. Having a career in teaching challenged both of us while showering us with beautiful memories. We continued that career for a combined 80 years before retiring.”

Mary Pat and Mike are the parents of two children, their son, Zach (and his wife Molly) and daughter, Samantha. “Our

**We give to the sisters because when you look at their mission statement and see the work they do, you know that the words of Jesus are coming alive in many different ways. The commitment to view the world and their work for justice through hospitality, welcoming all, and striving to transform unjust systems and empowering those most in need is really what we are all called to do, and the sisters are great role models.**

Mary Pat and Michael Ament

children make us proud by the loving lives that they lead. We are also blessed to have four beautiful grandchildren; Izzy, JP, Kate and Raya. They not only bring us joy but inspire us to leave the world a better place. Our children and grandchildren are the future of our world. They are why we do what we do for the sisters and other organizations we support.”

In addition, over the last decade, Mike met with Sister Julia Wingert for spiritual direction. “Sister Julia has a gentle, spirit-filled demeanor and her guidance has been a blessing to my faith journey,” states Mike. “She has provided me with so many insights to deepen my faith.”

Mary Pat and Mike have many interests outside of their family. Both of them enjoy cooking, reading, gardening, traveling and games. Mike has played in a band for the last 20 years and has not yet encountered a puzzle or team sport opportunity which he can turn down. Mary Pat feels the same way about her long walks with family or friends.

In an effort to give back, they both give of their time by volunteering – Mike with UnityPoint Health Finley Hospital, Kennedy School and Luther Manor, and Mary Pat with St. Stephen’s Food Bank. Volunteerism is not the only way the Aments give back. They also provide financial support to the organizations they care about. “Obviously, this critically important work takes not only prayer and time, but financial help from those of us who also share this vision. We started out giving small amounts from our monthly budget and moved from there. Our belief is that *every* dollar is important and no amount too small. We have been fortunate enough to be able to give consistently, which is a key component in affirming the goodness and importance of the mission.”

Mary Pat and Mike know that God has richly blessed them and realize that what they have – time, talent and treasure – needs to be shared. “We are now at a stage in our lives where the best way for us to give is through charitable distributions, but each family and individual needs to make commitments based on their own circumstances, embracing the fact that we *can* make a difference working together.”

“Today, we enjoy reading about the highlights of what the sisters do and achieve locally and globally. *Presentation Doorways* and the sisters’ website share the achievements and impact the sisters are making around the world through a variety of ministries including the ones we are passionate about – education, healthcare and advocating for the poor and the oppressed to name a few. We are not directly involved in any specific projects sponsored by the sisters, but hear and read about the good work being done and provide support for those projects through prayer and financial support. The words of Pope Francis beautifully highlight what it is that is going on within the Presentation community: “Today we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others.”

After reading the sisters’ annual appeal letter, Mary Pat wrote: “Give hope. Share love. Build peace. You ladies are brilliant in how you do the work of Jesus in such an inspiring way. This inspired us! My husband and I have also been very vigilant about making donations to local organizations that have these same goals in mind.”

A message they would like to share with others ... “We give to the sisters because when you look at their mission statement and see the work they do, you know that the words of Jesus are coming alive in many different ways. The commitment to view the world and their work for justice through hospitality, welcoming *all*, and striving to transform unjust systems and empowering those most in need is really what we are *all* called to do, and the sisters are great role models.”

The future of the Sisters of the Presentation is in embracing the journey. The Aments see this embracing as “a continued focus, with increased presence and a renewed vision.” Mary Pat and Mike see the sisters accomplishing realized goals while continuing to inspire hope.

As the sisters embrace the future in journeys yet to be clarified, the partnerships of friends and generous financial supporters are a constant reminder that these journeys cannot and will not be made alone. Thank you for embracing the journey with us.

# Reflections on the Journey

## Sister René Laubenthal

by MAURA MCCARTHY, PBVM

Born in Emmetsburg, Iowa, June Adel Laubenthal is the fourth daughter of 10 children, whose parents were Dr. Albert and Rose (Dahlhauser) Laubenthal. June went to grade school at St. Ellen and finished high school at the Emmetsburg Public School.

June's parents were faith-filled Catholics, depending on God's loving protection, especially through their consistent attendance at Mass and the Eucharist. This strong faith, especially evident during the lean times of the Great Depression, helped her parents accept the challenges and celebrate the joys of life. Their example graced and strengthened June's faith life growing up.

June travelled to Denver, Colorado, with her sister one summer and on a memorable evening could not get religious life out of her mind. "The grace was strong and palpable. I'm so glad that I followed that call," she expresses. "My aunt, Sister Presentation Dahlhauser, was an influential and steadying presence in my life."

June entered the Presentation congregation on Presentation Day in 1952 and received the veil in June of the following year with the name Sister Mary René. She made vows and began teaching in 1955. "I've always loved teaching" affirms Sister René. She began her teaching career in the primary grades, but in Timber Lake, South Dakota, she began teaching upper grades. She became principal and local director in Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota and Illinois. She received a national outstanding teacher's award in Key West, Iowa. After retiring from teaching for almost 50 years, Sister René did parish ministry, including RCIA in Algona, and tutored immigrants from all over the world at the Presentation Lantern Center in Dubuque for 13 years.

Once the Associate Partnership Program began in 1999, Sisters René and Annette Skyles eagerly formed a group of 13 members in Algona, Iowa. "I so looked forward to the initiation of this program as I hoped lay people could be more involved in our Presentation life and mission," expresses Sister René. "This was a great beginning to years of developing meaningful, mission-focused friendships."

Carol Kane, associate and former member, speaks about living and working with Sister René: "A blessing in my life was my time living with Sister René in Shoreview, Minnesota. She was a soothing, balancing presence in our home. She exuded joy, support and wisdom when engaged with others. As a teacher, she was enthusiastic and loving to her students.



*Sister René Laubenthal spends her days in prayer and enjoying community life.*

It was never about her. She stood courageously on issues when she felt a need for compassion and justice."

The consistently warm smile on Sister René's face is a true testament to her love of life. She enjoys puzzles, playing Scrabble or cards with fellow sisters, listening to music and using her iPad to play games and stay connected with community, family and friends. She is a prolific reader, especially fiction and biography.

Sister René lives her life with an unwavering attitude of gratitude, especially when it comes to the great care she receives at Mount Loretto. She believes it is important to always see the good in others and to care for one another with compassion and love. Daily prayer is especially meaningful to her as it sustains and guides her on the journey.

Through the years Sister René's favorite scriptural image has been the Good Shepherd, ceaselessly searching for the lost ones, or even for anyone who is struggling with complications of life. She adds: "The witness of my sisters and family have been a great source of grace in my life, as well as some of my favored saints. One of my favorite prayers is from St. Ignatius of Loyola, 'Give me your love and your grace; that's enough for me!'"

# Mount Loretto AND BEYOND

Featured below are special times in the lives of Dubuque Presentation Sisters and associates.



## Conference of Presentation Sisters of North America

Twenty-two Presentation leaders were finally able to gather again in person for the 2022 Conference leadership meeting on May 16-19, at the Presentation Motherhouse in Dubuque. The Conference of Presentation Sisters represents hundreds of Presentation Sisters from six congregations in North America located in Aberdeen, South Dakota; Dubuque, Iowa; New Windsor, New York; Staten Island, New York; San Francisco, California; and the United States Unit of the Union of Presentation Sisters. Time was spent discussing how they are being called to be Presentation in the world today, learning from one another and engaging in contemplative dialogue, looking with energy toward a future filled with possibilities.



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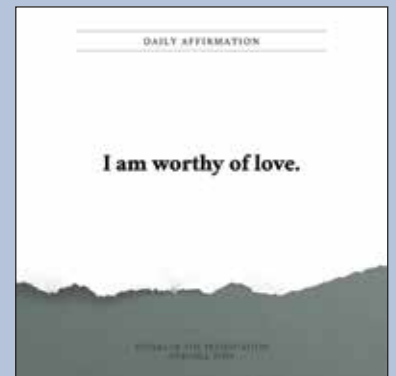
Contact Sister Jessi Beck at [vocations@dbqpbvms.org](mailto:vocations@dbqpbvms.org)

## PLEASE CONNECT WITH US.

For updated information about the activities and events of the Sisters of the Presentation, please visit our website at [www.dbqpbvms.org](http://www.dbqpbvms.org) or call 563.588.2008.

## DAILY AFFIRMATIONS

A daily affirmation is shared on our social media channels with the hope to inspire positivity, self-worth and confidence for all to live a healthier and happier life. **Follow us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram @dbqpbvms.** Or, if you would like to receive these daily affirmations by email, contact [info@dbqpbvms.org](mailto:info@dbqpbvms.org) to be added to the list.



## PLEASE PRAY WITH US.

**June 25, 2022**  
Service and Awareness Opportunity  
Sisters of the Presentation  
Dubuque, Iowa

**July 13, 2022**  
60th Jubilee Celebration  
Sister Marilyn Breen  
Sister Michaeline Healy  
Sister Margaret Anne Kramer  
Sister Joellen Price

50th Jubilee Celebration  
Sister Suzanne Takes

**July 14-17, 2022**  
Community Gathering  
Dubuque, Iowa

**21st of each month**  
Pray for Vocations

**25th of each month**  
Pray for Benefactors



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# PRAY FOR PEACE

***Join us in solidarity as we pray for peace in our hearts and in our world.  
Give us hope for a future of peace based on justice for all.***

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