



PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

offering hospitality to the world



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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 partners, 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 invite 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 purpose 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 Mile 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.

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Cover PHOTO

On April 15, Presentation Sisters, associates, employees and family gathered to celebrate the transfer of congregational leadership. Left to right: Sisters Joetta Venneman, Mary Lou Specha, Rita Menart and Carmen Hernandez willingly accepted the ministry of leadership and will lead the Presentation community into the next five years.

A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

Openings

by CARMEN HERNANDEZ, PBVM

In an explanation of her most recent song, "Ready for Change," Carrie Newcomer says, "Change often begins with our own inner work, our longing and willingness to step up to the next growing edge. I believe it is our inner work that supports and grounds our outer work for personal and community change. Of course, positive change rarely happens without push back (internal and/or external). But together, in the writing and singing of this new song, we affirmed that when we risk change, when we are ready and willing to trust, this allows us to reach out and clasp hands with one another, and in reaching out gather strength for our shared journey."

As my first five-year term of leadership concludes, I reflect back on where we began, where we have been and what lies ahead for us these next five years. It certainly was a shared journey. Who will ever forget COVID-19, when people made valiant attempts to manage the care and safety of loved ones, staff, family and friends? Change was inevitable during the pandemic. Every day provided an opportunity to look at things differently. We relied on one another as we became more creative in dealing with matters of communication, maintaining social distance and supporting one another – especially those in isolation. We learned patience as we became educated in how to use Zoom and realized the benefits of maintaining this method of communication. The list goes on. Trust deepened, vulnerabilities were revealed, personal and communal sharing and prayer flourished.

During this time, our awareness of systemic racial injustice in our country was heightened by police brutality, economic inequity and increasingly visible racism. Prayers were offered, letters to the editors and legislators were written, banners of support for Black Lives Matter were hung as on-going education increased both personally and communally. These efforts and more were put forth to address these profound issues and this time of uncertainty.

As we look to the future, our General Chapter theme, Embrace the Journey: Dare, Trust, Begin, calls us to deepen our Presentation mission and charism through prayer, contemplation and continued sharing of our vulnerabilities as we imagine something new. This is an exciting time filled with possibilities as we undertake the task of implementing the work of long-range property and resource planning – discovering new ways to make these assets serve not only us but the good of all.

Theologian John O'Donohue compares his thoughts on transformation to a threshold. "Often a threshold becomes clearly visible once you've crossed it. Crossing can often mean the total loss of all you enjoyed on the other side; it becomes a dividing line between the past and the future. A threshold is a significant frontier. It is a place of great transformation."

I believe we are at a place of great transformation in our community, contemplating crossing a threshold that holds great potential for growth. We ask ourselves, are we ready to take the first step in faith, knowing we do not have all the answers to unsettling questions? What might be the deeper invitation if we choose to cross the threshold? Will we allow the deep longings and dreams in our hearts to nudge us forward over the threshold that beckons us into the next growing edge – transformation? It is at these moments our awareness of grace heightens, making its presence known to us and guiding us in our uncertainty.

Sister Carmen Hernandez Sister Rita Marant Mary Impeche Sr. Judith Cannon



Our MISSION

We, the Sisters of the Presentation, are called to evangelize, offering hope and love to our broken world by incarnating the hospitality of God, confronting injustice and working for peace.

Our DIRECTION

We, the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Dubuque, Iowa, Associates and Companions in Mission, are called to live our charism of radical hospitality in response to the cry of women and children made poor, our wounded Earth and all creation.

Our COMMITMENTS

We invest time, energy and resources to a process of inner work, opening ourselves to personal and communal transformation.

We listen and respond to the cry of women and children and advocate for racial equity and immigration reform.

We foster connections with people and land to nurture healing of our wounded Earth.



The newly-elected congregational leadership team led by Sister Carmen Hernandez followed by Sisters Rita Menart, Joetta Venneman and Mary Lou Specha exit Sacred Heart Chapel after the transfer of leadership ceremony on April 15.

Transfer of Congregational Leadership **Crossing Thresholds**

by BETH KRESS, PBVM

"To grow into the person that your deepest longing desires is a great blessing. If you can find a creative harmony between your soul and your life, you will have found something infinitely precious. ... if you can awaken the eternal beauty and light of your soul, you will bring light wherever you go. The gift of life is given to us for ourselves and also to bring peace, courage and compassion to others." *John O'Donohue*

After returning home from a privileged life in France, Honora "Nano" Nagle (1718–1784) saw beggars huddled at the doors of St. Finbarr's Church in Cork, Ireland. Although she had questioned her sister Ann's selling of the family silk to help those who were impoverished, Nano couldn't forget the haunting image at the church doors. She saw the light that burned in Ann's heart and awakened to the dire poverty of Ireland's children. Thus began the process of Nano's transition and transformation when she would awaken to the eternal beauty and light of God burning in

her soul. She dedicated her life and wealth to bring the gift of that light to educate and minister to those made poor.

Nano's journey of transition and transformation is integral to each person who commits to live her charism in order to carry out Jesus' mission. Whether it be encountering others, advocating with and for others or being present to others in prayer and Eucharist, members of the Presentation community embrace Nano's journey in their time and place.

To carry on Christ's mission in the spirit of Nano, every five years the Sisters of the Presentation call forth leaders from the community, relying on the Spirit who gifts wisdom. It is the role of leadership to facilitate the membership in responding to Jesus' commandment and to carry out his works. With Nano as their model, Presentation Sisters, associates and partners promise to journey and serve with faithfulness, mindfulness and radical hospitality.



Left to right: Blessings are offered to the outgoing leadership team. Sister Lois Lehmann thanks Sister Joy Peterson for her commitment to leadership. Lugene Berning, administrative assistant, expresses her gratitude to Sister Marilyn Breen for her leadership these last five years.

Gratitude for the past five years, commitment to the next five years

The weekend of April 14 and 15 rang with much gratitude and celebration. On Friday, April 14, the Presentation community expressed their deep gratitude to the outgoing leadership team, Sisters Carmen Hernandez, Rita Menart, Joy Peterson and Marilyn Breen for their generous service over the last five years. Sisters, associates and employees offered their sentiments on what a true honor it has been to live and work among such courageous women who are committed to continuing Nano's work of hospitality and love.

"You shepherded us through a once-in-a hundred-year pandemic. You modeled attentive listening and bold dreaming," was the prayer led by Sister Elena Hoye with those gathered on April 14 in Sacred Heart Chapel. "You helped us to celebrate our shared joys and to carry our shared grief. You invited us to share our hopes and dreams, you provided listening and support of those dreams. You have given us the power of your grace, strength, love and leadership in a world that does not always cultivate those things. You are examples of what it means to lead with compassion, integrity, vision and a servant's heart."

Grateful for their dedication to the ministry of leadership, the community blessed Sisters Carmen, Rita, Joy and Marilyn that God will light their way on their next adventure.

Sisters Joy and Marilyn reflect on how leadership ministry from 2018-2023 energized them and enriched their lives. Sister Joy is grateful that the Presentation community brought deeper awareness and education about the 2018 Chapter direction through the Promise Groups. "I have been enriched during these years by the faithfulness of sisters and associates to be part of bringing alive the commitments we made to live radical hospitality, to act with nonviolence, to foster dialogue and communication in decision-making

You shepherded us through a once-in-a hundred-year pandemic ... You helped us to celebrate our shared joys and to carry our shared grief ... You are examples of what it means to lead with compassion, integrity, vision and a servant's heart.

Sister Elena Hoye

and to steward our resources with justice. Our future looks bright as we deepen our efforts toward transformation."

Sister Marilyn sees blessing in social distancing for three years. "It seems strange to say that the COVID-19 experience enriched this time of leadership, however, I believe we were challenged to protect the most vulnerable among us, to learn to communicate using Zoom and to seek creative ways to live our direction statement. Sisters, employees and associates supported one another as we faced the changes needed each day. We continued to focus on our mission to confront racism and to care for creation. I know that our faith has sustained us and guided us as we navigated uncharted paths."

Transition from leadership for Sister Joy starts with serving as the treasurer for the Sisters of the Presentation. Sister Marilyn, who has commuted between Chicago and Dubuque for the last five years, will spend more time in Chicago. There, with her local community and associates, she continues to give focus to local justice issues including the monthly homicide vigil highlighting the violence in the city, working with immigrants who seek asylum and working for peace.



Left to right: Sister Marilou Irons offers opening remarks to those gathered for the transfer of leadership prayer service. All present blesses Sister Rita Menart for her generous response and dedication to the call to leadership. Sister Dolores Moes gives a heartfelt congratulations to Sister Mary Lou Specha.

Through change comes a threshold for possibilities

Gathered in Sacred Heart Chapel on April 15, sisters, associates, employees and family sang “Ready for Change” and welcomed the incoming leadership team, Sisters Carmen Hernandez, Rita Menart, Mary Lou Specha and Joetta Venneman.

In her opening remarks, Sister Marilou Irons proclaims, “Today we make way for a new leadership team who again commit to follow in the footsteps of Nano Nagle and Mother Vincent Hennessy and all those who have taken the journey before us. We are at a threshold opening to new possibilities. We are thankful for all that has brought us to this place. We take these next steps in faith, knowing that God’s promise to be with us always continues to give us hope and the courage to dare this journey into an unknown future. This is a holy journey that we are taking and we are taking it together. We are ready for change.”

Sisters Carmen, Rita, Mary Lou and Joetta accepted the role of leadership to guide the community in living out the 2023 Chapter direction statement and commitments with a focus “to live the charism of radical hospitality in response to the cry of women and children made poor, our wounded Earth and all creation.” To live the direction statement requires listening and transformation to “do inner work.”

Transition for a new leadership team also calls for transition and transformation individually and communally by the larger Dubuque Presentation community. Each receives the call to do their part, each offering voice and vision, each bringing courage and choice in the spirit of love. The song echoes forward: “I am willing to change ... willing to see ... ready to trust in you and me, I am ready to change ... keep on changing, each doing our part.”

Grateful for Sisters Carmen, Rita, Mary Lou and Joetta’s willingness and readiness to serve as leaders for the next five years, those gathered on April 15 made a commitment to support these four sisters and blessed each one as a member of the new leadership team.

Sister Carmen Hernandez

All present blessed Sister Carmen for her compassion and wisdom, asking God to strengthen her to embrace the call to transformation in leading the community as it crosses a new threshold in the Presentation story.

Sister Carmen continues for five more years of leadership. Previously, she initiated and served as executive director of La Luz Hispana in Hampton, Iowa, after having served as Hispanic outreach coordinator of Mercy Medical Center North Iowa in Mason City. She served as a team member of Caminando Juntos with the Aberdeen Presentation Sisters in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. While vocation director for the Dubuque Presentation congregation, she visited Bolivia several times and studied Spanish in Cochabamba. Sister Carmen was an elementary school counselor for the Archdiocese of Dubuque while serving as vocation director for the congregation and as chaplain for the Dubuque Police Department. Prior to that, Sister Carmen was an elementary teacher in Osage, Key West and Dubuque, Iowa.

“As I move forward into the next five years of leadership, continuing the work we have begun with our consultant for strategic planning of property and resources and implementing our 2023 Chapter direction and decisions excites me,” comments Sister Carmen. “This will affect how we continue to carry out Jesus’s mission in the spirit of our foundress Nano Nagle. It will affect the expression of Presentation spirituality through our prayer and contemplation. It will affect our relationships with others as we continue to deepen radical hospitality so that, like

Jesus and Nano, we are open to encounter Jesus in others – greeting, accepting, welcoming and journeying with others, especially those at the margins of life. I believe that this is a call to transformation individually and communally. This will be a new leap of faith not unlike that of Nano and Mother Vincent, a leap filled with risk and requiring trust to build partnerships for the sake of the mission.”

Sister Rita Menart

All present blessed Sister Rita for her generous response and dedication to service and mission – that God will guide her in discerning new paths to help lead the community in the thresholds of change.

Sister Rita continues in leadership for five more years. Previously, she served as a mental health counselor with Dubuque Catholic Charities for four years full-time and two years part-time. She was the part-time director of Hispanic ministry for the Archdiocese of Dubuque for two years and continued as the coordinator of Spanish Speakers’ Retreats for several more years. From 2009 to 2011, Sister Rita was a missionary in Bolivia. Prior to that, she worked as an in-home family counselor for Mid-Iowa Family Therapy Clinic in Ames, Iowa. Sister Rita served as a missionary in Chupol, Guatemala, from 1990 to 2000. Other positions include high school science teacher in Storm Lake, Iowa, and junior high teacher at St. Columbkille in Dubuque, Iowa.

“I have much hope as I begin a new term of leadership, because of the spirit of our sisters, associates and employees,” states Sister Rita. “We have walked respectfully and joyfully with each other through the difficulties and blessings of the past five years. I believe that spirit is an inspiring witness to the world and energizes us to be Christ’s love.”

Sister Mary Lou Specha

All present blessed Sister Mary Lou – that her passionate spirit will continue to spark love toward advocacy for women and children who struggle in poverty, asking God to use her gifts of hospitality and creativity for imaginative and effective responses of new leadership structures.

Now serving in congregational leadership, Sister Mary Lou is also a leader in New Orleans, Louisiana, in the nonprofit and civic community as executive director of Hotel Hope, an organization serving the most vulnerable in the community – women with children. Whatever the societal or economic barriers – homelessness, abuse, incarceration, poverty, behavioral health issues, lack of education or jobs – Hotel Hope’s programs and services are designed to promote and provide equal opportunities and a path to self-sufficiency in the lives of all women and their families. Her first ministry in New Orleans was as executive director of Café Reconcile, a nonprofit organization committed to interrupting the cycle of generational poverty and violence. Before entering the Dubuque Presentation Sisters, she was a teacher in South

Chicago, where she witnessed the Presentation charism. After entering, she served as a youth coordinator, earned a Master of Divinity and served as a director of Catholic campus ministry at the University of Northern Iowa.

“I am excited to continue the mission of Nano as we focus our passions and energy on our Chapter direction and commitments,” states Sister Mary Lou. “The challenge before us always is to continue Nano’s work in our own time and place. Her desire to walk with the poor, especially with women and children, calls us to explore and act in innovative ways. Nano never hesitated to address the needs of the time. We are called to do the same and to dedicate ourselves to the mission in her spirit.”

Sister Joetta Venneman

All who gathered blessed Sister Joetta for her listening heart, asking God to strengthen her gentle, steady spirit of speaking on behalf of those struggling in unjust realities as she leads in the commitments to Earth and people.

Sister Joetta serves in congregational leadership, on the community’s initial membership team and with the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky, as director of the Western Province Office of Social and Environmental Justice. After entering the Dubuque Presentation Sisters, Sister Joetta taught in Catholic schools in Iowa and South Chicago, striving to become more inclusive and to share and integrate Catholic social teaching in her classroom. With her graduate degree in cultural anthropology and social transformation, Sister Joetta applies her education to examine and analyze personal, organizational, governmental, religious and cultural systems. She has engaged with coalitions on several levels to enact change. She works with Catholic sisters and their associates to express solidarity with those made poor using education, legislative advocacy, vigils, marches, protests and prayer as catalysts and means.

Sister Joetta is committed to the call to Nano’s spirit and mission through the ministry of leadership. “Nano’s life invites us into a way of being such that our Divine Spirit ministers through us. Her radical hospitality demands openness without preconceived notions and judgments with each encounter such that change of heart personally, communally and culturally can lead to action for the common good and the future of religious life.”

Leadership and membership have heard a common call to transformation. The Dubuque Presentation community stands at a juncture of significant change. Guided by words from our Chapter prayer, we pray that the spirit of wisdom guides us as we embrace this journey in faith; impels us with courage to dare to step into the unknown while discovering the wonders of the journey and; graces us with openness to explore mission-driven possibilities that ground us in trusting God and each other.



At the conclusion of evening prayer at the InterCongregational Collaborative Novitiate in Chicago, the novices and the co-directors gather to simultaneously recite the Lord's Prayer, each in her native language. (Photo credit: Julie A. Ferraro/Global Sisters Report)

New Approaches to a Timeless Journey

by ELENA HOYE, PBVM

With spring comes “new” – green grass, sweaters instead of coats, outings, Easter. The natural world revives and reinvigorates. People begin to experience new beginnings and new life.

As women discern whether they may have a calling to religious life, they, too, experience “new.” Every religious community designs a number of steps on the path to making a lifetime commitment. An initial membership period is of paramount importance in the life of a discerning woman and the community that she is entering. This process of discernment enables a woman to integrate and deepen her religious identity. The Sisters of the Presentation are developing new approaches and a new philosophy for their vocation and initial membership ministries.

Vocation Discernment

Discernment is the process of discovering how God invites us to live out the gift of who we are in the world. Vocation ministry includes both accompanying women who are discerning their vocation and promoting religious life

to our Presentation community. The world and religious life are experiencing an era of transformation. Having a presence on social media and an updated website helps new audiences learn about who we are as Presentation Sisters. A few years ago, the community established an intentional plan to create and share vocation-related content regularly on social media. Each week readers discover something different: a sister quote, mission highlight, discernment song, vocation prayer, information request form, upcoming vocation events and more. We invite you to follow us @dbqpbvms every Tuesday.

Sometimes obstacles become blessed opportunities. The pandemic prevented in-person gatherings for a time, and this made online connections more important. In 2020, vocation ministers from five Presentation communities in North America created an Advent online retreat. Approximately a dozen women from across the country participated in this retreat. The deep prayer, meaningful sharing and a sense of community across other religious communities led them to request an online Lenten retreat.

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FOR VOCATION NEWS**



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Changes continue. Instead of retreats, an hour of online prayer and faith sharing is offered several times throughout the year for single women ages 18-45. A reenvisioning of religious life is happening as new members enter without other peers and are much younger than the majority of the current members.

Women from 10 states, as well as Canada and Philippines, have participated in these faith sharings. Some women are discerning religious life and others are seeking prayer and community. "Come and See" events invite sisters to share their lives as Presentation Sisters and answer questions from women interested in religious life.

How can you be a part of our vocation ministry? Those on social media can "like," "share" and "comment" on the vocation posts in order to help spread the good news about religious life today! You can request brochures for your church or have our vocation events placed in your parish bulletin. These events are on the Sisters of the Presentation's website at www.dbqpbvms.org. Most important of all, please extend personal invitations to women who might feel called to explore Catholic religious life and encourage them to reach out to learn more about life as a Presentation Sister.

Finding new ways to connect with women who are curious about religious life or seriously discerning a life calling is an ongoing endeavor. The good news is that God continues to call women and men to religious life, and they are responding to serve God's people!

Initial Membership

As fewer women choose to enter religious life and with the current population aging, initial membership programs are re-creating ways to journey with individuals. Programs are being individualized, and collaboration with other religious communities is increasing. Gone are the days of "one size fits all." Alive are the days of honoring one's uniqueness within the context of religious life.

Reflecting the reality of our multicultural world, newer members (novices) are often more racially and ethnically diverse than in the past. One needs only to look to the Inter-Community Novitiate Program that meets weekly in Chicago to appreciate this reality. There are 47 novices from 21 countries including a Dubuque Presentation novice, Sister Rachel Dunlap. With this diversity, their theologies will

be a gift to religious life because they will bring a broader picture of the world. Thus, the increasing awareness and need for newer members to be steeped in intercultural and intergenerational living skills is essential. They will need to develop skills to live and interact with people of other cultures, to pray with diverse spiritualities and to minister together. What the novices bring back when they return to their respective congregations will be enriching and inviting for all members in developing their intercultural living skills.

Religious congregations are reimagining their initial membership programs in order to honor each woman and her experience, her education and her wisdom. The lived experience of a woman discerning religious life is a source of hope and a gift to all of us.

"I truly believe God is continuing to call people to religious life and that we will be a 'searing presence,' prophetic in the ways that our Church and world need us to be today," shares Sister Rachel. "I pray that we may all continue to trust in the work of the Spirit, especially on the days when we cannot see or imagine what is on the horizon."

Temporary Vows and Final Vows

At the conclusion of the novitiate, a sister professes vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. Preparation continues for a specific number of years as the sister strengthens her life of union with God and her sense of belonging to the community. After ongoing discernment, a sister may profess final vows.

As our journey into the "new" continues, we celebrate God's promise to be with us always.

Vocation & Initial Membership Team



SISTER JESSI BECK

Vocation Director
Teacher at Our Lady of Tepeyac
School, Chicago, Illinois



SISTER JOETTA VENNEMAN

Co-Director of Initial Membership
Congregational Leadership Team
Director of Social & Environmental
Justice, Louisville, Kentucky



SISTER RITA CAMERON

Co-Director of Initial Membership
Counselor at Catholic Charities,
Dubuque, Iowa



Volunteer tutor, Linda Wolf teaches English to a young woman.

Collaboration and Bridge-Building

Teaching English to Immigrants

by PAULA SCHWENDINGER, PBVM

Testimonials from Students

"Dear teachers - there are no words to express my gratitude for your noble work. Many thanks for the time that you give me, teaching me so many things and, above all, for not giving up on me and gifting me with your patience and time."

"It is important that one day I can share and help someone in need, just as my volunteer teachers give themselves and dedicate part of their time to teach me English. I am very grateful to God for placing such great people in my life."

It all began with an inspiring question from Presentation Associate Dianne McDermott to Sister Paula Schwendinger at the end of the April 2022 community gathering. "Have you ever thought about opening a satellite Presentation Lantern Center in the Dyersville area? I know several retired teachers from Western Dubuque who would be interested in helping." Sister Paula prayed about it, but knew she was not called to be confined to a building.

In 2015, when Sister Paula first began Hispanic Outreach Ministry of Evangelization (HOME), the trunk of her car became her office. If someone needed a Bible, a rosary, any other type of article in Spanish, Sister Paula had it readily accessible in her trunk. There was a need for Hispanics to learn English. Past efforts had failed due to difficulty in scheduling and transportation. In response to Dianne's suggestions, Sister Paula decided to conduct a survey to determine interest in one-on-one learning.



Left to right: Associate Dianne McDermott and Sister Paula Schwendinger address volunteer tutors before beginning English tutoring program. Tutor Ellen Smith works with her non-English speaking student learn the basics of English. Volunteer Mark Breitbach explains some difficult English grammar to his student.

Initially, only three Hispanics expressed interest. This did not dissuade her efforts. Sister Paula began asking the Hispanics when she saw them after Mass, at the grocery store, at fiestas, and soon the word spread. Soon, there were 14 Hispanics interested in one-on-one learning. Sister Paula started teaching English to a young woman in Monticello in March 2023. She found educational resources, and learned what seemed to work. Enlisting the help of Megan Ruiz, executive director of the Lantern Center, and her staff, a pre-test was administered to each of the Hispanics to determine their level of knowledge of English, and textbooks were ordered.

Meanwhile, Dianne was organizing volunteers, some retired teachers, others with no experience of teaching but with a compassionate heart for the needs of the Hispanics. Lantern Center staff came to Epworth one evening and offered a workshop to help the volunteer tutors and orient them on a phone app that would also be useful. Students and volunteers were then paired, with every effort made to accommodate the needs of the Hispanics. Sister Paula attended the first meeting of each pairing in order to introduce the student and volunteer. She gave a blessing in both English and Spanish as they embarked on this journey of trust and new relationships.

In addition to tutoring, Dianne continues to check in with volunteers via e-mail, to find substitute tutors when needed and to share helpful teaching tips. Sister Paula touches base with the Hispanics at Mass or in other settings to make sure everything is running smoothly.

To date, there are 15 pairings of Hispanics with tutors who meet once a week in church basements, parish offices, libraries or the students' homes. Students are from Earlville, Petersburg, Dyersville, Cascade, Monticello, Farley, Epworth

Testimonials from Volunteer Tutors

"Tutoring has been a rewarding experience as I see my student become more familiar with the English language and grow in confidence of his understanding. I encourage individuals to get involved and help others become successful."

"I am in awe of my student's strength, desire to be in this country and thankfulness after each class."

"My wife and I have been blessed with forming a new friendship that continues to grow. We often wonder who is learning more from the other!"

and Peosta, Iowa. Volunteers are from those areas as well, and most are not fluent in Spanish. However, with sign language and phone apps they are able to communicate well with their students. There is currently a waiting list of students who would like to begin learning once volunteers can be secured.

This program is more than academic. There are bridges being built, friendships being formed and lessons being learned that are truly gifts of the Spirit. Collaboration with the Presentation Lantern Center, which has helped immigrants for over 20 years, as well as the team-work created with Dianne and Sister Paula, has enabled this program to flourish. It is the daily work of the dedicated tutors and the desire of the immigrants to learn that truly is the heart of this program and brings Nano Nagle's charism of hospitality to fruition. Poet Maya Angelou stated, "When we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed."

If you are interested in being a volunteer, please email info@dbqpbvms.org.



Wahlert Catholic senior Megan Hefel is presented with the Mother Vincent Hennessy Scholarship by the scholarship committee. Left to right: Associate Deb McClimon, Sister Rita Menart, Megan Hefel, Sister Cecelia Marie Auterman and Sister Joellen Price. (Not pictured: Associate Deborah Barrett)

Exceptional Individuals Honored Scholarships & Awards

by JANE BUSE-MILLER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

In 2010, 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 supported since its inception in 1959.



Megan Hefel

This year's recipient, **Megan Hefel**, is honored for her dedicated service to others, her school, parish and the Dubuque community. Megan volunteers and works at Hills and Dales, a nonprofit that helps those who

are developmentally disabled. She works as a personal assistant supporting residents with everyday tasks and personal care such as brushing teeth, eating, doing laundry and even making decisions. She is also a spiritual enrichment volunteer at Hills and Dales, teaching residents religious education, singing, reading Bible stories and doing activities with them. In addition, Megan volunteers at the Dream Center where she tutors disadvantaged students in the downtown Dubuque area. She tutors K-6th graders with math and reading skills twice a week for up to two hours. In addition, she helps with Mazzuchelli Middle School's musicals and volunteers at Holy Spirit Parish, singing, altar serving, and setting up and working events.

"Megan is deeply committed to making society a better place for all human beings and lives her Catholic values daily. She truly is the hands and feet of Jesus in the world," states Heather Trees, English teacher at Wahlert Catholic High School. "Like many in this generation, she does not just talk the talk. She walks the walk, making a difference in the lives of those who need a hand up. She does it with a huge heart and smile. It is not a burden to her."

To me, service isn't just a pastime. Service has taught me more than anything else who God is and how God is present in the world and in myself.

Megan Hefel, Scholarship Recipient

"To me, service isn't just a pastime. Service has taught me more than anything else who God is and how God is present in the world and in myself. Every person I have worked with or alongside gives me more motivation to pursue a life of service," states Megan.

In the fall, Megan plans to attend Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa, pursuing a degree in social work.

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, aids graduates in the continuation of their education.

This year's scholarship is awarded to **Theodore Ahern**, a student at Columbus Catholic High School in Waterloo, Iowa. His contributions to his community, parish and school serve as an outstanding example for people of all ages.



Theodore Ahern

An active member of St. Patrick Parish in Cedar Falls, Iowa, Theodore lectures, serves and volunteers for parish events.

In his school community, he demonstrates leadership and dedication through his involvement in the Senior Leadership Team which leads other youth in personal, communal and spiritual advancement.

Theodore strives to act as Christ would, to lead by example and to recognize where he could be helpful to others. "Of all the volunteering experiences I have had, the one that stuck out to me the most was working at the Northeast Iowa Food Bank during the pandemic when so many were struggling," shares Theodore. "Giving boxes of food to people and seeing the faces of those we were helping was so rewarding. Simply feeling that I am making a difference, even if it was just to one person, made it all worthwhile."

"Theodore's willingness to give back to his community and help those in need is a testament to his character and his dedication," shares Katie Friedly, Columbus English teacher.

In the fall, Theodore will be attending the University of Iowa, and will major in Exercise Science on a Pre-Physical therapy track. He has chosen this path so he can continue in a life-long field of helping others. He also looks forward to getting involved at the Iowa City Children's Hospital and Newman Center.

Presentation Mission Service Award

The Presentation Mission Service Award is offered to individuals committed to serving the Presentation mission and who may otherwise be unable to afford a mission immersion experience, locally, nationally or abroad.



Grace Flemming

This year's recipient is **Grace Flemming**, a pre-med student at Loyola University of Chicago in Illinois, who works as a scribe in an emergency department.

Last summer, Grace traveled to San Pedro Laguna, Guatemala, as part of a medical outreach team of Loyola students and faculty. There, they provided free primary healthcare clinics, evaluations with physicians and prescription medication to citizens who didn't have access to such care. Grace describes this trip as "life changing" and it solidified her choice to pursue medical school as an avenue for caring for vulnerable people such as those she met in Guatemala.

Grace feels she is called to provide not only medical care but respectful connections with persons she encounters. "I am personally very intrigued by medicine and it is my life's goal to provide healthcare to underserved communities that do not have fair access," she expresses. "I believe the quality of life is much improved with basic healthcare and feel as if everyone deserves the right to maintain a healthy life in order to give back to society and have full freedom over their potential."

This summer, Grace will use these award funds to return to Guatemala where she will again offer care to persons made impoverished by unjust corrupt systems. She hopes to deepen relationships with the people and deepen her own drive to become a doctor.

Associate Donna Ewy shares, "I have known Grace her entire life. This passionate young woman has always been driven to excellence whether it be academics, swim competitions, or her passion to make the world a more just and equitable place where everyone has the opportunity for safe and healthy lives."

Presentation Associate Partnership Scholarships

Due to the generous support of the Dubuque Presentation associates, three \$1,000 scholarships were given to individuals associated with three ministries supported by the Sisters of the Presentation: Hispanic Outreach Ministry of Evangelization (HOME) in Dyersville, Iowa; La Luz Centro Cultural in Hampton, Iowa; and the Presentation Lantern Center in Dubuque, Iowa. The associate scholarships are intended to assist with education, job training, equipment, fees and expenses associated with the immigration process. Congratulations to the 2023 Presentation Associate Partnership Scholarship recipients!

Stephanie Cortes – HOME

Stephanie shares, "The money received from this scholarship will be used to help pay for my college tuition and expenses. In the future, I would like to become a pediatric nurse practitioner. My two greatest passions have been taking care of children and those in need. I am the oldest of four children and all three of my siblings look up to me. I want to be the best role model I can be for them."



Stephanie Cortes

Stephanie continues, "I would also be able to help the Hispanic community. Often times in hospitals there aren't Spanish-speaking or Hispanic doctors. My parents aren't fluent in English. I am able to translate for them, but there are some parents who don't have the same advantage. I would be able to help non-English speaking parents who are in need of care for their children. I have seen firsthand the difficulties that parents endure. I want to better myself and then be able to help others. With the grace of God, anything is possible."

Sister Paula Schwendinger affirms in her letter of support, "I know that Stephanie has a bright future. She realizes the hardships that her parents have endured and is focused on pursuing her dreams and making her parents proud of her accomplishments. Her unbounded energy and outgoing personality will carry her far in her future endeavors."

I want to better myself and then be able to help others. With the grace of God, anything is possible.

Stephanie Cortes, Scholarship Recipient

My hopes and dreams for the future would be to give back everything my parents did for me.

Luis Mota, Scholarship Recipient

Afghan Refugee – Presentation Lantern Center

Scholarship recipient from Afghanistan states, "The Presentation Lantern Center has been very important for me because I arrived in the United States with no knowledge of English. I have been meeting with Lantern Center tutors two days a week for one year now and I am learning to read and write in English, which is very important to me. I am also working on conversational skills. Being at the Lantern Center helps me learn about the United States and American customs. I applied for this scholarship because I feel it is important for me to learn to drive so I can occasionally pick up the children from school, take them to doctor appointments and do some grocery shopping while my husband is at work. Also, I have the personal goal to have the independence that driving would give me so I can someday get a job to help my family. I need to take driving lessons and also pay a translator when I take the driver's test. This scholarship money will enable me to do that."

Luis Mota – La Luz Centro Cultural

Luis states, "My hopes and dreams for the future would be to give back everything my parents did for me. They have done a lot to just bring me here to the United States from Mexico so I can have a better education. I just hope I can get a degree and have a good paying job so I can give back to them and help them with their needs. No one can ever take away my education and I am focused on that as I move forward with my goals."



Luis Mota

Valeria Gonzalez, immigration assistant at La Luz Centro Cultural, expresses in her letter of support, "Luis is a remarkable individual, hard-working and self-motivated. He has had big aspirations from a young age and has demonstrated great self-reliance and strong communication skills. I am most impressed by his strong work ethic and dedication to his education. Luis is a natural leader, a man of integrity and is extremely dedicated to his family and friends. He is a role model for his younger siblings and will make great use of the scholarship funds."



Left to right: The Presentation community welcomes Jayne Anglin, Carrie Breitbach and Shirley Lanners into the Presentation Associate Partnership.

Welcoming New Associates

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

On May 1, 2023, three new associates were welcomed into the Presentation Associate Partnership in Sacred Heart Chapel at Mount Loretto. Jayne Anglin, Carrie Breitbach and Shirley Lanners have gathered with Associate Partnership co-directors Radie Roberts and Colleen Venter for the past 10 months to pray, study and reflect on Nano Nagle, Presentation heritage, charism and mission. Each month the group welcomed a different sister and associate to introduce them to a variety of Presentation people.

Jayne is a retired dental assistant, part-time instructor at Northeast Iowa Community College in Peosta, Iowa, and volunteers for several organizations. She and her husband Jeff have two children and five grandsons. Jayne shares, "In the discernment process, I experienced such a welcoming sense of connection and realized a much deeper understanding of faith-filled prayerfulness. I look forward to supporting each other while reaching out in the spirit of radical hospitality that the Presentation Sisters live and honor."

Carrie is retired from the Clarke University mail center. She is a master gardener and currently runs a landscaping business with her husband Jeff, when he is not working as a firefighter/paramedic for Dubuque. Carrie and Jeff have been married for 40 years and, together have four

children and six grandchildren. They are members of St. Columbille Parish. Carrie has several family connections to the Presentation Sisters: Sisters Marian Sweeney and Damian O'Brien, and associate Carol Kane. Carrie was also a longtime member of the Theresian Tapestry group led by Sister Francine Quillin. Carrie states, "Over 33 years, I have been a member of the Theresians who met at Mount Loretto. I saw the openness and felt the welcome of the Presentation community. They invited me so lovingly that I felt I belonged."

Shirley and her husband Dan have four children and nine grandchildren. A lifelong Dubuquer, she belongs to St. Anthony Parish. Shirley is retired from McGraw-Hill Publishing and enjoys volunteering at Carnegie Stout Public Library, spending free time with elderly friends, serving them with love and care, doing errands for them and fulfilling a variety of needs. Shirley reflects, "Create in me a clean heart, O God ..." to carry the light of Nano, and renew in me a willing spirit to seek justice for those in need. I am drawn to the Presentation Sisters because they are prayerful and fervent in responding to the needs of others in our world."

We welcome and congratulate Jayne, Carrie and Shirley. We are certain our lives will be enriched by the many gifts and excitement they bring to the Associate Partnership!



Left to right: Associates Radie Roberts, Darla Budden, Laurie Noel, Jo Gullickson, Colleen Venter, Sister Marilyn Breen, Sister Joan Brincks, facilitator Keith Donovan, and Sister Jessi Beck are appropriately clothed and ready to serve a meal at the St. Thomas of Canterbury Soup Kitchen in Chicago.

Service & Awareness Opportunity

Seeing with New Eyes

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

During April 21-23, six associates and three sisters served in inner-city Chicago. Facilitation of the service and awareness opportunity was led by Keith Donovan of the Br. David Darst Center, which provides transformative social justice retreats and immersion experiences grounded in the LaSallian tradition and Catholic Social Teaching.

The weekend began with prayer and a brief introduction to the Darst Center staff. The group traveled to St. Thomas of Canterbury Soup Kitchen and partnered with Loyola University Chicago students to serve a meal. The soup kitchen was founded in 1978 by Catholic Workers who had been with Dorothy Day in New York. It continues to serve those in need of a hot meal every Tuesday and Friday evening from 5:30-6:30 p.m., serving between 120 to 170 people at each meal.

On Saturday, the group visited Frieda's Place, a community-based organization that exists to meet the needs of individuals in Chicago experiencing poverty and hunger. This organization provides food, clothing and other available resources needed to improve the quality of life. At Frieda's, service members organized clothing donations and food that would be distributed to the community.

On Saturday afternoon they traveled to Taller de Jose, an agency that offers companionship and personal attention to mostly non-English speaking people who have difficulty finding their way in a complex social services system. Each staff member is trained to listen to clients in order to assess the services they need and then serve as a bridge to connect them to the health, legal and social services needed to achieve their goals.

The team also toured St. James Food Pantry, where Presentation Sisters Barbara Rastatter and Janet Stelken previously ministered.

Team members included Sisters Joan Brincks, Marilyn Breen and Jessi Beck, and Associates Darla Budden, Jo Gullickson, Laurie Noel, Radie Roberts and Colleen Venter. While in Chicago, the team was joined by Chicago Associates Anne Marie Spehar and Sister Virgie Luchsinger, SFCC, and Sisters Rachel Dunlap and Raeleen Sweeney.

Team member Jo Gullickson shares, "I find myself still processing all that we saw and heard over the weekend. I feel this will be with me for a long time. 'Seeing With New Eyes' describes so well how I felt after each of these events."

In Loving Memory

ASSOCIATE BETTY ALLEN

August 1, 1927 - January 10, 2023

Associate Betty A. (Bahl) Allen, 95, of Dubuque, Iowa, died peacefully at home on January 10, 2023. Betty was born August 1, 1927, in Dubuque, daughter of Joseph and "Vi" (Savary) Bahl. She married Robert J. Allen on July 31, 1948.



While raising seven children, Betty found even more ways to keep herself busy. She opened Allen's Art Supply as a way to connect with many aspiring artists. She started the Dubuque Chapter of Compassionate Friends after the loss of her son, John, at the age of 18. She taught faith formation at St. Anthony's for many years and touched the lives of many students. She shared her cooking skills with women at the Presentation Lantern Center.

Betty worked at various positions in Dubuque. Her last and favorite role was with Mental Health America. She retired after 17 years and received the Gannon Award for outstanding service to mental health.

Betty became an associate on June 18, 2009. She wrote, "I so admire Nano Nagle – her determination, her love of the poor and her faith in God. What I have found in the Presentation community is friendliness, sharing with others, and active listening."

We were so blessed with Betty's 14-year connection to the Presentation Sisters!

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.



I, for one, am through talking about these problems; I think I have done enough reading, writing and discussing of articles about how "It's time to wake up, America." I've got to do something more.

Br. David Darst



Top photo: The service group pauses after a tour of the St. James Food Pantry for a picture with Peter Wawire, director of social care. Middle photo: A quick photo op for the group outside Taller de Jose, located in the Back of the Yards on the South Side of Chicago. Bottom photo: Team members gathered around Frieda Holley, owner of Frieda's Place.

Reflections on the Journey

Sister Michaeline Healy

by MAURA MCCARTHY, PBVM

Sister Michaeline Healy is passionate about her pastoral ministry at St. Mary Parish in Caledonia, Minnesota, and considers accompanying the people of God a great joy. Early in her ministry, the ecumenical organization, Church Women United, named her their "Valiant Woman" and currently she has completed 26 years in this ministry. Sister Michaeline's great inspiration is Nano Nagle, who was known to go out into the winding lanes to find Christ.

Sister Michaeline was christened Margaret Jane and was accompanied at birth in Schaller, Iowa, by an identical twin, Mary, who lives in Oelwein, Iowa. If both are present for a public event, one is often mistaken for the other. Sister Michaeline and Mary have supported each other over the years in their major endeavors and talk to one another almost daily. Their parents, Frank and Rita Healy, raised a family of 11 children on a farm near Schaller.

Sister Michaeline's early years found her participating in family and school sports, especially softball, basketball and track. Her parents were sports fans and her mother followed the Iowa Hawkeyes and Notre Dame games on the radio when cooking for the family. Sister Michaeline graduated from Schaller Public High School in 1962, applied for college and was accepted, planning to become a physical education teacher. Plans changed course and she entered the Sisters of the Presentation in September of that year. She was nicknamed "Coach" by her Presentation classmates because of her enthusiasm for all sports.

Sister Michaeline speaks warmly of her aunt, Sister Michelle Gallagher, and how her annual home visits influenced her vocation. Sister Michelle came home each year and played basketball energetically with the children and joined in other family events. Her love of life was evident.

After completing her teacher preparation, Sister Michaeline taught for 27 years in almost all grades, obtained a master's degree in reading education and later in pastoral studies. She speaks warmly about her intercultural experiences at Loyola University in Chicago with students from many countries.

Sister Michaeline began her role as a pastoral associate at St. Joseph Parish in Salix, Iowa, and continued this ministry at St. Mary Parish in Caledonia. She loves working with parishioners who are involved with parish and school life. "We have a tremendous number of volunteers," she remarks.



Clockwise: Betty Byrnes Hammel is comforted by Sister Michaeline Healy's presence, care and compassion. Sister Michaeline Healy (right) with her twin sister, Mary.



"It is exciting to watch them grow in leadership positions, encouraging one another and their children to be involved."

Maria Keefe, St. Mary's office manager, speaks of Sister Michaeline as the "heart of the Caledonia community" after 26 years of loving accompaniment. "She is part of everyone's family and they adore her," says Maria. "She is present for baptisms, weddings, funerals and sporting events."

Bernie McCormick, from the local funeral home, speaks of Sister Michaeline's "willingness to accompany grief-stricken families anytime of the day or night. She gathers with them to share their sorrow and hope in solidarity and friendship."

Parishoner Dorothy Hendel speaks of Michaeline as, "a beloved and trusted servant-leader." She speaks of her as "one who listens intently, values our feelings, no matter how troubled, and uplifts our souls with faith, hope and love."

Sister Michaeline recalls, "I see living out our Presentation charism and ministry as one. Nano's life was one of service whether she was teaching children or caring for the sick and the lonely." Sister Michaeline's advice to young people is: "Get involved. Stay focused. Bring your gifts to the world."

Mount Loretto AND BEYOND

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



An Evening with Hildegard of Bingen

On March 26, Presentation Sisters and associates performed a one-act play titled "An Evening with Hildegard of Bingen." This play brought a medieval mystic to life and offered insights into a woman whose visions and amazing giftedness invite all to bring natural and spiritual life together. St. Hildegard of Bingen was a composer, herbalist, scientist, a student of cosmology, healer and prophet. *Left to right: Cast members included Sister Beth Driscoll, Associate Becky Searcy, Sisters Rita Cameron, Joellen Price, Carrie Link, Elena Hoyer and Rita Menart.*



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June 4, 2023

Sacred Heart Online Women's Prayer
RSVP: bit.ly/pbvmpayer2023
This online prayer experience is open to single women ages 18-45 seeking prayer and faith sharing.

PLEASE PRAY WITH US.

July 19, 2023

80th Jubilee Celebration
Sister Damian O'Brien

60th Jubilee Celebration
Sister Joy Peterson
Sister Julia Wingert
Sister Janet Stelken

July 20-23, 2023

Community Gathering

21st of each month

Pray for Vocations

25th of each month

Pray for Benefactors



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In Loving Memory Sister James Marie Gross



We remember our beloved Sister James Marie Gross who passed away on January 5, 2023. She was a woman who valued prayer and community service. "The genuine hospitality, simple lifestyle and commitment to serve the needs of the church are what attracted me to this community," stated Sister James Marie on her 60th jubilee. "Memories of the many people whose lives we touched and hopefully enriched, bring much joy and gratitude for the many ways community supported our efforts to bring the good news to especially the poor and disadvantaged."

**Read more about Sister James Marie's life
at dbqpbvms.org/news-events/obituaries.**

Celebrating 103 Years Sister Damian O'Brien



On April 2, Sister Damian O'Brien celebrated her 103rd birthday with an open house. Many friends and family members came from near and far to wish Sister Damian a very happy birthday. "I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who helped make my 103rd birthday party a truly unforgettable celebration," expresses Sister Damian. "To those who were able to attend, thank you for making my birthday celebration such a joyous occasion. Your presence made the event truly special and memorable for me, and I will cherish these memories. Thank you all for your love, thoughtfulness and kindness. It is moments like these that make life truly meaningful and I am so blessed to have you all in my life."