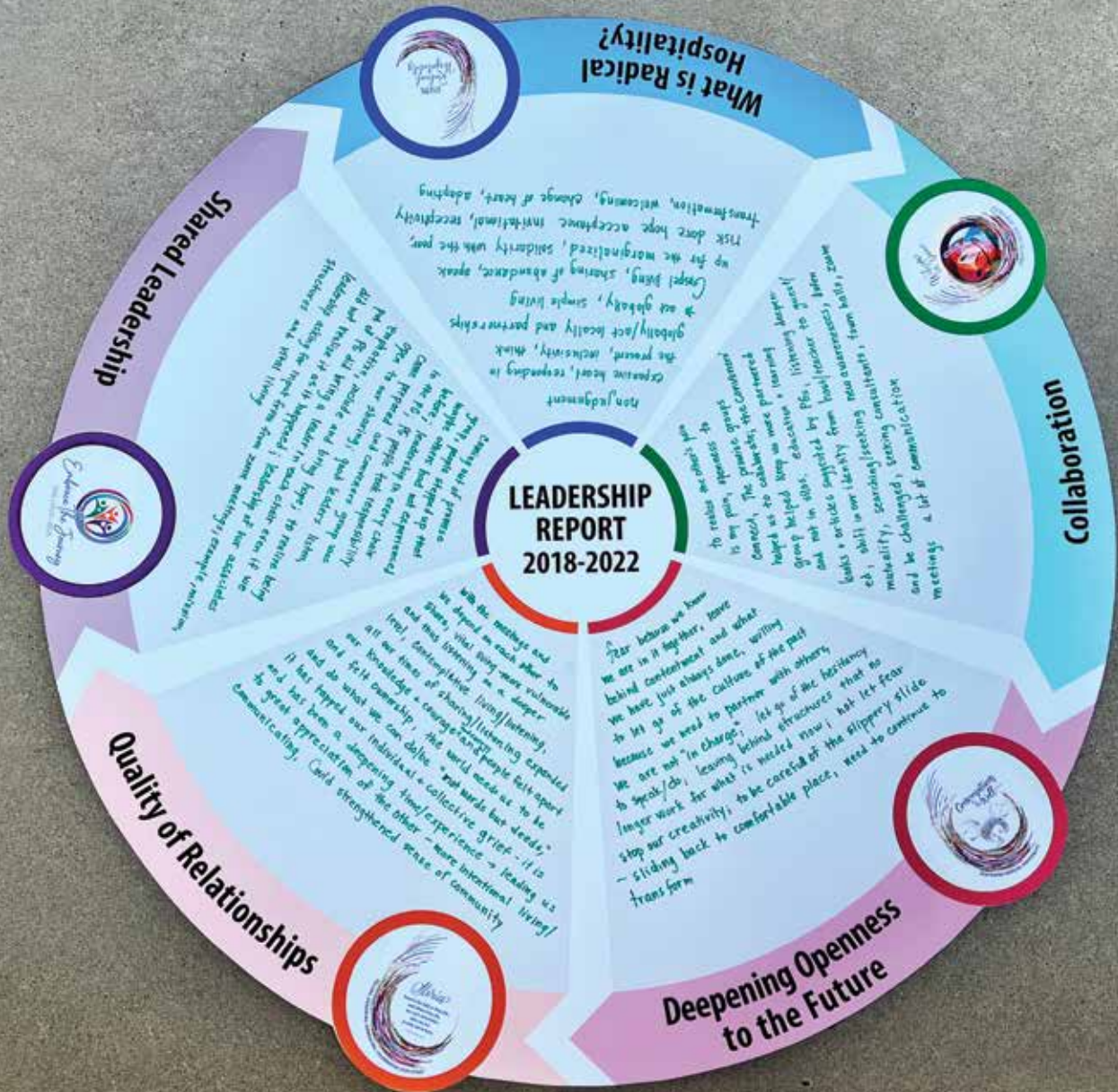




# PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

*offering hospitality to the world*



# The COMMITTEE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY by the  
Sisters of the Presentation  
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Dubuque, Iowa 52001-2997 USA  
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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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During the Chapter of Affairs, the leadership team gave a report of the past five years that led participants in a process that oozed with creativity. Ideas from table conversations were captured in writing on circle centerpieces and shared with the entire group.

# Openings A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

by MARILYN BREEN, PBVM

Thomas Merton reminds us, “Humans have a responsibility to find themselves where they are, in their own proper time and place in the history to which they belong and to which they must inevitably contribute either their response or their evasions, either truth and act, or mere slogan and gesture.”

Wrapped in the yellows and oranges of autumn, surrounded by prayer, mindful of the war in Ukraine, gun violence, midterm elections and threats to the environment, we, sisters and associates, gathered to consider our response to all that troubles us and gives us joy.

We, as a community, have completed our General Chapter and have chosen a direction and leaders who will guide and animate us to carry out the directives of the chapter for the next five years. While our process led to decisions, we depend on prayer, listening and trust to guide us. We are ready to begin together with new energy.

Making choices is often about letting go of what we know and daring to see with new eyes. This applies to all the decisions we make. Change is all around us and we can choose to embrace it. In Pope Francis’ talk at the opening Mass of the Synod he said: “The Spirit asks us to listen to the questions, concerns and hopes of every church, people and nation. And to listen to the world, to the challenges and changes that it sets before us. Let us not soundproof our hearts; let us not remain barricaded in our certainties. So often our certainties can make us closed. Let us listen to one another.”

Listening to one another and to the events in the world around us are just as important for our community as for the church. We cannot hang on to the past. Nano Nagle, our foundress, responded to the needs of the Irish people of her day and that led her to begin schools to teach children about God, and to carry her lantern through the streets of Cork as she cared for widows, prisoners and those in need. This same call brought Presentation Sisters to Iowa almost 150 years ago when Mother Vincent Hennessy dared to leave her homeland and become a missionary to Irish immigrant families. Today we are at a crossroads and ask, “What is it that we can spend our lives, resources and energies on which will continue the mission and witness God’s presence each day?”

Our prayer, listening and conversations about our call to respond to the needs of the world have been the foundation of the choices we have made. We have come to believe that no matter how we change our structures nothing will be different unless we change ourselves, so we will embrace personal and communal transformation. The plight of immigrants, the racial divide and unjust treatment of those on the margins are always before us, urging us to work for equity. Our Midwest roots and love of nature inspire us to respond with urgency to climate crisis and to care for Earth.

Allowing the Spirit to work in our midst is a holy process. It is coming together in peace, amidst differing priorities, listening with openness and moving together. It requires a firm belief that God will give us whatever we need for the next steps. We invite you to join us as we embrace this uncertain journey that requires courage, creativity and hope.

*Sister Carmel Hernandez Sister Rita Mannert Sister Joy Peterson Sister Marilyn Breen*



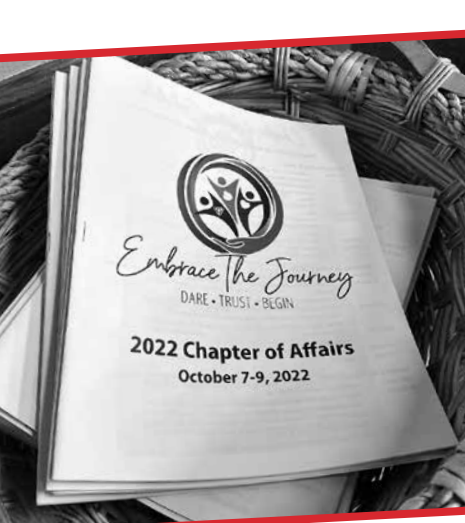
## Our MISSION

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.



# Chapter of Affairs and Elections

by CORINE MURRAY, PBVM

**More important than knowing is never to lose the power to learn.  
That is the meaning of dialogue.**

*Leonardo Boff*

For over a year and a half, sisters, associates and the Chapter Preparation Committee were in dialogue preparing for their General Chapter held on October 7-12, 2022. The theme, Embrace the Journey: Dare, Trust, Begin, described the task at hand. In a culture hungry for instant answers, they opted to live into the wisdom of the questions: How has the mission and charism informed our actions? Where do we hear the cries of people made poor? What is our response to the summons from Pope Francis to care for Earth, our shared home?

## *What is a General Chapter?*

For Dubuque Presentation Sisters, a General Chapter is a time to take stock of the current state of the world. It is a formal meeting scheduled every five years, consisting of two distinct parts: Chapter of Affairs and Chapter of Elections.

## *What happens during a Chapter of Affairs?*

The Chapter of Affairs addresses direction setting for the future through the lens of the congregation's mission and charism. Several associates participated in the Chapter of Affairs and the sisters valued their contributions.

The Chapter of Affairs began with a meaningful opening prayer that invited those present to remember sisters and associates who joined the company of the angels and saints during the last five years.

Throughout their days together, sisters and associates participated in prayer experiences enriched by music, scripture, poetry and contemplative silence. The rich threads of these shared prayers were a source of strength and unity.

After months of study that included guest speakers; several Zoom meetings; many opportunities for dialogue; suggested readings; honest conversations and prayerful discernment, sisters and associates continued the conversation. They were guided by their charism of radical hospitality and the founding vision of their foundress Nano Nagle. Her response to what needs doing was clearly in defiance of the 18th century penal laws in Ireland. Nevertheless, with courage in both hands, she founded schools and later a community of women religious.



Left to right: Chapter of Affairs began on October 7 and ended at noon on October 9, 2022; Table conversations were captured in writing on large circle centerpieces; Associates Carol Witry, Colleen Venter and Barb Ressler catch up during a break; Sisters Dolores Moes and Dolores Zieser reflect on a artistic timeline highlighting the last five years; Direction statement and commitments for 2023-2028 were finalized and displayed on a prayer card; Sisters Cheryl Demmer, Jessi Beck, Rachel Dunlap and Margaret Anne Kramer are more than happy to agree to a maskless photo.

The leadership team gave a report of the past five years that led participants in a process that oozed with creativity. Ideas from table conversations were captured in writing on circle centerpieces and shared with the entire group.

A 50-foot timeline, a picture of the journey of the last five years, served as an artistic complement to their report. It highlighted significant events, jubilee celebrations, pictures of associates and sisters now dancing with the angels and more. All these were displayed amid intersecting waves of pastel yellows and greens.

Chapter facilitator, Sister Mary Catherine Redmond, Presentation Sister from New York, skillfully led the group in conversations and discernment that connected the charism of radical hospitality with the reality of so many sisters and brothers in the world who are barely eking out a living. After attentive listening and reflection, the major themes, ideas and concerns were then handed off to a writing committee who were tasked with expressing the focus and direction of the group's energy as envisioned for the next five years. Their work formulating a direction statement was met with unanimous approval.

### **What is a direction statement?**

The direction statement is a chapter-approved statement, in sync with the mission and charism of the congregation, that names the community's responses to what is going on in the world and what needs doing. Usually, it consists of one sentence that focuses the group's energy for the next five years or more. The direction statement reflects the involvement, affirmation and support of the sisters and associates. Three commitments enhanced clarity about how they plan to live out the direction statement into the future.

## **Direction Statement and Commitments 2023-2028**

**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.**

**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.**





## What is the process for the Chapter of Elections?

The second part of the chapter, the Chapter of Elections, involved only the sisters. It threaded together conversations from pre-chapter meetings and discussions. Building on a pre-chapter process that surfaced names of sisters for the ministry of leadership, the delegates participated in a method of discerning names for this ministry. This process was followed by a day of retreat.

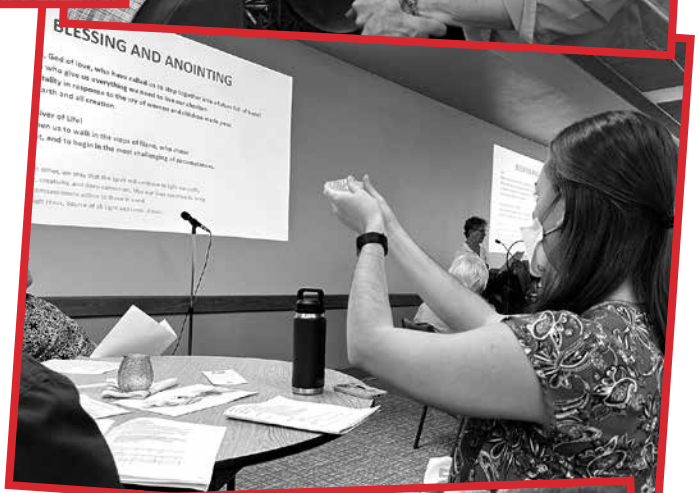
After the retreat day, with the prayerful support of all assembled and those at a distance, delegates moved to Sacred Heart Chapel to continue their discernment of the needs of the congregation and the names of sisters who remained open to the ministry of leadership. The Chapter of Elections concluded with the prayerful election of the leadership team for 2023-2028.

Sister Carmen Hernandez was re-elected as president and Sister Rita Menart was re-elected as vice-president. Sisters Mary Lou Specha and Joetta Venneman were newly-elected as members of the leadership team to serve as councilors. The new team was warmly embraced and blessed by the sisters. Their term of service will begin in the spring of 2023.

Calm, peaceful, prayerful, reverent and contemplative were words used to describe the entire chapter experience. Conversations provided numerous opportunities for the sisters to share in meaningful ways, which strengthened their bonds of unity as they anticipate their journey into the future.

In the closing ritual, sisters anointed each other for the journey they promised to begin. With the entire chapter completed, sisters and associates embrace their shared journey into the future, a journey that calls them to dare, trust and begin.

*Clockwise: Left to right: Sisters James Marie Gross and Raeleen Sweeney enjoy a quick photo op; A retreat day provided an opportunity for reflection and discernment; Sisters congratulate Sister Rita Menart (right) on her re-election to leadership; Sister Rachel Dunlap blesses anointing oil during a prayer ritual; Sister Leanne Welch accepts a blessing from Sister Irma Ries; Newly-elected leadership team: Sisters Joetta Venneman, Rita Menart, Carmen Hernandez and Mary Lou Specha.*



# Presentation Presence at the Southern Border

“A month just went too fast!” was the sentiment of the four sisters who responded to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious’ *Catholic Sisters Walking With Migrants* collaborative effort at the Kino Border Initiative in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. Sister Marge Healy was part of the first team of Catholic sisters to experience Kino, a place of hospitality and advocacy. The team spent their days preparing and serving food to 300-500 migrants; helping with the distribution of clothing and other essentials for many who spend days, weeks, months or years escaping inhumane situations; and compassionately listening to stories.

Blessed by this opportunity, Sister Marge offers this sharing:

For many who are migrating to the United States, the Kino Border Initiative may seem like an oasis in the desert. Fleeing north for survival or south after deportation, Kino is not paradise, but a place for rest, food and time to tell their story – a time to let the tears flow as they process what has been happening, as well as consider their options, which are few. Barriers briefly come down as they receive treatment that is respectful and accepting, and they relish having volunteers who listen in a deep and compassionate manner. Then, the migrants’ journey continues.

The green desert of Sonora, which the migrants cross to reach the border, has vegetation similar to the Chaco area of O’Connor Province in Bolivia. However, those crossing the desert do not pass through communities like those of the Guarani people. There are no roads, no signs, nothing but rough walking through the thorns, up and down the hills, avoiding the snakes and the tarantulas, under the hot sun, having only the food and water that they carry on their backs for the three to five day journey which may be longer if they become sick, wounded or lost.

Through the years, Pete, a Jesuit priest, and one of the developers of Kino, has gathered from the desert many migrant possessions discarded, lost or perhaps all that remained after a robbery or death. He opened his backpack to reveal some of the findings:

- photos of families, friends, a spouse or a home;
- black plastic water jugs that do not reflect sunlight, revealing their location to drones or the border patrol;
- a baby bottle;
- a letter, probably from a father indicating to his son or daughter where to go, whom to ask for, a warning not to talk to anyone in the street; and
- some big, floppy booties to go over shoes so as not to leave footprints in the sandy soil.



*Sisters Mary Montgomery, SP; Yliana Hernandez, PBVM; Jan Gregorcich, SSND; and Marge Healy, PBVM, offer their assistance at the border.*

We attempt to imagine what these possessions meant to those travelling. A sharing gave us the opportunity to place ourselves on the desperate journey. For me, the letter of the father touched me deeply as I pondered the painful unknowing of what happened to his child.

In the days after the desert experience, individuals and families arriving at the Kino center shared the painful stories that forced them to make the decision to risk all as they left their communities, homes and families. With children in their arms or sitting beside them, fathers and mothers cried as they spoke of and relived:

- the violent death of a son or daughter and the ensuing fear for their other children;
- threats of the mafia, or drug cartels when the migrants could not pay their quota, or when their sons and daughters refused to join the gangs;
- the futility of filing police reports because the criminals and the “police protectors” work hand in hand;
- ruined land and homes because of climate disasters;
- victims of domestic abuse seeking safety for themselves and their children after life-threatening experiences.

Each person has a right to live where they are safe and have enough work in order to care for their family. Let us unite our prayers and efforts to advocate for humanitarian border policies. Let us pray and work for an end to poverty and violence in all parts of our world. No one wants to leave their homeland or their families, except for what we all desire, a safe and better future. May our loving God bless us and them, for we are all members of the same human family, created by the one God and redeemed by Christ.



# Gathering of Presentation People

by JENNIFER RAUSCH, PBVM

The Gathering of Presentation People, entitled “Light the Lantern,” was held on September 15-17, 2022, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Twenty-two Dubuque sisters, associates and employees joined others from Presentation communities from Aberdeen, South Dakota; Dubuque, Iowa; New Windsor and Staten Island, New York; San Francisco, California; and Union members from Newfoundland, the United States and Western Australia, forming a total of 135 participants.

With anti-COVID masks and name tags in place, old friendships were renewed among Presentation people and new connections were forged. Sister Rita Cameron notes, “We could pick up where we left off with previous relationships.”

Sister Jane Conrad reflects, “I am touched by all the people who are here in the name of Nano. Her ministry, begun 247 years ago, is alive and well.”

Sister Rita Menart comments, “I hope people were able to connect with someone they did not previously know and plant a seed for a blessed relationship.”

“One highlight for me was the diversity of people who were present ranging across spans of age and language,” states Sister Carmen Hernandez.

A spirit of gracious Midwest hospitality welcomed all to this prairie land bisected by the Big Sioux River.

## *Theme for Day One: Gathering the Light*

Core team members for the gathering reviewed the long-range planning that preceded the Sioux Falls experience which included a previous coming-together of sisters in 2017 in Brookings, South Dakota. A September 2020 meeting had to be re-scheduled via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally face-to-face, the 2022 gathering began at tables of six as participants introduced themselves and discovered their similarities as followers of Nano Nagle, foundress of Presentation Sisters, as well as their attraction to her spirit of service to those in need.

## **Who Are Presentation People?**

Presentation people are sisters, associates, employees, friends or partners who share in the Presentation mission and charism.

## **Purpose of the Gathering**

To continue to nurture transformative opportunities now and for future generations by widening the tent in providing contemplative, transformative formation experiences for Presentation people.





*Left to right: Dubuque Presentation sisters, associates and employees participate in the Gathering of Presentation People in Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Sisters Carmen Hernandez and Maura McCarthy help make tie blankets for those in need; The enthusiasm generated by the Gathering of Presentation People is reflected in the faces of Sister Marge Healy, Associate Anastasia Nicklaus, Associate Barb Ressler and Sister Diana Blong; Associate Jean Lange, Sister Joy Peterson, Sister Rachel Dunlap and Sister Rita Cameron respond to the signage behind them to “Be the ‘I’ in KIND.”*

“The term Presentation people came to life for me as the energy and creativity of employees, associates and sisters permeated the gathering,” recalls Sister Marge Healy.

Table talks gave opportunities for sharing the multi-faceted ways in which Presentation people reflect the energy and courage of Nano to bring healing and hope to places of suffering and despair. One of the intentions for this gathering was “to listen and share with each other in building new relationships in a spirit of openness, respect and curiosity as we embody the spirit of Nano, who offered radical hospitality in her interactions with others.” The dream of Nano continues.

### **Theme for Day Two: Gathering to Be the Light**

A line from morning prayer introduced the focus for the day: “Loving God, your light within us enables us to claim our own strength and need; and to take risks in the service of your people, confident that your grace is with us.” Participants then embarked on a variety of social justice actions at sites including Bishop Dudley Hospitality House, Jo Wegner Arboretum, Boys and Girls Club, Avera Medical Center, Caminando Juntos, St. Francis House and a letter project. These agencies are meeting the needs of Earth, children, the homeless, the immigrant, the sick and the lonely in the Sioux Falls area. Presentation people filtered across the face of the city with open hearts and helping hands to touch lives with compassion, understanding and joy.

The afternoon provided time for unpacking the deeper meaning of the various service activities. Sister Joy Peterson concludes, “The memory of the energy and passion for living the charism of Nano Nagle in service among the gathering participants is a gift I will carry for a long time.”

### **Theme for Day Three: Gathering to Carry the Light – Dreaming Our Future**

The task at hand was capsulized in phrases from morning prayer: “In our dreaming, everyday God; In our daring, O

Jesus; In our searching, O Spirit; In our sharing, come, be with us.” The group joined in contemplative silence, purposeful being, so that the dreams of their hearts could be formulated and then given voice. Energetic ideas immersed and flowed into the founding of dream groups – Presentation people with similar interests and lively passion around categories including Presentation Young People, Sparking Local Action, Immigration, Storytelling and Celebrating Presentation People, Care of Creation, Spirituality and Charism of Presentation People and Presentation People as Influencers.

Associate Jean Lange observes, “Anytime we work with a big group of people, it takes patience to wait for things to unfold. There were lots of great ideas and now the question becomes how to use those ideas for action.”

A direction had been set: “To dream possibilities for the future of Presentation people.” Dreams were birthed and then blessed as the participants gathered to celebrate Eucharist, to celebrate being together and to celebrate their hope for a shared future.

The closing banquet flowed into the missioning ritual during which each participant received a lighted lantern as a reminder to “Go and be the light,” the blessing voiced for all present.

Those at the gathering departed with grateful hearts and focused hope. Sister Jessi Beck summarizes, “It is so wonderful to see how God is calling people to the Presentation mission, charism and spirituality in a variety of ways: sisters, associates, employees, partners through sponsored ministries and more. I’m so grateful to be part of this Presentation family rooted in prayer and working for justice together.”

The symbol of Nano’s lantern reminded all, “Take your candle, and go light your world.” These words by Kathy Troccoli best capture the Sioux Falls experience and reflect our participation in the dream of Nano.



*At age 102, Sister Damian O'Brien lives a life full of gratitude and wisdom.*

## *Reflections on the Journey* **Sister Damian O'Brien**

*by* BETH KRESS, PBVM

Experience, knowledge and insight, accompanied by the example and teachings of others, shape a person's beliefs and priorities. These provide lifelong nourishment for the soul and mind, and usually influence one's decisions and actions. Sister Mary Damian O'Brien has discovered that wisdom blooms along life's path and becomes more beautiful in time.

"Wisdom is so fulfilling. At this time in my life, my special wisdom is acceptance," shares Sister Damian. "This calls me to take time for prayer. I have learned that as experiences come to me I recognize the hand of God was and still is touching my life."

A few of Sister Damian's learnings include: (1) to take things as they come, (2) to accept and allow yourself to live with your decisions, (3) to rely often on patience and peacefulness, (4) to prepare for the next steps, and (5) to live for the day.

At 102 years old, her learnings do not stop. "It is very necessary to keep learning – to keep my mind going," states Sister Damian. "There is no secret to living long. You just have to keep on going. You have to keep busy with something."

She has enjoyed many years of responding to and listening to the hand and voice of God. For her, this has been evident through many persons in her life, especially her parents, William and Bernice (Tumey) O'Brien of Ryan, Iowa, who passed on strong faith and values to their children Annabelle (Sister Damian), Imogene and John.

"St. Patrick Parish was important to our family. From Mass and devotions at church to practicing our faith by serving and helping at church events, we gave our time and talent to the parish just like Mom and Dad did," recalls Sister Damian. "Imogene and I did sacristy work and played the organ at Mass and John served as an altar boy."

**Wisdom is so fulfilling. At this time in my life, my special wisdom is acceptance. This calls me to take time for prayer.**

*Sister Damian O'Brien*

# 2022 Annual Appeal

A Presentation Sister's Living Experience

**Life flows through our relations with others.**

*Pope Francis*

Sister Damian's parents worked hard to provide a Catholic education and music lessons for their children, nurturing good work ethics. "They also taught us to celebrate our successes with family treats after recitals and plays," smiles Sister Damian.

Sister Damian remembers that the Presentation Sisters who taught in Ryan were fine educators, including Sisters Mary James O'Brien, Mary Estelle Pillard and Mary DeLourdes Verhey. "I was taught by Presentation Sisters from grade school through high school. I am grateful for their influence in my life," she reflects.

Lessons at home, school and parish taught Sister Damian to gain from her experiences and to translate that knowledge and understanding to her life as a woman religious. "When I was reassigned from mission to mission as a new music teacher, I remembered how my parents accepted hardships and change because they knew that through the purpose of sacrificing, things would come out well in the end," recalls Sister Damian.

When she became a member of the leadership team as well as formation director, Sister Damian reflects that giving oneself to the purpose of mission pays off.

"I asked Sister Helen Marie Feeney, then our leader, what I should do as director of the young professed sisters. She advised me to 'be kind to them.' It was the best advice," she declares with a big smile.

For Sister Damian, living life wisely includes meditation and praying the rosary before the Blessed Sacrament, participating in Mass, providing piano accompaniment for Mass and evening prayer. Her prayer and reflection reveal a special face of wisdom, "Gratitude. Always be grateful," she declares.

A life spent in thoughtful reflection and getting to know God in prayer and through others leads Sister Damian to share a quotation from a favorite book, *What the Mystics Know: Seven Pathways to Your Deeper Self* by Richard Rohr, "If you are truly capable of loving one person, you are capable of loving more than one, eventually even your enemy, and finally, all."

One could say that these words mirror the many facets of Sister Damian's wisdom.

Our Presentation mission is to serve, educate and advocate – serving those made poor, educating the uneducated, caring for the vulnerable and transforming unjust systems through our various ministries. The number of sisters ministering without compensation has grown; however, their deep commitment to mission and ministry continues to grow, too! Sisters never really retire.

The Presentation Sisters are rich examples of their communal call to live radical hospitality. Women of welcoming hearts, their works and actions strive to make a difference in each and every person they encounter. Their ministry of hospitality through service, education and advocacy to others and to one another never ceases.

As we embrace the unknown future, the partnerships of faithful friends are a constant reminder that our journeys cannot and will not be made alone. Your generosity not only contributes to the sisters' vital living at Mount Loretto, but also assists in supporting our sisters who are active in ministry. For this, we thank you.

Your gift to the 2022 Annual Appeal will help to continue the mission of the Presentation Sisters. Donations can be made online at [www.dbqpbvms.org](http://www.dbqpbvms.org) by clicking the Donate Now button.

**For more information, you may also contact Karen Tuecke in the Partners in Mission Office at 563-588-2008 ext. 109 or [partnersinmission@dbqpbvms.org](mailto:partnersinmission@dbqpbvms.org).**

*May the hope and joy of this holiday season be filled with love and compassion to all those you hold dear.*



*Left to right: Associates Delynn Fangman and Radie Roberts prepare the new location for the food pantry at La Luz Centro Cultural; The Seeing With New Eyes team pauses for a group photo with Kale Whalen, executive director of La Luz; Associates Delynn Fangman, Laurie Noel, Treva Ingrassi and Darla Budden sort robot parts used in the after-school program.*

## Service & Awareness Opportunity

# Seeing with New Eyes

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

On Saturday, November 5, a group of 10 associates volunteered at La Luz Centro Cultural in Hampton, Iowa, as part of the Seeing With New Eyes program. This program provides an opportunity to step away from the busyness of daily life and engage in service. After carpooling to the site, the group spent time getting acquainted with one another, staff members from La Luz and local Hampton volunteers. The group then jumped right into service projects which included cleaning, organizing, gutting the attic, demolishing leftover shelving units from the building's previous owners, hauling items out to a dumpster and relocating the food pantry within the building.

La Luz Centro Cultural, initially named La Luz Hispana, meaning "The Hispanic Light," was initiated by the Sisters of the Presentation on March 27, 2013. The center changed its name to La Luz Centro Cultural in February 2020 to encompass all the programs and services it offers.

The mission of La Luz Centro Cultural is to promote cultural awareness and diversity with hospitality and supporting services for all. Their mission statement reads, "We are Latin Americans who raise up integral services for survivors of crime. We give specific cultural assistance to the Latin American population in Franklin, Wright, Cerro Gordo, Hamilton counties and areas nearby. Our services are centered around the family and accessible in Spanish, providing survivors help and information that will better their health, security and well-being in the short or long

term." Services offered include providing information about rights and options for survivors; assisting with developing a personal security plan; providing references and assistance with legal services, doctors, housing and socials; visits from lawyers; accompanying to court; interpreting; confidentiality; and support groups the third Monday of each month. La Luz also offers an after-school program for children and teens, providing homework help, art activities and access to computers, tablets and the internet.

Two participants of the Seeing With New Eyes group, associates Joann Gullickson and Darla Budden, were members of the La Luz board for several years. Both Joann and Darla were excited to return to La Luz and experience how it has changed over the years.

Joann shares, "It was a productive and fulfilling day for all. On our drive home, our carload reminisced about a few of the wonderful things that happened at La Luz when Sisters Carmen Hernandez and Maura McCarthy ministered there. A favorite memory was the 'bed project.' Sister Carmen worked with a local furniture store in the area and was able to provide 28 beds to families in the community who were previously sleeping on the floor. What a blessing for so many!"

Associate Delynn Fangman states, "I enjoyed cleaning and organizing with others at La Luz with a common goal of creating a functional place for individuals to gather and learn, and create a community."

# In Loving Memory

## ASSOCIATE JOAN MONTAG

*November 25, 1927 – October 11, 2022*

Joan Laubenthal Montag, age 94 of West Bend, Iowa, passed away on Tuesday, October 11, 2022, at the Palo Alto County Hospital. Joan was born on November 25, 1927. One of 10 siblings, Joan grew up in Emmetsburg, Iowa, and graduated from St. Ellen Grade School, Emmetsburg High School and Emmetsburg Community



College. As a young woman, she worked in her father's chiropractic office, the local pharmacy and the bank. She obtained a teaching certificate and taught in Bode, Iowa, for two years. She married Raphael Montag on June 21, 1948. They resided on the family dairy farm east of West Bend where they raised their family of seven children. Throughout her lifetime, she was an accomplished seamstress, a writer, a voracious reader and conversationalist. She and Raphael shared a love of family memorabilia and antiques.

Joan became an associate on September 11, 2000, after connecting with the Presentation Sisters through her sister, Sister René Laubenthal. In her letter of commitment, Joan wrote, "Being a Presentation associate has been a joy. It is great to feel the support of companions on the journey."

Joan lived a busy, long life blessed with good health and a wealth of love. She is preceded in death by her husband of 56 years.

### 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.

# Blessing Bag Project

For the second year, the Associate Partnership Office invited all Presentation people to help fill Thanksgiving bags for local needy families. This mission was a joint project with Resources Unite and Western Dubuque High School, with the goal of providing a bag with everything a family of six would need to sit down and enjoy a holiday meal together. Each bag included green beans, instant mashed potatoes, stuffing, a packet of gravy, cornbread mix, cranberry sauce, canned sweet potatoes, dessert mix and a ham.

With the assistance of Western Dubuque High School students, 4,350 phone calls were made to people served by Resources Unite in the past year asking if they would like a Thanksgiving Blessing Bag. Josh Jasper, director of Resources Unite, says, "The value of this phone call is so much more than asking about a blessing bag. What is most valuable is the part where one person is asking another person how they are doing. To be honest, that is everything to the person on the receiving end of that call."

Approximately 600 families throughout the tri-state area will receive a blessing bag. Presentation people were given the option to purchase food from items listed above or make a monetary donation. All monetary donations went towards purchasing ham. Presentation people rose to the challenge and raised \$475. Food donations received will feed roughly 50 families!

Associate Janet Leonard states, "Thanks for helping with this project. Nano would be proud!"



Associate Partnership co-directors, Radie Roberts and Colleen Venter organize collected food for the blessing bags.

# Lloyd and Dianne McDermott

## Matthew 25 Service Award



Lloyd and Dianne McDermott, recipients of the Matthew 25 award.

On November 22, Presentation associate, Dianne McDermott and her husband, Lloyd, were presented with Divine Word College's Matthew 25 Award for their many years of service to the college, as well as to people around the world.

This award honors those who help the poor and marginalized. It was established in 2001 to recognize those in or connected to the area who minister in the spirit of the Gospel message put forth in Matthew 25:35-36.

In the past 24 years, Dianne and Lloyd have shared their home, their family and their hearts to welcome students from around the world. They have provided housing for 12 international students, including 10 who were enrolled at Divine Word College. With open arms and hearts, the couple taught students about American culture and gave them an immersive environment where they could practice their new English skills. In return, Lloyd and Dianne said the students taught them about the cultures of their own countries, which included Japan, South Korea, Haiti, France, the Philippines, Belarus and China. The couple is also an important part of the Friends Across Nations Club at Divine Word, serving as a surrogate American family of sorts to international students who live on campus. In addition, Dianne and Lloyd volunteer their help at the Epworth Community Meal on many Friday mornings. They certainly know how to feed the hungry and welcome strangers.

**For I was hungry and you gave me food,  
I was thirsty and you gave me drink,  
a stranger and you welcomed me,  
naked and you clothed me,  
ill and you cared for me,  
in prison and you visited me.**

*Matthew 25:35-36*

Their charitable efforts extend outside of Divine Word College, as well. After retiring, Dianne and Lloyd decided they wanted to travel and leave a "footprint" behind wherever they went. Since then, they have worked with numerous organizations to pitch in after natural disasters and help people living in poverty both in the United States and abroad.

During a trip to Haiti, Dianne helped to serve people in a clinic that was basically a shack. When she returned home, she organized an effort at St. Patrick Church in Epworth, Iowa, and with the help of the people of St. Elizabeth Pastorate, raised \$17,000 to fund the construction of a building that is used for a clinic, church and school in Soliette, Haiti.

Lloyd said that as a boy, he didn't understand why he needed to study geography because he knew he would never go to any of the places on the world map. Today, he says the experiences of traveling and serving as a host family for international students has allowed him to feel more connected to world issues. Dianne agreed, saying that travel has a way of making the world smaller. "When you go to a country and you see their culture and you meet the people, you can't look at it as just a place on a map anymore," she said. "There are good people wherever you go." Dianne and Lloyd have four children and 10 grandchildren but after many years of service and sacrifice, the love of their new extended family stretches across nations.

Dianne became a Presentation associate in August 2014 and is a member of the Servant Seekers associate group. In July 2022, Dianne worked with Sister Paula Schwendinger's HOME program to gather volunteers in rural Dubuque County to teach Hispanic immigrants English and help them learn about the American culture.

# Mount Loretto AND BEYOND

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



## Celebrating World Mission Sunday

Presentation Sisters attended World Mission Sunday hosted by Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa, to support their Vietnamese Sisters who live in community at Mount Loretto. The day was a celebration of cultures with sample dishes from around the globe. Left to right: Back row: Sisters Jeanine Kuhn, Donna Determan, Dolores Zieser, Margaret Anne Kramer, Marie Barth, Rosalyn Ulfers, Joellen Price, Kay Cota, Rita Cameron, Martha Donnelly. Front Row: Sisters Thoa Pham, Mary Thuong Phan, Tuyet Pham, Donna Demmer, Van Hong Nguyen, Janet Stelken and Tinh Le. Photo contributed by Divine Word.



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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.

### PLEASE JOIN US.

**December 10, 2022**

Advent Discernment Reflection  
Zoom at 9:00 a.m. CST  
Open to single Catholic women ages 18-45 curious about or discerning apostolic religious life.

**December 11, 2022**

Prepare the Way Women's Prayer  
Zoom at 5:00 p.m. CST  
Open to single women ages 18-45 seeking prayer and faith sharing.

**January 22, 2023**

PBVM Come and See  
Zoom at 5:00 p.m. CST  
Open to single Catholic women ages 18-45 wanting to explore religious life in the Presentation charism.

### PLEASE PRAY WITH US.

**December 17, 2022**

Christmas Dinner provided for Dubuque Rescue Mission and Hope House guests

**February 2, 2023**

World Day for Consecrated Life

**March 8-14, 2023**

National Catholic Sisters Week

**21st of each month**

Pray for Vocations

**25th of each month**

Pray for Benefactors



**SISTERS**

OF THE PRESENTATION  
*of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

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*Help us keep our database up-to-date.  
Send changes to [info@dbqpbvms.org](mailto:info@dbqpbvms.org)  
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May this be the Christmas  
when peace settles on the corners  
of the earth that need it most.

May the joy and peace of Christmas  
light your way through the new year.

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