



PRESENTATION DOORWAYS

offering hospitality to the world



Celebrating
150
YEARS OF TENDING THE LIGHT
Established 1874

The COMMITTEE

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Sisters of the Presentation
2360 Carter Road
Dubuque, Iowa 52001-2997 USA
Phone: 563-588-2008 Fax: 563-588-4463
Email: info@dbqpbvms.org
Website: www.dbqpbvms.org

EDITOR: Jane Buse-Miller
DOORWAYS COMMITTEE:
Sister Carmen Hernandez; Associate Janet
Leonard; Sister Maura McCarthy; Dave
McDermott; Laura Orris; Sister Joy Peterson;
Associate Radie Roberts; Joel Thoreson; Karen
Tuecke and Sister Rita Waters, RSM

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:

Editor, Presentation Doorways
2360 Carter Road
Dubuque, Iowa 52001-2997
info@dbqpbvms.org

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 in Tarija, Bolivia.

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The soft light of each luminaria tenderly honors the memories of deceased loved ones. Lining the circle driveway at Mount Loretto, the luminarias formed a radiant expression of remembrance during the Circle of Illumination on All Souls' Day.

A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

Gratitude for the Past and Hope for the Future

by MARY LOU SPECHA, PBVM

As we conclude our 150th anniversary celebration, we do so with hearts full of gratitude and eyes set firmly on the horizon of light and of hope. This milestone has given us the opportunity to pause, to look back with gratitude on all that has transpired since our founding in 1874, and to look forward with renewed purpose to the mission that continues to call us.

Throughout this 150th year, we have celebrated in many ways — through prayer, storytelling, pilgrimage, social gatherings and service. We revisited the courageous journey of Mother Vincent Hennessy and her companions, who came from Ireland to Iowa, with faith as their compass and compassion as their guide. From our early days of teaching in one-room schools to our present ministries of radical hospitality, we remain steadfast in our mission to be a light amid darkness and a voice of hope for those most in need.

The 150th anniversary was more than a celebration of our past — it was honoring the legacy that lives on in our sisters, associates, ministries and relationships that continue to shape who we are today. We gave thanks to the sisters and associates who have gone before us, whose lives of prayer and service built a solid foundation of faith and love. We also rejoice with all who walk beside us, carrying the Presentation mission forward and helping it thrive in an ever-changing world.

We gathered many times throughout the year. We rekindled friendships, we prayed together, we feasted, we laughed and we celebrated in true Presentation spirit. Each gathering became a reminder that our mission breathes not only within our ministries, but also in the hearts of all who bear Nano's lantern — carrying its light into places needing hope, healing and new beginnings.

As we look back at this important celebration, we find ourselves standing at a threshold of transformation — one that calls for both courage and imagination. As religious life unfolds in new ways, we are called to a renewed invitation to reimagine how we live our Presentation charism in the world today. Our commitment to radical hospitality guides us as we serve those made poor, growing and adapting to the changing needs of our world.

As we look to the future, we are called to deepen our partnerships with those who will dare to "go where need calls out most loudly" today. We recognize that the Presentation mission lives in every person who acts with integrity and love, who stands with the poor and who believes in the power of presence to transform lives.

As we step into the next chapter, we carry forward the same spirit that inspired our foundress, a spirit of faith, courage and tender care for the most vulnerable. The light of Nano's lantern continues to guide us, reminding us that even in times of uncertainty, the mission continues to lead the way.

As we reminisce about this year of celebration, we know we are part of a story larger than ourselves — one carried forward by those who, like Nano, believe that one person can make a difference. With gratitude for the past and hope for the future, we move forward, guided by the same faithful light that has led the Sisters of the Presentation for 150 years.

Sister Carmen Hernandez Sister Rita Menart Mary Lou Specha Sr. Joetta Venneman

Sisters Carmen Hernandez, Rita Menart, Mary Lou Specha, Joetta Venneman



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.



Honoring Our Legacy of 150 Years Moving Forward with Hope

by LAURA ORRIS, COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

In celebration of their 150th anniversary year, the Presentation community came together in prayer, remembrance and joyful gatherings to honor the story that shaped them. Each celebration echoed the courage of Nano Nagle, Mother Vincent Hennessy and the generations of sisters and associates whose faith and service built their foundation. Throughout this anniversary year, the sisters celebrated not only their heritage, but the relationships that continue to sustain their mission. These moments invited them to give thanks for the legacy they inherit and the mission they continue to carry forward.

Sprinkles of Gratitude

Across the grounds of Mount Loretto, temperatures and humidity soared on a Sunday afternoon in August yet, no one rushed to leave. Beneath the shade of several tents, the warmth of friendship and community was most important as sisters, associates, neighbors and friends gathered to enjoy a sweet treat at *Sprinkles of Gratitude*, an ice cream social filled with laughter and love.

On what proved to be the hottest day of the year, guests fanned themselves as they savored scoops of Delaney's Ice Cream with flavor names honoring the sisters' legacy like "Heaps of Hospitality," "Mooncoin Mint" and "This Could Be a Habit." Sisters mingled easily among guests of all ages, greeting familiar faces and welcoming newcomers with genuine joy.

"Seeing families, neighbors and friends enjoying time together was the highlight of the afternoon for me. That is what makes a community strong," said Sister Margaret Anne Kramer.

Lightbearers' Dinner

A month later, as the sun dipped behind fading gray clouds that had threatened rain, the sisters hosted the *Lightbearers' Dinner*, an outdoor dinner honoring their many partners in mission. Guests included representatives and clients of local nonprofits, schools and community organizations that walk beside the sisters in advocating for women, children, immigrants, care of Earth and in transforming unjust systems.

Before dinner, Sister Rita Menart led guests in prayer, "Place in our hearts the desire to use the energy from this meal to make a difference to our families, to our community, to our country ... guiding us to create tables of welcome and love, renewing our commitment to let the light shine in us and in each person. With God and each other we can bring light into the darkness."

Throughout the evening, talented cellist Sam Day played as guests exchanged stories and ideas. They spoke of women finding strength and independence, children learning with confidence, immigrants finding welcome and new initiatives to protect Earth's resources.

Left to right: Friends, Steve Rodham, Sister Beth Driscoll, Kris Rodham, Kevin Walsh and Associate Debbie Gross, enjoy catching up with one another at the *Sprinkles of Gratitude* ice cream social. A little one enjoys her ice cream, adding her own sweetness to the day. An inviting and elegant place setting greets guests at the *Lightbearers' Dinner*, paired with a simple reminder to continue to "be the light" for others, capturing the heart of the evening's mission. A warm embrace from Sister Joy Peterson reflects the spirit of the evening, one of welcome, gratitude and heartfelt connection. Guests were invited to light their candles and lift them high as a reminder that the light within them has the power to welcome, heal and transform. Candles glow in honor and remembrance of deceased loved ones during the *Circle of Illumination* prayer service.

"What a beautiful event your *Lightbearers' Dinner* was!" said Dawn Cogan, executive director of St. Mark Youth Enrichment. "I have benefitted both personally and professionally from the love and light that sisters and your staff put out into the world. I am incredibly grateful for all you do."

"It was such a beautiful evening filled with warmth, inspiration and connection," added Karen Hoeger of Catholic Charities. "Thank you for welcoming me so graciously into your community and for the light you continue to share with the world. It was a gift to be among you."

Behind the scenes, Presentation staff and associates worked many hours to create an elegant experience for guests. Volunteer and Presentation associate Becky Searcy said, "On Sunday morning, I was basking in the afterglow of what we experienced all day Saturday! Seeing everyone working together and welcoming guests for one mission, spreading good throughout the world, it could not have been more beautiful!"

Sister Mary Lou Specha reflected, "From the food to the atmosphere, the conversations, the music and the joy that filled the air, every detail was thoughtfully crafted and deeply felt. I am so grateful for the heart and dedication our team poured into making this event a lasting memory."

As dessert concluded, Sister Carmen Hernandez invited everyone to raise the candle at their place setting. A soft glow filled the night as she prayed, "May this flame remind us that the light we bear matters — that it has power to welcome, to heal and to transform. When joined together, our small flames become a great beacon of hope, lighting

May this flame remind us that the light we bear matters — that it has power to welcome, to heal and to transform. When joined together, our small flames become a great beacon of hope, lighting even the darkest of places.

Sister Carmen Hernandez

even the darkest of places ... May the time we have shared tonight inspire new connections and renewed energy for the change we seek together."

Circle of Illumination

As autumn deepened and the anniversary year drew toward its close, the sisters turned from celebration to remembrance. On All Souls' Day, sisters welcomed guests for the *Circle of Illumination*, a prayer service honoring loved ones who have illuminated their path and continue to guide them toward the future with hope and gratitude.

The evening began in Sacred Heart Chapel with music and readings as many remembered parents, spouses, children, siblings and friends. "This is always one of our most tender gatherings," Sister Beth Driscoll reflected. "It reminds us that love does not end; it transforms."

Sister Julia Wingert invited everyone to observe a moment of silence and to light a candle in memory of their loved ones. Those present in the chapel were given a tea light,



while participants joining from home had received candles by mail. Through the gift of technology, many joined from afar via livestream, united in spirit and prayer.

When the final hymn ended, guests processed outside, their tea lights glowing softly in the cool November air. Karen Tuecke, partners in mission coordinator, invited guests to place their tea light in one of the luminaria “as a sign that the spirits of our beloved deceased live on through and among us.” The circle driveway was lined with hundreds of luminarias, each one representing a life remembered and a story held dear.

As the circle of light grew, it seemed to hold the night itself — radiant, peaceful and timeless. The lives of those remembered, the faith of those gathered and the hope their legacy continues to inspire were all intertwined into one sacred circle of illumination.

Trusting the Light

After a year of celebration, sisters, staff and associates gathered for the 150th closing ceremony, *Trusting the Light*, an evening centered on gratitude, hope and courage as they step together into the future. The celebration began with a prayer service in Sacred Heart Chapel recapping the year’s events. Those gathered paused to give thanks for all who have tended the light of the Presentation mission, those whose faith built the foundation and all who continue to carry it forward today.

Following prayer, all gathered for dinner in the dining room over the soft glow of lantern lights. Sisters Marilyn Breen, Rita Menart, Marilou Irons and Beth Driscoll expressed their heartfelt appreciation to the 150th committee, associates and staff for their many hours of volunteering, creativity and dedication that helped make the 150th anniversary celebrations meaningful and memorable. Their gratitude reflected the spirit of the evening’s theme, *Trusting the Light*, a reminder that the Presentation mission thrives because of the shared commitment of many hands and hearts.

Left to right: A circle of luminarias line the driveway at Mount Loretto during the Circle of Illumination, each light representing a loved one remembered in prayer. Sister Raeleen Sweeney visits with friends as guests and sisters gathered for refreshments following the prayer service. The closing 150th anniversary prayer service, *Trusting the Light*, offered gratitude for the countless blessings for the last 150 years and look to the future with hope. Sisters, associates and staff raise their lit candle as a symbol to trust the promise of what lies ahead.

As the evening drew to a close, the community looked to the future with hope. Just as God’s Spirit once guided Nano and Mother Vincent into new and uncertain paths, the Presentation community trusts that the same light will continue to illuminate their way. With grateful hearts and renewed courage, they step into the future together, confident that their mission will continue to shine brightly.

From the heat of summer to the change of autumn, each celebration carried its own kind of radiance. *Sprinkles of Gratitude* celebrated joy in community. The *Lightbearers’ Dinner* glowed with partnership and shared mission. The *Circle of Illumination* gathered hearts in remembrance. Together, these events told the story of 150 years of faith lived out loud — in laughter, in service and in light — and *Trusting the Light* reminded all that they are called to be lightbearers, carrying the mission forward into the future.

150 Trees for 150 Years
Tending Our Earth

by KAREN TUECKE, PARTNERS IN MISSION COORDINATOR
and DAVE MCDERMOTT, JUSTICE PROMOTER

From November 2024 to November 2025, the Presentation Sisters honored their deep commitment to the care of creation through their “150 Trees for 150 Years” initiative. With the hopes of planting 150 trees during their 150th anniversary year, the sisters invited the schools, parishes and organizations where they have ministered, as well as associates, family members, friends and benefactors, to join them by planting or sponsoring a tree. Just as the Presentation Sisters have planted seeds of faith, education, hospitality and service that have transformed countless lives over the past century and a half, this project invited others to help extend that legacy in a tangible and life-giving way.

in the spring, when the warmer growing season will allow additional varieties to take root and thrive.

During a recent tree planting, those gathered prayed, “We plant not only for today, but for tomorrow. These trees will outlive us. They will provide shade for children yet to be born, homes for birds who will nest in spring branches, stillness for those seeking reflection, and renewal for a planet in need of healing. They represent our ongoing commitment to sustainability, environmental justice and reverence for creation — one of the most urgent calls of our time.”

The legacy of a tree outlives those who plant it, standing as a powerful symbol of how the Presentation legacy has taken root, flourished and reached far beyond those who first sowed the seeds of faith 150 years ago. The Sisters of the Presentation extend heartfelt gratitude to all who participated in the “150 Trees for 150 Years” initiative. Through the generosity, time and care of supporters, whether planting a tree, sponsoring one or sharing in the spirit of this project, the legacy of the sisters continues to thrive in communities near and far. Your partnership helps keep the Presentation mission alive, nurtures the seeds of faith and service the sisters have sown for 150 years, and ensures that their mission will continue to grow and flourish for generations to come.

The sisters joyfully surpassed their goal of planting 150 trees! This accomplishment was possible only through the collective efforts and shared commitment of so many supporters. This initiative proved to be a beautiful reminder that when a community comes together, all things are truly possible.

Our Goal

Plant 150 Trees

OVER 100%

Over the last year, many trees found homes at local schools and parishes, and countless more were planted by individuals on their own properties. Presentation supporters extended far and wide, participating from California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming and even Tanzania and Newfoundland, Canada! In October, 18 trees were planted on the grounds of Mount Loretto, the Presentation Motherhouse. Future plantings are scheduled to be planted



Sisters and associates gather for a blessing of a newly-planted tree in honor of the Sisters of the Presentation at Seton Catholic School in Peosta, Iowa.



Sisters Carmen Hernandez (left) and Rita Menart (right) offer a heartfelt blessing and words of gratitude to Demetria Sabas Lekule, MaryFlora Gabriel Mroso and Constantina Dominic Shayo as the Holy Spirit Sisters from Tanzania prepare to return home.



Left to right: Sisters Ngan Thi Mai, Hoa Nguyen, Nga Thi Phan enjoy their time at Mount Loretto. Tanzanian sisters enjoy a ride on the 4th Street Elevator during a tour of Dubuque with Sister Jane Conrad. Sisters Carmen Hernandez and Rita Menart with the The Lantern Center board marks a continued partnership in fostering education, advocacy and welcome. Back row: Megan Ruiz, Craig Takes, Tim Moothart, Matt Dodds and Jimmy Jean Francois. Front row: Dianne McDermott, Sister Rita Menart, Gina Guerrero, Faye Finnegan, Sisters Carmen Hernandez and Richelle Friedman.



PRESENTATION
**LANTERN
CENTER**
WELCOME • LEARN • BELONG

Transforming Lives Through Welcome

by CARMEN HERNANDEZ, PBVM

In a world often marked by division and exclusion, the Sisters of the Presentation continue to embody a counter cultural witness: radical hospitality. Rooted in the Gospel and inspired by their foundress Nano Nagle, the sisters have long embraced the transformative power of welcome — not as a passive gesture, but as a bold, active commitment to love, inclusion and shared mission.

Radical hospitality, as practiced by the Presentation community, is not simply about opening doors. It is about opening hearts. It is the spiritual discipline of making space, physically, emotionally and spiritually, for the other. It is the willingness to be changed by those we welcome.

This spirit of radical hospitality is shown in the sisters' welcome of other women religious such as the Vietnamese Dominican Sisters from Bui Chu and Lovers of the Holy Cross of the Vinh Diocese and, most recently, the Holy Spirit Tanzanian Sisters into their home and into their hearts. These international guests are not merely visitors, they are embraced as family, as co-pilgrims on the journey of faith and service.

The Vietnamese Sisters have been with us for several years, studying English and theology at Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa. Many come from communities shaped by resilience and deep devotion. They bring with them a rich cultural and spiritual heritage. Their presence has deepened the communal prayer life and broadened the global perspective of the Dubuque Presentation community. Similarly, the Tanzanian Sisters, with their joyful spirit, have enriched the Presentation mission with new energy. While here only for a three-month sabbatical, these sisters longed to be of help and service wherever and to whomever.

Living together, sharing meals, stories and ministries, the sisters have created a tapestry of intercultural communion. It is a living witness to the Presentation charism, a radical openness to God's unfolding call, wherever it may lead and whomever it may include.

As one sister reflected on the sabbatical visit of the Tanzanian Sisters: "During their time of 'refreshment' after serving in community leadership, they expressed their gratitude for the warm welcome and for the gift of time

for prayer and renewal at Mount Loretto. Thanks to their presence here, I, too, was 'refreshed' as we recalled meeting 25 years ago when I was blessed by their gifts of hospitality, eagerness to learn and living joyfully in the Spirit."

This reflection underscores the mutual enrichment that radical hospitality brings, not just to those welcomed, but to the hosts as well.

This intercultural hospitality is not without its challenges. Language requisites, cultural differences even the logistics of finding their way around a new building require patience and humility. But the sisters embraced these challenges as opportunities for growth.

Bold and Generous Move

The Presentation Sisters' commitment to radical hospitality is not confined to their motherhouse walls. It extends to the very structure of their physical space. In a bold and generous move, the sisters will soon be relocating within their own building to make room, with hope and anticipation, for the Presentation Lantern Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded by the sisters to offer welcome, one-on-one English tutoring and compassionate companionship for adult immigrants striving to better their lives. The center will move into their new space in 2026.

This decision is far more than a logistical shift — it is a profound act of mission. At the heart of the Presentation mission is a call to respond to the needs of the times, to stand with those on the margins and to foster a community where all can thrive. For more than 20 years, the Lantern Center has embodied the values the sisters hold dear: hospitality, education and advocacy. By making space for this ministry to grow, the sisters reaffirm their belief that

mission must always lead, even when it requires sacrifice. They are choosing to prioritize community impact over comfort, collaboration over control.

This transition reflects the sisters' deep understanding that buildings are not just places to live, they are instruments of ministry. By sharing their space, they are extending their legacy of hospitality to new partners in service. It is a continuation of Nano's vision: to go out into the streets, to meet the needs of the day and to do so with courage and compassion.

The Sisters of the Presentation have always been guided by the light of Nano, the "Lady of the Lantern." Her legacy is one of fearless love and tireless service. Today, that lantern still burns brightly in Dubuque — in the welcome of Vietnamese and Tanzanian Sisters, in the opening of space for new ministries and in the daily acts of kindness and courage that define the Presentation way.

Radical hospitality, in this context, is a way of life. It is the daily decision to see Christ in the other, to make room for transformation and to trust that love will always lead us deeper into community.

As the sisters continue to live this call, they invite all to consider: What spaces in your lives — physical, emotional, spiritual — can be opened to others? How might we, too, practice radical hospitality in our homes, our workplaces, our communities?

In a time when many are building walls, the Sisters of the Presentation are building bridges. And in doing so, they are reminded that hospitality is not just about welcome — it is about witness. It is about showing the world what love looks like when it is lived boldly, generously and without reservation.

Presentations Worldwide Celebrating 250 Years

by JOEL THORESON, ARCHIVIST

As Dubuque Presentation Sisters wrap up their 150th celebration, Presentation people around the world prepare to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the first Presentation community in Cork, Ireland. This story began with a woman named Nano Nagle, a woman of unwavering faith, fierce compassion and extraordinary courage.

Nano's mission among the poor began decades before the founding of her community. In 1754, she opened her first small school in a mud cabin on Cove Lane in Cork. With a thatched roof and two earthen-floored rooms, it soon held 30 girls receiving what was, for them, the only accessible educational opportunity, a forbidden Catholic education. The school expanded quickly, serving 200 students in two buildings and extending its reach to the north side of Cork. Throughout this work, Nano relied on the support of many helpers who shared her desire to uplift the poor.

Hoping to strengthen and expand her educational mission, Nano welcomed the arrival of the Ursuline Order from France and supported the construction of their convent on Cove Lane in 1770. She had anticipated that the Ursulines would carry on the teaching of poor children, but their rule of enclosure restricted their outreach, and their ministry grew to include wealthier girls in their boarding school. Recognizing the need for a community dedicated exclusively to the poor, Nano took a courageous step.

In January 1775, she gathered two of her trusted school helpers, Elizabeth Burke and Mary Fouhy, into her home on Cove Lane. On Christmas Eve of that same year, Mary Ann Collins joined them, marking the quiet but profound beginning of a new religious community called the Sisters of the Charitable Instruction of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The community eventually changed their name to the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a fitting title for a woman whose devotion to the Presentation inspired her life's work.

After Nano's death in 1784, their mission continued to flourish, extending to Mooncoin, Ireland, in 1830, and eventually to Dubuque, Iowa, in 1874. Nano's spirit of selfless service became the spark that eventually spread around the world, inspiring Presentation congregations on nearly every continent.

As Presentation Sisters worldwide honor 250 years since Nano and her companions began this remarkable journey, the Dubuque Presentation community reaffirms their commitment to walk forward with the same courage that sustained these early founders. They are called to practice that same trust: to believe that the seeds they plant will bear fruit, that their presence matters and that the mission will continue to evolve. This global anniversary serves as a reminder that they are part of something much larger than themselves. Just as those before them trusted the process, so too must they carry Nano's light into places still waiting to be illuminated.



*In the silence of the night, a lantern gave its glow,
Nano walked the narrow streets, where few would dare to go.
She carried hope for all children, a flame that still survives,
Two hundred fifty years, her spirit is alive.*

*From Cork to every nation, her vision took its flight,
A family of compassion, united in the Light.
Across all seas and all borders, her mission calls us still,
To stand with all the silenced, in love and in goodwill.*

*Our voices from all nations, rising evermore,
Bound by love and purpose, one people, one call.
In every stand for justice, in every heart consoled,
Her lantern burns within us, a vision to behold.*

*Rise, all you people, lift up your eyes,
The lantern still guides us, the flame never dies.
Through trials and triumphs, our story still unfolds,
With justice and mercy, our hearts brave and bold.
With justice and mercy, Nano's vision still grows.*

International Presentation Association

Social Justice Actions

Indigenous Peoples' Day Proclamation

On October 6, members of the Dubuque Sisters of St. Francis, Sisters of the Presentation and Sisters of Charity, BVM, came before the Dubuque City Council to proclaim October 13 as Indigenous Peoples' Day in Dubuque, Iowa.

Over the past two years, these congregations and their associates have participated in the Land Justice Futures Program, a national initiative exploring reparation and reconciliation efforts for injustices experienced by Indigenous peoples.

The proclamation seeks to bring greater understanding to the people of Dubuque regarding Indigenous cultures and the enormous contributions they have made and continue to make on our nation.



Left to right: Dave Heiar, Franciscan associate; Sister Ann DeNicolo, BVM; Mayor Brad Cavanagh; Sister Suzanne Gallagher, PBVM; Nancy McCarville, BVM associate; Sarah Smith, Dubuque County Reads Program Coordinator; and Lydia Sigwarth, Dubuque County Library District Engagement Librarian witness the proclamation at a City Council meeting.

Transforming What is Broken

The Sisters of the Presentation recently donated a broken down car to the Iowa Public Radio (IPR) Vehicle Donation Program, turning an unused vehicle into a gift that continues to serve others. While the car may no longer be running, its value now helps keep Iowa Public Radio's trusted news, inspiring music and rich cultural programming on the air for listeners across the state. Vehicle donations generate over \$250,000 for IPR each year. As a community-based network funded entirely by Iowans, this donation is one more way the sisters extend their mission of service and stewardship to support the common good.



A broken-down car leaves the Mount Loretto grounds for the Iowa Public Radio Vehicle Donation Program to support statewide news and cultural programming.

Ignatian Family Teach-In for Social Justice

In November, the Sisters of the Presentation participated in the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Social Justice in Washington, D.C., the largest annual Catholic social justice gathering in the United States. The event brings together thousands of students, educators and faith leaders for workshops, keynote sessions and advocacy training rooted in Ignatian spirituality. Their participation reflects the sisters' ongoing commitment to justice, dialogue and active engagement in shaping more compassionate and equitable communities.



Dubuque justice promoter Dave McDermott joins Sister Mary Catherine Redmond, PBVM (New Windsor), in representing the Presentation Sisters at the Ignatian Family Teach-In for Social Justice.



Left to right: Sister Marge Healy and Presentation associates Dora Serna and Billie Greenwood represent Dubuque Presentation people at a Binational Encuentro, expressing solidarity with migrants.

Hospitality Without Boundaries

Pilgrims of Hope

by BILLIE GREENWOOD, PRESENTATION ASSOCIATE

Dubuque Presentation people, Sister Marge Healy and associates Dora Serna and Billie Greenwood, represented the Presentation community at a powerful event expressing solidarity with migrants. They joined a gathering of Roman Catholic bishops from the United States and Mexican dioceses, clergy and faithful from both sides of the U.S./Mexico border at San Luis, Arizona, and San Luis Río Colorado in Sonora, Mexico. All united in a prayerful procession that literally crossed the international border and culminated in a Eucharistic celebration in a gathering called the Binational Encuentro.

Eight bishops from U.S. and Mexico gathered on October 12, for the binational encounter, “Migrants, Pilgrims of Hope in Christ.” The Dubuque trio witnessed the bishops sign a joint declaration to reinforce the Church’s pledge to accompany migrants on their journey.

That document affirms that “in the Church, no one is a stranger” and emphasizes that the hope we receive through Christ “transcends every border, every barrier and every source of division.”

The event began with a procession crossing the border, led by a migrant family as a symbol of hope and visibility. Bishops carrying the Jubilee Cross, clergy and hundreds of participants from both nations joined in prayer and song. The gathering continued with a bilingual, binational Mass at the Immaculate Conception Parish in San Luis Río Colorado.

In his address, Bishop John P. Dolan of the Diocese of Phoenix stated, “We sign our names not just as a symbolic gesture on this day but as an ongoing commitment to foster this work in our Dioceses ... to work for migration with dignity through prayer, word and action.”

Sister Marge, Billie and Dora also attended outreach and awareness-building sessions with more than 26 dioceses and civil society earlier that day. There they heard from activists and ministers who shared the challenges they face as they accompany the migrant communities they serve.

The three brought symbols of the migrants who live in the Dubuque archdiocese and of those affected by the 2025 deportation initiatives.

Dora reflected, “Being with this large group of people reminded me of what the church represents. A sense of a united community was tangible from the moment we arrived in Yuma. We were strengthened when we were welcomed by the families of the San Judas Tadeo parish in San Luis. Their radical hospitality showed by the food they shared with us, by walking with us in pilgrimage and being united by a shared faith in God and love of neighbor. There were no strangers, just a common ground of kindness.” She also noted that seeing so many youth involved gave her hope that the next generations will continue advocating for human rights and, in particular, for a better immigration system in our country.

Sister Marge appreciated learning more about the impact of U.S. policy on Mexico from Sister Magda Silva Rentería, a Josephine Sister from Mexico City. She explained that before January 20, 2025, Mexico was treated as a pass-through country by migrants. After January 20, Mexico became the end of the trail for them. Migrants choose to emigrate out of desperation. They now have nothing to return to and nowhere to go.

Before January 20, U.S. foreign aid received by Mexico helped with provisions for people in transit. Now, that funding has stopped. Thus, Mexico and its citizens are forced to deal with migrants without assistance. This strains their limited resources. Criminal elements create larger issues. They target migrants for human trafficking, abductions, kidnapping and extortion, endangering their lives. Women migrants report multiple rapes.

“As a Church, we need to pray, yes, but we also need to act,” urged Sister Magda, inviting all people to see what is happening, to stand up, to speak up and to act.

The Presentation community commissioned the three representatives at the Sunday Mass on October 5. Their travel was sponsored by the Presentation community, whose advocacy for women and children is central to their mission and is further supported by the Women and Children Justice Team.

This binational encounter stands also as a prophetic reminder that migrants are, as Pope Leo XIV notes, “messengers of hope” and brothers and sisters to be welcomed. Migrants, indeed, are not a problem to be solved.

2025 Annual Appeal

Journey of Transformation

**Transformation is not a single step —
it is a pilgrimage of the heart and spirit.
Like Nano Nagle carrying her lantern
through the dark streets of Cork,
we walk with courage into the unknown,
trusting the light we carry will guide the way.**

As we move into 2026, the Sisters of the Presentation carry forward the spirit of our 150th anniversary with gratitude and renewed purpose. We step boldly into a future that is unknown yet filled with possibility, promise and opportunities for transformation. Guided by the same resilient spirit that shaped our beginnings, we continue to listen deeply to the needs of the times.

The sisters remain committed to walking with the vulnerable, supporting women and children, confronting injustice, caring for Earth and extending radical hospitality. From teaching immigrant children in 1874 to today’s work in education, advocacy and environmental justice, our mission continues to be grounded in action.

Like Nano Nagle walking the dark streets with her lantern, our journey of transformation moves step by step — seeing clearly where we are, envisioning what God calls us to become and committing our hearts to the path ahead. Today’s world calls us to shine Nano’s lantern more intentionally into the dark places of the global community. Conflict, poverty, displacement and climate change invite us to act with courage and compassion.

Your partnership makes this possible. Your generosity fuels scholarships, supports immigrant families, expands solar energy efforts and empowers survivors of human trafficking. Together, with our partners, we carry Nano’s light into the world where hope is needed most, standing with those on the margins.

Gifts to the 2025 Annual Appeal help tend this light. Donations can be made online at www.dbqpbvms.org by clicking the *Donate Now* button. For more information, please contact Karen Tuecke in the Partners in Mission Office at 563-588-2008 ext. 109 or partnersinmission@dbqpbvms.org.

*May your holiday season overflow
with love, joy and cherished moments.*



Left to right: Sister Diana Blong enjoys engaging others in ministry, including coordinating with Vicki Leidal, one of three team leaders in “WE CARE” card ministry to the homebound and elderly, as a way of connecting bi-monthly with the parish.

A Faithful Journey of Service

Sister Diana Blong

by JANE BUSE-MILLER, COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

For more than five decades, Sister Diana Blong has carried Nano Nagle’s lantern of hope into places near and far, and for the past 17 years she has offered that same steady light to the people of Immaculate Conception Parish in Charles City, Iowa. Her ministry is rooted in presence, as she becomes the “hands, heart and feet” of the parish, while inviting others to share in compassionate service. In response to calls for assistance with food, transportation or housing needs, she connects individuals with vital community resources. She meets families in their grief as they plan funerals, presides at communion services, coordinates parish ministry teams and visits the hospitalized, the homebound and residents in care centers.

Sister Diana’s days expand further into parish life through assistance with the weekly parish bulletin, support for justice and peace initiatives, accompaniment of marginalized families, especially those from Hispanic and

Filipino communities and coordinating special celebrations and outreach. This quiet, steady work reflects the heart of pastoral ministry, where compassion meets daily realities.

Sister Diana speaks often of the privilege of offering a caring presence. Many formative moments for her have come from witnessing the patience and steadfastness of those who suffer. Their courage in sharing their stories has been both humbling and a grace. She remembers families she accompanied through hardships, including times when she was asked to testify on their behalf during adoption procedures or in court cases. These experiences stretched her in her desire to promote justice and to walk with others through both uncertainty and hope. She names the power of simply “being there” in both joys and sorrows, taking equal inspiration from the generosity of volunteers who share their time and gifts. Their great-heartedness renews her energy and fuels her ministry.



For Sister Diana, an added delight is sharing greetings from primary students at Immaculate Conception School with their “senior friends” as generations meet, pray and encourage each other.

Her life as a Presentation Sister has carried her far beyond Iowa. A three-week mission trip to Tanzania in 1986 grew into a lifelong relationship with the Holy Spirit Sisters, eventually leading her to respond to an invitation to teach in their Theological Pastoral Centre, as well as to teach English in their formation program. Parish mission experiences to Appalachia, Haiti, El Salvador and East Africa not only broadened her awareness of global needs, but also those who participated and shared the reality of needs both near and far. She has embraced others’ description of her as a “bridge”, linking people and cultures, young and old, parish and community, local and global concerns, the cries of the poor and the cries of the earth.

Jesus’ words, “that all may be one,” have shaped Sister Diana’s ministry, as has the call of Vatican II to be so animated by love that the needs, sufferings and joys of others are felt as our own. Over the years she has learned that each journey prepares the way for the next, that God often leads us where we never expected to go and that gratitude opens the heart to grace.

Inspired by the light of Nano’s lantern, Sister Diana treasures her recent experience of walking in Nano’s footsteps in Cork, Ireland. Tracing the same path Nano traveled “through mud and marsh” renewed her call to remain faithful wherever God leads her, while reflecting on Nano’s conviction, “If I could be of any service in saving souls in any part of the globe, I would willingly do all in my power.”

Looking back, Sister Diana is most grateful for the people and places that have shaped her life and enlivened her spirit. Opportunities she never imagined expanded her horizons and deepened her understanding of God’s presence in every culture and circumstance.

Her legacy is one of presence and possibility. She has tended the light entrusted to her, and through countless acts of compassion and courage, she has helped others discover their own.

Staying Connected, Saving Resources

As part of our commitment to sustainability and good stewardship, the Sisters of the Presentation are updating our mailing list to reduce waste, lower printing and postage costs and ensure you receive the materials most meaningful to you.



You are invited to update your contact information and share your communication preferences. It only takes a minute, and your response helps us maintain meaningful connections while supporting sustainable practices.



Here’s how you can help:

**Scan the QR code with
your camera phone**



or

**Visit the link below:
bit.ly/PBVM_stayconnected
to update your information.**

Thank you

**for helping us keep communications
aligned with what serves you best!**



Left to right: Presentation Sisters and associate candidates take a guided tour of Presentation heritage sites and key Dubuque locations. Front row: Ron Condon, Maria Guadalupe Conti Condon, Shelia Urban, Sister Rita Cameron, Tracy Connolly, Terri Buss, Sister Marilyn Breen. Back row: Luis Rojas, Sister Rita Waters, RSM, Sister Corine Murray, Norma Fernandez-Pearson, Sister Margaret Anne Kramer, Gina Richman-Cesaretti and Sandy Gaul. Not shown: Sister Richelle Friedman who took the picture.



Presentation Sisters and associates spend a meaningful day of service and learning at Little Platte Catholic Worker Farm near Platteville, Wisconsin.

Walking Together in Faith

by RADIE ROBERTS and SISTER RITA WATERS, RSM, ASSOCIATE PARTNERSHIP CO-DIRECTORS

According to the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary, an associate is someone who joins as a partner, friend or companion. Dubuque Presentation associates embody this definition fully: women and men who feel called to share in the life, spirituality and mission of the Dubuque Presentation Sisters. Rooted in prayer, they support and encourage one another as they strive to live the Presentation charism, or spiritual gift, of radical hospitality both individually and within community.

Presentation association is open to women and men who desire a deeper spiritual life and a commitment to serve others. While remaining faithful to their own vocation and tradition, associates are invited to share in the prayer, mission and values of the Sisters of the Presentation. They maintain an on-going relationship with the Presentation community by participating, when possible, in gatherings, retreats or days of prayer.

Presentation Sisters and associates work together in furthering the mission of Jesus. All are encouraged to use their diverse and unique gifts to embody God's hospitality, confront injustice, steward Earth's resources and cultivate peace. While many Presentation associates live in the

Dubuque area, others reside throughout Iowa and across the United States. Long-distance connections are nurtured through mail, email, social media, video conferencing and phone calls. Inspired by the spirit and life of Nano Nagle, associates extend hospitality and compassion wherever they are, responding generously to the needs of the world.

The orientation process for interested individuals is a time of relationship building, learning and discernment. Participants pray, reflect and share with one another while learning about Presentation heritage, Nano Nagle and the founding story, the congregation's charism and mission and one another's personal journeys. This process helps individuals deepen their understanding of the Presentation way of life and consider how they might embody it. Orientation begins each September and meets monthly for approximately six to eight months, after which individuals discern whether they feel called to connect with the community as an associate.

The 2025-2026 orientation group includes 12 individuals engaged in the process. They began with an initial gathering to learn about the program and meet one another. During their second session, Sister Corine

Murray led the group on a guided tour of Presentation heritage sites and key Dubuque locations. Her narrative, informative, humorous and heartfelt, was sprinkled with antidotes that brought the Presentation history to life. Several Presentation Sisters accompanied the pilgrimage, adding their own stories and memories. The tour helped participants form meaningful connections and better appreciate the community's legacy

Seeing With New Eyes Opportunities

One way associates engage with members of the Presentation congregation is through service projects. Typically one "Seeing with New Eyes" service and awareness opportunity is held each year, organized through the Presentation Associate Partnership Office. "Seeing with New Eyes" is an opportunity to step away from the busyness of daily life that offers time for service, conversation, reflection and prayer.

On October 15, a team of sisters and associates traveled to Little Platte Catholic Worker Farm in nearby Platteville, Wisconsin, to learn about the Catholic Worker movement and organic farming practices and to help with the fall harvest. Participants learned about environmental justice and no-till farming through a farm tour before sharing prayer and a delicious meal made from the garden's bounty. Hands-on service included weeding carrots and leeks, gathering walnuts and cleaning coriander seeds and green peppers. This visit offered both education and inspiration — a reminder of how caring for Earth connects us more deeply with one another and with God's creation.

Little Platte is a small Christian intentional community dedicated to growing healthy food as an act of honoring creation, community and the Sacred. Using organic, no-till and permaculture practices, they rely on human power rather than fossil fuels, producing fruits and vegetables without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers.

In Loving Memory Associate Clara Ernst

March 11, 1936 – August 30, 2025

Associate Clara Ernst passed away peacefully on Saturday, August 30, 2025. She shared 40 years of marriage with her husband Lawrence before his passing on October 11, 1995. A devoted wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, Clara centered her life around faith, family and service.



Clara Ernst

Clara made her initial commitment to the Presentation Associate Partnership on November 11, 2014, alongside her daughter, Jean Lange, and son-in-law, Jeff Lange. In her request for initial commitment, Clara wrote, "My religious education was two weeks of summer school taught to me every summer by the Presentation Sisters. I could not imagine a more worthy call than being a sister! Being a Presentation associate just seems like a good fit for me."

She will be remembered for too many things to list here, but especially for her unwavering faith, kind heart, wisdom, sense of humor and the love she shared with all who knew her.

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.

In Loving Memory Associate Rita Stanley

August 31, 1927 — September 25, 2025

Associate Rita Stanley, mother of Sister Brigid, died peacefully surrounded by her family on September 25, 2025. She was among the Dubuque Presentation associates who marked their 25th jubilee this year, having made her commitment September 23, 2000.



Rita Stanley

Rita was a lifelong educator who began her teaching career at the age of 16, teaching in a country school. She was an active member of her parish and served in the Legion of Mary and the Catholic Daughters of America. She was artistic and had a talent for crocheting, making rosaries, blankets and Christmas ornaments.

As an associate, she ministered to the elderly — leading the rosary, delivering communion, offering transportation, mentoring and visiting the lonely. She pledged, "I will do my best to serve in the mission of Jesus and in the spirit of Nano Nagle."

Rita will be deeply missed, and the Presentation community gives heartfelt thanks for the kindness, wisdom and spirit she brought to all who knew her.

In Loving Memory Associate Mary Standing Bear

July 8, 1950 – September 27, 2025

Mary Unga Standing Bear, 75, of Huntsville, Alabama, passed away on September 27, 2025. Mary was whip smart and had a lifelong heart for others. She earned her bachelor's degree in social work from Clarke University and carried her compassion into every part of her life. Known for her warmth, wit and resilience, she touched many lives with her humor and strong spirit.



Mary Standing Bear

Mary became an associate on July 10, 2012, and became a member of the associate group Branches of the Word. In her application to be an associate, Mary wrote, "The sisters represent peace and spirituality to me. In this modern, hurried world we do not take time to reflect on the uniqueness and precious lives of individuals. I feel my charism is encouragement and listening to people, especially the lonely or overwhelmed."

A celebration of life service was held at Rivertree Church in Huntsville on October 11, 2025. Friends and family gathered in remembrance and gratitude for Mary's life.

Let us answer your questions.

**Contact Sister Rita Waters, RSM, or Radie Roberts
to learn about the Presentation Associate Partnership.**

**563.588.2008 Ext. 608
associates@dbqpbvms.org**

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Mount Loretto AND BEYOND

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

CELEBRATING 85 & 75 YEARS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE



Left to right: Sisters Marie Barth, Linus Coyle and Dolores Moes.

The Presentation community honored three Dubuque Presentation Sisters who celebrated their jubilee on October 16, 2025, at the Sisters of the Presentation (Mount Loretto). Sister Linus Coyle celebrated 85 years in religious life, entering in 1940, and Sisters Marie Barth and Dolores Moes celebrated 75 years, entering in 1950.

Throughout their combined 235 years of faithfulness, these three extraordinary witnesses of endurance, grace and dedication have been a blessing for many.

{ Read more at dbqpbvms.org/news-events/jubilees. }

It Only Takes a Minute!

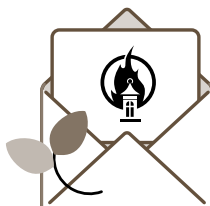
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PLEASE CONNECT WITH US.

For updated information about the activities and events of the Sisters of the Presentation, visit our website at www.dbqpbvms.org or call 563.588.2008.

PLEASE JOIN US.

December 25, 2026

Christmas Day
9:00 a.m. Mass

January 1, 2026

New Year's Day
9:00 a.m. Mass

PLEASE PRAY WITH US.

December 13, 2026

Christmas Dinner provided for
Dubuque Rescue Mission
and Hope House guests

February 2, 2026

World Day for Consecrated Life

March 8-14, 2026

National Catholic Sisters Week

21st of each month

Pray for Vocations

25th of each month

Pray for Benefactors



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