

SAVE THE DATES FOR 2020–2021

2020

Oct. 23–24

Associate Coordinating
Committee
Dubuque, IA

Dec. 8

Renewal of Associate Promise

2021

June 24–27

Congregational Assembly

Oct. 23–24

BVM Network for Women's Issues
Dubuque, IA

For more information about
associates and events, contact:
bvmassociates@bvmsisters.org.

For a complete list of events,
visit the members' website:
members.bvmsisters.org>
[Resources>Calendar of Events](#).



Need Help Accessing the BVM Members' Website?

Associates, if you need help
accessing the members'
website, contact Suzie
Wright, administrative
assistant to the Office of
BVM Life and Mission at
563-588-2351 ext. 5135.
Suzie is happy to assist you.

We would love to share your
associate events, stories, and
photos. Send submissions to:
swright@bvmsisters.org.

For a list of volunteer
opportunities, visit:
bvmsisters.org/volunteer.

BVM Associate News
will be emailed and posted
on the associate page of the
members' website. Copies
mailed on request. Contact:
swright@bvmsisters.org.



BVM Associate News

A Faithful Present, a Hopeful Future

F R E E D O M • E D U C A T I O N • C H A R I T Y • J U S T I C E

Summer 2020

Dear Circle of Friends,

As we continue to navigate
the pandemic nationwide,
churches, restaurants, and
other businesses are reopening
with restrictions in place. Each
week we learn conflicting
information to direct our paths.
There are still many unknowns
about the virus.

The Associate Coordinating
Team (ACT) had planned to
meet with associates across
the United States this summer
and fall. This past winter we
held two of these meetings in
Phoenix and California. Due to

the virus, we have been unable
to follow through with these
conversations.

During the May Associate
Coordinating Committee
Meeting, we revised our initial
plan and will begin pursuing
educational training for those
unfamiliar with Zoom.

After the training, we will
proceed using Zoom for our
creative conversations with
associates exploring the future
of association. If someone does
not wish to learn Zoom, they
may attend via telephone.



We are looking forward to
this outreach and trust that
it will only strengthen the tie
that binds.

—Jeanie, Grace, and Eileen
Associate Coordinator Team (ACT)

Zoom Meetings Connect Us When We Can't Gather in Person

The Associate Coordinating
Committee (ACC) met May
16 for a two-session Zoom
meeting instead of meeting
in person. We watched "The
Associate Vocation," a talk
by Sister Carol Zinn, SSJ. She
discussed association as a voca-
tion and charism as a gift that
belongs to the whole world.

With the current social
distancing situation making
it impossible to gather in
person, we focused on how
we can continue the Associate
Conversations started in
January 2020.

For associates with internet
access, we want to set up
Zoom sessions so more can

learn how to participate
electronically. Zoom allows
participation via telephone as
well, and practices will include
instructions for phone-only
users. For those with no access
to email, we will continue to
mail any needed information.

We also discussed the Mrs.
Berkeley Fund, understanding
that the needs are real (see, r.).

We set some dates to Zoom
again and hope to meet in
person in October. Meeting
via Zoom is not the same as in
person, but we are grateful for
this technology.

—Kathy Weishaar
ACC Committee Member

Mrs. Berkeley Fund Update

A request for clarification
concerning the tax deductibility
of Mrs. Berkeley Fund donations
has arisen. Your gift is tax
deductible as provided by law.

Here is a little more information
the Office of Development
provided: "Under tax law, the
amount of your contribution
that is deductible for federal
tax purposes is limited to the
excess of the amount of any
money and other property
contributed over the value of
goods or services provided by
our organization. Receipts of
charitable contributions are
in accordance with Internal
Revenue Code section 170(f)(8)."

Midwest Group Unites Several Congregations



My two-year service working with the Community of Associates and Religious in the Midwest Area (CARMA) was focused on planning and facilitating the 2019 biannual meeting. We wanted to feature an associate presenter who had expertise in promoting growth and renewing strength in association.

Through networking connections within regional associate groups, we selected Kathy Wade, a Mercy of the Americas associate. She custom designed a venue for what we had conceived. After leading a step-by-step examination of self-understanding and self-assessment of leadership gifts, she posed two powerful questions:

“What do you see as both gift and obstacle to a viable future for association?”

“What can you do?”

Associates and sisters left feeling empowered and spirit-filled.

CARMA offers exposure to and communication with several religious congregations. Sharing their needs and their gifts, CARMA members promote and pool their ideas to keep the group vibrant. That biannual endeavor takes a lot of preparation and effort.

—Associate Nancy McCarville



I recently stepped down from serving on the CARMA committee after serving in leadership for 12 years.

As an associate, it was an honor to represent the BVM community. During many planning meetings, I reflected on the charism of Mary Frances Clarke and what it has meant to the BVMs and associates—how it continues to keep us focused and drives us into action in our mission and ministries: “May the holy will of God be done in all things.”

Although I am no longer serving in this role, I continue to serve as an associate volunteer, staff member, Eucharistic minister, and participate in prayer groups.

—Associate Mary Chapman

Currently Associates Eileen O'Shea and Suzie Wright are the BVM representatives for CARMA.

An Evolutionary Moment



We're living in profoundly spiritual times, or so I've been telling anyone who'll listen since March when Chicago entered coronavirus shutdown.

Big questions swirl, and we've time to ponder: Will I get sick, will I die, will my 80+-year-old parents survive, how will I pay my mortgage if I lose my job, what does it mean to be the church when churches aren't open?

How can one be “essential” and barely earn a living wage? How is it possible that we've been so complacent about blatant racism?

In my bones, I know this is an evolutionary moment. Global chaos is calling forth new life, and I'm invited to participate as a hospice worker one day and midwife next.

Case in point: To help racism die, I participated in a Black Lives Matter protest. I wore a mask and kept six feet away from other marchers. We knelt for eight minutes and 46 seconds on asphalt, and I imagined what it felt like to kneel on a person's neck. I also imagined the suffering of being strangled. Surely my being at that march was insignificant, but I know as Gandhi said, it was very important.

Another example: To create a new life, I started a daily group spiritual direction

call (via Zoom) for the Beloved Retreat Community. The first night of shutdown, we reflected on what it means to be a person of faith now. In the last 100+ days, we've held each other's fears, celebrated each other's wisdom, and enjoyed each other's creativity. And every Thursday night, we dance because new life is coming.

Recently, my freelance work died off, so I'm looking to birth new ways of working in this time, too.

“Go gently,” I remind myself—and those I meet during my Zoom spiritual direction sessions—for these are profoundly spiritual times we're living in.

Then I remember a 2017 email from Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF (she was responding to my note to her):

“Yes, hold on to the bigger vision,” she wrote, “because this is the greater reality. We are caught in the crevices of patriarchal craters, but these eventually will crash to the ground (yes, there will be debris), but the phoenix of love shall rise and conquer. This is my hope and vision because the big G (no, not gravity, God) is at the heart of this adventure.”

Yes, indeed, my friends, these are profoundly spiritual times.

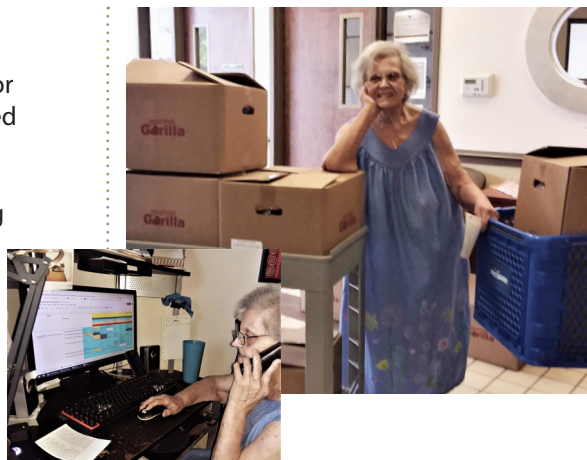
—Associate Laura Field

Elberta Raschke Lauded for Volunteer Work in Chicago

Associate Elberta Raschke was recently recognized in Chicago's *Westside Mutual Aid Newsletter* for her volunteer work and described as “one of our most reliable and dedicated volunteers!”

Elberta's efforts include calling isolated community members and ensuring that they have sufficient food and a cheerful conversation. The article celebrated her sense of friendly dedication and generosity.

The Chicago Mutual Aid network's purpose is to meet people who have lost their income and access to safe transportation, medication, or groceries. Mutual Aid emphasizes solidarity rather than charity, recognizing that well-being, health,



and dignity bind us together. Mutual Aid allows volunteers to plug in where they can make the most impact—locally.

—Eileen O'Shea
Associate Coordinator Team

How times have changed!

Who would have thought that “speaking in tongues” in the days of the Pentecost would have morphed into “speaking in Zooms” more than 2,000 years later? Yes, it’s happening.

In May about half of our cluster had our first Zoom meeting. The timing was perfect—Grace Mendez conducted a training on using Zoom at our last cluster meeting!

We reported a wide range in activities during the coronavirus restrictions.

Associate discerner Dolores Bromberg had the longest bangs on her hairdo, a common woe to which we could all relate.

Nancy Niles and Grace Mendez kept busy at their tax preparation jobs. Kathleen Hebron and Mary Waddell expressed sadness over the restrictions preventing them from doing their St. Vincent DePaul volunteer work. Peggy Daze celebrated her 40th wedding anniversary. Teresa Tiffany reported on their neighbor’s tree decorated with Christmas lights, and BVM Vicki Smurlo’s neighbors did chalk drawings on the sidewalk of the convent.

The most common activity? Jigsaw puzzles. When Rosalia “Lia” Avila said she had been on cruises, we all gasped until she explained that she cruises from her living room to the kitchen and then cruises to the den. Ahhh, yes that sounded familiar to all.

For the June meeting we scheduled time to discuss the questions included with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious Pentecost article, “To Live with the Spirit.” Grappling with the realities of the coronavirus pandemic requires letting go of *control* as well as *fear* during these times of unknowing and waylessness, thus having to place more trust in the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, we did our usual check-in to report on some of the newer quarantine activities that have evolved since our May meeting. Gardening activities topped the list: Vicki and Lia planted vegetables; Teresa discovered two never-before-seen sapling trees on her property; and Clara Schwartz’ gardener mistook her wildflowers for weeds and poof! They’re gone.

BVM Mary Lou Wetzell (new Zoom participant from Phoenix) reports more time for community games and activities at Xavier Convent. Having extra time for knitting, reading, family contacts, house remodeling, and more all reinforce *how times have changed*.

When trying to decide on something meaningful to help Erica Brown, whose daughter Melody died unexpectedly on June 5, Clara suggested a grave marker. The Montrose Cluster jumped at the idea and made contributions covering 90 percent of the cost. Erica said, “I am feeling overwhelmingly blessed by my BVM family.”

And special kudos go to Teresa Tiffany (and husband Phil) who provided their charming backyard for the reception after Melody’s burial. They thought of everything to make it a perfect setting for the family: “safe distance” seating, garden flowers all around, colorful tables, and shade from beautiful trees. Carol Walsh contributed her afternoon to help with the event too.

“Where one BVM is we all are,” so, if the cluster members felt exhausted on that Friday afternoon, that’s why.

—Vicki Smurlo, BVM



Associate Cheryl Hannah stopped by Holy Redeemer convent as part of her “drive-by” birthday party for her dad on his 104th birthday June 12. Standing outside the car are BVMs Anne Kendall (l.), Susan Stopper, and Vicki Smurlo.



The more the merrier on Zoom: Associate Grace Mendez (top row, l.), BVM Vick Smurlo and Associate Shirley Witlin; Associate Margaret (Peggy) Daze (middle row, l.) and Teresa Tiffany welcomed Arizona virtual visitor BVM Mary Lou Wetzell; as did Associates Rosalia “Lia” Avila (bottom, l.) and Clara Schwartz.



Associate Teresa Tiffany’s neighbor decorated his outside tree as a fun diversion.



Associates and BVMs gathered for a reception after the burial of Erica Brown’s daughter, Melody. Associates Carol Walsh (l.), Teresa Tiffany, Erica Brown, and BVM Vicki Smurlo share food and comfort.



BVM Vicki Smurlo’s neighbors designed meaningful messages on the convent sidewalk.

Ministry Focus Committee Membership Reveals Depth, Breadth of BVM Mission



In the spring of 2014, I received a phone call from BVM Thea O'Meara. Would I consider becoming a member of the Ministry Focus Committee? As daunting as it seemed, I said yes!

With the opportunity to observe at the April 2015 meetings, I knew participating would be a challenge. Any sisters who have served on this committee will concur.

Once a year (now twice), the grant committee reviews the 28 to 33 applications referred by any BVM or associate. The grantee's mission must align with the BVM core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice.

During the six years of my participation (a total of eight sessions), I became acutely aware of the numerous and varied missions serving the critical needs of people worldwide. We evaluated requests to help fund (usually partially) projects in Africa (school supplies, solar energy, computer needs, etc.); Central America (empowering women, providing scholarships for nurses, etc.); and for microfinancing (mosquito netting, piglets, and chickens).

Of course, there were always requests for the needs here at home: farm workers' injustices, anti-trafficking, immigration issues, accompaniment, homelessness, and female imprisonment.

In Dubuque, requests came for medical aid for Marshall Islanders, disadvantaged young and not-so-young, and transportation for the

residents at a local facility. Indeed, the needs are all around us.

The BVM history with many of these organizations goes back years and is most impressive. Some include Working Boys' Center and Damien House in Ecuador; Learning Center in Ghana; Taproots; and the National Farm Workers Ministry.

Indeed, BVM involvement is most apparent today and has been for decades. The living of the core values permeates the work of the Ministry Focus Committee. As a member, I was educated!

In addition to the worldwide awareness of the needs, I was inspired by the total dedication of the many sisters and associates with whom I have shared the table. The members brought special insight into the evaluation of each request.

Our mission was beautifully expressed in this opening prayer at one of our meetings:

"We come with open hands and open hearts, relying on your wisdom and guidance. Grace us with the ability to listen to each other and determine together how to share our abundance with applicants who are counting on our compassion and our generosity in their needs."

So when you get this call, say yes!

—Associate Barbara Roy

Wanted: Associates to Join Shareholder Education and Advocacy (SEA)



JOIN US

Shareholder Education and Advocacy (SEA) is dedicated to educating ourselves about shareholder issues, sharing that knowledge with others in the community, and participating in advocacy work on shareholder issues. Please consider joining SEA to challenge, as shareholders, the unjust practices of corporations.

SEA meets four times a year, once in the summer in person and three times by phone.

To volunteer or for additional information, please contact:

BVMs Carol Cook ccook@bvmsisters.org or Gwen Farry gfarry@bvmsisters.org.

Associates Bring Welcome Perspective to Committees and Clusters

I have very much appreciated the presence of associates on the committees in which I have participated and also as members of the cluster to which I belong. I find that associates bring a rich experience of non-BVM life, which can offer a realistic context to our thinking and decisions because they operate in circles that BVMs do not.

Furthermore, I believe that BVMs, as much as we say we are all different, can still fall into a "groupthink" that we do not recognize. Associates can help us see our group biases. I see that often they bring experiences from the business world that are invaluable to us. In addition, I find associates very generous in offering their skills in note-taking and meeting planning.

—Joellen McCarthy, BVM

2020 Congregational Assembly
Planning Committee Chair



Correction

The Spring edition of the *Associate Newsletter* incorrectly identified the person pictured with BVM Joan Stritesky. The other person in the photo is deceased Associate June Kenkel.

BVM Mission:

We are the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a community of Catholic women called to live the mission of Jesus through our core values of

FREEDOM, EDUCATION, CHARITY, AND JUSTICE.

BVMSISTERS.ORG
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