

SAVE THE DATES FOR 2021

May 14–16

Associate Coordinating Committee Meeting (Virtual)

June 22–28

Congregational Assembly (Tentative)

Oct. 22–23

Associate Coordinating Committee Meeting

Oct. 23–24

BVM Network for Women's Issues

Dec. 8

Vow and Promise Renewal

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

Did You Know?

 BVM Associates have a private Facebook group dedicated to just us. If you are interested in being added to the group, please let your associate coordinator know how to reach you on Facebook.

Contact Us

For more information about associates and events, contact:

bvmassociates@bvmsisters.org.

Submit your associate events, stories, and photos 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.



View from the new BVM Center offices in downtown Dubuque, IA.

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

Winter 2021

Dear Circle of Friends,

Happy New Year! Wow, what a year 2020 was, and I hope that 2021 can only go up from here.

When I say statements such as that, I immediately reflect and feel disappointed with myself, as I am so very blessed and certainly have so much when others have so little. Is this the human condition, or is this just me?

We are starting the New Year with a new column in the *Associate Newsletter* titled, "An Associate Reflection." We invite you to share, "What does being an Associate mean to me today?" Please consider writing 100-200 words for the column in an upcoming newsletter, and

be sure to read the first two in this series (by Dan Abben and Sharon Scully on pages 2–3).

For questions or submissions, please contact Lori Ritz, Director of the Office of BVM Life and Mission, at: lritz@bvmsisters.org or 602-339-3034.

Peace and joy to you this New Year!

—Jeanie Fritscher
For the Associate Coordinator Team



Aspiring Associates in Ecuador are (l.) discerner Sr. Gladys Robles, Hermanas Marianitas; Associates Sonya Rendón, Sandra Molano, and Pat McTeague; discerner Sr. Isobel (Fanny) Bolanos, Hermanas Marianitas; Annie Credidio, BVM; and discerner Germania Moran gathered at a social distance.

Peace and greetings from Guayaquil!

This photo, taken Nov. 29 at Nuevo Mundo, was of our first in-person associate gathering. The group's first three meetings were virtual.

Due to internet problems in our three aspiring associates' neighborhoods, we missed several meetings and finally held

this meeting as a face-to-face gathering. All wore masks and sat at different tables.

The sharing was wonderful. It is a great support group during these uncertain times!

—Annie Credidio, BVM

Advent on the Air

For the previous two years, the Dubuque associates held an Advent Lessons and Carols service at the Mount Carmel Motherhouse. This year necessitated the creation of a virtual BVM Community Advent Service.

This virtual event allowed the planning committee, comprised of Dubuque associates, to extend an invitation to participate to associates across the country.

Associates read passages of Scripture, poetry, and prose. Others created music. Dubuque Associate Maureen Frommelt painted an original piece of art that portrayed relationships between the congregation's four core values and the four standard themes of Advent.

The segments were recorded via Zoom and Microsoft Teams during late October and early November and then compiled into a video presentation. The final video played weekly at Mount Carmel Bluffs throughout Advent. It was available online for other sisters and associates to view until just after Epiphany.

A big thank you goes out to the associates who participated in this year's program: Kraig Pfiffner, Kimberly Emery, Sherry Jacobs (and her husband Steve), Nancy Niles, Marabeth Freund, Jill Burleson, Blanche and David King.

Special appreciation also goes to the other members of the Associate Advent



Technology allowed (l.) Associates Andy Schroeder, Christine Olsem, and Marabeth Freund to expand their Lessons and Carols audience far beyond Dubuque, Iowa.

Program Planning Committee 2020: Christine Olsem, Katie Pfiffner, and Andy Schroeder.

Appreciation also goes to the Communications and Information Technology Departments and Meredith Hubanks, coordinator of events and resident services, for their assistance given to broadcast this project sponsored by the Office of BVM Life and Mission.

**—Associate Suzie Wright
For the Advent Program
Planning Committee 2020**



Associate Maureen Frommelt, of Dubuque, Iowa, created original art for this year's Advent Lessons and Carols Service.

Associate Reflection: "My" Church



A few years ago after I had been an associate for several years, I was sitting in the chapel at Wright Hall in Chicago waiting for a priest to show up for afternoon Mass.

He had forgotten he was scheduled. Instead of canceling the service, the BVMs took over with readings and prayers. We even

received Communion with pre-consecrated hosts.

It was at that time that I first realized that this is "my" church. The ritual of Mass gathers us, but we shouldn't be dependent on it.

In the early days, like-minded people gathered to learn, pray, comfort and assist each other, teach, debate, and grow together. I haven't found much

of that when I attend a parish church. Often I don't know even the names of the people around me, let alone what personal challenges they might have with which I could assist.

"My" church provides all the opportunities listed above. Thank you for welcoming me.

—Associate Sharon Scully

Montrose Cluster: Discerning at a Distance

The Montrose Discerners met two days prior to our BVM Nov. 1 birthday to immerse ourselves further into our BVM history. We held a birthday celebration with a few decorations and a review of BVM life at that time. Any excuse for a party will do!

California's perfect weather allows us to meet outside on the Montrose patio—masked and safe distanced . . . and well, yes, with jackets as needed.

Discerners Dolores Bromberek and Faith Holland meet regularly with Associate Cheryl Hannah and others from the Montrose Cluster. The meetings open with a discussion of

Creating Community by Ann Harrington, BVM chapter by chapter. We read this together per Dolores' request and with the admission that, "If I have to read this on my own, I probably won't do it." Even for a seasoned BVM like myself, it's been enriching to review our history again.

We all share an enormous amount of respect for our early members' courage, endurance, prayer, and trust, thus enhancing our understanding of their and our living the core values.

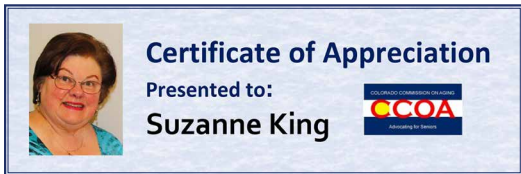
And that's what we're all about, right?

—Vicki Smurlo, BVM



Discerners (l.) Dolores Bromberek and Faith Holland meet regularly with members of the Montrose Cluster, including Vicki Smurlo, BVM.

Colorado Associate Suzanne King Surprised by Certificate of Appreciation



Suzanne King is a celebrated volunteer and one of the unique people known as associates.

BVM Betty Voss says, "Suzanne was an active associate in California before

moving to Colorado and there, continued her ministry to others."

Suzanne's dedication to volunteerism was recognized with a Certificate of Appreciation from the Colorado Commission on Aging celebrating her many years of volunteer community service. She provided and continues to provide "exemplary work" to older people in Colorado.

"During the last 10 months

of COVID-19 in Colorado, she demonstrated extreme commitment and bravery, going above and beyond to serve Colorado's older adults," the certificate says.

Well done, Suzanne!

Thank you to Betty Voss, BVM for providing a quote and a copy of Suzanne's certificate and award letter. The contents of this article are excerpts from her award and Betty's quote.

Associate Reflection: Community of Saints



When reflecting on the meaning of association, I can't help but focus on the congregation as a community of saints.

As an associate, the BVM Circle of Friends is a community with which I am able to find support when I'm struggling (I received so many encouraging words when

finishing my dissertation!) and a group with whom I can celebrate when I succeed.

More recently, my experience of association has been through a call to accountability, whether by engaging in the hard work of reading about and reflecting on how I've benefited from systematic racism or by working to bring about a more equitable

and sustainable distribution of resources in my civic community.

Through my relationships with members of the BVM community, I am reminded that I cannot give up, I cannot become disheartened, and I cannot not act on behalf of justice in the world today.

—Associate Dan Abben

Associates in Virtual Action

Keeping Our Promises, Our Spirits Up, and Christmas Traditions



Promise Renewal

On Dec. 8, Associate Coordinator Eileen O'Shea held a Promise Renewal Service via Zoom that was attended by more than 30 associates and a few sisters. A few people who were present were (top to bottom, l.) Associates Mary Agnes Leonard, Jeanie Fritscher, Diane Broderick, Marilyn Highlander-Pool, Eileen O'Shea, Virginia Piecuch, Michele Miller, Samira Towfic, Sharon Scully, Maureen Frommelt, Paula Schmidt, Marybeth Coleman, Christine Olsem, and Therese Hawks.



Trivia Pals

This merry band of trivia nuts has gathered on Saturday evenings since March to laugh, share stories, and eventually answer trivia questions: (top, l.) Veronica Higgins, BVM; Associates Suzie Wright (and her daughter Beth); Nancy Niles; (bottom, l.) Grace Mendez (and Quinn, her grandchild); and Roberta White, BVM. Sometimes others have joined in the fun too. What fun things are you doing to keep laughing?



"O Come, All Ye Faithful"
John Celentano, Associate
and Mary Lou Reid, Associate

Christmas Carols

BVMs and associates' Christmas spirit and carols spread far and wide with 391 views on YouTube.

 **Watch the video:**
youtu.be/kUwmHYVvkjM



Associate Coordinating Committee

These smiling associates and sisters comprise the Associate Coordinating Committee, which met Jan. 24 for its quarterly meeting: (top, l.) Associates Eileen O'Shea, Grace Mendez, Kathy Weishaar, Lori Ritz, and Jeanie Fritscher; BVMs Vick Smurlo and Mary Frances Reis; Associate Susan Hoerger; BVM LaDonna Manternach; and Associate Michele Miller. Members host ongoing Zoom socials for associates and sisters.

Eileen and Associate Marybeth Coleman will host a Lenten Reflection Series beginning Sunday, Feb. 21, at 2:30 p.m. CST.

We Remember Our Associate



Jean Hedberg

July 10, 1930–
Nov. 22, 2020

Acceptance:
May 9, 1996

Read obituary:
[bvmsisters.org/
associate-obituaries](http://bvmsisters.org/associate-obituaries)

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
MEMBERS.BVMSISTERS.ORG




Sisters of Charity
of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Freed by Love, Acting for Justice
1100 Carmel Drive | Dubuque, IA 52003-7991 | 563-588-2351