

## SAVE THE DATES FOR 2021

**August 10**  
Zoom Social  
with Grace Mendez

**August 11**  
Exploring Intersections:  
Eliminating Gun Violence,  
Virtual

**August 17**  
Zoom Social with  
Vicki Smurlo, BVM

**September 8**  
Exploring Intersections:  
Economic Justice, Virtual

**September 14**  
Zoom Social  
with Grace Mendez

**September 21**  
Zoom Social with  
Vicki Smurlo, BVM

**October 12**  
Zoom Social  
with Grace Mendez

**October 13**  
Exploring Intersections: Food  
Security, Virtual

**October 19**  
Zoom Social with  
Vicki Smurlo, BVM

**October 22**  
Associate Coordinating  
Committee Meeting, Zoom

**October 23**  
BVM Network for  
Women's Issues, Zoom

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

## Contact Us

For more information  
about associates and  
events, contact:  
[bvmassociates@bvmsisters.org](mailto:bvmassociates@bvmsisters.org).

Submit your associate  
events, stories, and photos  
to: [swright@bvmsisters.org](mailto:swright@bvmsisters.org).

For a list of volunteer  
opportunities, visit:  
[bvmsisters.org/volunteer](http://bvmsisters.org/volunteer).

**BVM Associate News**  
will be emailed and posted  
on the associate page of the  
members' website. Copies  
mailed on request.



# 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 2021

## Dear Circle of Friends,

We hope you are enjoying the summer free from some of the pandemic restrictions that dampened the summer of 2020. It's good to be able to gather again with our families and friends.

One of the highlights of this summer has been participating in the 2021 BVM Congregational Assembly, held June 22–27. The theme of the Assembly—"Be alert! Be present! We are doing something new!"—certainly defined our time together.

Approximately 30 associates attended as either non-voting participants or observers, the most ever to participate in an Assembly.

Associates who attended as non-voting participants shared tables with sisters engaged as non-voting participants. The discussions were rich as we shared our thoughts on the questions posed.

Our voices were heard and contributed to the two direction statements, which will lead the BVM community in the coming years.

While we did not participate in the election of the new leadership team, we were glad to be able to witness it.

Congratulations to LaDonna Manternach, Lou Anglin, Kathy Kandefer,



Kate Hendel, and Carol Marie Baum!  
Be assured you have our support.

We look forward to gathering with you in the coming months, both in person and on Zoom.

Blessings,

—Eileen O'Shea

For the Associate Coordinating Team (ACT)

**Banner photos:** The Assembly Planning Committee sent handmade prayer spirals to all registered participants of this year's BVM Congregational Assembly to focus prayers visually and tactilely.

Associate Laura Field (l.) and BVM Ruth Evermann celebrate a holy joyful moment of worship during the Assembly.



## Weaving a New World: Biblical Reflections from Women's Wisdom

This year's BVM Network for Women's Issues on Oct. 23 will be a Zoom-based experience with reflections on scriptures from the perspective of women's wisdom.

Barbara E. Reid, O.P., a Dominican Sister of Grand Rapids, Mich., will facilitate.

The program committee will send registration forms and information on costs by late August.

## Consoling Phone Ministry Sends and Receives Love

Never underestimate the power of the phone! Whether it's a quick greeting, a lengthy conversation, or respectfully listening, the voice of someone who cares is a gift beyond measure for friends or family.

Associate Jill Burleson is not only ready to receive calls for help or companionship, but she is proactive in seeking the well-being of others, providing prayer, and advice—assistance of all kinds.

"I have a seriously ill friend who is incapacitated and lives a few states away. It's such a blessing to help her remotely and offer the personal support that is not readily available," Jill says. "Another friend who battled lung cancer for years passed away in January. With her illness and the pandemic, our phone conversations and texting provided a meaningful

and powerful way to connect. I am beyond grateful for these opportunities."

The phone is also the medium for group prayer three times a week and for spontaneous prayer when requests come. It has been the chief connector for our Saint Louis cluster.

Whether it's voice, photo, email, or texting, Jill knows the responses to her messages are always gratitude and hope revived.

During this pandemic time, I'm sure we have all come to appreciate the consoling instrument of sending and receiving love and peace.

—Mary Frances Reis, BVM



Associate Jill Burleson conducts her prayer ministry from her home in Pacific, Mo.



## What are BVM Ministry Partnership Grants?

BVM Ministry Partnership grants give financial assistance to organizations with which BVM sisters or associates have current, firsthand knowledge of a specific ministry, program, or project.

The grants provide a means of outreach to others according to BVM vision and values.

### Can I, as an associate, write a letter of reference for a Ministry Partnership Grant?

Yes! Several associates have written successful letters of reference as part of the application packet for Ministry Partnership Grants showing how an organization's program or project

provides direct service to the poor, powerless, or oppressed.

The letters share how the projects can create systemic change. Sisters and associates provide examples of how the program or project manifests the vision and core values of the BVM congregation.

Recently Sean Bradley, associate from Dubuque, wrote a letter of reference for the Friends of Kenyan Orphans in Meru, Kenya. Sean and his wife, Betsy, worked with the founders of the group while in American Samoa in 2002–2004 and have been friends since that time.

The Ministry Partnership Grant to this organization helped provide bedding, clothing, and footwear at St. Clare Centre, which is a safe home for young



women who have experienced a variety of negative, life-threatening situations.

Do you know of an organization with a program or project that could benefit from a Ministry Partnership Grant? Contact Ann Sweeney, development director and grant administrator, at [grants@bvmsisters.org](mailto:grants@bvmsisters.org) for more information.

—Lori Ritz  
Director, Office of BVM Life and Mission

## Association Strengthens and Inspires



During most of 2020, I worked in a long-term care facility in Dubuque, Iowa. One day last fall, walking down the corridor to where I would begin my shift, I passed Paul's room.

I knew Paul had suffered a serious fall a few days earlier and that his prognosis was not good. That was why he had moved from the memory care unit to this central wing.

I paused to peer through his open doorway. Things had changed. I could see Paul's hours were numbered. He was unconscious. His breath labored, each exhale and inhale equally taxing.

No family was there to sit with him—COVID-19 rules. Staff could only

check in periodically. So many needs and short-handed again.

Before leaving to tend to my charges, I approached his bedside and held his hand, just for a minute.

And during that minute, I did what I have felt drawn to do since I had started working there: I asked Mary Frances Clarke and the choir of BVMs in heaven to come and sit with Paul. Please stay with him. Don't let him die alone.

I was certain my silent prayer was joined to the prayers of the entire BVM community. Inspired by the congregation's ministry of presence for dying sisters, I knew we were with him. And all would be well.

This, my dear sisters and brothers, is an important part of what association in the

BVM community is to me.

Though we can feel overwhelmed and inadequate in the face of challenges, we draw strength and inspiration from this body. We rely on the community's love and kindness. We pray for each other, with each other, through each other.

Another Paul, addressing the church in Corinth, wrote of the body of Christ: "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members share its joy."

United, BVMs are fond of a variation on this theme: "Where one of us goes, there are we all." It's true.

With affection and gratitude,

—Associate Sean Bradley

## A-Z Cluster Welcomes Members Coast to Coast



A benefit of writing about our cluster was discovering that we have a title: A-Z.

Another surprise was that five (past and present)

associate coordinators are members of our group: Kay Brown, Nancy Van Anne, Betty Voss, Kimberly Emery, and Jeanie Fritscher. It truly is an extraordinary group.

Some of our members are associates, and others are BVMs. Members have commented that there seems to be no difference between associates and vowed members in their contributions.

We hail from New York to Arizona. Our discussion topics are from Exploring Intersections.

The Zoom meetings number about 10 participants each time. Jeannie Fritscher sends out the link each month and a different member leads the group.

Participants have become familiar with each other using Zoom. This technology was new to most of us, but it also helps communication with other meetings.

Members expressed reasons why they consistently return to the monthly gatherings each third Wednesday of the month:

- Cindy Sullivan, BVM enjoys the group because she lives and works in upstate New York, which is not close to the community, so it helps her connect with many members each month. The

relevant topics force her to read or watch the videos.

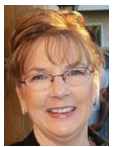
- Associate Kay Brown looks forward to being in contact with the group, many she knows or has met. Her hearing aids help her participate fully.
- Associate Hannah Spalding finds that it reinforces friendships and she is meeting new people from other places who have had a variety of experiences.

Our cluster welcomes all to participate with us any third Wednesday of the month. You won't be disappointed.

Let Jeanie Fritscher know if you would like the link: [jfritscher@bvmsisters.org](mailto:jfritscher@bvmsisters.org).

—Associate Joan Judge Mirabal

## Interdependent Core Values Guide Choices



The core values of the BVM Sisters are freedom, education, charity, and justice. These are tenets upon which I try to base my life.

I learned charity from my parents. I watched as my mother shared avocados from our tree with the Sisters of St. Joseph, who taught at my school.

My parents owned a grocery store, and my father would give groceries to anyone in need. They would send us kids to deliver food to the elderly or others in need.

My parents always donated to the church and various other charities. Their example is carried forward in my life.

In this country, we are blessed with freedom. We can make our own choices to be and do what we choose, to worship as we believe without interference.

I had the freedom to choose my faith and my path to nursing through my educational choices and other life choices.

Education is important to me as I believe that it never ends; we never stop learning. Education helps guide our

decision-making, and helps us improve our lives and the lives of others.

I believe that justice flows from all the other core values. How can we ensure that justice is carrying forward if we don't have the core values of charity, freedom, and education?

The core values are interdependent; without one, the others would not be able to flourish.

I truly believe that without the core values, I would not be the person that I am today.

—Associate Nancy Niles

# Welcome new BVM associates!

Welcome and congratulations to seven new associates for asking for and receiving the gift of Association!

The four new associates from California celebrated their commitment ceremony on July 10.

The Ecuador associates, who journeyed through discernment together, are planning a ceremony in September. Ann Credidio, BVM accompanied them.

Pictures to follow in the next edition.

## Fanny Isabel Bolaños Suárez



Fanny Isabel Bolaños Suárez lives in Durán, Ecuador, and was born in Loja, Ecuador. She attended university in both Ecuador and Rome.

Fanny is a natural medicine physician and runs a medical center that serves the poor of the community. In her leisure time, she enjoys music, gardening, and painting.

She shared that she decided to become an associate because, "I have always wanted to share dreams and hopes of service to the poorest with people who have these same ideals, and the Sisters of the BVM Congregation respond to my wishes to serve those most in need."

Ann says, "Fanny exemplifies our BVM service and mission and truly lives out the core values through her desire to accompany the poor in her daily life. She brings enthusiasm and passion for life to our BVM Association."

## Gladys Abigail Robles Montesdeoca



Gladys Abigail Robles Montesdeoca lives in Durán, Ecuador, and was born in Cuenca, Ecuador. She attended university in both

Ecuador and Rome.

Gladys is a full-time volunteer coordinator for a sewing cooperative and a women's group. In her leisure time, Gladys likes to garden, read, and take care of her pets.

She shared that she is especially called to the core value of freedom. "The value of freedom is fundamental in my life experience, because love without freedom is not love. Freedom allows me to be myself and respond responsibly to God's call."

Ann says, "I fully support Gladys in her desire to become a BVM Associate. The words freedom, charity, education, and justice are so much a part of her work and an integral part of our BVM mission and ministry."

## Germania Moran Calle



Germania Moran Calle and her husband, Nathan Shaw, live in Durán, Ecuador. She was born in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

Germania is an administrator for La Fundación Padre Damián. She met BVMs when she visited her aunt, a resident at Damian House. Germania received a Mary Frances Clarke scholarship that helped her to graduate from the University of Guayaquil.

Germania shared that, "The community of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary helped me on the path of my studies. I learned that education changes your life, and you change the world of one and others."

"Her incredible sense of mission even as a young woman was something that always drew me to working with her," Ann says, "Germania incorporates the BVM charism and core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice through her conviction of working with the most rejected in society, those affected with Hansen's Disease."

## Dolores R. Bromberek



Dolores R. Bromberek, and her husband, John, live in La Crescenta, Calif. She was born in Los Angeles.

Dolores retired from work as an information technology director three years ago. Now she fills her time with St. Vincent de Paul ministry work as the conference president at Holy Redeemer/St. James Churches in Montrose, Calif.



Candles are a traditional part of Associate Commitment ceremonies. The pictured customized flameless candles are for the new associates in Ecuador. The four new associates in California were also gifted with similar candles. Going forward each new associate will receive a personalized candle with their name and the date they celebrate association and the Heart of BVM logo.

Dolores has been companioned by Associate Cheryl Hannah and Vicki Smurlo, BVM.

She is quite grateful for the chance to learn more about Mary Frances Clarke and the BVM history as she journeyed through discernment. She especially appreciated reading *Creating Community* with the sisters and associates in Montrose.

She found “the members to be people I admire and have a great deal in common with.”

Cheryl Hannah states that Dolores, “lives the core values and has a strong devotion to God.”

Dolores looks forward to deepening “caring relationships between the sisters and associates with prayer, reflection, and working together on activities that support the BVM core values.”

### Shirley Katherine Federico



Shirley and her husband, Gilbert, (see next column) live in Roseville, Calif. She was born in Ontario, Canada. As a child, she moved to California and attended Saint John Baptist de la Salle Church in Granada Hills.

She married Gil there. They have three sons and five grandchildren. Shirley is a retired accounting clerk. Her companion has been BVM Vicki Smurlo.

Shirley’s discernment took place through meetings prior to the monthly Montrose Cluster in person and via Zoom. The Zoom sessions enabled Gil and her to continue discernment despite moving to Roseville in northern California.

Shirley states, “I respect and admire the friendship of the BVMs and would be grateful to join them in their works as a layperson . . . Jesus Christ’s call to service fulfills my daily need to help those who are less fortunate.”

BVM Vicki Smurlo says, “Shirley brings a strong faith connection to putting faith into action. She desires to help others, as is evidenced by her participation in helping feed people who are homeless and BVM Cluster activities.”

### Gilbert (Gil) Doyle Federico



Gilbert (Gil) Doyle Federico was born in Los Angeles and is married to Shirley (see previous column). His sister was former BVM Maria Miguel.

He has appreciated the BVMs ever since attending Bellarmine Jefferson High School in Burbank, Calif. He is a retired real estate appraiser. Gil’s companion has been BVM Vicki Smurlo.

Gil’s discernment with three others and attending the Montrose Cluster continued even after he and Shirley moved from southern California to Roseville in northern Calif.

He believes, “The BVM Charism is to share/promote God’s love through education and helping the poor.” He lives that philosophy through his work with Brother’s Helpers at Holy Redeemer Church in Montrose and preparing and serving meals for the less fortunate.

BVM Vicki Smurlo states, “I appreciate Gil’s enthusiasm and commitment to the discernment process, his values . . . Gil brings a willingness to be supportive and acknowledge the needs of others and address these in ways consistent with our core values.”

### Faith Dale Holland



Faith Dale Holland lives in La Crescenta, Calif., and was born in Methuen, Mass. Faith is retired from work as a dental office manager and volunteers with the St.

Vincent de Paul Society as spiritual advisor.

Faith was companioned by Associate Francine Lee and BVM Vicki Smurlo.

She journeyed through discernment with three others. She very much enjoys the sense of community she has found by attending the cluster meetings at Montrose.

“I believe that becoming a BVM Associate will help me to become closer to God, to be part of the BVM ministry and mission,” Faith says.

She has admired the BVMs ever since attending St. Robert Bellarmine Catholic Elementary School in Burbank, Calif.

Francine shared that Faith, “is a very friendly person. I recommend her highly to become an associate.” Francine and Faith have been friends since high school.

Faith looks forward to “offering hands-on assistance for the sister’s various projects” as a way of integrating the BVM charism and core values more deeply into her life.

—Associate Coordinators  
Eileen O’Shea and Grace Mendez



**BVM Vicki Smurlo (l.) celebrates the decision to become associates with Faith Holland, Dolores Bromberck, and (on the phone) Gil and Shirley Federico on May 5, 2021.**

## First Post-pandemic Meeting in St. Louis Area

Mary Nolan, BVM and Donna Day, SL hosted the first get-together of BVMs and associates at their home in June. Everyone was really thrilled to come together after this long absence.

All enjoyed a delicious brunch, catching up, prayer, and reflection.

Using May Zoom questions about leadership, the lively discussion moved into the broader issues of diversity, locally and nationally.

It was obvious that everyone is looking forward to future gatherings! It was also obvious that the undefinable BVM spirit is alive in this circle of friends.

—Mary Frances Reis, BVM



First row (l. to r.): Dennis Kelly, Associates Trinity Kelly, Christine Middendorf, Theresa Koetting, and Mary Clair Wenger. Second row (l. to r.): BVMs Agnes Marie Keena and Mary Frances Reis, Associate Jill Burluson, guest Christine Wenger, and BVM Mary Nolan.

## Associates in Action



BVMs Marjorie Heidkamp (l.), Theresa Caluori, Judy Callahan, and Liz Olsen celebrated their first in-person gathering in over a year with discerner Ann Hoefer at Judy's home in East Dubuque, Ill.



Associate Marilyn Wasmundt from Dubuque, Iowa, painted this beautiful representation of clustered associates creating Circles of Friends using photos of BVM associates for inspiration. Thank you, Marilyn, for this loving gift for all associates.

## Associate Families Connect Across the Miles . . .



One evening I received a text from Dubuque, Iowa, Associate Andy Schroeder. It just happened that Andy was visiting Phoenix with his family.

Andy asked if his family could see the Radical Reptile Fun Farm owned by Tegan Viveash and my son, Michael McAllister. Within minutes Andy and Michael were making arrangements for a Friday evening showing. And as they say, the rest is history . . . and some pretty excited kids.

—Associate Lori Ritz  
(and part-time reptile ranch hand)



Southern California sisters and associates gather to greet BVMs Mary Jean Ferry and Roberta White during their visit in June. Mary Jean and Roberta were part of the Montrose cluster before they moved to Dubuque.

First row (l. to r.): BVMs Mary Jean Ferry and Suzanne Stopper; and Associates Peggy Daze and Faith Holland. Second row (l. to r.): BVM Vicki Smurlo; Associate Teresa Piña; BVM Roberta White; Associates Bill and Francine Lee, and Carol Walsh.



Diverse Ministries Cluster of Dubuque, Iowa, members share stories of Mary Frances Clarke, Clarke University, and family fun. BVM Theresa Caluori (l.), Associate Marabeth Freund, BVMs Mira Mosle and Sara McAlpin, Associate Norm Freund, BVM Thea O'Meara, and Associates Lorie Murphy gather at the home of Betty Takes (standing), who hosted the dinner party. Not pictured: Cluster members BVM Pat Nolan and Associate Lori Ritz (photographer).



Local members of the ratification planning committee, Associate Suzie Wright (l.), and BVMs Jan Pertle and Veronica Higgins celebrate a successful completion of the BVM Congregational Assembly at Happy Joe's in Dubuque, Iowa.

## More Zoom Socials Planned

The Associate Coordinating Committee (ACC) gathered on May 15.

Comprised of associates and sisters from across the country, the group typically meets six times a year.

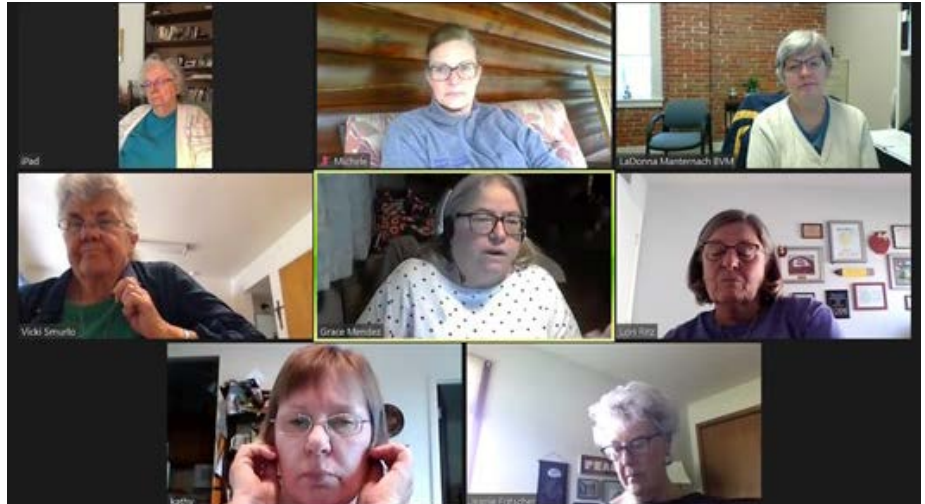
Two of these meetings are usually in-person; the rest are via Zoom. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, the group has shifted all meetings to Zoom.

The agenda for this meeting primarily consisted of updates, along with discussions about how to proceed.

The Associate Coordinator Team (ACT) gave us an update on how they continue making connections and fostering communication among associates.

Members of ACC and ACT have been hosting social gatherings via Zoom. Most of the hosts do not have a set structure for these but rather allow free-flowing conversation and personal connection time. The attendance at each of these varies depending on the day and time of the event.

The group discussed the desire to continue offering these meetings and explore new days and times to attract new people to participate.



**BVM Mary Frances Reis (top, l.), Associate Michele Miller, BVM LaDonna Manternach; BVM Vicki Smurlo (middle, l.), Associates Grace Mendez and Lori Ritz; Associates Kathy Weishaar (bottom, l.) and Jeanie Fritscher meet as the Associate Coordinating Committee.**

LaDonna Manternach, as the BVM Leadership liaison to ACC, shared updates regarding Mount Carmel Bluffs, the partnership with PHS, and plans for the upcoming Congregational Assembly in June.

Lori Ritz, director of the Office of BVM Life and Mission, shared updates on

plans to update the Associate Directory this year; partner programs with Clarke University and Wahlert Catholic High School; and laying the groundwork for future Associate Newsletters.

—Associate Michele Miller

## We Remember Our Associates

Full obituaries are posted online at:  
[bvmsisters.org/associate-obituaries](https://bvmsisters.org/associate-obituaries).



**Ann Miller**

April 24, 1935–May 19, 2021  
Commitment: Jan. 26, 1982



**Marilyn Haas**

Aug. 26, 1932–June 5, 2021  
Commitment: Jan. 1, 1992



**Ann Donlin**

Aug. 12, 1930–June 26, 2021  
Commitment: Jan. 5, 2002



**Mary Helen (Busch) Hughes**

Aug. 1, 1940–July 7, 2021  
Commitment: Aug. 14, 1994

### 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](https://bvmsisters.org)  
[MEMBERS.BVMSISTERS.ORG](https://members.bvmsisters.org)



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