

From Our Associates

Dear Circle of Friends,



The 52nd anniversary of BVM Association is June 11. Also celebrating anniversaries are Associates Marilyn

Wasmundt, Kathleen Maas Weigert, Stephena Fredette, Elizabeth Sykora, Joan Judge Mirabal, Arline Lamm Elliot, and Mary Kaiser Miller—Congratulations to all of you on your 25th anniversary of association.

I hope you were able to participate in the Zoom celebration or were able to congratulate these amazing women in your own way.

June bugs will be flying and so will I! By the time this newsletter is printed, I'll have flown to visit associates and sisters in California with a brief

stopover visit in Phoenix. At the end of the month, I'll be zooming along the winding highways in Iowa to see associates and sisters in Minnesota.

These trips are part of the strategy to identify current needs for associates in our major population areas as well as begin to look at how they can keep creating community locally while plugging into our wider BVM community. The concepts and comments from these gatherings will be shared with the steering committee. Make sure you read the committee's article in this issue for the newest information.

As always, I'll keep my eyes and ears open for your calls, texts, and emails.

—Suzie Coulthard
Associate Coordinator

Update: Associate Steering Committee

The Associate Steering Committee is planning for the August in-person session to further discern the future of the Associate Relationship.

As a precursor, the committee has added "Relationship" to its name: The Associate Relationship Steering Committee (ARSC). Associates will be invited to complete a questionnaire to help with the process. The three working groups—Interim Structure, Organizing Framework, and Communications—have been meeting monthly, working with Associate Transformation Facilitator Laura Field.

—Associate Relationship
Steering Committee

2025 Associate Calendar

June

- 24 Pilgrims of Hope Conversation and Potluck Dubuque
- 28 Pilgrims of Hope Conversation and Potluck Minnesota

July

- 10 Associate Steering Committee
- 11 MJ Meister and Nancy Moreno Associate Commitment Ceremony
- 15 Zoom Meet and Greet with Vicki Smurlo, BVM
- 26 Associates and Clarke Literacy Event

August

- 14 Associate Steering Committee
- 19 Zoom Meet and Greet with Vicki Smurlo, BVM
- 22–24 Associate Steering Committee Retreat

Discussing Discernment

It has been a privilege to participate in various associate discernment circles over the past several years. Each grouping takes on its own personality, its own direction, its own community. The discernment circle at Xavier College Prep in Phoenix is no different. A faculty member, Noemi Santaella, meets with BVM Isabel Conchos and me monthly.

Recently we have been talking about the core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice. Since our group is small, the discerner asked if other sisters and associates could join us and share how they see the core values in their everyday lives.

In March we were joined by BVM Lynn Winsor in person and Associate Jeanie Fritscher by Zoom. Each shared how the core values are present in her life on a daily basis even though they may not consciously think about them. In May we welcomed BVM Carol Marie Baum, via Zoom, who shared her insights on the core values.

To discuss the core values more practically in our own lives, we did an activity where a topic/phrase was given



Noemi Santaella (l.) and BVM Isabel Conchos share which core value comes to mind when they think of their grandmother.

and each of us shared which core value came to mind. For example, we started with the key words "Statue of Liberty." Some chose freedom, some chose justice. Another topic was "Your Kindergarten Teacher" and another "Political Gatherings." All explained the meaning behind her choice of the selected core value. It was a great way to engage in the thinking of one another as well as to deepen our understanding of what each core value means for us.

What an opportunity for me to grow! I cherish the time we spend together and the relationship we continue to build.

—Associate Lori Ritz



Clarke Gathering: Evolving With New Perspectives

Attending the recent gathering of BVMs and associates at the home of Norm and Marybeth Freud was a truly beautiful and inspiring experience. It was my first time attending and the sunny day seemed to reflect the warmth and hope that filled the space.

What moved me most was the sense of unity—singing hymns and coming together in prayer as well as reflection as one. Music has a way of opening hearts, and during that time, surrounded by both sisters and associates, I felt a profound connection to something larger than myself. The voices in the room carried not only melodies but also hope, resilience, and love.

What stood out most to me about that day was the deep sense of community

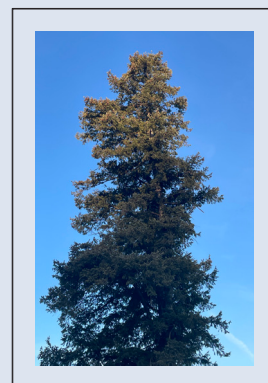
and shared hope—for the future, for Clarke University, and for the continued mission of the BVMs.

In a world that can often feel uncertain or even scary at times, the gathering offered a powerful reminder of what's possible when we come together with open hearts and with prayer. I left the gathering feeling not only connected and supported but also more hopeful for what lies ahead for the future.

I am deeply grateful for this experience. As I continue growing in my journey as an associate, I look forward to different ways to connect with others in the BVM community.

—Associate Cat Smith

More than 20 sisters and associates—current and former faculty, staff, and students at Clarke—gathered to celebrate milestones in Clarke's history.



Pondering

Every Bush is Burning

A single silent pine un-lonely,
Head upraised and
Outstretched arms,
Anointed by yellow dawn-light
And goldfinch-chanted song
Speaks its wordless wisdom—

Every bush is burning,
Every breath a prayer,
Each loaf already consecrated,
Every drop of water holy,
All is sacred ground,
And no ordinary time.

—Sean Bradley
Spiritual Care Minister

Associates Attend Spring Festival in Galena

Associate K. Kriesel organized the second annual Spring Festival in Galena, Ill., on April 27. This free, all-ages event provides an opportunity to learn and engage with the community while welcoming Spring. Costumes were encouraged.

The BVM Care for Earth committee staffed a table to share strategies for reducing plastic. Special thanks to Terrace resident Julia Castella for creating an amazing display that asked the question, "What would Grandma do?" featuring her own paternal grandmother Potenza Casella, at age 102.

Attending the festival were Associates Suzie Coulthard, Marilyn Wasmundt, Diane Kopp, Pat Maddux, Holly Hochhausen, organizer K. Kriesel (and her dog, Smores) and Associate discerner, Paul Kelley.

—Pat Maddux
Director of BVM Life and Mission



Associate Joann Crowley Beers and her husband stand beside a piece of Associate Pat O'Driscoll's art at Pat's memorial service.

