

# UNITED IN MISSION

ATLANTIC-MIDWEST PROVINCE

Transforming the world through education

September 2020

## “Holding on the Reins Through the Mud!”

If you are following us on social media, we’re featuring posts called *Mission is...* every Monday, expressing how the word “mission” is understood and lived out by the Sisters, staff and ministries of the School Sisters of Notre Dame Atlantic-Midwest Province. You can find the *Mission is...* posts on our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

This illustration was adapted by one of our province staff, featuring Sisters on a horse-drawn carriage on what appears to be a wild ride. “*Mission is...Holding on the Reins Through the Mud,*” captures a moment we all find ourselves in. With activities resuming this fall, we’ve been trudging through muddy moments these last couple months: a

new school year marked by hybrid learning and social distancing, transitioning back to the physical workplace or continuing remotely, continued protests and demonstrations in our communities in response to racism, our growing concern about climate change and the

**In unity is  
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above all.**

(4980)

anticipation of when we’ll finally have a vaccine against COVID-19. Despite the mud, we courageously hold onto the reins of faith, hope and love, leaning on one another as we continue to advance the mission of SSND.

Since our [June issue](#), we continue featuring stories of mission leadership in our sponsored and co-sponsored ministries. Central to these stories are the call to solidarity and the power of community. The words of Blessed Theresa hold true for us during these uncertain times, “In unity is our strength; therefore, we must hold to this anchor above all” (4980).

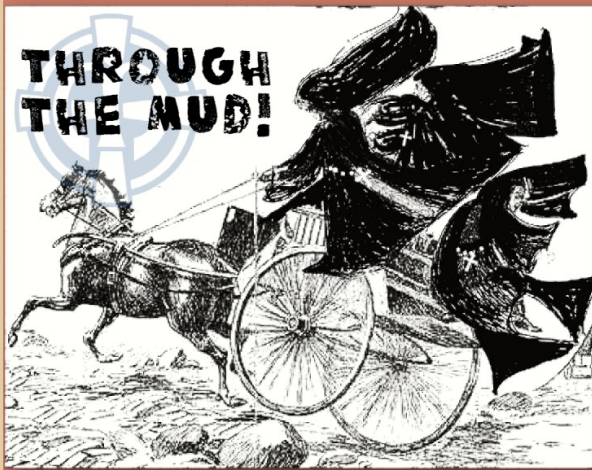
*Patrick* *Yvonne*

Patrick Laorden Associate Director Ministry Services  
Yvonne DeBruin Director Ministry Services

MISSION IS

HOLDING  
ON THE  
REINS...

THROUGH  
THE MUD!



August 17th  
*Mission is...* Post.  
Illustration adapted by  
Province Staff Member,  
Laura Stafford.

# Mission Leaders See Opportunity in Every Situation

*Joan Connelly*  
Director of Mission & Ministry  
Academy of the Holy Angels-  
Demarest, NJ

The lockdown in response to the pandemic shook the Academy of the Holy Angels (AHA) community. Spring was the time of year that the senior retreat was offered, a time for the seniors to get together to reflect on their year and share their hopes for the future. However, the campus ministry team had to think of another way to offer the retreat – they turned to a virtual gathering. Adjusting to a new norm, the team, along with the seniors, wanted to send a message of hope. One highlight of the senior retreat is affirmations, which are shared on poster boards, lifting up hopes and acknowledgments of each individual. *You are Sent* reminds us, “We are called and sent to deepen communion with God and among people wherever we are – in every place, in every time, in every situa-

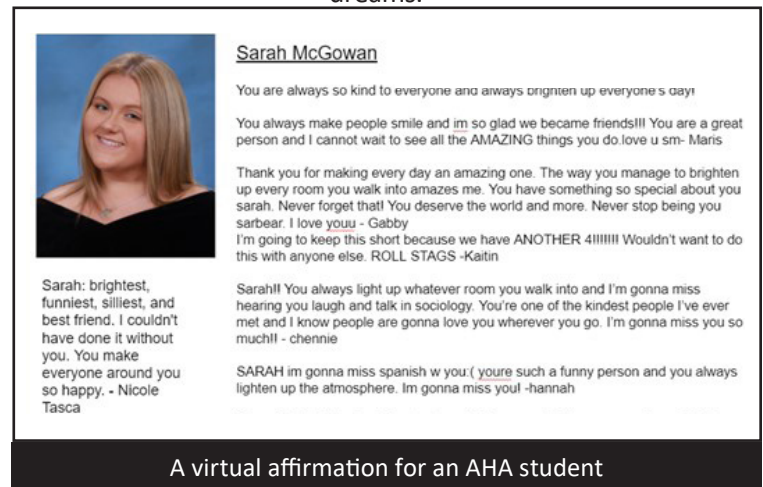
tion,” (C 9). A mission leader is one who sees opportunity in every situation. In the midst of the pandemic and demands of social distancing, a new opportunity to build community emerged through technology. The AHA seniors are those mission leaders. Taking advantage of technology, they were able to send those affirmations to one another through Google suite.

In addition to the retreat, the seniors were invited by Jean Miller, principal, to create a class video telling the AHA community who the senior class was. [You can watch the video here.](#) With courage, they came together to share a message, “We are not letting

We are not letting COVID take away our last victory.

COVID take away our last victory.” Such a poignant message from the seniors with a conclusion, “Angels fly higher.”

As they look to the next chapter of their lives, the girls of AHA will not be swayed by the present challenges, but will step forward boldly, trusting and daring to achieve their dreams.



**Sarah McGowan**

You are always so kind to everyone and always brighten up everyone's day!

You always make people smile and I'm so glad we became friends!!! You are a great person and I cannot wait to see all the AMAZING things you do love u sm- Maris

Thank you for making every day an amazing one. The way you manage to brighten up every room you walk into amazes me. You have something so special about you sarah. Never forget that! You deserve the world and more. Never stop being you sarah. I love you - Gabby

I'm going to keep this short because we have ANOTHER 4!!!!!! Wouldn't want to do this with anyone else. ROLL STAGS -Kaitin

Sarah!! You always light up whatever room you walk into and I'm gonna miss hearing you laugh and talk in sociology. You're one of the kindest people I've ever met and I know people are gonna love you wherever you go. I'm gonna miss you so much!! - chennie

SARAH im gonna miss spanish w you. (youre such a funny person and you always lighten up the atmosphere. Im gonna miss you! -hannah

Tasca

A virtual affirmation for an AHA student

# Mission Leaders Foster the Common Good

*Lucy Freeman*  
Executive Director  
Caroline House -  
Bridgeport, CT

The pandemic posed new challenges, forcing Caroline House to move towards online education. The teachers were not 100% confident they could pull off online teaching with such a small window for preparation. Helen Ramos, our program manager, saw otherwise. Normally, we have 70 students, but given the pandemic, 30 students were currently enrolled. These women were hungry for learning. In my four years here, I have come to know how close the women

are with one another in this community. Getting to know them, they are comfortable letting you know the needs within the community. For instance, one woman's husband was out of work while some families faced difficulty paying for rent and food. With these challenges, the Caroline House community knew what was coming down the pipeline.

We recently hired a grant writer and focused our efforts on raising resiliency funds. All of sudden, money started coming in. We were able to raise \$20,000! With these funds, we helped at least twenty families, pro-

viding financial assistance to cover utilities while also providing gift cards to aid them in purchasing non-perishable food items and medication. The women gave back what they did not need, lifting up the value of the common good for the Caroline House community. In my thirty years of being in social services, I have not seen this level of honesty among people, understanding basic needs.

This takes me back to the pilgrimage – I feel like I'm wearing the cloak of Blessed Theresa and Mother Caroline, doing what we have to do to do what we need to do. Caroline

(Continued from page 2)



Women currently enrolled in Caroline House programs

House has evolved into a provider of social services during these difficult times. I have learned, the more you talk about your needs, you will find out where you can get these needs met. Mission leaders are called to foster the common good. In the circles I find myself in, it's about making connections and planting seeds. We have our eyes and hearts set high amidst this pandemic – I know we can do so much more, we can do better.

## Mission Leaders Remember They Are Human

*Katie Allston*  
Executive Director  
Marian House –  
Baltimore, MD

The adjustments that we have had to make have brought me closer to the women we serve and closer to our mission. The stay-at-home orders proved to be hard for most of them because the restrictions brought back feelings of imprisonment. Many women that come to Marian House were formerly incarcerated, so the last thing we wanted was for the sense of imprisonment to creep back during their stay here. My staff and I have made it our top priority to make Marian House feel like home.

As a leader, I think mission leadership means focusing on the humanity of our work. It is about meeting the needs of the women we serve and the staff who serve them. Being a residential program is challenging in a pandemic. Early on I went to bed thinking about the empty beds we

**Technology is important, but it cannot replace human interaction!**

had at Marian House and the number of women in the community who needed them. I am so glad we were able to find a way to resume admissions and to use technology to provide supports and therapy. Now I am happy that many staff are coming in part-time. Technology is important, but it cannot replace human interaction!

Our vision compels us to unlock the potential found within our women – we want them to feel whole, safe and loved. Our women come to us so broken, they often don't believe they can be loved. They don't know what safety is. I hear some women saying, "I don't know who I am" or "I don't know how to be a friend." They don't

have a sense of their own self-worth. This program is a journey of self-discovery. It is a true honor to be a part of that journey.

There are numerous members of the Marian House community who reached out to share their love and prayers during these uncertain times. This reminds me that we cannot go at this work alone, that we have to lean on one another in order to keep the mission going.



Marian House Pandemic Team (left to right): Psalms Rojas (Grants and Community Relations Manager), Novlette Haughton (Board Member and Volunteer), Katie Allston, and Sharon Kennedy (House Manager)

## Mission Leaders Meet the Needs of Their Community

*Sister Peggy Juskelis, SSND*  
President  
Mother Seton Academy –  
Baltimore, MD

Due to dwindling enrollments and personnel, several Catholic schools in the urban center of Baltimore closed, creating an unmet need for children who were academically capable but

economically unable to afford a Catholic school education. The six congregations working together created and sponsored Mother Seton Academy (MSA).

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Since that time, MSA provided a transformative education for its students and helped them take their rightful place as citizens of their city, state and nation. Families too are engaged as the first learning community for the students and are invited to engage in service and community building activities for the students.

MSA has been blessed to have a committed, mission-driven faculty, focused on helping the students to



Leah Benzing, 6th Grade Language Arts teacher, instructing a student

develop to the fullness of their potential. One example of this commitment to mission is Leah Benzing, who teaches sixth grade Language Arts. A product of SSND elementary education at Sacred Heart Highlandtown and secondary education at Institute of Notre Dame (IND), Leah is committed to building community among the students, staff, faculty and families. She is a teacher fully engaged with the students in the classroom and in their activities. Ms. Benzing is the students' number one fan at events and basketball games.

Daily leadership is provided by our principal, Dr. Gregory Sucre. His relational approach to discipline and integrated understanding of education has strengthened MSA's retention. His calm demeanor and capable skills helped prepare our staff and students for the challenges faced when the school moved to remote learning due to Covid-19. Because he and the staff had worked to develop skills for remote learning, MSA was able to respond positively to the challenges

**"The future is shrouded in as dense and mysterious a fog as is nature these days. Through it, only one-star gleams for us the infinitely wise and gracious providence of God" (4758).**

of an unexpected closing. During the summer, the faculty continued to enhance their skills so that we can begin the fall semester with an integrated approach to virtual schooling.

Confident in God's provident care, we recall the words of Blessed Theresa, "The future ... is shrouded in as dense and mysterious a fog as is nature these days. Through it, only one-star gleams for us – the infinitely wise and gracious providence of God" (4758).

## Solidarity Needed to Rebuild Post-Pandemic Community

During his General Audience on September 2nd, Pope Francis urged the faithful to foster authentic solidarity in order to build bridges in a post-pandemic world. Read excerpts from his catechesis [here](#). The catechesis was part of a series focusing on "Healing the World." Pope Francis exclaimed that solidarity is the road to take in a post-pandemic world. "One does

not come out of a crisis as the same as before. The pandemic is a crisis. We emerge from a crisis either better or worse than before. It is up to us to choose. And solidarity is, indeed, a way of coming out of the crisis better." As we continue to feature stories of AMSSND mission leadership, reflect on how mission leaders heeded the call to solidarity in their respective ministries.



### Prayer for Solidarity

*Caritas Australia*



Image by Tim Marshall

Give me the courage to move beyond hopes and dreams to work with others to make justice a reality for all peoples.

Give me an open heart and listening ears to understand the challenges which face those who are marginalized, lacking the basic necessities for a dignified life.

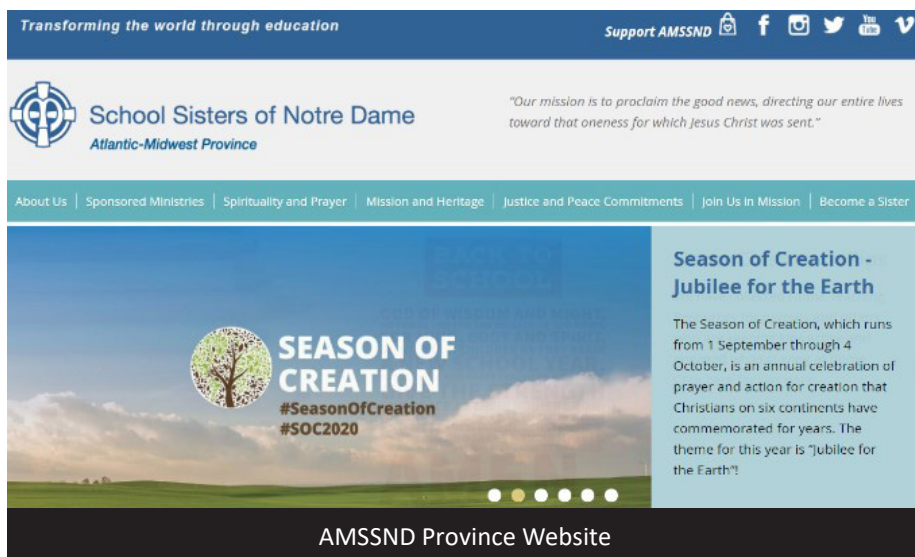
Give me the resolve to work with others to make a new reality, so that those who suffer injustice are heard and feel the impact of our solidarity as they confront the issues in their communities.

May I respond generously to your call so that all may have life and have it to the full.

# NEW RESOURCES FOR MINISTRY BOARDS AND FACULTY

Ministry Services is working hard to expand its resources not only for our sponsored and co-sponsored ministries, but also for the ministry boards and staff. Please check out our website for [Resources for Ministry Boards](#) and our new section, [Resources for Faculty](#). Check out these additional resources as well:

1. [Fall Message by Sister Charmaine Krohe, SSND to AMSSND Ministry Boards](#)
2. [Resources for Dismantling Racism for Ministry Boards](#)
3. [Resources on Catholic Social Teaching](#)
4. [Season of Creation Resources](#)



## UPCOMING EVENTS



## Announcements

- New Mother Caroline Booklet: *"Mother Caroline – Woman of Her Time"*  
[Preview](#)    [Order Form](#)
- October Ministry Formation Session – Virtual  
Friday, October 23rd 3:00-6:00pm to Saturday, October 24th 9:00-12:00pm
- Claiming the Fire Within – Malvern, PA  
June 27-30, 2021
- Proclaiming the Fire Within – Malvern, PA  
June 22-24, 2021



## Reflection Questions



- How have you adapted to these challenging times? What came easy and what is still difficult?
- What new energy has this pandemic created in you? How are you investing this newly created energy?

*United in Mission* is a quarterly publication of the Department of Ministry Services – School Sisters of Notre Dame, Atlantic-Midwest Province.



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