

## Meet the new members of the North American Vocation Team!

### CAROL JEAN DUST

"Everything God gives us and every person God places in our lives is the perfect preparation for the future which only God can see." (Corrie ten Boom). These very poignant words speak of the journey of my own life, one step or one gift or one challenge of God preparing me for the next step of the journey. Growing up in a family of six in a rural area of central Illinois, School Sisters of Notre Dame found me in first grade and I found SSND through them.



*Sister Carol Jean celebrating  
100-year old Sister Irene.*

God's placement of experiences and persons on my life journey brought me to community and deepening prayer life, to the ministry of teaching in various schools of Missouri, to teaching, administration and formation work in Honduras, to religious education, and most recently to a congregation-wide panorama through the general council ministry at our Generalate in Rome. I so clearly see in reflecting back how God truly dropped the necessary seeds and tools in my path, which prepared me for what was to follow. This ongoing God-care I look forward to and trust will continue to happen for this next call to service on the North American Vocation Team.

My hopes for the journey ahead embrace a three-fold perspective:

- that the very way we minister as team reflects the call we have as SSND in mission today, i.e. collaboration, networking, calling forth the gifts and potential of each individual, conscientious of the urgent needs in the heart of our world
- that we continue to animate and invite our sisters to our responsibility as expressed in the PDIC Act of the 24th General Chapter: "We recognize that we are all vocation promoters, personally and communally." (YAS, C43, C44).
- that, knowing our deep story as a treasure which roots our evolving charism, we will encounter today's discerners for religious life with joy for the mission of Jesus and for who SSND is, and with energetic accompaniment that mutually helps all "to direct our entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent." (YAS, C4)

### NANCY GILCHRIEST

God invited me to be a sister by placing amazing people of faith in my life. First and foremost, my parents, my two wonderful sisters and my family shared God's love with me. Then, as a student, I saw amazing women religious, first the School Sisters of Notre Dame in elementary and high schools, then the Sisters of St. Joseph at St. Joseph's College.



*Sister Nancy with some of her St. Joseph's College students as they served at the 2018 AM Province Jubilee*

All of these people lived their lives in response to God's love by being faith-filled and joy-filled. Their example inspired me to become a School Sister of Notre Dame.

That inspiration continues today as I am grateful to be reappointed to the North American Vocation Team because it has been the most life-giving part-time ministry I have ever had. I continue to be the chair of the Education Department at St. Joseph's College in New York as this new team starts its wonderful journey inviting young women to be the best people God calls them to be, and, in so doing, I hope that I continue in that direction as well.

## **JILL LASZEWSKI**

I grew up in central Wisconsin and moved to Minnesota in 1987. Considered a "late vocation," I entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Mankato, Minnesota in 1994 and professed first vows in 1997. In the years since, I have worked for SSND and church-related organizations, primarily in technology and administrative assistance roles. I have also served as a member of the SSND Central Pacific Province Assembly and on various committees. I received an undergraduate degree in Business Administration, and in 2009 completed a Masters of Theology from the College of St. Catherine in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

My hope for our North American Vocation Team...

As we work (and have fun) together, I hope we continue to find creative ways to engage with, create connections, and invite women in the working world to consider religious life and our SSND community. I believe there are "kindred spirits" searching for "the more," as I did on my own journey to religious life. My hope is that we can find ways to make it easier for them to find us. I look forward to the conversations to come as we engage with our sisters, and share the gift of religious life, and our SSND charism, with women who are searching and listening for God's call.

## **STEPHANIE SPANDL**

After three years of so many selfies and stories published in *Vocation Voice*, you have probably seen too much of me! Nonetheless,



*Sister Audrey Lindenfesler and Sister Jill at Sister Audrey's Golden Jubilee.*

I will offer here a brief recap of who I am. Raised in southern California (El Cajon), I graduated from college in Minnesota with degrees in Elementary Education and Spanish, stayed, taught and there met the SSND. Since my youth I felt called to minister cross-culturally, particularly with those who were economically poor, and eventually I found my way into my deepest love, working with immigrants and refugees, where I remained for 20+ years until beginning vocation ministry. During those years I earned a dual-degree Master of Social Work and Master of Theology. Fun facts about me: I learned Flamenco while living in Spain and performed with a Polish folk dance group in St. Paul before entering. I still love to dance as well as to sing and make music. Also, I finally learned from my mom the art of Kolache-making, and am now capable of carrying on the family tradition!

My hopes for the NAVT are that our new team will continue the spirit of joy and enthusiasm and build on the work of the last three years, while finding our own unique team dynamic and expression that lifts up the gifts of each other. Now that we are grounded in some experience, my hope is that we will be able to use our new strategic plan to focus our efforts and outreach. In particular, I hope we can become more effective at and strengthen our outreach online and via social media. I also hope we can become more intentional and strategic in reaching out to immigrant faith communities.



*Pictured above is Sister Stephanie with her sister, Christine Heimkes.*

## **BRIDGET WALDORF**

I am beginning my fourth year of formal vocation ministry, but my first with this new team of five. I currently live in Dallas, TX. I am one of six children, aunt/great aunt to 22 nieces and nephews and cherish any time I can get with my aging parents who live in Minnesota. I'm grateful for the bonds created within our vocation team the last three years and look forward to more of the same in these next three years.

My hopes for the NAVT are that we continue the good work we've begun, that we "up" our public profile in consistent and expansive ways, and, most importantly, that in assisting women with their discernment, they are able to say "yes" to God in whatever ways they are being called, including the School Sisters of Notre Dame!



*Sisters Beatriz Martinez Gomez, Bridget Waldorf and Nancy Gilchrist at a vocation event in Canada.*