

UNITED IN MISSION



ATLANTIC-MIDWEST PROVINCE

Transforming the world through education

June 2020

Transforming in Challenging Times . . .

Following Sister Roxanne Schares' [keynote address](#), "Mission Leadership in Challenging Times," at the Annual Leadership Meeting in February, we indeed find ourselves in challenging times: social distancing and lives lost from the coronavirus, celebrating Easter remotely, civil unrest in the community from the killing of George Floyd, states initiating phases of reopening to jumpstart the economy, the decision to close the beloved Institute of Notre Dame and the culmination of the Easter season with Pentecost.

We are tasked to find creative and meaningful ways of connecting. Our Mission and Ministry staff have been gathering every Friday for prayer and reflection through videoconferencing. Staff take turns each week leading a gathering. It has been inspiring to see each person's creativity and approach to prayer.

"We are called and sent to deepen communion with God and among people wherever we are – in every place, in every time, in every situation," (YAS, C 9)

Throughout history, the SSND lived through and endured times of chaos and epidemics. In April 1809, Mother Theresa, still young Caroline, witnessed Napoleon's army ravage the town Regensburg, to thwart off the Austrian army. Caroline grieved, "it was dreadful to see the balls of fire through the air and we crouched down in fear. Whenever the roar of a canon was heard, it felt like it was going right through my heart." The nineteenth century was marked by three major cholera outbreaks in the U.S., mov-



ing with great ease due to the increase in population and means of transportation. The sisters also endured the 1918 influenza outbreak in the Midwest, where the flu claimed the lives of candidates and novices.

Times of crisis call forth transformation. In this issue, we share stories from our sponsored and co-sponsored ministries, lifting up what it means to exercise mission leadership in unexpected circumstances. We thank the ministries

for sharing their inspiring stories in the midst of these challenging times. "It is their testimonies and fidelity to the SSND mission and charism that lift our hearts and deepen our conviction to be leaven for the communities in which we serve."

Patrick Laorden
Associate Director
Ministry Services

Yvonne DeBruin
Director
Ministry Services



The Many Faces of Mission Leadership



Pope Francis recently released his [message](#) for the upcoming World Mission Sunday this October:

“Mission is a free and conscious response to God’s call. Yet we discern this call only when we have a personal relationship of love with Jesus present in his Church. Let us ask ourselves: are we prepared to welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, to listen to the call to mission...in all the everyday events of life?”

The call for leadership is needed now more than ever. However, it’s in hearing the successes of others during times of crisis that inspire us to deepen the roots of our own mission leadership. The following stories shed light on how leaders from four of our sponsored ministries have found new opportunities to serve amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic, each story revealing what it means to be a mission leader.

Mission Leaders Adapt to Changing Environments

*Sr. Mary Fitzgerald, SSND
Assistant Professor
Notre Dame of Maryland
University – Baltimore, MD*

My new reality has been “Zooming” with my students and peers in the School of Education. With respect to my students, this has provided a great platform for them to dialogue on issues I may present or they may raise. Students have been able to share significantly and they really enjoy seeing and dialoguing with each other. This pleasure, in my opinion, is an outgrowth of the SSND charism and the wonderful community culture here at Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU).

At NDMU, I coordinate the Administration and Supervision Practicum. While we could not meet the students face-to-face, we were able to assess their work through the PowerPoints they sent us. This

process took place very early in the pandemic shut-down. Now that we are all more adept with the technology, we will have a better process in place for next year. Under the circumstances, the process, while limited this year, was still very effective.

I conducted a few classes through videoconferencing at the end of the spring semester. These were productive and enabled me to “feel out” the available resources to enrich remote learning classes am having this summer with my learning during this time. *You Are Sent* reminds us that, “We are educators in all that we are and do. We continually choose ways of living and serving that call to growth,” (C 23). These times call us to growth and we

have the privilege of answering, “Yes!”

I believe that my twenty-three years in high school administration and my experience serving on several boards have equipped me to exercise mission leadership at this time in history. I am fortunate to be serving on several very important committees at NDMU and am enjoying learning from others and sharing my insights into the challenges we face today.



Image from NDMU Website

NDMU student adapting to online learning.

Mission Leaders Live and Own the Directional Statement

*Sr. Cathy Feeney, SSND
Executive Director
SSND Educational Center –
Woodhaven, NY*

Our Directional Statement, [Love Gives Everything](#), took on new

meaning after eighty-five of our students left the center on March 12th. We asked them to be alert for school closings due to the pandemic. High school diploma prep students were given websites to assist with their preparation for the

New York state test. We weren’t sure what might happen with our ESL students.

As a leader who is not adept in technology, I trusted my staff to create a new path for learning.

(Continued from page 2)

Within days they were “risking innovative responses as educators in a rapidly changing world impacted by globalization and technology,” (YAS, Prologue; C 22-24, 26). Staff videoconferences and daily communication with our Consortium for Worker Education partners for the ESL program brought us to a day in April when twenty-three ESL students were participating in distant learning four days a week. Our master teacher, Kathy Locher, received training and trained her students. Imagine this: one woman couldn’t fly out of Columbia where she was visiting family. She “Zooms” in for classes! Another is with us from Indiana.

Sadly, many of our students don’t have email. Others are overwhelmed with monitoring their children’s distance learning. We haven’t reached everyone, but are encouraged by those who can participate. One teacher works with her students by mail.

Our marvelous staff continue to collaborate with each other. We have begun to sketch out modified schedules that will support social distancing in September. We are fortunate to have a registered nurse who has volunteered to assist with health issues.

My own love for the people we serve, our partners in ministry and our donors has been a wonderful asset during this time of isolation. There is plenty of time for encour-

aging phone calls and emails. I want them to know we are here for them, especially the many donors who are on in years and live alone. Through networking, we were able to help one needy family through our SSND Gospel Emergency COVID-19 Fund. Others have been referred to local food banks.

Together we continue to respond to this critical and global concern and are daring to respond boldly in unsuspected ways.



Women from the High School Equivalency Program express gratitude to those who support their education.

Mission Leaders Make One Wherever They Are

Sr. Miriam Patrick Cummings, SSND, Executive Director
Corazón a Corazón – Chicago, IL

There’s no one around! Rooms once filled with laughter and learning are now void of students and volunteer tutors. Staff are safely working from home. And how do I, who is called to be a leader, lead with no one to follow? But, I’m an SSND leader, so my role is to continue to make one as we keep our distance.



An empty classroom at Corazón a Corazón.

My role is to make sure each person: staff, board, volunteer, child or adult learner and donor know how important he or she is to this family we call Corazón; to be a reminder of how important each individual is. It is especially important to maintain some connection with the many parts that comprise the whole – that when the time comes to gather as one we will know that indeed we were one all the time.

Staff and board meetings through videoconferencing may not be ideal, but it is good to see faces and share ideas. Email blasts to donors and volunteers letting them know we care, are thinking of them and praying for them, reaching out to after school students and parents through email, phone calls and text messages lets them know we are only a call or email away from any help needed.

"And how do I, who is called to be a leader, lead with no one to follow?"

Perhaps the most significant connection we made was inviting everyone to pray with us at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which was offered to bless our Corazón family and live streamed on a Sunday morning from an empty local parish. This is a testament: though scattered, we are one in the God who called us together in the first place. And one day, we will return to laughter and learning in one place, knowing we never were really separated!

Mission Leaders Celebrate Family and Milestones

Lisa Benson, Board Chair
Caroline Center – Baltimore, MD

Historically, Caroline Center graduates have overcome life altering challenges and obstacles prior to acceptance into the program, including poverty, hunger, homelessness and struggles with immigration. Caroline Center Class #75 and their talented team of trainers and administrators faced a dangerous and unique new challenge no class had faced before, COVID-19.

With the commitment of the Provincial Council, the women, the Caroline Center Board of Trustees and the Baltimore City Department of Social Services, the women were provided with tablets from which to attend remote classes and complete their clinical studies. This brave journey to a new place happened just past the halfway point in their studies.

With no chartered course for the journey, Lynn Selby, Executive Director, and her leadership team pivoted quickly to make sure they delivered on the promise to the

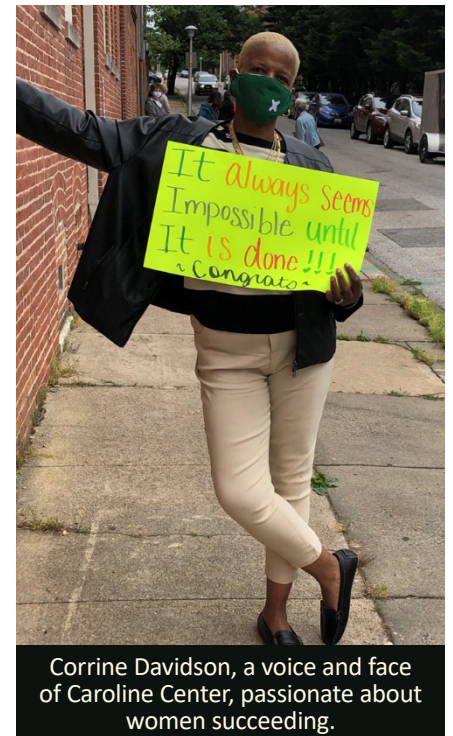
women, who were just beginning to take heart in the SSND charism themselves.

Lynn's passion for standing on the shoulders of Mothers Theresa and Caroline is fueled by the dedication of Sister Grace Sciamanna, SSND, Director of Administration, and Sister Debbie Liesen, SSND, Career Coordinator, who recommit themselves to the charism and the work each day, reminding us all who we truly have to thank for the many blessings enjoyed by the "Caroline Center Family."

As the Board Chair at Caroline Center, I had the great privilege to be onsite for the drive by graduation celebration on May 21st. Fueled by love, faith and Caroline Center's leadership team, the celebration featured balloons, diplomas, congratulatory chants, and literal dancing in the street in front of Caroline Center. The staff could not have been more excited if they graduated themselves! Another great example of oneness!

Midway through the outdoor gradu-

ation celebration, two fighter jets appeared in the sky, flying briefly over Caroline Center. "Holy mackerel," I said to Sister Debbie. "That's amazing! Where did they come from?" "Well," she replied, "there are two of them, so I'd have to say that it's Mother Theresa and Mother Caroline!"



Corrine Davidson, a voice and face of Caroline Center, passionate about women succeeding.

Thank You

We thank those who submitted a story of mission leadership from their ministry. We welcome other sponsored and co-sponsored ministries to submit accounts of their mission leadership throughout the summer as we hope to continue sharing them in the September issue of *United in Mission*. Please send your submissions to Patrick Laorden at plaorden@amssnd.org.

Mission Is ...

Since the beginning of Easter, we've been featuring posts every Monday called "Mission is..." The aim of these posts is to lift up the multitude of meanings for "mission" as lived out by the sisters, associates, and staff of province departments, sponsored/co-sponsored ministries and continuum of care centers. We invite you to check them out on our [Facebook](#) page and on [Twitter](#) each Monday for new posts. If you have an idea for a Mission is... expression, we welcome your submissions. Please submit them to Patrick at plaorden@amssnd.org.



Reflection Questions:



- ◆ How is the Spirit moving you to exercise mission leadership in unprecedented times?
- ◆ What aspects of your mission leadership would you like to strengthen?
- ◆ What gifts or skills that you possess can you share with others in the SSND ministry network as we move into new times and new ways of doing ministry?

Resources:

[Spiritual Resources from the Catholic Health Association During COVID-19](#)

Resources Against Racism

- [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops \(USCCB\)](#)
- ["The assumption of white privilege and what we can do about it" by Fr. Bryan Massingale \(National Catholic Reporter\)](#)
- ["Fr. Bryan Massingale: How the church can combat racism and white privilege | Behind the Story" \(YouTube\)](#)
- ["Systemic Racism Explained" \(YouTube\)](#)

New Mother Caroline resource, *Mother Caroline: Woman of Her Time*, a partner booklet to *Mary Theresa Gerhardinger: Educator of the 19th Century*.

- [Preview a copy](#)
- [Order a copy](#)

[AMSSND Integral Vision Series](#)

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