

# UNITED IN MISSION

ATLANTIC-MIDWEST PROVINCE

Transforming the world through education

September 2022

## *Living* the Covenant Promises:

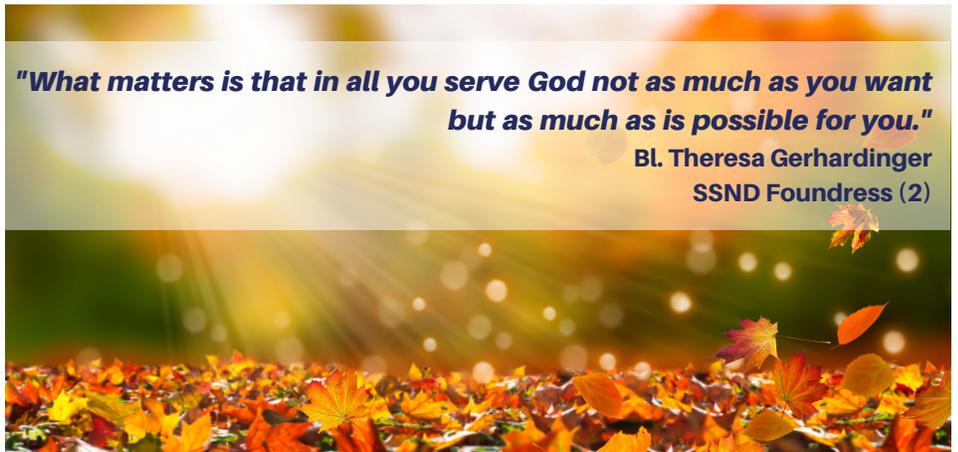
### Associates Serving on SSND Ministry Boards

Yvonne DeBruin & Suzanne Blackburn

This issue of United in Mission points to the collaboration between the province departments of Ministry Services and Associates. Formation has long been a focus shared by both departments, albeit with different approaches and for different goals.

Pre-Associate formation leads to a covenant relationship with the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Atlantic-Midwest Province. The initial formation of our leaders for sponsored ministries is designed to equip them as leaders to uphold and advance into the future the SSND spirit that sets our schools, university and our various educational ministries apart from secular educational institutions and non-profits. A deep underlying purpose regarding this initial and ongoing formation for both departments, is the deepening of the SSND charism within the (Pre-) Associate and the lay leader to share the charism of 'making one' to transform the world.

**SSND Associates are men and women who make a yearly covenant to live the mission and ideals of Blessed Theresa in their daily lives and ministries.**



Our lay leaders do that at their place of ministry in one of our nine sponsored ministries or various province departments.

Some of our lay leaders chose to become SSND Associates and through their covenant they bring an additional dimension to their work as staff members, administrators or volunteers in SSND sponsored ministries. Others serve on SSND committees flowing from the Directional Statement of the 24th General Chapter *Love Gives Everything*. In addition, other Associates have responded to the call to serve on boards of our SSND sponsored and co-sponsored ministries. This reflects an evolution of the charism pushing outward and forward to engage and promote the work of love and unity in new places, and invite others deeper into a value upheld by Provincial

Council as *communion in mission*.

Associates seek to deepen their spirituality, engage in social justice through advocacy or direct service to underserved people, but they mainly desire to grow spiritually **in** community and work **"with"** others for the rights of the poor and marginalized. It is this "with"ness that also draws them to serving on boards and their committees. This form of ministry displays a shared vision between the Provincial Council and the Associates, as it deepens the *communion in mission* with the SSNDs. It also raises the profile of Associates' service, as it is a new way of "prophetic witness of unity in diversity and service to God's people".

(Continued from page 1)

We are truly standing at another threshold; thus, this issue is dedicated to highlight some Associates serving on SSND sponsored and co-sponsored ministry boards. We hope you find it inspiring and perhaps consider a possible next step for yourself. If you are interested to learn more about the Associate Relationship, please [visit our website](#) and/or contact [Suzy Blackburn](#), Director of Associates; if you are an Associate and would like to serve on a committee or board of one of our ministries, please contact [Yvonne DeBruin](#), Director of Ministry Services.

Also, together with the province, we are happy for a new colleague, our new Director of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC), Ms. Colleen Kammer. In case you missed the announcement in our Friday newsletter, you can meet Colleen by clicking [here](#). Further, the search for a new Associate Director of Ministry Services is well under way, please support us in prayer that the Spirit may nudge the right person to apply for this important position. Please [share the job description](#) in case you know of someone who might be interested. Thank you.

I hope your beginning anew after the summer break is off to a good start. Blessings as you go about serving the mission of your ministry, SSND and ultimately God's mission. Please stay in touch, we always enjoy hearing from you and serving you wherever we can.

Autumn Blessings,



Director, Ministry Services



Director of Associates

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### **Lisa Benson, Board Chair, Caroline Center - Baltimore, MD**



**Lisa Benson**

As an SSND Associate serving on the board of an SSND sponsored ministry, the measuring stick for what we can accomplish, is impacted, influenced and inspired by our heritage and leadership.

I am grateful to have served as both a trustee and the board chair at Caroline Center.

At Caroline Center, women who are Baltimore City residents are trained to become CNAs and Pharmacy Techs. Graduates also receive assistance with academic and career advancement including placement into their first professional opportunity after graduation.

We are fortunate to have a strong Executive Director, Lynn Selby, with 4 years of ED experience serving with us. Lynn would agree that our modern-day story may be different without the mission and vision inspired examples of Blessed Mother Theresa Gerhardinger and Mother Caroline Friess.

Lynn and her team, including her Director of Administration, Sr. Grace Sciamanna, SSND, and Professional Readiness Instructor/Career Coach, Sr. Debbie Liesen, SSND, are daily inspired by the work of Mother Theresa and Mother Caroline, the spirits of whom are palpable in the halls of Caroline Center, along with the Holy Spirit.

My education and commitment to the SSND, and to myself, as an Associate, equipped me to support Lynn and her team and even assist in some of the more challenging and pivotal decisions that we are making today, particularly in these MOST challenging times for non-profits, faith-based organizations, institutions of learning and workforce programs, all of which describe our beloved Caroline Center.

Without understanding and growth I have experienced as an Associate, our conversations and our ability to hear God directing our steps above the noise of the past few years, would not have been possible. We measured every hard decision against the faith inspired commitments of our Foundress and Mother Caroline.

In Lynn's short tenure we have been faced with the closure of one Caroline Center campus, constant renovations and repairs to the main campus, (Cont'd)

### **Lisa Benson, Caroline Center - Cont'd**

supporting the program move to a virtual platform, job placements in the midst of a decimated employment market, administrative realignment to promote stability and retention of staff, meaningful strategic planning for a world we barely recognize right now and keeping trustees and supporters engaged when their families and jobs have been threatened and upended by world change ... among other things.

At each turn we drew strength, purpose and energy from our heritage and we are, somehow, at the end of it all, stronger than ever before and prepared to grow and change and be relevant and committed to the communities we serve today.

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### **Kattia Gibb-Hernández, Board Member, Mother Seton Academy - Baltimore, MD**

My name is Kattia Gibb-Hernández and I am an SSND Associate. I have always been interested in education. I believe that it is through education that a true, positive change will occur in the world. As an educator, I have tried to help my students become good citizens of the world. This is why I was very pleased to have the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors at Mother Seton Academy, a middle school located in Baltimore City. The school is dedicated and committed to provide tuition-free, Catholic education to boys and girls from low-income families. Mother Seton is lovingly and magnificently directed by SSND Margaret (Peggy) Juskelis.

The Academy is co-sponsored by the SSND, the Sisters of St. Francis Philadelphia, the Daughters of Charity, the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Scranton), the Xaverian Brothers, and the Marianists.

Needless to say, it is a wonderful school that helps many boys and girls to find their God-given talents, helps their families, and the community. But Mother Seton also faces challenges because the school needs helping hands and economic support, to keep the important mission going. I would like to invite other SSND Associates to get involved in the many ministries which need support, especially from SSND Associates who would put their whole heart into the mission of helping others. I understand many of us work, have families and things going on in our lives but we should not forget that the community needs our support.

Now, more than before, I truly understand the purpose of being an Associate and how by serving the community has deepened my search for oneness and my connection to SSND.



*Kattia Gibb-Hernández*

Serving as an Associate in a small or big way has helped my spiritual life. My life's journey has become more enlightened, interesting, and joyful. I am sending you blessings and peace in these challenging times.

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### **April E. Bell, Board Member, Notre Dame Preparatory School (NDP) - Towson, MD**



*April E. Bell*

Following an invitation to visit the SSND website and learn more about the Pre-Associate program, the role of the Associate, and the relationship with the SSNDs, I was immediately enlightened. I was seeking a way to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ better, embrace the spirit of the foundress, Blessed Theresa, and grow in the fullness of my potential through strengthening my relationship with God. By participating and partnering with a loving community of strong women within the SSND community, I knew I had found a new pathway.

Upon entering my commitment to becoming a pre-associate and future SSND Associate, I was unaware of the vast number (Cont'd)

## April E. Bell, NDP - Cont'd

of opportunities to serve as an SSND Associate on ministry boards and committees. During my formation period, I was inspired by the unique relationships and bonds formed with fellow Associates and SSNDs. I was given a better understanding of the potential leadership roles and how I can serve the broader SSND community.

The entire experience has been a tremendous inspiration. Going through each phase of the formation process, the monthly meetings with the SSNDs, Associates, Pre-Associates and special guest speakers provided consistent engagement experiences with like-minded individuals. While collaborating within the community, I learned how to engage and collaborate more meaningfully and sustainably.

After becoming an SSND Associate, during my doctoral courses at Notre Dame of Maryland University, I was approached by my professor, Sr. Margaret Ellen Mahoney, SSND, regarding the opportunity to serve as the SSND Associate representative at the Notre Dame Preparatory School.

Without hesitation, I accepted the invitation, knowing this was my role as an SSND Associate. Being a former middle school teacher and having previous experience serving as a College Advisor at a local all-girls public high school, serving in this manner granted me the chance to give back. Through service at NDP, which encompasses every area of my professional and personal life, precisely that of being an Associate, the opportunity to impact the lives of NDP girls is an honor.

Serving on the NDP Board of Directors as the Education Committee Chair, my current role has positioned me to be able to demonstrate my commitment as an SSND Associate through Charism. Learning more about God daily and how SSNDs serve as vessels within the global community to share love, inspiration, and spiritual direction with those in need, I find that my role as an Associate grants me the experience to serve as a

contributing vessel within the NDP school community.

In closing, I would like to share from *You Are Sent*, which states,

***We are called and sent to deepen communities with God and among people wherever we are - in every place, in every time, in every situation.***

My role as an SSND Associate on an SSND ministry board has granted me the gift of doing so at Notre Dame Prep.

I am grateful to the SSNDs for inviting me into the School Sisters of Notre Dame community, welcoming me as a member of the SSND Associates, and granting me the opportunities to serve within the community.



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## Jeannette Partlow, Board Member, Notre Dame Preparatory School (NDP) - Towson, MD

I was educated by the School Sisters of Notre Dame for 13 years, kindergarten through high school at St. Mary's School and Notre Dame Preparatory School and this made a lasting impression on me.

In my early 40's I was seeking to spend time exploring my Spirituality and with inspiring people and knew the School Sisters of Notre Dame to be Spirit-filled women of tremendous energy and inspiration. The opportunity to serve on the Notre Dame Preparatory School Board of Trustees came to me through an invitation from Sister Patricia McCarron, SSND, Ph.D. Most recently, I served as Chair of the Inclusivity Committee.

I joined the Board of Trustees before I became an Associate and it was during my board service that I truly learned about the charism of the SSND's. The SSND charism, to transform the world through education, and the Blessed Mother, were calling me to be a part of something much bigger than myself and my existing "world". (Cont'd)



Jeannette Partlow

## Jeannette Partlow, NDP - Cont'd

I believe that learning the SSND charism as a Board member paved the way for me to say "Yes!", to the invitation of Sr. Grace Sciamanna to become an SSND Associate.

After I covenanted as an Associate, my engagement as a Board member gained new energy and dimension. Knowing that I am living out the charism of transforming the world through education as an Associate, is living a life closer to the

Blessed Mother and God. It is empowering to know that the SSND's are trusting me to carry out the charism and it transforms me.

Board service does come with challenges to navigate. One that I have encountered as a Board member is learning and understanding the responsibility to the organization as a Board member. I was

educated through Board Orientation training and resources to guide me through the appropriate handling of confidential and sensitive information.

I receive great joy in my life by serving our community through my SSND Ministry Board service. It is a blessing for which I am abundantly grateful!

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## Mary Gunning, Board Member, Sisters Academy of Baltimore (SAB) - Baltimore, MD



I am a twelve-year product of SSND education and was drawn to Sisters Academy of Baltimore (SAB) as a result of that experience. The education I received was transformative and I wanted others individuals (particularly young girls who are marginalized) to have the same access to a high-quality education. In addition, I was familiar with SAB through my ministry at Catholic Charities Head Start of Baltimore City.

Sister Delia Dowling, SSND, had come to speak about SAB to our Head Start parents and always sent us recruitment information which we distributed to our families. In addition, several of our former Head Start students graduated from SAB. I was moved to serve on the board because many of our Baltimore City Public Schools do not meet the needs of our children and families and I knew SAB provided a top notch, wholistic education for young girls.

As an Associate, serving on an SSND board or committee provided me with an excellent way to live out one of our covenant promises "to participate in local and regional activities." In addition, there are many opportunities for networking with other board members which enhanced some of my personal and professional relationships. This opportunity enabled me to utilize my professional experience gained from working side by side with families who are experiencing poverty. It also provided an avenue for me to live out my desire to

"extend the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in service to God's people." I also arranged for a few Associates to tour SAB with the hope that they may find a way to become knowledgeable about the school and discern how they might be called to become involved.

I strongly encourage other Associates to explore opportunities and discern how they may be called to serve on AMSSND boards or committees. In addition to being a former SAB board member, I also am a member of the Haiti Collaboration Committee and Notre Dame Prep's Sustaining Transformation: Racial Inclusion, Value and Equity (STRIVE) Committee. While each of these experiences have been very different, there is a common thread that strengthens my understanding of our charism, mission centered focus and commitment to education in the broadest sense.

## Upcoming Events



**2022**

**OCTOBER 21-22**  
Ministry Formation Session I  
Virtual

**NOVEMBER 15 & 17**  
New Employee Orientation  
Virtual

**2023**

**MARCH 3-4**  
Ministry Formation Session II  
Baltimore, MD

**JUNE 25-28**  
Claiming the Fire Within Retreat  
Malvern, PA

## Resources



### NEW Resource Available on St. Augustine

*Our charism flows from our spiritual heritage especially the gifts of St. Augustine*

*Who formed a community of one heart and one soul in God, seeing in the Trinity the basis, source and goal of all community;*  
(Excerpt from *You Are Sent*, Prologue)



**Part 1** The Life [6:51 min.]

**Part 2** Spiritual Influence  
and Approach to Leadership [8:53 min.]

**Part 3** Foundations of Justice, Peace  
and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) [7:20 min.]

**All Videos May Be Found on our Website:**  
<https://atlanticmidwest.org/posts/heritage-library>



### UPDATED Board Guidelines

#### August 2022 Edition

Board Guidelines for Sponsored  
and Co-sponsored Ministries

The Updated Board Guidelines includes an additional chapter on a SSND Board's *Particular Role During a Crisis* (chapter 10) and updated resources.



**Friends of Silence** is a non-profit endeavor to facilitate others in reverencing silence, prayer, contemplation, the Divine Guest, and the Oneness of all creation as well as to encourage the life-giving empowerment that derives from the Silence.

<https://friendsofsilence.net/>



**Building a Successful Relationship with your Board - 2008**



**Listen to the Voice of Creation - 2022**

*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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Yvonne DeBruin  
Director of Ministry Services  
(410) 377-7774 x 1153  
ydebruin@amssnd.org

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