

# UNITED IN MISSION

ATLANTIC-MIDWEST PROVINCE

Transforming the world through education

Summer 2025



## A SEASON OF HARVEST

As summertime reaches its peak, we find ourselves surrounded by the fullness of creation—fields ripe with grain, gardens and farmers markets brimming with fruits and vegetables, and hearts stirred by the beauty of colors, scents, and growth. In this season of abundance, the Office of Mission Formation celebrates a different kind of harvest: the vibrant, life-giving and impactful outcomes of programs and resources offered through the office and our sponsored and co-sponsored ministries.



Claiming the Fire Within Retreat, June 2025

The pages of this summer United in Mission newsletter are filled with stories sown in faith, nurtured with care, and reaped in gratitude and joy. Each submission reflects the spirit of our mission—a mission that is sprouting in new employees of our sponsored and co-sponsored ministries, province departments and Waterdown, the residence of many of our Canadian sisters and flourishing in the ministries' leaders.

With sadness but unspeakable gratitude, the Office of Mission Formation, alongside the entire Atlantic-Midwest (AM) and Central Pacific (CP) Provinces and beyond, harvest the legacy of our dearly departed Sister Miriam Jansen, SSND. While from the CP Province, she lived in and served the AM Province for many years and in numerous ways. For example, she created a 3-part video<sup>1</sup> detailing the evolving SSND educational vision, for use in formation activities and as a resource for years to come. She led an executive search and served on a task force, just to name a few. She valued building 'small circles of friends' and believed in their power to impact the world. Equally important, she was all about 'throwing a lifeline to save one another'<sup>2</sup> in the storms of ministry. Sister Miriam presented on Mother Caroline and the SSND educational vision in the Ministry Formation Program (MFP) and mentored key new lay leaders in SSND ministry, to support their transition into the SSND charism, mission, vision, values, and culture, and thus, to set them up for success in SSND ministry. Please find some of the leader's reflections in this newsletter. Thank you, Sister Miriam! (Cont'd)

1 Scroll down the webpage to find the videos

2 See Mother Caroline's account of the Steamboat explosion on the Mississippi to the Sisters

## Introduction, Continued

With gratitude, I am also harvesting the generous support and fruitful collaborations of so many collaborators in this work of mission formation. It deepens my own commitment to the mission and the joy of what we accomplish together. Gazing at and contemplating all that transpired and happened since April, the eyes of my heart behold that this summer's harvest is rich with grace.

I invite you to read on, to see how seeds of hope planted months ago have borne fruit.

May the reflections and resources inspire all of us to keep cultivating our commitment to listen to and act on our "longing for the oneness of all in God" — season after season.



Yvonne DeBruin  
Director, Mission Formation



For your Reflection:

If you look back on your summer, what are you harvesting in ministry and life? What seeds have borne fruit?



## CLAIMING THE FIRE WITHIN RETREAT REFLECTIONS

Victor Pellechia, Upper Level Principal, Notre Dame Preparatory School

**I can't say enough great things** about the recent Claiming the Fire Within Retreat experience. A core principle of the charism of the School Sisters of Notre Dame is unity, and the retreat embodied such a tangible way to bring the charism to life. The retreat drew together those of us involved in various direct and co-sponsored ministries, and it was a blessing to see the working of the Holy Spirit through the different stories we shared.

As we learned about our spiritual roots in the life of St. Augustine, the visionary leadership of Blessed Theresa, the pioneering tenacity of Mother Caroline, and the path forward in the 25<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, it was clear that we were all part of a tremendous story of faith and promise. In those few short days, we asked questions and sought answers, broke bread and gave thanks, and built our own little community of prayer. It was impossible not to feel revitalized and recharged, ready to bring this energy back to our various corners of the SSND mission.

But the image we were left with was one of tapestry, that although we might be separated across miles, the threads that connect us in our common purpose also connect us to the past and those whose legacy we carry with us now. It is our great hope that we can extend the threads of that tapestry into the future through the lives that we touch while continuing to spread the Gospel.

Many thanks to all those who made this experience possible, stoking the embers and claiming the fire of Christ that brought each of us warmth and clarity. May it burn brightly, and may we enkindle each other, in the days, months, and years ahead.

Continue reading for more reflections!



## Margo Veal, Principal, Sisters Academy of Baltimore



**The moment that I felt the “fire within”** being renewed in my spirit was when I walked into the first session on St. Augustine. There was a beautiful picture of him being displayed and I felt an immediate connection to him. I had heard about him, but I was not familiar with his spiritual journey.

The history of his life and the relationship with his mother really resonated with me. I’m a mother of two sons, so it piqued my interest. I am also a history buff, so to have this professor and scholar of St. Augustine take me back to his time of existence and share what was going on politically, spiritually and personally with him was fascinating. This was a quick account of his life, but it was dense, thought provoking and intriguing. What really captured my attention to where I was spiritually renewed was when we went into reading excerpts Augustine’s *Confessions* (Book IX). Through his own words, I felt a kinship to him. I love to travel and last December I went to Rome, Italy. Now that I know about St. Augustine, I will be traveling back to Italy, but this time I’m headed to Milan.

The new insight that I gained about my leadership in a SSND’s co-sponsored ministry in my school is that I want the students to know the great work of the SSNDs. I am the principal of Sisters Academy of Baltimore (SAB) where our all-girls middle school was founded by four congregations of sisters, SSND being one of them. The girls know of the SSNDs and many of them can tell you a little about them. However, I want the students to dive deeper in understanding the sacrifices that these sisters made to come to America and their early experiences in this country. It’s important to know the charisms of the founding sisters and ingrain them into our curriculum. This year I’m implementing a deeper dive into the history of the SSNDs in our religion classes.

## Lisa Peters, Program Coordinator, SisterHouse, Chicago, IL



**Professionally/Organizationally - Claiming the Fire Within** starts with a concrete foundation of systems and procedures in place:

- it mitigates second guessing and promotes sticking to practices that have been put into place;
- in any absence (staffing), things can run as a well-oiled machine;
- it allows for one to work in a less chaotic state and accomplish more;
- it enables one to tap into the emotional and well-being of an individual, and in some instances, helps to catch and avoid meltdowns or stress related occurrences;
- it helps to navigate in a professional state and avoid being overwhelmed (centering oneself to block out noises and disruptions); and
- it allows me to voice my opinions even when they differ from others, resulting in the same end goal.

**Personally - It deepens the sense of self sufficiency**, not relying on others, to take a leap of faith even when the safety net is not apparent. It keeps me pressing forward knowing that a Higher Power is in control. It has deepened my faith knowing all is possible, even the things that can’t be seen. It requires patience in the midst of storms; it allows for the quiet and stillness in moments of despair/doubt/and disbelief. It focuses on the health and thankfulness for what is present and those things unseen. Claiming the fire isn’t about people-pleasing, or matching energy, but standing firm and trusting in self and things gained and achieved. It allows for constant self-reflection and getting outside of your comfort zone. It allows peace within and patience waiting on a word or sign from GOD in assurance that all things are aligned and in perfect order.

# VIP'S AT CORAZÓN A CORAZÓN!

by Sister Miriam Patrick Cummings  
Coordinator of Mission Integration  
Corazón a Corazón, Blue Island IL



Sr. Miriam with 2  
VIP Volunteers!

**In a well-ordered not for profit**, it takes all hands-on deck to ensure a favorable outcome. At Corazón a Corazón that certainly is true, and all members of the staff work to make success a reality. However, when it comes down to one-on-one, it is the volunteer who sits across from the ESL<sup>1</sup> learner, or the volunteer sitting next to the struggling youngster who provide most hope of realized potential and the best example of God's love in action.

Volunteers come with a willingness to serve, to give back. They come with experience and expertise in their field, or a willingness to learn.

Not many come to Corazón because it is a sponsored ministry of the School Sisters of Notre Dame; yet sponsorship is at the heart of Corazón. The how and why at Corazón stem from the vision and charism of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

No wonder then, these volunteers are invited to learn more about what it means to volunteer at an SSND sponsored ministry.

The conversation with new volunteers centers on three components of a sponsored ministry: the Doer's, the ministry, and the Congregation.

These volunteers come with their own gifts and personalities. Inviting them to reflect on their history, experiences and relationships opens them to the importance of Corazón's tagline: "When hearts connect, lives are changed." During this "Who am I" time they are asked to complete seven to ten "I am" statements, i.e. wife, daughter, Italian, Catholic, golfer, etc. and share how these relationships have shaped them into the persons they bring to Corazón today. Sharing some "I am" statements help them to know one another.

A video on Mission, prepared by the Office of Mission Formation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, reminds the participants of their own baptismal call to service and how that call is enriched and expanded through partnership with SSND. In this video they also learn the beginnings of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and how the dream of educating young girls, who subsequently could transform society, has changed countless lives over one hundred ninety years.

Throughout the session, references are made to the ministry at Corazón, the enablement of persons to reach the fullness of their potential through the ESL and Youth programs. "Impelled by the mission of Jesus, enriched by the charism of the School Sisters of Notre Dame" Corazón volunteers continue to show forth God's abundant love by their very being.

**Very Important People, indeed!**

1 English as a second language  
or other language(s).



# IN GRATITUDE & LOVING MEMORY ... REFLECTIONS OF ENCOUNTERING & REMEMBERING

## Sister Miriam Jansen, SSND

May 9, 1939 - June 25, 2025



Sister Miriam

*A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning.* Brad Henry

### **Miriam was very significant**

in the success of my role as Executive Director of SisterHouse. She cared about my success in my role and how I was doing in my personal life as well.

She was funny and had a contagious wholesome spirit. Our Zoom meetings were filled with love, laughter, and genuine concern. I'm glad that I was able to be a part of her life. Our conversations were welcomed, wanted, and needed and I will never forget them.  Patricia Banks, Executive Director, SisterHouse

### **I was the lucky one.**

As a participant in the Ministry Formation Program (MFP), I was blessed to have Sister Miriam Jansen assigned as my mentor in early 2021. From our first contact, she exuded peace and calm, welcomed qualities as we were still clearing through the uncertainty and anxiety of the pandemic. She made it seem that she was the lucky one to be assigned to me.

I will be forever grateful for our many Zoom conversations about life, vocations, mission and charism, education, *You Are Sent*, Blessed Theresa and Mother Caroline, our families, our health, our world.

We laughed together and prayed together as we looked at each other on the screen. She was incredibly yet gently comforting and reassuring, affirming and encouraging, and so very wise. She joyfully answered my questions about all things SSND and was invested in helping me reach my full potential, not only in SSND communications but in all areas of my life. I always looked forward to our calls and the guidance and support she offered.

I know there are many who knew and loved Sister Miriam well before she entered my life. But for the brief time we connected, we had a special bond, or at least she made me feel that way. I think that was one of her many gifts to this world, especially as an SSND "sent to make Christ visible by our very being, by sharing our love, faith, and hope." I was just a lucky recipient of this priceless gift and will treasure it always.

 Laurie Lindauer, Communications Manager - SSND North American Vocation Team



Laurie, Blessed Theresa  
& Sr. Miriam

## I was most fortunate to have Sister Miriam Jansen

as my mentor in the Ministry Formation Program for new leaders in AM SSND. Sister Miriam gently helped me to understand the SSND charism and conveyed to me its lessons and gifts in a most thoughtful and meaningful way. One evening as we met, I was especially awe inspired by her story of the foundresses and how we can use their example as we encounter the concerns of our time. As she spoke, I admired her confidence wrapped in a gentle kindness that drew me in. I could have sat there for another hour to hear more!

Sister Miriam had a gift for teaching others about the charism of the congregation that she loved. I was one of the recipients of the CaroLines, small inspirational notecards containing phrases from Mother Caroline. When I look at them occasionally, they bring a smile to my face, not only because of what they say, but because Sister Miriam gave them to me.

I felt Sister Miriam's genuine desire to help me learn about the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was selfless and generous with her time. I will always be grateful to her for her wisdom and companionship during my formation as a new employee of SSND.

 Colleen Kammer, JPIC Director, SSND - AM Province



## NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION (NEO)



### This Past April

15 new employees in SSND sponsored ministry and Waterdown attended an online NEO. A variety of topics cover the SSND history, mission, ministry, values and spirituality in the workplace. We end with a closing ritual, called 'Called and Sent'. After a contemplative moment, participants are invited to share with the group how they 'heard the call'. Their supervisor who joined for this ritual is offering an affirmation and is sending them forth. Below please find some participants sharing their call:

-  *I have heard the call to contribute to the formation of compassionate, ethical, and self-aware leaders—ones who serve with humility and courage, rooted in a deep understanding of the human experience.*  
- Amy Wheeler, MUIH/NDMU
-  *I heard the call to share my skills, experience, and knowledge to build relationships, engage the NDP community and contribute to the ongoing work of advancing the SSND mission in meaningful and joyful ways.* - Anonymous
-  *I heard the call to cultivate relationships with alumni and help strengthen their bonds with their university as I stay true to the SSND mission.*  
- Carey Wargo, NDMU

# Resources

## **Prayer to Celebrate the Feast of St. Augustine:**

[Click here](#)

## **Monthly Pope Video:**

[August - For Mutual Coexistence](#)

## **Watch (rent) a documentary: Running to Stand Still**

Migrants Search For Hope in the Promised Land from [Worldwide Documentaries](#)

## **Celebrate with us the Season of Creation:**

[September 1 - October 4, 2025](#)

## **Music Video Prayer:**

[Turning of the World](#) [4 mins]

by Sara Thomson/Susan Francoise, CSJP

## **Upcoming Ministry Formation Sessions Ministry Formation Program, (MFP)**

### **Session III**

November 14-15, 2025

St. Mary's Seminary & University, Baltimore

## **New Employee Orientation**

October 28 or November 10, 2025

8:30 AM-1:00 PM (Eastern)

Virtual/Zoom

## **For Boards**

### **BoardSource Article:**

[Using Generative Governance Principles for Better Boardroom Conversations.](#)

### **BoardSource Blogs:**

[Beginner's Guide to Nonprofit Board Service - Part 1](#)

[Beginner's Guide to Nonprofit Board Service - Part 2](#)

[How Board Chairs Foster Board Engagement](#)

[Key elements of a board fundraising policy](#)

### **From Social Impact Architects:**

[Habits of Effective Nonprofit board members](#) | [Nonprofit Board Relationships](#) | [Nonprofit Board Responsibilities](#)

United in Mission is a quarterly publication of the Office of Mission Formation  
School Sisters of Notre Dame, Atlantic-Midwest Province

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Yvonne DeBruin  
Director of Mission Formation  
(410) 377-7774 x 1153  
ydebruin@amssnd.org

Graphic Design by: Laura Stafford

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