



GREETINGS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I hope you had a nice and restorative Christmas break, and that the gifts of family, friends and nature blessed you with hope and joy. As I am writing these lines to you during the final days of December 2025, I am not only looking forward with hopeful anticipation of what the new year may bring, but I am also invited to look back on the many opportunities all of you have taken to share and evolve the mission of the Gospel and the SSND charism. I am grateful for the varied and creative ways this happened. This Winter 2026 issue features an interview with the AMSSND Communications Director, Lauren Ciotti, following her attendance at the Leadership of Women Religious (LCWR) meeting back in August. Through the Communicators for Women Religious (CWR), an affiliate of LCWR, many congregational communicators attended.

Following the *Claiming the Fire Within* retreat late June, one of our sponsored and co-sponsored ministries connected over a service project, empowering girls and women and to build community. Please read the story of Sisters Academy of Baltimore and Caroline Center.

The November session of the Ministry Formation Program (MFP) engaged the topics of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) as Mission and Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC). Please take a look at our leaders currently in formation.

In December, we received notice from the Marian House board of directors, that Katie Allston, after 18½ years in her position as President/CEO, is transitioning to a new opportunity, evoking gratitude for Katie's tireless service to the women at Marian House and opening doors for new opportunities in the history of Marian House.

Continued...

Introduction, Continued

As you look at this very new year ahead of us, what are you longing for to happen in ministry and life? How are you trusting? What might you promise yourself and to the mission and ministry? What are you asking? What might be arising in you? Bring your emerging thoughts in conversation with our newborn Christ, named Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever and Prince of Peace.(Is 9:5, NAB).

In whatever sense this year is a new year for you, *may the moment find you eager and unafraid, ready to take it by the hand with joy and gratitude.* – Howard Thurman



Yvonne DeBruin
Director, Mission Formation

Questions & Answers: 2025 LCWR Assembly

Lauren Ciotti
AMSSND Director of Communications



HOPE has been the theme
of our communications ...

1. Sr. Simona Brambilla, MC, in her introduction, cited the *Synod's on Synodality* Final Document, that described consecrated communities as "laboratories for intercultural living." How do your communications amplify stories of interculturality and communal discernment, strengthening these values in Sisters, Associates, colleagues and friends in ministry?

Successful intercultural living naturally flows from a stance of listening, which is foundational to communications. We are committed to listening, and our stories reflect and share that. With listening, also comes telling. We aim to tell stories reflecting SSND's interculturality in a way that is inviting and engage to our audience in further reflection.

2. The Assembly stressed "Journeying in God's Promise" through the vulnerability inherent in this time. Sister Kathy Brazda, CSJ defined leadership as "holding the paradox of our time"¹ and asserted that "Dread is not of God."² " How in your role as communicator do you support the province in communicating hope and calling forth resilience in our stakeholders (Sisters, Associates, colleagues and friends in ministry), particularly during institutional transitions, losses and closures? *Continued...*

1 Page 2 middle section, pages 3 and 4

2 Pages 3, 8

Hope has been the theme of our communications throughout the year and will continue into 2026. An important mission to the Department is to be bridgebuilders, something that has proven to be challenging in this charged political climate. But there is a place within our charism for everyone, where we are all called to be invited and changed. We highlight stories that reflect there is hope, there is good in the world, and we are all part of it. Stories like our reflections for the liturgical calendar, and ministry successes share that hope. We are still working; we still have impact. No Sister is ever really in retirement and the stories of their continued ministry, even in ways that seem quiet, still have huge impact. By focusing on the good and not getting caught up reacting to the political climate, we remain focused on hope and spreading the good news.

3. Sister Kathy also believes that “there are no coincidences in our lives” ... that Assembly participants “were born for these times” and “chosen to be people of these times³”. How might this resonate with you in your role as Communicator for the SSND Atlantic-Midwest province?

Catholic Sisters are, and always have been, prophetic witnesses and leaders. We follow their lead. I also feel called share my gifts with the Sisters to help them reach out and share their spirituality with a new audience. Young people are hungry for meaning in their lives and for something bigger than themselves. There is a place for them in the church and in community. My goal is to reach them and present a different way of being to the world.

4. The 25th General Chapter Statement calls SSND to “be credible witnesses of universal communion through deepening our efforts to live as an intercultural faith community.” Emerging from the 2025 LCWR Assembly, what new communication initiatives or approaches do you envision to realize this mandate more concretely?

All of our communications have at their heart the call to universal communion. Any new initiatives will be discerned within the team and with the Provincial Council. Our job as communicators is to observe the initiatives of the Sisters and to reflect those efforts in our communications. Each week, we make efforts via the Friday News to share stories from around our province’s geographic locations. It is also important to note that oneness, and interculturality isn’t just about geographic location or heritage. It is about building bridges with those who might think or believe things contrary to ourselves.

I’ve been reading a book by Fr. Gregory Boyle, SJ, called “Cherished Belonging” in which he talks about what it truly means to cherish others during these very divided times. In truth, we belong to one another, and as members of the School Sisters of Notre Dame family we have an opportunity to find unity in division. Our charism tells us how.

Sisters Academy of Baltimore Service Project by Margo Veal, Ph.D., Principal

In a beautiful expression of showing leadership in the SSND spirit, students from Sisters Academy of Baltimore (SAB) in the Fall visited the Caroline Center in Baltimore, to share their skills and build meaningful connections with the women in the community.



The service project was Teaching Crochet Skills.

Our students served as teachers and mentors, training the ladies at Caroline Center in the art of crochet. This hands-on experience allowed our young women to step into leadership roles, sharing their knowledge and creativity while building relationships across generations. Building on this successful in-person visit, we are planning a virtual training session that will allow our students and the Caroline Center ladies to connect once more before the students leave for Christmas break. Through this partnership, our students are living out the SSND mission of unity, education, and service—demonstrating that leadership means empowering others and building community through shared learning.

Reflecting on the visit, Toni Moore-Duggan MS, CRNP, CNA/GNA Program Coordinator and Clinical Instructor at Caroline Center, wrote the following note of appreciation, to Dr. Margo Veal, Principal at SAB:

Margo, I cannot thank you, your team and those amazing students enough for the joy of having them here at the Caroline Center. It was a wonderful rewarding experience for the students as well as the staff. They are great instructors and exhibited a high degree of professionalism, joy and patience. This is a wonderful way for us to intertwine and to get to know the continuing works of our SSNDs.

Ministry Formation: Catholic Social Teaching as Mission



Leaders from SSND sponsored ministries and the AMSSND Province Communications Department gathered at St. Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore, MD for a formation session as part of the province's Ministry Formation Program.

Photo from left to right: Janice Incavo, NDLC., Michael O'Neill, Corazón a Corazón, Lauren Ciotti, AMSSND Communications, Patricia Banks, SisterHouse, Angela Allen, NDP, Jennifer Speargas, NDP, Francine Poppo, SSND EC, Yvonne DeBruin, AMSSND Mission Formation, Colleen Kammer, AMSSND JPIC.

The session held Nov 14-15, 2025, covered two main topics: Catholic Social Teaching as Mission, including the intersectionality with *The Call of the 25th General Chapter* and Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC). Presenters were Yvonne DeBruin, Director of Mission Formation and Colleen Kammer, Director of JPIC.

Participants brought a beautiful spirit and sincere engagement to the session, which made for a fruitful time together.

To see both CST and JPIC lived out at SSND and to highlight the international dimension of SSNDs mission, participants watched and engaged the recent recorded webinar on *The Joys and Challenges of Mission in South Sudan* with S. Anna Marie Reha, SSND.

One evaluation response stated as a challenging takeaway: *It's not a "new" concept for me, but I sometimes need to be reminded that our faith is more than just personal. It calls all of us to actively "shape" our society in the image of God's love.*

With the transition of the Baltimore Sisters to Stella Maris, Timonium, MD, the Ministry Formation sessions will now be held at various locations within the State of Maryland.



**Katie Allston President/CEO
of SSND Co- Sponsored Ministry
Marian House, Baltimore, MD**

SSND and the Marian House sponsoring congregations, the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Atlantic-Midwest Province and the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas (RSM) received notice that after 18½ years of faithful service as President & Chief Executive Officer, Katie Allston will be transitioning from Marian House on January 16 to pursue another professional opportunity.

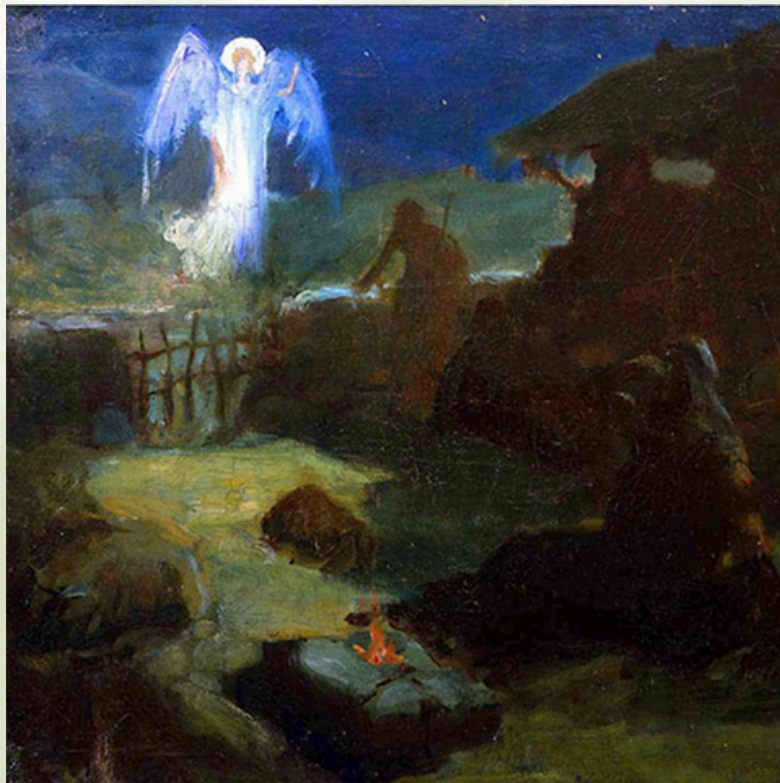
When the founding Sisters entrusted Marian House to lay leadership, they passed on more than an organization—they passed on a sacred mission rooted in dignity, compassion, and the belief that every woman deserves a chance to rebuild her life.

For nearly two decades, Katie has been a devoted steward of that charism. She has kept the Sisters' spirit alive in every program expansion, every woman welcomed through our doors, and every decision made with love at its center. The values they instilled—hospitality, empowerment, and unwavering respect for human dignity—have flourished under Katie's care and leadership.

"It has been the honor of my life to carry forward the vision of the founding Sisters," says Katie Allston. "Their charism is woven into the very fabric of Marian House, and I am fully confident that this mission will continue to thrive into the future."

To ensure continuity during this transition, the Board has appointed Rebecca Perry, Marian House's current Chief Operating Officer, as Interim President & CEO beginning January 17. Rebecca has served alongside Katie for over a year and understands the charism that guides the mission and ministry. The Marian House board states that it has "complete confidence in her ability to honor the Sisters' legacy as we begin the search for our next permanent CEO."

Please offer your continued prayers and support as both Katie and Marian House enter this new chapter. The seeds planted by the founding Sisters continue to bear fruit, and their vision remains as vital today as ever!



The Annunciation to the Shepherds
by Henry Ossawa Tanner
oil on canvas, ca. 1895
Public Domain. Source:
Wikimedia Commons.

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
To make music in the heart.

- Howard Thurman

Resources

Upcoming Ministry Formation Sessions Ministry Formation Program, (MFP) Session IV

February 27-28, 2026

St. Mary's Seminary & University, Baltimore

New Employee Orientation

April 14 or April 20th, 2026

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

Virtual/Zoom

(For more information,

contact: Yvonne DeBruin @

ydebruin@amssnd.org)

For Boards & Chief

Executives/Administrators

Unleashing the Superpowers of Executives:

How Boards Can Help Us Soar

Leadership

What the Papal Conclave Teaches Us About
Leadership

From the Institute of Christian, Jewish and Islamic Studies

Teachers & Educators - ICJS

For Higher Ed Faculty - ICJS

Education

Keeping Up With The Latest Trends
Impacting Education

Artificial Intelligence in Education

Free Webinar on January 24, 2026,
The International Day of Education
by the Committee on Teaching
About the United Nations (CTAUN)

Noteworthy

Queen Camilla 'humbled' by work of UISG
Sisters - Vatican News

The Inspiration of SSND - NDP Bluenote

Notre Dame of Maryland University

President Marylou Yam

Announces Retirement After 12 Years
of Extraordinary Leadership
at NDMU

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

UNITED IN MISSION

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Graphic Design by: Laura Stafford

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8