

Ursulines of Cincinnati Visions

Christ-Centered Women in a Changing World



Autumn/Winter 2022

URSULINE COMPANIONS HOST SYNOD LISTENING SESSIONS

By Sr. Eileen Connelly, OSU

In late March, the Ursuline Companions chose to answer the Synodal invitation to “Walk Together as a Church with the Holy Spirit” by hosting two listening sessions titled “Women’s Voices for the Synod.”

On March 23, a virtual session was conducted via Zoom, with 15 attendees. An in-person session was held on March 26, with 34 attendees. As directed by the preparatory documents and guidelines provided by the *Vademecum*, both listening sessions served as a forum for articulation and examination of the main Synod theme: “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Preparation and Ministry.”

Discussions were prompted by the 10 “thematic nuclei” referenced by Pope Francis: Companions on the Journey, Listening, Speaking Out, Celebration, Shared Responsibility, Dialogue, Ecumenism, Authority, Discerning and Forming Ourselves.

When participants were asked “Why are you here?” the responses included personal hope of speaking candidly to

Church hierarchal structures; expressing a longing for their singular voice to be heard; and to bear an impact on the future direction of the Church. Perhaps the most significant topic explored dur-



Jane Knudson addresses those in attendance at the in-person listening session.

ing the Companions’ sessions was that listening informs and influences all other themes. Participants noted that while the Second Vatican Council recognized the role of the laity, the Catholic Church of today is out of touch and not listening to the people in the pews.

“Providing an opportunity for women to

come together and freely and honestly share their voices, as requested by Pope Francis, was our objective in sponsoring Women’s Voices for the Synod,” explained Companion Jane Knudson. “The Ursuline Companions responded to the Holy Father’s request for input from the family of God by praying, listening and talking together to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church today. We believe that as women we have unique and important perspectives and those need to be shared and heard by the Church today.”

The report from the Companions’ listening sessions was sent to the General Secretariat of the Synod. As a follow up, the Companions are hosting a virtual session with Sr. Maureen Sullivan, OP, on Nov. 17 at 6:30 p.m., on the role of women in the Church today. Sr. Maureen is a professor emeritus of theology at St. Anselm College in New Hampshire. While she offers presentations on a variety of topic, the second Vatican Council and its impact on the Church is at the heart of her research.

URSULINE CONVOCATION 2022 HITS THE ROAD—VIRTUALLY

By Sr. Margie Efke, OSU

After the North American Ursuline family held its 10th triennial Ursuline Convocation in St. Louis in July 2019, Sisters and collaborators wondered if there would be another. Over the years, the original Convocation attendees had aged and numbers of Sisters had declined. But many co-workers and collaborators had been added to the mix. Was there energy in that mix for a Convocation 2022?

When COVID-19 surfaced in March 2020, the planning team set about “making a way out of no way.” The uncertainty of being able to meet in-person in 2022 was an invitation to move beyond the barriers presented by the aging of the Sisters and the desire to

include increasing numbers of interested co-workers and collaborators. Pandemic-spurred advances in virtual meeting platforms stimulated creativity in the planning team.

Happening Sept. 16-Oct. 21, “Challenged and Changed for our Times: A Virtual Pilgrimage of Encounter with Angela Merici and Her Ursuline Family” welcomes Ursuline school and other ministry staff members and volunteers, board members and friends, as well as the Sisters and all their collaborators as pilgrim companions. The first stop on the journey is Angela Merici’s homeland of Brescia, Italy, where the pilgrims are introduced to Angela’s contemplative spirit and engage her as their pilgrim guide. Returning to the North American

continent, they visit Brescia College in Ontario, Canada, then three sites in the United States before ending the journey in Mexico. Each stop has its own theme and challenge for the pilgrims to ponder.

Cincinnati Ursuline Sisters and Companions, along with personnel from Saint Ursula Academy and St. Ursula Villa, plan to participate in the gatherings, all of which are being held online, based in a virtual hub. On each of the six consecutive Friday evenings, pilgrims have the opportunity to experience a live or recorded presentation, to interact with each other, to pray together and to experience the location of each stop. The itinerary is designed to end by celebrating together the feast of St. Ursula on Oct. 21.



I give you a new commandment: Love one another. — John 13:34

Dear Friends of the Ursulines,

The Scripture passage above expresses a life-stance that Jesus mod-



eled for his followers throughout his public ministry. In fact, earlier in the same chapter from John's Gospel, we read that Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. He then told them to do the same. He wasn't referring just to the companions they'd been walking with for three years. (Hard enough for this motley crew!) He meant to include the stranger as well. Washing another's feet assumes getting to know a little about those feet and where they have walked. It requires compassionate attention and listening.

In our deeply divided nation, world and church, Jesus calls us to reach across political, racial and cultural, religious, sectarian and belief divides to get to know the other – the ones we may call stranger, but whom Jesus names as our neighbor, our sister and brother.

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia rages on, directly affecting thousands, and millions indirectly by the rising prices and supply and food shortages resulting from the war. Attempting to "walk a mile in their shoes," the Cincinnati Ursulines have supported the Ursulines of the Roman Union who minister in Poland and Slovakia, where they have welcomed Ukrainian refugees and are addressing their needs. Once again this year, we co-sponsored Catholic Charities of Southwest Ohio celebration of World Refugee Day. Other funds have provided relief to victims of natural disasters within our U.S. borders.

One way to get to know others outside our normal spheres is to go on pilgrimage. In this issue of *Visions*, you will read about the virtual pilgrimage the North American Ursulines will be engaged in at the time of this newsletter's publication. Pilgrims will "travel" virtually across an ocean, across the northern and southern borders of the United States and to a few places in between to experience other cultures, meeting new traveling companions on the way. In "Voices of Women for the Synod," you'll read about the listening sessions our Ursuline Companions convened to allow local women from various backgrounds to share with each other their hopes and dreams for the Catholic Church.

This issue include also recognizes the gifts of two of our Ursuline Companions. You'll also get a peek at Sr. Mary William's new "neighborhood."

St. Angela advises us in her Ninth Counsel: "Be bound to one another by the bond of charity, esteeming each other, helping each other, bearing with each other in Jesus Christ." Let us strive, by these bonds, to bring peace and harmony to our hurting world!

Sr. Sandy Sherman and Sr. Margie Efke

Our Mission Statement

We, the Ursulines of Cincinnati, are a community of Christ-centered women transforming lives with compassion and creativity. We pledge to respond to the needs of our times through our diverse ministries and in collaboration with the laity. We will respect the dignity of each individual, nurture their unique gifts, and be present to them as we all seek a deeper and more personal relationship with God.

Sr. Margie Efke, OSU
Local Congregational Representative

Sr. Sandy Sherman, OSU
Pontifical Commissary

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Sr. Eileen Connelly, OSU

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for design



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Welcome

Please feel free to write letters to our editor on anything you might like to say about articles that appeared in *Visions* or anything else that is of interest to you.

We welcome your opinion.

Please address letters to:

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COMPANIONS SHARE GIFTS WITH OTHERS



By Sr. Eileen Connelly, OSU

The Ursuline Sisters are grateful to our Companions who use their gifts for the good of others and keep the spirit of Angela Merici going strong.

Peggy McCormick Platz (SUA '84) was named associate director of the Ursuline Education Network (UEN) effective July 1, after serving as community service coordinator at Saint Ursula Academy since 2004. Her love for and dedication to the Ursuline charism is rooted in her father John's educational experience with the Toledo Sisters.



Peggy McCormick Platz (SUA '84)

"He really embraced that and was determined that his daughters also be educated by the Ursulines," Peggy explained.

Married to Tony, Peggy is the mother of five, and grandmother to three. She holds a bachelor's degree in music education and a master's in organizational leadership and development from St. Mary of the Woods. She came to her community service role at the Academy by way of a conversation with Sr. Eileen Connelly at a class reunion.

"I loved the programming side of it, the events, getting our students out into the community," Peggy said. "Rachel (Choquette Kemper, SUA '91, community service learning

director) really showed me the importance of the broader global lens to our students, and I'm thankful for that."

Prior to her current position, Peggy served on the UEN board of trustees. She's now looking forward to helping move UEN into the future. "We're moving UEN into a very digital existence," she explained. "We really learned a lot during COVID about what the schools need from us and how we can do programming that better links them. We're here to support the schools and make them stronger through collaborative programming, retreats and professional development."

"The relevance of what St. Angela did has never lost its appeal for me," Peggy said. "She was a forward thinking woman and her educational directives, and they were directives, were not only spot on for the time, but still have the same relevance.

When you see the depth and breadth of Ursuline education, we're so fortunate that it came to America."

Gifted artist Mary Ann Meyer, retired assistant principal at Saint Ursula, has been inducted into the St. Xavier High School Fine Arts Hall of Fame. Involved with Catholic education for most of her life, Mary Ann arrived at St. X for the 1970-80 school year and spent more than 30 years there teaching art.

"I really loved teaching the boys; they kept me on my toes!" she said. "I was fortunate to be able to teach a lot of upper level courses and had many incredibly talented students, many of whom went on to pursue careers in art."

"The award was a big honor for me, but I'm even more thrilled that it recognizes the arts," Mary Ann said. "It sends a message to students that art is an important activity and way of sharing your gifts."

Mary Ann was drawn to the position

at Saint Ursula as an opportunity to keep her educational ministry fresh and to embrace a new challenge. She was especially moved by Angela's writings and the Academy's mission statement that focusses on transforming "young women into thinkers, leaders, nurturers and prophets committed to building a better world."



Mary Ann Meyer

She is currently involved in an art project at Saint Ursula that will revamp the area where students who have achieved the Mother Fidelis Coleman, Mother Gertrude Creamer and other top awards are recognized. Mary Ann has visited the Ursuline Sisters' Archives, poured through yearbooks and obtained candid pictures of the students to create a collage on fabric that will adhere to the wall and covered in Plexiglas inscribed with names and dates. She hopes to eventually do the same with events related to the school's history.

"I think it's important that we continually show our history," Mary Ann said. "There's so much that goes on in the school that's related to the spirit of St. Angela and the Sisters, and my hope is that this will be a celebration of the students who have achieved the Ursuline characteristics and worked so hard to continue the Ursuline charism."



Sr. Mary William's New "Neighborhood"

The Ursulines of Cincinnati gathered at Twin Towers Senior Living Community in early August to bless the apartment where Sr. Mary William Luxford, left, is now residing. Sr. Margie Efke is also pictured.

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