

# Vision & Challenge

VOL XXVI NO. 2  
FALL 2020

A publication of the Sisters of Notre Dame, California | One Heart • One Hope • One Mission





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*Vision & Challenge* is published three times annually by the Sisters of Notre Dame, California.

#### SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME

Founded by Hilligonde Wolbring in Coesfeld Germany in 1850, the Sisters of Notre Dame is an international congregation of women religious who serve the church in 18 countries. The Sisters of Notre Dame have ministered in California for 96 years, bringing hope to humankind through education, faith formation, spiritual development, pastoral ministry, health care, social outreach ministries and missionary service. For more information, visit [www.sndusa.org](http://www.sndusa.org).

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# A Message from *Mission Advancement*

Dear Friends,

Since last March, how many times have we heard the phrase “unprecedented times...”? I’m sure that you’ve had those eerie feelings “this is the twilight zone.” Another oft-repeated phrase is “**we are in this together.**” I remember seeing this message via sidewalk chalk, thinking that the young writer is learning an important life-lesson during this pandemic.



And along come the SNDs with our SND USA motto: **One heart. One hope. One mission.** Perhaps God has given us the pandemic as an invitation to discover new perspectives and inspiration. One heart. Early during the pandemic, I was shopping and to no avail, there were no eggs available (nor hand sanitizer nor disinfectant wipes). Purchasing some medication at a drugstore, I checked for eggs. Nope. In the checkout line, I noticed a gentleman with a dozen eggs and asked him where he found them. His response, “in the cooler.” Nope again. When he saw me back in the checkout line sans eggs, he offered me the eggs. “No,” I said, “you take them.” This scenario, which has probably played out in your life as well, reflects the true meaning of **one heart.**

Every human heart is created with an insatiable desire for union—union with the divine and union with all humankind. Sometimes, we stumble along obstacles to this union. What we consistently see, though, is that there are many opportunities for this desire to ignite hope-filled realities. In this magazine, we are pleased to share several powerful examples of our SND life and heritage, examples of our **one heart** in action. Through the reflections of our Uganda missionaries, the energy of the tykes at Notre Dame Learning Center Preschool, or the hope shared in pastoral outreach during this pandemic, we discover that our focus on the common good takes us beyond ourselves, for **we are of one heart.**

We pray that you find abundant grace as you pursue the divine union for which your heart yearns. When you feel that you are stumbling through the twilight zone, remember that you are sharing in the one heart of the Sisters of Notre Dame because **we are in this together.**

Grateful blessings always,

*Sister Mary Lisa Megaffin, S.N.D.*

Sr. M. Lisa Megaffin, S.N.D.

# Notre Dame Learning Center Preschool

*Celebrating 15 Years of  
Intergenerational Learning*



*"We should start a preschool."* Sr. M. Immaculette Moose regularly spoke of opening a preschool when she served as the province education coordinator in the 1980s. Her dream finally came to fruition in September, 2005 with the opening of Notre Dame Learning Center Preschool. An under-utilized wing of Notre Dame Center was renovated to accommodate three classrooms, restrooms, a kitchen, reception facilities, and an age-appropriate playground.

Situated within the Provincial Center, and adjacent to La Reina High School & Middle School, Notre Dame Learning Center Preschool was designed to incorporate intergenerational benefits. Preschool children have opportunities to engage with volunteer students from La Reina as well as senior sisters living at Notre Dame Center.

The Sisters of Notre Dame offer their heartfelt gratitude to the many donors whose investments in this youngest generation has touched many lives. In particular, we honor the memory of SND Associate Vicky Godar for her generous bequest of more than \$250,000.

*Sr. M. Rosaria Park and Ellie Muniz  
enjoy the annual Harvest Festival.*

## *Where Are They Now?*



*Grace Parton volunteers  
for the Manna Food Drive  
at La Reina High School &  
Middle School.*

### **THE PARTON FAMILY**

We are so grateful for the experience that Grace had. NDLC not only prepared her academically, it instilled confidence. The environment was warm and nurturing and included meaningful ways for parents to be involved, such as Doughnuts with Daddy. Grace truly misses the sisters and gives them hugs whenever she sees them.

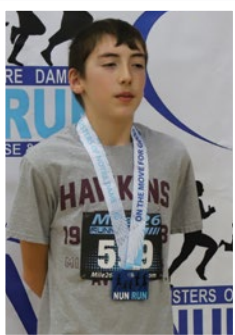
the tricycles and play structure, and my daughter made countless "masterpieces" at the easel. The play-based curriculum helped them develop a positive association with school, while developing skills at their own pace. Our kids are avid runners and we love to participate in the Nun Run every year, supporting the school and the sisters.

### **THE MCCARTHY FAMILY**



*Sean McCarthy, grandson  
of SND Associate Irene  
Woodall*

I was a member of the first class in 2005 and I just graduated from Chaminade High School this year. My younger sisters also went to Notre Dame Learning Center. I learned self-confidence, to enjoy learning, to play and get along with other students. It was a good start in building and strengthening my Catholic faith.



### **THE PAPAVASILIOU FAMILY**

When we toured the school in 2009, it had such a lovely, warm feel to it. Sr. Carol Papet was endlessly patient in playing with the kids. Sr. Rosaria made beautiful origami. My son loved

*Liam Papavasiliou earns a top prize at the  
2020 Nun Run.*



# Responding to the Unique Needs of the Times

As the Covid-19 pandemic has stretched from spring through the summer and into the fall, Sisters and Associates have discovered new ways to respond to the unique needs of these times. They share God's compassionate love with people of all faiths and cultures.

## Caring for the Health and Safety of the Community

*Sr. M. Dominic Jones*

has been busy making masks since the start of the Covid19 pandemic. Sr. Dominic has made over 1,000 masks: for sisters, family and friends; the parish and school staff at St. Dominic's in Eagle Rock; essential workers such as the postal clerks; and the personnel at the Los Angeles Archdiocesan offices, where she serves in the marriage tribunal. She has used her own quilting supplies and donations from St. Dominic's parishioners and then given the masks away free of charge. After learning of a need for reusable caps for Sr. Angela Lee and her fellow NICU nurses, Sr.



*Sr. Dominic Jones is whipping out another mask.*

Domnic expanded her sewing repertoire, "I have watched videos online and studied various patterns to learn how to make the reusable cloth caps that are urgently needed by ICU and NICU nurses. I feel privileged to do something practical to help at this time."

*Sr. M. Angela Lee*

works as a registered nurse in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of a large metropolitan hospital. As the rest of the hospital fights the coronavirus, the NICU staff stepped up to protect the most vulnerable babies. When a mother tests positive for COVID-19 or is pending test results, the baby is separated from the mother and placed in an incubator. NICU nurses take care of the baby with full PPE and N95 masks. Even short separations for mothers and babies are fearful and stressful. For COVID-negative parents and babies, in-person visits are also limited. Many families are



*NICU nurses model Sr. Dominic's surgical caps.*

missing critical bonding time in the first days of life.

Sr. Angela reflects on her unique role in this pandemic, "With restrictions on NICU

visitation, we spend a lot of time on the phone with the parents updating them on the baby's condition and care plan, while providing emotional support during this difficult time. Sr. Dominic Jones has made matching scrub caps for our staff of 44 NICU nurses. The nurses feel the support and prayers of the Sisters of Notre Dame as we dedicate ourselves to protecting the most vulnerable babies."

## New Horizons for Virtual Learning

*Olga Hernandez*

teaches young adults, ages 18-22, with severe physical and learning disabilities through the Adult Transition Special Education program in Ventura. She reflects on her experiences of building an online classroom that kept her students engaged.



*Olga Hernandez,  
SND Associate*

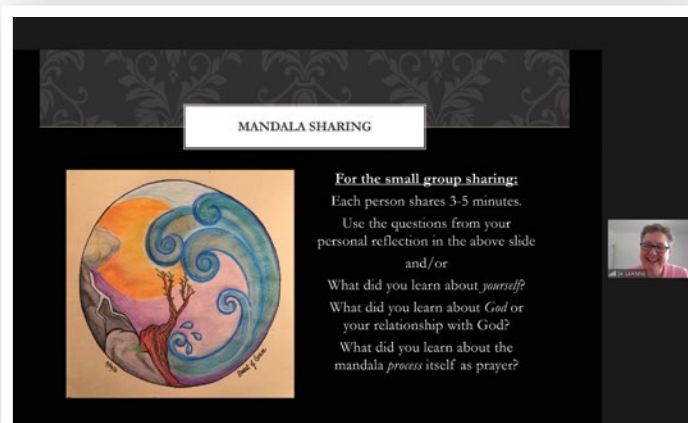
"When I walked into my classroom in July, the St. Patrick's Day decor was still up and the date on the whiteboard read March 13, 2020, the last day I taught in my classroom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I have always considered teaching Special Education my vocation although this spring was certainly a challenge for me.

*I developed theme days and fun incentives to keep the students showing up to class three days a week. I trained the parents in skills to work with their young adult child and support their learning. On the last day of school, we managed to pull off a talent show. Each of my students shared or performed a talent on our last Google Meet. It was beautiful to watch them watch themselves.*

*As we continue distance learning in the fall, I feel more prepared and look forward to adding new ideas to my online classroom. Above all, I trust that God has a purpose and He will lead the way."*

### Sr. M. Leanne Hubbard

facilitated a three-day retreat for the Providence High School Campus Ministry Core Team. She was invited by Providence staff members Claire Muller Hickey and Jason Coito to lead the student team in Ignatian discernment of spirits, creation of a personal mandala,



and leadership skills. The facilitators and participants all met via Microsoft Teams and Zoom, as shown in the photo. Sr. Leanne, a professor at St. John's Seminary, Camarillo commented that this experience opened new horizons for everyone.

## When I was hungry, you gave me something to eat...

As demand for food and emergency assistance has risen, sisters and associates have participated in a number of ongoing efforts to provide household and grocery essentials to those in need. Sisters who volunteer with the Saint Vincent de Paul Society reported a 10-fold increase in people participating in the weekly drive-through grocery distribution.

La Reina High School & Middle School partnered with Manna Conejo Valley Food Bank and Vitalant to hold several food donation and blood drives. Community members could bring food and household item donations for a no-contact drop-off. Vitalant hosted whole blood and plasma donations in the gym in a safe, socially distant environment. All blood donations were screened for COVID-19 antibodies as an additional benefit to donors.

*Sr. Anna Maria Vasquez, a volunteer with the St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Paschal Baylon Parish, helps unload boxes of dairy products.*



SND Associate Sandi Elias (on the left) works with Mary Ellen Emma, Zeza Salcido and Mary Lee Maline preparing food boxes for distribution.

# Celebrating 25 Years in Uganda

*With Gratitude to God and our Many Donors*

In the 1990's, St. John Paul II issued a challenge to women religious—to serve the people of Africa. Perhaps this was a latent call of the Spirit. Sr. Maria Aloysia Wolbring, our foundress, wanted to be a missionary to Africa, but came to the United States instead. Fast forward to the 20th century. A sister from another order met an SND while studying at Gonzaga University; upon returning to Uganda, she told the bishop of the SNDs' dedication to education. With that, Bishop Deogratias Byabazaire of the Hoima Diocese wrote to Sr. Joell Overmann, superior general, inviting the SNDs. Sr. Mary Amy Hauck, California's provincial superior at the time, remembers the mission's beginnings...

*"When we visited, we were greeted with the quintessential Ugandan hospitality, which was rich with joyful simplicity. The spirit of the SND charism was already present from the moment we arrived. We didn't bring it; it was already there! We collaborated with the Covington province and began a primary boarding school with 20 boys and 20 girls in the inaugural class. The children were the poorest of the poor. As I look back on the last 25 years, it is incredible to see how far we've come. We now have educational opportunities offered from nursery school to A-level. God has undoubtedly shown His goodness and provident care from the very beginning, and for that we are grateful."*

Here are some reflections from former missionaries.



## Sr. Jane Marie McHugh

On July 12, 1995 I was trying to sleep in a London airport awaiting the final leg of a life-changing journey. As we entered the jet bound for Uganda, I believe the realization that I was on my way to HOLY GROUND finally hit me. When we landed at

Entebbe Airport, I felt a rush of gratitude for the

blood of those young Ugandan Martyrs who paved the way for our arrival.

In Uganda, we met many wonderful people who played pivotal roles in our lives. Our closest neighbor was Abwooli, an elderly woman squatting on the land that would become the site of our secondary school. She was the first person with whom I regularly practiced the traditional Runyoro ritual greeting! When she died, we SND's paid our respects by going to her humble home and visiting the room where her body was wrapped in the burial barkcloth. We buried her under the trees in the land next to our convent. I can never repay her or the wonderful people of Buseesa for all that they taught me from 1995-2005.

Happy Anniversary! Webale ekiru kikirro na Ruhanga abalinde. (Happy Big celebration day and God bless all of you.)



## Sr. Paulyne Tubick

Eucharist comes in many forms. When I was missioned to Uganda, I witnessed the embodiment of Christ's presence among the people I served. One Eucharistic moment

came through the simple gesture of answering the door. When the doorbell rings, we Westerners typically open the door and greet the person. I was stunned to find that a Ugandan visitor would first inquire about my previous night, the well-being of my family, and offer greetings to the sisters in the house before moving into the business at hand. The lesson for me was recognition of Christ's presence in the here and now and gratitude for the gift of family and community.



*Sr. Margaret Mary Scott  
tends the fields alongside  
her students.*

These Eucharistic moments supersede all else. Though I was sent as a missionary to serve, I am the one who was served. I witnessed the Eucharist present, living and active. “Ruhanga Asiimwe” (Thanks be to God) for the 25 grace-filled years of this mission! Blessings as the Kingdom of God continues to flourish and spread!

### Sr. Margaret Mary Scott

Before I went to Africa, I thought of heaven as being beyond the sky, but through my experience there, I came to believe that it is deep in the earth. The African people were so human, humble and real. Whenever we said, “see you tomorrow,” they would answer, “if God wills,” a lesson for us to trust in providence and to surrender. I was inspired by their desire to grow, improve and advance, and their receptivity to new ways. While in Uganda, I encountered many challenges and much deprivation, circumstances that taught me to keep a laser-straight focus on mission. I am very grateful and blessed for having had the opportunity to plant seeds in Africa. It is heart-warming to see the mission grow and expand.

### Sr. Marie Paul Grech

I fell in love with Uganda’s lush greenery, laughter, and simplicity. An elderly man named Joseph told me: “Americans think we are poor, but we are not poor if we have a little land to grow food, a house to sleep in and children.” The people I met in Uganda were happy, hospitable, inquisitive, and appreciative.

I found the young women eager to ask questions about America, “did my family have goats? A garden for food?” They wanted to understand unfamiliar terms they came across in books: “What was a market? How did a washing machine work?” Because lessons needed to correlate with the handbooks for the tests they would have to take at the end of Secondary School, I had to sneak in the

critical thinking that I felt was also important.

### Sr. Antoinette Marie Moon

It was easy to fall in love with Uganda. My first, vibrant memories are of the eyes, smiles, laughter, beautiful hearts, hospitality and spirit of the Ugandan people. I had the privilege of accompanying Ugandan women beginning their formation to become Sisters of Notre Dame.

As I lived WITH our candidates, I also learned and enjoyed the simplicity of Ugandan life. We sang as we worked; did most activities as a group; and embraced a family spirit of hope, thoughtfulness for others and a sense of celebration even in the face of challenges. I remember the sound of drums greeting the morning and spontaneous singing during worship and work.

Finally, the sheer beauty of God’s creation in Buseesa: rocks, red-rutted roads and dust; clear black nights with the Milky Way illuminating the skies; monkeys and weaver birds. Thanks to all in Uganda for the memories!

### Sr. Cristina Marie Buczkowski

My 2+ years in Buseesa changed me forever by teaching me to live in the moment. So much was not in my control: access to clean water, corruption at all levels of government, availability of good healthcare, limited transportation options, telephone and internet communication challenges. Our charism was a great source of strength and courage for me—trusting in our good and provident God! That spirit of trust prevented me from feeling overwhelmed. God sent me people and students who taught me how to let go of my personal agenda and be present to whom and what was before me. For this, I will always be grateful.



*Sr. M. Bernadette Pendola brought her gift of healing to Uganda.*



*Sr. Marie Paul Grech and Sr. Antoinette Marie Moon are shown with one of the original signs.*

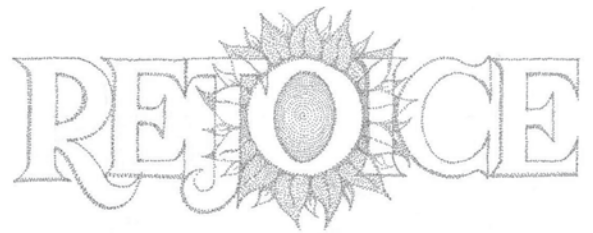


*Sr. M. Colette Theobald is accompanied by members of the East Africa Delegation.*



*Sr. Cristina Marie Buczkowski dons traditional attire for a Ugandan celebration.*

*Congratulations to Sr. M. Joan Schlotfeldt on her Golden Jubilee this August!*



Sr. Joan, who will be celebrating formally in 2021 with the next jubilarian group, is well-loved by her circle of friends. Nancy LaBelle writes, "Sr. Joanie took control of my heart when I witnessed the way she trained and successfully walked the Los Angeles Marathon in the 1980's. Her faithfulness towards our God, her family, and friends is absolutely the best!" SND Associate Betsy Potts

says "Sr. Joan is a kind, thoughtful, and good person, who puts others before herself. No matter the challenges, Sr. Joan greets every day with a smile and enduring faith. A true Sister of Notre Dame!" Carol Stanley said, "Sr. Joan is a loyal and understanding friend...my whole family loves her and considers her one of us."

## The Grapevine

### DISTINGUISHED GRADUATES 2020

The Sisters of Notre Dame Distinguished Graduate Award recognizes selected graduates in schools affiliated with the Sisters of Notre Dame National Education Partnership, as being outstanding witnesses to Notre Dame education. From the Class of 2020, the Distinguished Graduate Awardees from California schools included:

**SOPHIA TROSS**

La Reina High School & Middle School, Thousand Oaks

**LAUREN GAMBOA**

Notre Dame Academy, Los Angeles

**AVA HANNA**

Notre Dame Academy Elementary School, Los Angeles

**VIVIANA ALARCON & ABRAHAM SALAS**

St. Helen School, South Gate

**CHRISTINA GONZALEZ & NICHOLAS WEISBECKER**

St. Jude the Apostle School, Westlake Village

**TIARE ASEDO & OMEGA FLORES**

St. Mary Magdalen School, Camarillo

**BRIANA TORRES**

St. Pius X/St. Matthias Academy, Downey

### HOW TO "PAY IT FORWARD"

"We will always be indebted for our combined experiences with you all..."

"We don't know how we can ever thank you..."

"Wish this donation could be more..."

Comments like these are a great reminder that a planned gift to the Sisters of Notre Dame has the potential to serve several purposes. You will feel empowered, knowing that your gratitude is formalized, and your foresight will have an impact on generations yet to come. Please consider including the Sisters of Notre Dame in your will or estate plan, or name the SNDs as a beneficiary on a bank account or life insurance policy. Our legal title is "Sisters of Notre Dame of Los Angeles," and our IRS nonprofit identification number is 95-2005867. For further information, please contact Sr. Lisa Megaffin at 805-917-3714. Thank you and be assured that your gift will be transformative in sharing God's love and provident care with generations to come.



**SAVE THE DATE:**

**February 6, 2021**

We are On the Move for Good... especially in a pandemic!



**Rain or shine.**

**In-person or virtual.**

Check [www.nun.run](http://www.nun.run) for details about how to participate in our hybrid event.