

NACAR



North American Conference  
of Associates and Religious

# ***The Associate***

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# Message from NACAR

## MISSION

The North American Conference of Associates and Religious (NACAR) is a membership organization that acts as a catalyst to serve, empower and promote the associate-religious relationship.

## VISION STATEMENT

A vibrant, viable organization that collaborates with regional partners to promote association in all its forms.

Thank you for your positive feedback on the new look of *The Associate*. The NACAR communications committee and board read and appreciated your comments.

We would love to continue to hear from you; please send your comments and suggestions to [info@nacar.org](mailto:info@nacar.org).



As we approach the Lent and Easter seasons, I reflect on how each of us as associates and community members can bring our charisms to people with whom we interact each day. How do we bring our charisms to our co-workers and families or to the everyday mundane tasks such as the checkout line of the grocery store or daily chores? I often turn to the Lenten reflections from Dynamic Catholic ([dynamiccatholic.com](http://dynamiccatholic.com)) and the need for holy moments in the world.

What are holy moments? A holy moment, according to Matthew Kelly, is “when you make yourself completely available to God. You set self-interest aside; you set aside what you want to do or feel like doing, and for that moment you do exactly what you sense God is calling you to do” (*Rediscover the Saints*, 2019). Our world is a collection of holy and unholy moments and we can bring holy moments into the world.

As I reflect on holy moments, I have discovered that we can bring holy moments to the small moments in life by offering our unenjoyable tasks, such as chores, to God as a prayer for someone who is in need. Another way to bring holy moments into our lives is to start the day with a short prayer of gratitude; this helps set the stage for holy moments throughout the day. We can ask God for patience while waiting in line or bring a small act of kindness to someone in our lives. These holy moments can help us to bring our charisms to families, friends, co-workers and people we interact with each day.

I hope you have a blessed Lenten and Easter season filled with holy moments and will join me in filling this Lenten and Easter season with holy moments.



Associate Carla Rush,  
Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati,  
*editor of The Associate*

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Past issues of *The Associate* can be found on the NACAR website for members.

Submit articles for future newsletters to: [info@nacar.org](mailto:info@nacar.org).

# Seeking Points of Intersection

## A NACAR Board Report

by Covenant Companion Jeanne Connolly, Wheaton Franciscans, NACAR board president

The NACAR board of directors met March 9-11, 2020. It was a week dominated by the rapidly changing landscape created by the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. This timing allowed the board to make timely and important decisions to protect the well-being of our members by canceling the 2020 leadership retreat.

The meeting focused on identifying the essential services that NACAR offers and the data necessary to ensure that NACAR's mission and vision continues to flourish.

On March 11 NACAR board members were joined by representatives Marge Argyelan, director of membership with National Religious Vocation Conference; Krista Clements, Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration Affiliate, graduate programs director with the Leadership Collaborative; and Ryan Hoffman, associate director with Religious Formation Conference. In January, the NACAR board had invited representatives of these organizations to join in a conversation "to begin exploring the points of intersection and collaboration within our organizations' shared desire to support and give witness to the gift of the Gospel life."

As the host organization, the NACAR board welcomed our guests stating, "As a board we are working hard to be transparent about what we believe, who we serve, what we do and what we need in order to carry out our mission of serving leaders of associate communities. We are each part of a religious community; we know and experience first-hand the diminishing numbers and other human and financial resources. We know we can't carry out our mission alone and we don't want to. We have no desire to compete;



NACAR Board members met with representatives from three organizations at the March in-person board meeting to discuss future collaborations. From left, Krista Clements, Marge Argyelan, Sister Rita Woehlcke, Ann Gotfryd, Mary Jo Mersmann (via Zoom), Jeanne Connolly, Ryan Hoffmann, Terri Butel and Carla Rush.

everything is open for conversation with the understanding that we firmly believe that God is serious about the future of the associate way of life and because we believe that we want to serve associate leaders and prospective leaders. We want to further this form of Gospel life, not to the exclusion of other forms, but in relationship with and in collaboration with others."

The conversation was rich and informative. We were able to identify points of intersection beyond the religious communities that each group serves. These points were noted in the collective desire to support the formation journey of all "charism carriers." The representatives expressed gratitude for the time together, the deeper understanding of each organization, the good energy and synergy, and identification of shared values. There was a strong desire to continue the conversation and exploration of what is emerging.

Amidst the growing uncertainty of a world pandemic, this small group left feeling hopeful and confident in our growing friendship and collective desire to support God's emerging plan for living the gift of the Gospel life.

# Associate Leadership

## Understanding our Roles

by Cathi Duffy, director of Society of the Holy Child Jesus Associates, USA

At the OPAL (Ohio Pennsylvania Associate Leadership) September workshop, Sister of St. Joseph Jayne Helmlinger, LCWR president, shared information about current and future leadership in religious life as a way to invite participants into reflecting how associate leadership is similar or different. Using her image for leadership of religious communities as a starting point, I created my own equivalent for associate leadership and shared it with the Society of the Holy Child Jesus associate national leadership (i.e., core team/board). A lively discussion ensued about the different components; improvements were made. The framework speaks visually to our understanding of associate leadership whether we are the director, board member or local/virtual group leader.

The regional associate inter-congregational leadership (IAD) in eastern Pennsylvania were also energized by the visual description of leadership roles. Many are exploring its applicability with their own associate leadership. Following is an explanation of our current understanding.

At the center of our role as associate leaders is the congregation's mission and charism, which is lived out in our individual and unique vocations. As leaders, we have different areas in which we promote associate life. These include:



- **Leading associate communities** - We do this at a local/virtual or national level.
- **Fostering spiritual growth** - As leaders, we are called to foster spiritual growth in and by associates.
- **Encouraging responses to signs of our times** - As associates, we are called individually and communally to action that helps the marginalized. As leaders, we encourage action in response to the signs of our times and our congregation's preferential option for the poor.
- **Nurturing relationships** - As leaders, we nurture the associate communities in which we participate and build connections across communities (nationally, internationally, inter-congregationally).
- **Ensuring sustainability** - We are all called to invite others to the associate relationship and to support associates with our gifts. As leaders, we are called to ensure that the resources are available for the ongoing sustainability of the associate relationship. These resources include that:
  - ongoing leadership is available at a local/virtual and national level,
  - gifts and talents are shared by and for the larger associate community, and
  - younger individuals are intentionally invited to the associate relationship for continual growth and stability of the associate community.

What are your ideas? Do you agree? Would you add something? Does this model help you understand associate leadership in a new or different way?

Special thanks to OPAL and to Sister Jayne Helmlinger for helping us explore new ways of being, new ways of ministering!



# NACAR Benefits

## Events and Resources

### UPCOMING CREATIVE CONVERSATIONS

**Starting Conversations with Associates About Finances**, facilitated by Sister of St. Joseph Rita Woehlcke and Amy Kulesa, director of associates for the Sisters of Bon Secours, on Wednesday, April 15, 2020.

Watch for the emails that are sent for registration.

### NEW LEADERSHIP MANUAL CHAPTER

The newest chapter of the leadership manual, *Lead With The Spirit*, is now available for purchase. "Prayer As Sanctuary: Designing and Leading Prayer Experiences" is a 48-page chapter addressing what is at the heart of associate gatherings: prayer. It specifically outlines different kinds of prayer services and provides examples of each, both those unique to Associate gatherings as well as general prayer services frequently used.

Order online [here](#) or download the order form [here](#). We trust you will find this chapter a valuable resource!

### COMMUNITY DIRECTORY SURVEY RESULTS

In November of 2019 a survey was sent to all primary contacts for NACAR member communities. Invitations were sent to 122 people, with 88 responding, 79 of whom fully completed the survey. Aside from being able to update the community member directory, the survey provided basic statistics about the NACAR member communities. Data gathered included:

- what communities offer their associates--who can participate, from where,
- how associates are encouraged to participate in the life of the community,
- the community and associate presence on the web/social media,
- how associates are called, and
- the numbers of vowed religious and associates.

The survey responses can be found in the resource section of the [NACAR website](#). You must be logged in before downloading NACAR surveys.

### SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION AND SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

If you are in the process of hiring new leadership for your associates, you will find resources available in the member section of the NACAR website. They include:

#### Sample Job Description for a Leader of Associates in a Religious Community

This job description will help identify areas that could be included in a job description. It is not meant to be totally inclusive or exhaustive. Religious communities will want to adapt their job description to meet their own situation.

#### Sample Interview Questions for Leadership Role of Associates

These questions are samples of what might be asked. Each community will want to adapt their interviews to meet their own situation.

You can find these and more in the resources section of the [NACAR website](#).