

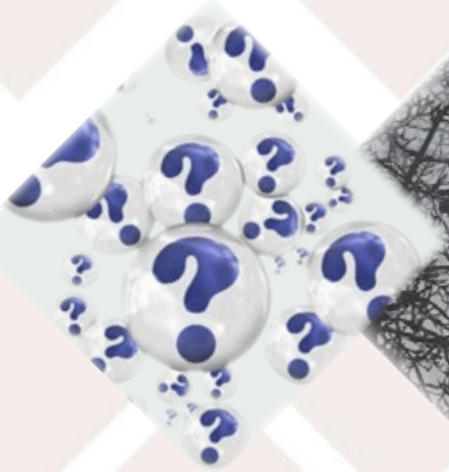
NACAR



North American Conference
of Associates and Religious

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

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.

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Message from NACAR

MISSION

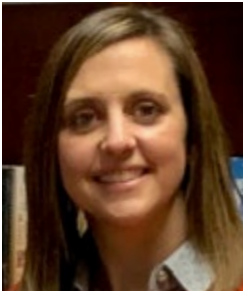
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Perfect love casts out all fear.

1 John 4.18



I think we are all ready to start a new year, this year more than ever, and hoping for a fresh start to 2021. We also begin *The Associate* with a new theme for 2021: crossing and connecting over borders and boundaries. I believe the events of the last few months have shown that we need to find ways to connect over boundaries more than ever!

As I began to reflect on this new theme, I thought of a podcast from Brené Brown that I have been listening to for a few days. It is a conversation between Brené Brown and Episcopal Bishop Michael Curry on finding love and hope in troubling times. Bishop Michael Curry is the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church and the author of the book *Love is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times*. In this conversation with Brené Brown, they discuss love and how we can use love to transcend fear in our scarcity-based culture. Bishop Curry believes that, inspired by God's love and the reflection of love in human lives, we can cross boundaries and connect with each other. What an inspiring and needed message to begin 2021! I recommend listening to this inspiring and challenging podcast with Bishop Curry to learn more about his message of love and connection to begin your new year.

In this issue, we have articles on connecting with others as well as an article about connecting with NACAR by serving as a board member. We are also happy to announce in this issue a new connection with the Religious Formation Conference with a RFC-NACAR dual membership option through RFC. We hope this *Associate* brings love and connection to your life through the associate movement.

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



Dual Membership Option NACAR and RFC

NACAR's ongoing collaboration with the Religious Formation Conference (RFC) has led to a new opportunity for NACAR members. RFC recognizes the desire for those active in NACAR to also have access and utilize the plethora of resources available to members of RFC. The numerous resources the RFC has assembled (archived video webinars and presentations, articles, resource manuals and more) would complement existing resources that inform the formative journeys of those committed to growing the associate-religious relationship.

Individuals interested in obtaining dual membership in NACAR and the RFC are invited to learn more online: www.relforcon.org/nacar

Eligibility, membership categories, price schedule and online application are included at the link above for review. Membership fees reflect additional membership dues to be paid directly to the RFC on an annual, rolling basis.

Questions about dual membership can be directed to Ryan Hoffmann, RFC associate director, by email at rhoffmann@relforcon.org.



ANNOUNCING

**NACAR-RFC
DUAL
MEMBERSHIP**

**THE NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF
ASSOCIATES & RELIGIOUS (NACAR) & THE
RELIGIOUS FORMATION CONFERENCE (RFC)
INVITE YOU TO LEARN MORE**

www.relforcon.org/nacar



Board Membership

What A Year This Has Been

by Mark Piper, Sisters of Mercy, West Midwest,
Chicago, Illinois

About a year into my stint as director of associates for the Sisters of Mercy (West Midwest) Conni Dubick, NACAR board president at the time, asked me to consider joining the NACAR board. I considered, I applied and the board accepted my application. In November 2017 I attended my first in-person NACAR board meeting and began monthly participation in standing and ad hoc committees. Now, I invite you to consider becoming a NACAR board member; joining the board is a particular way to be of service to association and provide a meaningful contribution to this catalyst of collaboration, communication and community.

Each of us, associates or sisters, has different skills and talents, and various levels of time to commit to the work of a board. But, with other committed and aimable board members, I assure you, your time is well spent, not taxing. More to the point, the NACAR board allows you to latch on to what speaks to your interests and strengths. Due to the ongoing strategizing, assessment of fidelity to mission and providing services, as a board member you – like me – would be able to focus on designing, developing or implementing the tasks, ideas or programs integral to NACAR and the associate way of life.

The following is what I experienced on the board, but certainly was not exclusive to me. Being a NACAR board member ensures your voice (and all whom it represents) is heard and has an impact. Additionally, because of contemplative dialogue, you will hear the impactful voices of others too. You soon realize, as a board member, you care more than you thought you did about NACAR as well as your local associate group; whether your skill is a designer (dreamer), developer (builder), or implementor (one who can execute ideas to fruition) you are a course-setter and navigator with a team of equally passionate, intelligent, spiritual, and dedicated associates and sisters. As we live in a perilous time, being of service by way of board membership ensures a purpose and hope-filled future for association. And so, my three years passed quickly by and I

transition my service and contributions to NACAR in ways apart from board membership. This allows other mission driven folks (read: you!) have a seat at this table and provide what the NACAR board needs: intelligent, passionate, discerning associates and sisters. My thanks especially to the two NACAR board presidents, Conni and Jean, along with all board members I had the great and fun privilege of working with over the past three years. Lastly, if you enter prayer, asking God whether or not you should inquire about or apply for NACAR board membership, and you don't readily hear a reply, until God instructs me otherwise, I'd be happy to serve as his proxy and I say to you: Yes. Yes, you should apply!



New Website Soon

Check it Out

NACAR has a new website coming soon! You will be receiving more information about our new website and you can see it now at <https://nacarin.wildapricot.org/>.

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Members Only Pages

Home News Who We Are Membership Support Us Resources Events

NACAR 2020: A Year in Review

NACAR 2020 Year in Review

Watch later Share

Joined by Krista Clements, Leadership Collaborative (left) and Marge Argyelan, National Religious Vocation Conference

Important Information!

Over the next few weeks, NACAR will be consolidating its two websites into a single website. This present website, which has been used for membership management, will be the only website for NACAR beginning in early 2021. The domain name will eventually also be changed to nacar.org. In the meantime, you can still find information and documents at www.nacar.org.

A Time of Transition - Carla Rush

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

When I reflect on NACAR and our world in general, the word that echoes in my head is transitions. Transitions are a recurring aspect of life and they can bring anxiety and trepidation but also excitement and hope. Transitions carry an opportunity for us to be vulnerable because the future is uncertain and brings a feeling of unsettledness. Transitions can usher in a feeling of loss and they can also guide us on a path to something new.

We are all experiencing transitions due to COVID and are trying to find our "new normal" (the phrase I hear so often these days). Through this transition, we have found newness and hope through loss. I had a wonderful experience of renewing my associate vows through zoom and connecting with associates from across the continent. It was a beautiful and life-giving encounter that I am thankful to have had. I have watched my children adapt to virtual learning then back to in-person school with masks and social distancing and still see them joyful in their lives. What a blessing for them to overcome change and adapt to this "new normal"!

NACAR is also undergoing a time of transition. Jeanne Connolly, our board president, will soon be sharing a member update with the changes that have occurred and the new transitions on the horizon. Our long-time member relations/office administration coordinator Mary Jo Mersmann will be retiring this spring, and she carries a wealth of NACAR knowledge, history, and relationships that will be missed by all. Another transition for NACAR is the retirement of board members and our continued request for new board members to bring new ideas and excitement to our organization. NACAR will be experiencing feelings of loss and uncertainty with these changes, but I pray that we will find newness and growth in these changes as well.

[Read More](#)

NACAR Mission Statement

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NACAR Vision Statement

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November 2013

NACAR | North American Conference of Associates and Religious

NACAR History

NACAR Board

Sixth Zoom Forum

Voting is an Act of Love

Associate Kathy Noether, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, co-director of the Bay Area Conference of Associates and Religious (BACAR)

In early October, BACAR addressed one of the most important actions we Americans can do — VOTE! BACAR saw this gathering as an opportunity to come together at the sixth Zoom forum on October 6, 2020.

Our planning team paired ideas with the Ignatian Solidarity Network, using thoughts and processes from their website. Religious, associates and friends joined together in prayer and discussion.

We explored three questions in our small groups:

1. What will restore our moral compass, solidarity and compassion to the needs of our community and our world?
2. What fears do we have about the process of voting in the upcoming election?
3. Being confined and sheltered in place during this pandemic, what can we do to get people to vote?

Some comments and concerns from participants included:

- Limiting my time in watching the news; more baking.
- Keep learning and educating oneself – recognizing the confusion from media and seeking reliable sources.
- Thank you again for the excellent time to reflect with other associates/sisters on the fact that “voting is an act of love.”
- We felt before we can solve anything, we need to ensure a strong spiritual background of prayer and contemplation. We can then reach out with conviction and hope.

- The pandemic has allowed us to reflect through prayer and be with nature while discerning how God can use us.
- Who would have thought we would have a concern about our vote!
- We see this election as an opportunity to vote with a conscience toward knowing that we are from a spiritual interfaith with needs of all races, creeds and cultures, and cannot polarize ourselves with narrow-mindedness.
- Peace, as we hold our suffering state, nation, world and planet in our hearts and prayer.



The time together prompted us to reflect on the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, “The course of history is directed by the choices we make, and our choices grow out of the ideas, the beliefs, the values, the dreams of the people.”

As a nation we voted this year in an unprecedented election that to date is still being debated. It prompts us to heed the words

encouraged by St. Timothy, “The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know. Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. This is the way our Savior God wants us to live” (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

This event was indeed an energetic sharing of ideas and hopes. Many events have come to pass since then, but this time had instilled in us the need to act as a citizen for the country’s ideals to which we aspire. And so, we pray for a future in our democracy that listens to the vote of the people and abides by the will of a nation waiting to be healed!



Living Dominican Charism in Mission under COVID-19

Associate Lisa Mitchell, director of associate life,
Dominican Sisters, Grand Rapids

The Midwest Dominican Associate Directors (MDAD) recently sponsored a Zoom gathering for Midwest and Tacoma associates to discuss how they are living out the Dominican charism in mission under COVID-19. Associates from seven congregations attended. Participants included representatives from the Dominican congregations of Grand Rapids and Adrian (Michigan), Racine (Wisconsin), Springfield (Illinois), Peace (Ohio), Sinsinawa (Wisconsin), and Tacoma (Washington).

We invited Dominican Sister Joyce Ann Hertzig and Associate Nancy Koehler from Grand Rapids to share insights into living through the COVID-19 experience.

Sister Joyce Ann shared these learnings:

1. Value the sacredness of the present moment.
2. Be grateful for health and community.
3. Continue to grow in understanding the perspectives of people of color.
4. Experience an awareness of how each person's gifts make the whole.
5. Amazement at how little shopping I really "need" to do.

Associate Nancy Koehler reflected, "My ministry work of home visits, mentoring, working on projects and just being available to help came to a complete standstill. All of the educational planning for care of earth and city-wide volunteering projects had to be canceled. To cope with COVID-19 and its restrictions, I focused on the following:

1. "Let go and let God!" I recite the Serenity Prayer often. I try to be aware of God's presence and take time to notice it in my experiences. I most often notice it when I go outside for walks/hikes in nature.
2. Discover time as a gift. I realized quite quickly that meeting virtually saves time. I've found extra time for prayer, meditation and study. I recognize that I live in a quieter, slower time and it's a time to read more and just be. I attend webinars regarding social justice issues and climate change. I engage in social justice issues through petitions and letter writing. I attend online classes and meet virtually with my faith sharing group and for Bible study.
3. I'm cultivating an attitude of gratitude for what is and what is to be. I have this constant feeling of gratitude as I am aware of the many blessing in my life, especially for family and friends.

After Sister Joyce Ann and Nancy shared their stories, the group divided into small groups to share more stories and insights. We discovered that COVID-19 brought many changes to peoples' ministries — some ministries ended, some were morphed into something new, and some are now completely different. Sharing stories about experiences and details of changing ministries greatly impacted those who gathered.

I'm grateful that we had this time to share and hear about experiences and what others are noticing during this time of COVID. There is something so grounding and peace-giving about engaging contemplatively with the same charism that has led the life and mission of the Dominican family for over 800 years until our time.

The Big Questions

Love, Legacy, Leadership

Associate Conni Dubick, Dominican Sisters of Peace

The theme was “Legacy, Love, Leadership: The Unfolding Associate Path” with author/consultant Mercy Associate Kathleen Wade. The “location” was the first Zoom workshop for the emerging Ohio Pennsylvania Associate Leadership (OPAL).

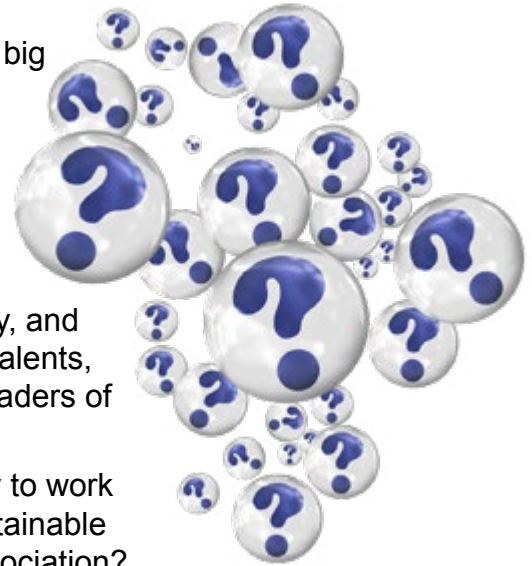
Kathy began our day with the words of Franciscan Sister Ilia Delio that “We are not called to maintain the existing order but to engage disorder as it lingers on the edge of new order. ... We are called to live with a renewed energy of love, gathering the fragments of life into new wholes, and testing the possibilities of life with a sense of spiritual adventure.”

When the immediate feedback from participants was positive, energized and voiced as “ready to be called into leadership, where the action is,” we knew that Ilia’s message had been heard through our prayer, writing and dialog on that day! The format of the morning provided time for self-discovery through the contemplative dialog process, using fast-writing and then sharing with breakout room partners. Listening to one another was imperative in order to begin to understand what Jesus meant by “you are the light of the world.”

After we wrote our “above the time line” and “below the time line” personal leadership skills, we shared and listened again with each other. Then slowly it dawned on us that we maybe could see both our light and the light of each person. We realized, as Thomas Merton did on a Louisville street corner, that “there is no way to tell people that they are walking around shining like the sun. It can only be believed and understood by seeing the secret beauty of their hearts.”

And then Kathy presented these big questions to the group:

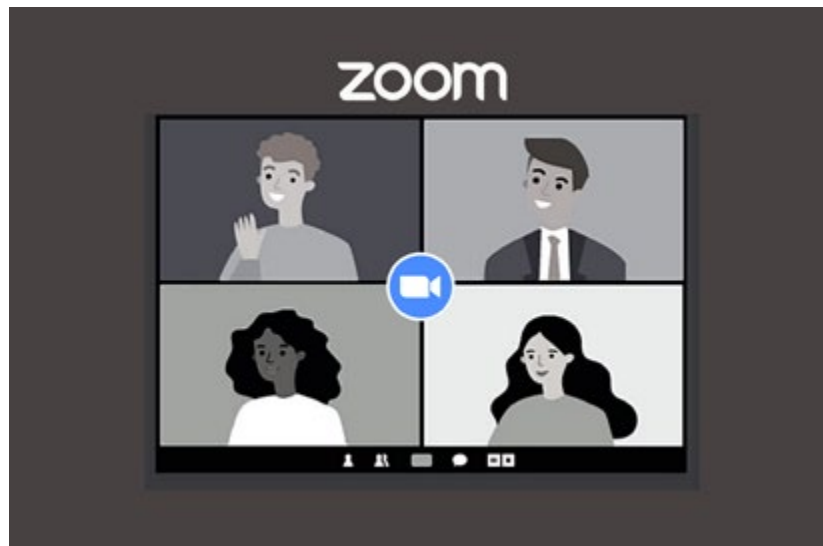
1. Are we ready to trust and deepen our spirituality, and develop our talents, to become leaders of association?
2. Are we ready to work toward a sustainable future for association?
3. Are we ready to invite individuals of greater diversity to association?
4. Are we open to exploring what it will mean to be an association community of the future?
5. Are we brave enough to risk asking challenging questions?
6. What will my own personal next steps be?
7. Is there one way I might see myself contributing to the growth of association?



The challenge to us in 2021 is to engage in imagining the new order of associate leadership from within by gathering together to discuss and answer the big questions.

As one breakout group discussed “we must do market research and determine what congregations want from associates and what associates want now and moving into the future. We must take a hard, analytical look at our charism and what it requires in our current time/ society and where it has to take us into the future.”

Creative Conversations Monthly in 2021



Creative Conversations will include brief presentations, breakout groups and reports. They will be held the third Wednesday of each month and will be one hour in length, beginning at 10 a.m. Pacific, 11 a.m. Mountain, 12 p.m. Central and 1 p.m. Eastern. Registration emails will be sent one month prior to each.

Essential Steps in Associate Initial Formation

Wednesday, February 17, 2021

Anne Carey and Terri Butel will review tab 3 in the NACAR Leadership Manual regarding initial formation. Discussion will focus on inquiry and information, formation, discernment, commitment and withdrawal.

Ongoing Formation

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Anne Scott and Sister Rita Woehlcke will analyze various components of ongoing formation within our associate communities, which is the topic for tab 4 in the leadership manual. She will look at the various aspects of spirituality, mission, community and governance.

Associate Spirituality and Faith Development

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Lori Ritz and Anne Carey will review tab 5 of the leadership manual regarding associate spirituality and the stages of faith development.