

Collaboration



Providence—Where Justice and Radical Hope Meet!

Background

In 2018, after the Providence Event was over, planning began for the next one to be held in June of 2020. A Core Team was formed and our planning began in earnest. Nancy Sylvester, IHM, was secured as our speaker. The theme was chosen and the team was off and running! Rituals for a three day event were being planned, a logo was selected, assignments for hospitality, registration materials, the book room, posters, folders, nametags, and even what was to be used for the table centerpieces was decided. By spring of 2020 we were finished with **everything**—except the making of the centerpieces. Then Covid hit, and like everything else, the possibility of holding the Event in person couldn't happen. The WPC Board had its meeting that same spring and made the decision to hold the Providence Event on one day only and **virtually**! So the Core Planning Team had to begin again...thinking about how we would format a one day conference. We contacted our speaker, who agreed to do her presentations via Zoom; we secured the help of the IT department at St. Mary of the Woods (without whose help we couldn't have done it!); sent out new registration materials, refunded monies, created new rituals from all the ones that were finished, and created new groupings for the way people would attend.

Actual Virtual Providence Event Day

For those of you who attended, you know that the first ever Virtual Event was superb! It began with an Anniversary Power Point to celebrate the 40 year history of the Women of Providence in Collaboration. (WPC) There were over 250 Sisters, Associates, and Partners in Mission in attendance. The Opening Ritual, using a PowerPoint to the song "All I Do Today" called us to bring blessings on the earth...for the good of all...which is the

call to **BE** Providence today. Following the Opening Ritual, Sr. Nancy Sylvester began her presentation. She spoke about how Providence lures us to systemic change, to justice, to radical hope. She invited us to respond to an unfolding future and to be prophets in the way we re-vision our world and its cosmic reality.

Using some of the notes from Gayle Desarmia, SP, I share with you some points from Nancy's first presentation on Emerging Consciousness. (Thank you, Gayle!) Consciousness is the way we view the world—values, beliefs, assumptions and worldview. It evolves both individually and collectively. She spoke about how Spiral Dynamics is integral—and includes "wholearchy" rather than hierarchy. Nancy spoke about the pre-modern, modern, and post-modern stages of consciousness and how each of them has us believing that the way we see the world is the right way. The Kosmocentric Consciousness is emerging and identifies with all life—wholeness, paradox, ambiguity, both/and—it is only here that one can appreciate the wisdom and values of the previous stages—can seek a new way

forward to achieve a common goal—the future is calling us here—to widen our worldview. Reflection questions followed the presentation and small groups were asked to discuss (a) how Providence was inviting us to do justice? (b) what that might look like today, (c) what personal challenges it held?, and (d) what challenges it might hold for the WPC?

The second presentation by Sr. Nancy focused on Contemplation and Justice. She said that commitment to working for justice is integral to contemplative practice...that contemplation invites us to drop down into the space where Divine Mystery/Providence dwells.



Nancy Sylvester, IHM

Providence—Where Justice and Radical Hope Meet!

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It invites us to silence, to be fully present to the now, to a path of awakening, of surrendering to the power and energy of God.

Providence calls us from the future and from deep within. It calls us to a witnessing presence, to see from the eye of the heart, from one's true best self. She then spoke about **HOPE**. Providence invites us to new ways of contemplative action. Hope is yielding unconditionally to God's future—to embrace and work for a future without us. The question is: can we embrace radical hope as an active, conscious choice? Her reflection questions following the second presentation challenged us to be **ICONS** of Providence where justice and radical hope really do meet! We are all part of this evolving future, the

call is not to be complacent, but to be that “witnessing presence,” that iconic beacon of radical hope in this evolving world.

In the closing ritual of the day participants were led in a litany of our founders and foundresses who spoke out in the name of Providence with justice and hope. Now it is our call to do whatever justice calls us to—in our own time and place if we are serious about really sinking into the heart of our Provident God. This is our call. Will we spend time in contemplation and be open to the ways the Spirit of Providence invites us to where justice and hope meet? Together we can. Divided we will fail. One of the readings in this closing ritual asked the question: “Can we have the kind

of hope in the once-unimaginable, which the present, that was once the future, has proven possible? So there are things that we don't yet know, that we don't

think we're going to live to see, that are also going to give us power and beauty if we hold up our own—**this is radical hope!**”

As you will see on the following pages, we are sharing some of the notes from the small groups, the reflections people who were asked sent in, and points of evaluations. Many of the comments on the evaluations were positive. People felt challenged, inspired, energized, hopeful. Thought the day was magnificent! More people could participate via Zoom.

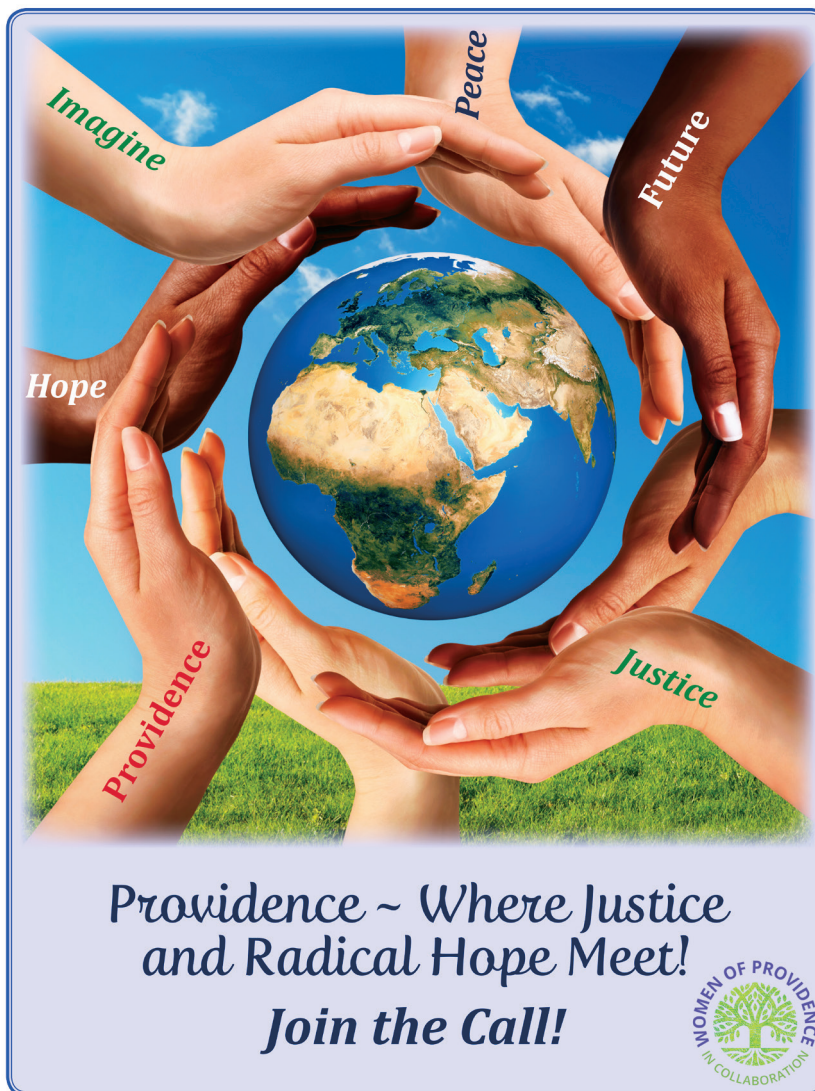
We asked Nancy Sylvester to engage us in the critical issues of our day, to show us where justice and

radical hope meet, and to help us integrate our response through our own particular “providence lens.” I think I can say, for all the participants of the day, a resounding **YES**, she did!

Barbara McMullen, CDP

P.S.

I know many of you wanted the PowerPoint slides and notes from Sr. Nancy's presentation. However, due to some copyright restrictions, she is not able to share written materials of her presentations or slides. What I can share with you is that each WPC congregation will receive a DVD of the **recording** in future weeks.





Women of Providence in Collaboration 40th Anniversary



Standing on the shoulders of....

We stand on the shoulders of our founders, Michelle Holland, SP, and Ruth McGoldrick, SP, who forged a path for us to come together as Providence Congregations.



A Steering Committee was Formed

A Steering Committee was formed and continued to work for ten years thanks to the dedication of the following women: Barbara Doherty, SP; Mary Joan Coultas, CDP; Kathleen Popko, SP; Pauline Lally, SP; Anita Green, CDP; and Nicole Bunnell, CDP.

Three of the six Steering Committee Members, Barbara Doherty, SP; Anita Green, CDP; and Nicole Bunnell, CDP; are now enjoying our Provident God face to face in eternity.



**Nicole
Bunnell, CDP**



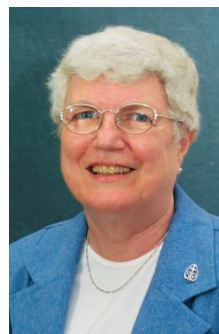
**Mary Joan
Coultas, CDP**



**Barbara
Doherty, SP**



**Anita
Green, CDP**



**Pauline
Lally, SP**



**Kathleen
Popko, SP**

The Steering Committee recognized the organization was ready for the next step.

To continue the wonderful work, the Steering Committee hired an Executive Director — Sr. Mary Catherine Hunt, CDP — who led the Women of Providence in Collaboration from 1992-2000

Other Executive Directors Followed in Her Footsteps:

Barbara McMullen, CDP 2000-2007

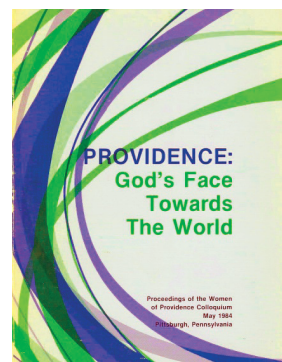
Ann Margaret O'Hara, SP 2007-2012

Barbara McMullen, CDP 2012-present





The engagement with one another is the inner strength over these 40 years that led to how WPC has fed, nurtured, grown and energized our spirits through Providence Events, through Vocation/Formation/Leadership Conferences, through Associate Conferences, Board meetings, Executive Committee Meetings, Collaboration Newsletters, and various publications. Forty years later the Women of Providence in Collaboration, with its Sisters and Associates, continue to create a network of Providence communities and enable dreams and visions to become realities. Let us continue to celebrate the unfolding universe and the power of love among us. This Inexhaustible Mystery we name Providence calls us forth to give thanks for the history we have forged together and for all that yet will be!



Providence Event: Notes, Learnings, Insights From the Cross-Congregational and Onsite Groups

What I have tried to do in these pages is take something from each of the groups that sent in their notes. While there was significant repetition in some of the sharing, I looked for a nuance or insight that might give a different view. Here are some of the sharings on the questions after Sr. Nancy's presentation one:

➤ Liked being in a middle space to invite persons in other stages of consciousness to conversation

➤ One of the ways to continue justice work is out of an integrated consciousness and a challenge is seeing the work of justice in the Church as Jesus presented it in the Gospels

➤ When I am centered in my true self, I can be more effective. The challenge is to live from a contemplative stance but hold on to our own values. Hard to keep values, respect for others.

➤ Even the definition of Providence changes my life. Have compassion for those that are stuck. Have a willingness to allow others to move forward. Be a beacon of hope.

➤ In relationships we need to notice that there are parts of our own world view that are in different stages and so are the world view of others. What we need is openness and dialogue in a world that is more openly human loving God and the world.

➤ We believe that the God of compassion sees wholeness of humanity as good. If we really all believed this, we would move forward on the spiral.

➤ Because of being public with our corporate stances, we have to be aware that others are trying to understand what we're supporting and why. It's important to choose wisely how we word what we say publicly.

➤ We are challenged to address racial injustices from an integral consciousness. Connecting with people of color, with groups within our parishes, through book discussions, etc. are some helpful ways to understand other's experiences as we practice listening with openness from an integral consciousness.

➤ The issue of racism is very much in the forefront at this time. This has led to an increasing awareness of white privilege and a challenge by Providence to consciously choose inclusiveness, to be open minded.

➤ We talked about the need to think differently and act differently—to engage from a place from which we can respond and not react. This is what's needed to be an icon of Providence where justice and radical hope meet.

➤ Importance of loving one another into new ways of understanding each other (listening). Importance of having a sense of humor.

➤ We learn to practice "listening instead of controlling" and being part of the team.

➤ Understanding the tiers that are part of the spiral dynamics/ consciousness explanation helps explain people's actions; can help with learning to listen without trying to convert; can assist with finding common ground.

➤ The group agreed that the very witness of acting out of a new consciousness is powerful; that we underestimate how we can use the power of witness. It might be the best way we can work for justice.

➤ Movement up and down the tiers of consciousness and honor

where other people are

➤ We realized that the closer the relationship, the harder the dialogue so that it does not end in blame or shame (considering the past 4 years and the difficulty in having political conversations with family and friends),

➤ In the Spanish speaking group they talked about the need for Providence communities to increase consciousness in the area of interculturality.

➤ Not everyone, even in our religious community, has had exposure to the same information and experiences. We need on-going formation. For international communities, relating from different cultures, there can be special difficulties, different questions, values, a different worldview.



Sister Jean Hagelskamp, SP

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Providence Event: Notes, Learnings, Insights

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➤As women of Providence, we are called to reflect God's loving care in ALL the stages of our life, and to know that each stage holds potential for growth and development. To think otherwise about aging is to cheat ourselves and the world.

➤Regarding energy that emanates, we are interested in sharing wisdom, widening the tent, and using technology.

➤We are learning new ways of being in communion.

➤Be aware and respectful that everyone is at different stages of consciousness; interest in learning new realities differs; can we be accepting of that?

➤Plurality in Community—welcoming it, seeing it is good and instrumental in achieving UNITY IN DIVERSITY.

➤We spoke of ways we practice justice through keeping up on current events and topics such as racism, climate change, etc. and by the way we interact with people.

➤Our reflection on moving through the stages of consciousness included letting go of dualism, i.e., bringing mind and heart together, and engaging in new relationships. The group also focused on the need for interior work if we wish to be in "the middle space" as a bridge for others moving through these similar shifts.

➤In the past we did not address issues of inequality among peoples, especially those of color, and did not discuss wide spread racism that existed. Today we identify the racism we see exists all around us, we claim some aspects of racism in which our Congregation has participated, and we work with groups who are actively addressing this issue.

➤In the new consciousness the Scripture quote "In God we live and move and have our being" has been given more "vivid" meaning today. We are ONE. It's so simple!

Again, here are some of the sharings after Sr. Nancy's presentation two and the questions she asked.

➤An icon is one perspective; it holds the collective sacredness of an idea.

➤As long as you are breathing you are called to be an ICON of Providence!

➤Liked the quote: "We work IN the present not FOR the present." As Providence women we must face the challenge of not being complacent. Must be risk takers, step out of our comfort zones.

➤WPC is an Icon of Providence, the sisters before her...WPC can keep on being an Icon through education, to continue the work of justice.

➤Look at Jesus in his lifetime and who he chose...not the mighty and powerful...and look at what's come of that. Jesus is an icon for where justice and radical hope meet!

➤Through contemplation we develop a witnessing presence. Presence is so important. Although we are aging and not as active, it is through the people we hire, have worked with, etc., that Providence and radical hope are changing the world. It has to come through contemplation and a place of silence.

➤The WPC newsletter gives me hope. We are a mighty force for good in the world.

➤Change occurs when there is chaos. Providence unfolds one step at a time—an important reminder to not rush ahead of Providence.

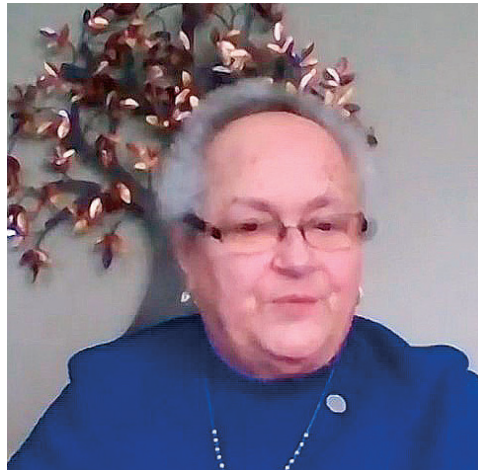
➤We are called to a hope that is independent of us and our accomplishments. In the past when we saw a need, we dug in our heels and did the work. Now we are called to trust in a time that lies beyond our own times and surrender the future to God's hands.

➤To radiate the love of God a person needs to be in touch with oneself and present to oneself.

➤Are we called to do something? YES. How? Through dialogue and education; continuing to articulate a theology and spirituality of Providence that is relevant for our world. Not settling or giving up on the journey.

➤How are we icons of hope in the church? Are we radical enough about the stands we take regarding Black Lives Matter, Immigration, LGBTQ issues and more, as a beacon of hope for those on the margins?

➤We need to find a way to speak radical hope with one prophetic voice that will bring hope freely and joyfully to all. Collaborate with other WPC women on the same justice issues thus combining our resources and support for each other.



Carol Groton, SP Associate

Providence Event: Notes, Learnings, Insights

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➤ Being an ICON of Providence is radiating the spiritual energies of Providence identified as: trust, compassion, hope, faithfulness, and positive energy.

➤ In suffering and chaos, hope rises through the ashes.

➤ We all agreed that we were being called to be an ICON of Providence, how important contemplative prayer is in this process and how we have been challenged by Nancy to envision new possibilities where "justice and radical hope meet."

➤ Hope doesn't need to be big...small acts of kindness and love matter. Do people we engage with really see Christ in us in every interaction? Do we see Christ in others? Can they be icons of hope as well? Can we be courageous enough to share that reality with them?

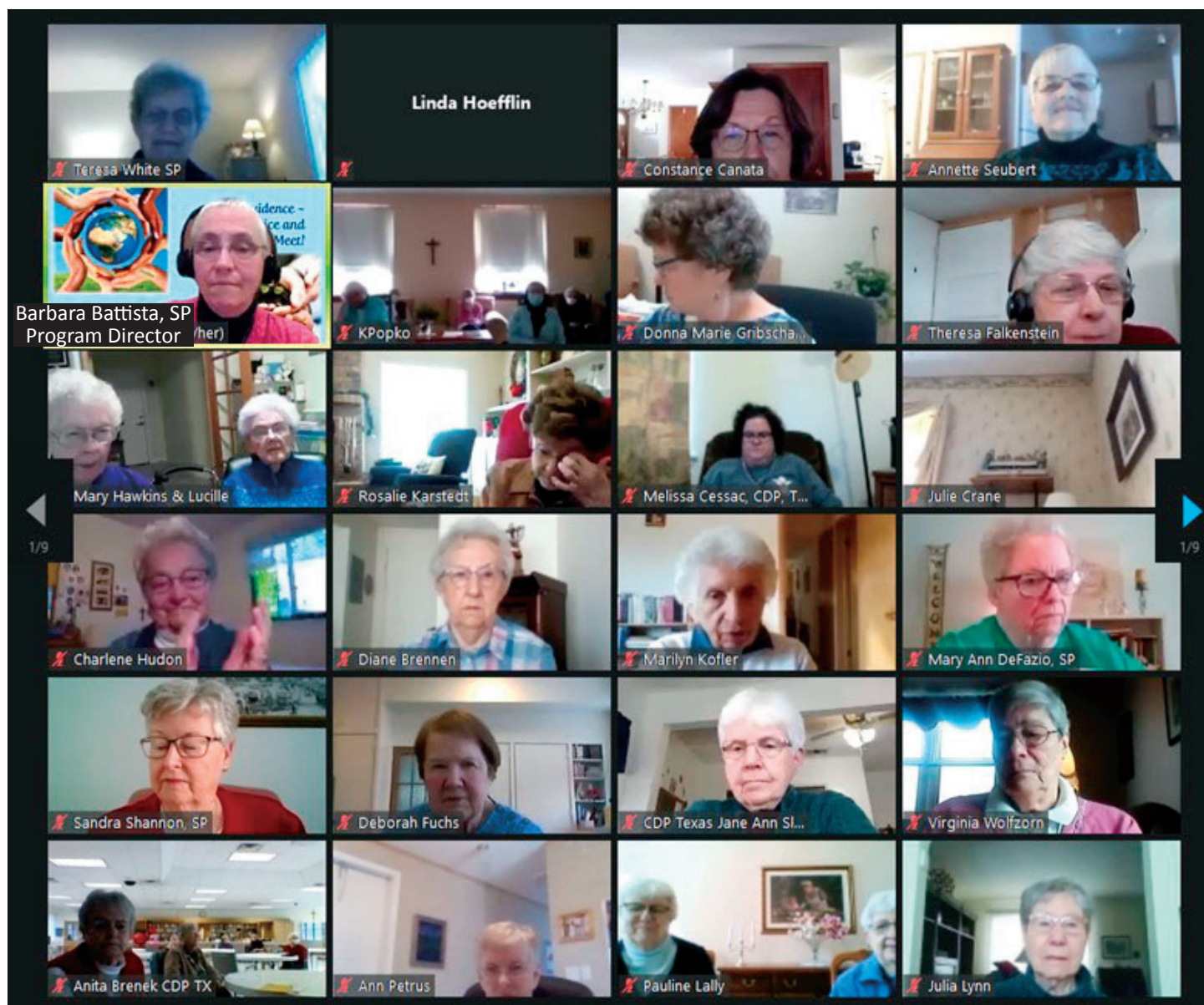
➤ We never know how our words, actions, or our just, loving, compassionate, and empathetic presence in the now will affect the future and those in it. It takes years to see what our impact might be. However, it is encouraging to live with Hope.

➤ There is a hunger to have deeper conversations surrounding Providence spirituality.

➤ How to convey radical hope when so many do not believe in God, in a world that does not show so much love, how to open the space in another to receive hope; how to live from the inside out rather than from the outside in.

➤ Throughout the afternoon discussion, there was clearly present a desire for WPC members, Sisters and Associates, to continue to deepen our association via Zoom.

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Providence Event: Notes, Learnings, Insights

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➤ Do we use our voice, our identity, our network to collaborate with other organizations that work for justice? How can we become a force with others doing the work?

➤ Agreeing that contemplative practice is vital to our witness of radical hope requires: deep listening, presence, and continued curiosity. Action is needed following prayer.

➤ Recognize the gift of the God of Providence “We become what we receive” the whole body of Christ, all of creation. The Trinitarian God of unity and oneness is present to us all.

➤ The pieces of hope were hard to be with, i.e., dispossession of self; important to remember we are about God’s work.

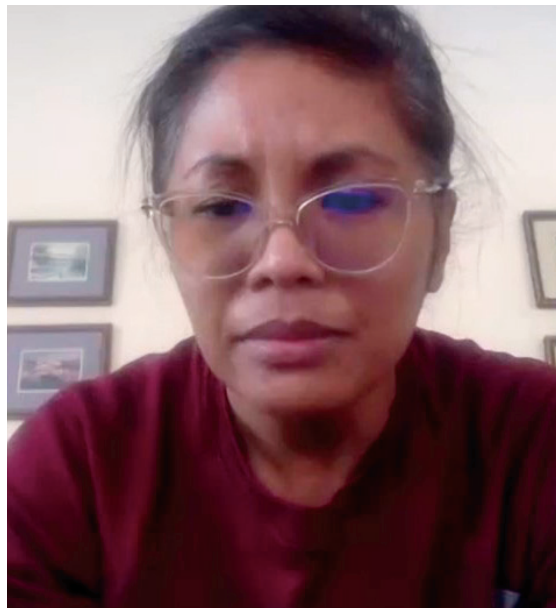
➤ The Core within us—how do we make it visible? How do we do this even when it goes against what others may think? We have a responsibility to society.

➤ We witness as Icons of Providence by bringing hope to the despairing and the powerless, trusting that God will provide, acting in communion with others. We acknowledge that growing in consciousness is a lifelong journey and Providence is with us calling us forward each day.

➤ The group’s sense was that, on an individual level, our times require more than “doing,” that is, being Providence, coming from a deeper contemplative place. From that place, where one touches the true self, we can try to become a conduit for the Providence of God in encountering people with radically different worldviews. There was much discussion on the difficulty of these efforts, since this puts us in a vulnerable place and requires courage to engage in those critical conversations.

➤ Congregations....If the expectation is that the vision that is emerging today will continue to deepen in the years ahead, those responsible have to have the tools to continue the work. This will take education, (religious and secular) experience, freedom to work across Congregational lines and Congregational support.

➤ Providence impels me to announce the joy, strength, and hope of the Good News. To be a Providence woman, I am called to respond in trust and action to whatever Providence puts before me in my daily life.



Jessica Vitente, SP Novice

A huge thank you to all the Moderators and note-takers of the cross-congregational and onsite location groups! There was so much good sharing and wisdom in the notes that it was difficult at times to know which sections of the notes to list here. Also I appreciate all the feedback on ways that the WPC can continue the conversation, collaborate with other justice directors, and work with newer/younger members on how these challenges can continue to emerge and unfold. Just so you know, there is now an established WPC group of the “Under 55” Sis-

ters who are meeting via Zoom. In fact they are having a follow up with Sr. Nancy in their April meeting.

Barbara McMullen, CDP

Participant Reflections

It was a bright and sunny day when I woke up on Saturday, February 20th. My first thought was that it would be a great day for a walk in the woods. Then I remembered that I would be sitting in front of my computer all day on a Zoom conference call with WPC. I wondered if I would get as much light from the conference as I would have outside. I did not have to worry. The planning committee filled our day with rituals that were rich in imagery of a God of Providence who calls us as Providence People into a world in need of men and women who bring new life to a world in chaos.

Our keynote presenter, Nancy Sylvester IHM, encouraged us to continue to develop an egalitarian world view that is non-violent, inclusive of all and can appreciate diverse views. Our broken world needs people of radical hope who believe that out of chaos we can bring wholeness.

The small group I was in was fun, insightful, challenging and renewing. Listening to the reports from the groups shone much light on the call to a new consciousness that will allow others to see us as icons of Providence.

*Barbara Baker, PA
Kingston, Ontario, Canada*

I was struck by a question: “Are you being called to be an icon of Providence where radical justice and hope meet?” I first thought, “I don’t think so.” This is for holy figure, not me. I am just an ordinary Sister of Providence who is called to follow Jesus and to serve the marginalized. After hearing from Sister Nancy, I am touched to know that I am also called to be an icon of Providence. Therefore, I am called to self-awareness, to be changed and to desire to think and act differently. For example, in my current ministry as a nurse, I can be an advocate for my patients, speaking for them when they cannot speak for themselves; saying the truth when I know it is easier to ignore than to deal with it. Each day if I through contemplative listening and prayer, I guess I will be ready where radical justice and hope meet is calling me.

*Hong Nga Nguyen, SP
Seattle, WA*

Having been involved with WPC since its inception, I was delighted to join in the 40th Anniversary WPC Providence Event. Scanning the past 40 years, it is clear this gathering was another breakthrough moment for WPC. Two areas seem pivotal: 1. how we will be together as WPC in the future; and 2. how we as WPC are called to be in the world.

Thwarted by pandemic, the Governing Board made a decision to risk holding the Providence Event virtually. Supported greatly by the Sisters of Providence, St. Mary of the Woods, this current successful use of zoom technology, on such a large scale as the Providence Event, points to new possibilities for how the Women of Providence may be able to interact virtually together in the days to come. Not hindered by our aging or the need to travel and its related costs, this zoom technology will enable WPC’s large and small groups to meet, perhaps more often, to foster the ongoing education, cross-congregational sharing, and common initiatives we wish to pursue. For many Providence Sisters and Associates, this virtual Providence Event was their first experience of the richness of these gatherings. There needs to be more!



The second pivotal matter is how WPC is being called to be in the world now. The theme of this Providence Event – “Providence~ Where Justice and Radical Hope Meet!” and the presentations of Nancy Sylvester, IHM demonstrate the deeper level of encounter and dialogue – rooted in contemplation – necessary to penetrate the divisions and polarization at all levels within our communities, country, and world. Understanding the stages of consciousness and doing the inner work required for our continued individual and collective evolution of consciousness will be essential to bridge and to heal the chasms between and among us in encounters with others with differing world-views. As Providence people, to truly step into that “middle space” and to be a “witnessing presence” bringing justice, healing and hope, are challenges worthy of our best efforts.

*Kathleen Popko, SP
Holyoke, MA*

Participant Reflections

Our opening song touched me in ways that kept echoing throughout Nancy's presentations and our small group discussions. May all I do today be for the healing of the whole; may all I do today mend our broken



world; may all I do today bring blessing on the earth; may all I do today be for the good of all. As Nancy described how we see the world in our differing spirals of consciousness, I felt that this refrain provided a touchstone for me, returning me to my center of gravity throughout the day.

During the presentation on contemplation, the words "Providence calls us from deep within AND from the future" helped me to be with Connie Fitzgerald's thought: Hope is yielding unconditionally to God's future. I felt called to spend time with the hope that exists independent of us and our accomplishments and the hope that embraces and works for a future without us. I want to trust in a time that lies past the horizon of my time. I want to give myself to God's work and God's ways now; I want all I do each day to be for the good of all.

Janet Folkl, CDP
Allison Park, PA



I am so grateful for the way in which Sr. Nancy Sylvester brought together the movements throughout history to focus on the different worldviews present today. Her challenges have stayed with me – most of all, the challenge to engage with others who have different worldviews and to do so without blaming or attempting to convert the other. We are called to be rooted and strengthened in our own beliefs, that we may have the courage and ability to listen and respect the views and beliefs of others – those who do not see life as we do. That is an ongoing challenge that is so needed as we are invited to work collaboratively with so many different individuals and groups today. Thank you for the challenge and reminder.

Helen Marie Miksch, CDP
San Antonio, TX

In reflecting on the Providence Event,
a variety of words flowed,
Delighted and Excited as I saw the smiling faces
appear on the Zoom screen,
Welcomed and Challenged by the greetings of
Sr. Barbara and Sr. Dawn,
Oneness and Supported as we prayed
during our rituals,
Touched and Moved by the slides and music
engaging our vision and hearing,
Affirmed and Called by Sr. Nancy's presentation,
its clarity and energy,
Trusted and Heard while sharing openly with
my Group friends,
Enlightened and Inspired by the feedback of the
Groups with Sr. Nancy,
Gratitude and Appreciation for all who contributed
to the success of this Event,
Contemplation and Action as practices that
recall two sayings:
Be still, and know that I am Providence.

Providence unfolds a step at a time. . . .

Providence – Where Justice and Radical Hope Meet!

Frances Popko, ASP
Holyoke, MA



The Providence Gathering offered insights that I continue to ponder, and it left me with a sense of our connections with each other across congregations. One of the insights Nancy Sylvester, IHM offered that resonated with me was that abandonment to Providence is not passive but active. It's a call to co-create the future with Providence, a movement of contemplation and action. This insight affirmed a call I already feel within me. Contemplation may be done in stillness, but it's certainly not the same as complacency. In fact, from my prayer springs a desire to risk for the sake of the Gospel. At the same time, I am more than just what I do, and my prayer life helps me to recognize who I am in God. I was encouraged to hear other newer, younger members in my small group express a passion for prayer and action, too. Our prayer roots us in our spirituality and then moves us to mission. As we shared, there was a resonance with each other, a sense of a common call and shared life.

Leslie Keener, CDP
Melbourne, KY

Participant Reflections

Barbara McMullen's last words summed up the 2021 Providence Event for me: "Blessed by Providence"! Nancy Sylvester, IHM, provided us with excellent and challenging presentations that truly made the theme: **Providence – Where Justice and Radical Hope Meet**, come alive with energy and passion. I believe we leave this day with a deeper consciousness and awareness of where and how Providence is calling us to do justice and radiate radical hope. From Nancy, and from the small and large group sharing, I feel renewed strength and courage to respond to the challenges we are experiencing in our congregations and world in solidarity with Women of Providence. How wonderful to benefit from each other's wisdom and support on ZOOM. With all today's material, I look forward to discerning our WPC response as the Board of Directors. Thanks to all who made the day possible!!!



*Karin Dufault, SP
Montreal, Quebec, Canada*



The virtual gathering for the Providence Event exceeded my expectations with regards to the scope and depth of the presentations by Sister Nancy Sylvester, the sharing of my Table Group and of the reports of the randomly selected Tables. The presentations impressed me in the ways that Nancy described how the different levels of consciousness affects worldviews; that being aware of these helps to better understand the actions of those whose worldviews are different from mine. As the moderator of my Table Group, I had the pleasure to meet or interact with our members for Zoom practice before the Event. Their responses to the questions posed for each of the breakout sessions touched me deeply because of their willingness to share personal experiences and reactions in the limited time we had. The challenge is to see if/how Providence is calling me to "...do justice from an integral-second tier Kosmocentric consciousness"!

*Marilyn Baker, SP
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN*

A beautiful day shared with many beautiful Providence people! This was a challenging topic for these times and Sr. Nancy was up for the challenge. I appreciated Nancy's review of the stages of consciousness that led into her explanation of 2nd tier Kosmocentric consciousness. Reflecting on how this level of consciousness is lived out, Sr. Nancy used descriptive words and phrases like wholeness, flowing, both/and thinking, differentiation within unity, complexity, etc. The thought that caught my attention was that at this 2nd tier level of consciousness, one is able to see the positive characteristics of previous stages without needing to criticize, blame or shame. It is this kind of thinking and being that I want to enter into as I converse with others; without needing to "convert," I can truly listen and recognize the value in another's words and ways.

This portion of Sr. Nancy's presentation reminded me somewhat of Cynthia Bourgeault's concept of the Law of Three, in which as two ways of thinking occur there can be a weaving together from which a new possibility can arise.

I found our small groups a delight both in meeting others in these Providence communities and in sharing insights that deepened the experience of the day. I also was heartened by Sr. Nancy's emphasis on contemplation – that "resting in God's love" and "dropping into spaciousness" that encourages us on our path of awakening into both working for justice and living with radical hope.

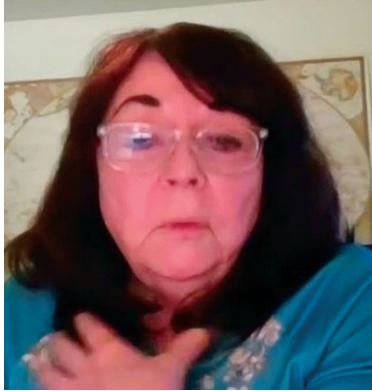
Thank you for the day!

*Marilyn Webb, PA
Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, IN*

Participant Reflections

Many sisters and associates gathered virtually for a day of dialog and celebration of the 40th year of WPC. The gathering welcomed Nancy Sylvester, IHM, to guide and enlighten the participants through out the day. She spoke of how the true nature of contemplative work is to awaken the heart to hear the cries of the world.

After Nancy's opening remarks reminding the participants that "We cannot solve the problems out of the same consciousness that created them", small groups were invited into breakout groups for the opportunity to discuss integral consciousness, contemplative prayer, aging as a justice issue, developing radical hope with a commitment of working toward justice and becoming an Icon so people will know Providence through what they see in us. Nancy encouraged all to get more articulate about ourselves and what we believe in, so others can learn.



As the day ended, Nancy inspired us to realize that we are part of the whole. The work of the day only deepened our conviction that contemplative practices drive transformed consciousness and this drives transformed action. In the months to come those in attendance and dialog hopefully will continue to reflect on this experience and how to exercise contemplative power. One of many thoughts that the group was left with was: "It is not that Christianity fails. It is that we have never tried".

*Kathe Boucha, PA
Seattle, WA*

The WPC virtual conference and the presenter Nancy Sylvester, IHM have allowed me to ponder many points. I can identify people and institutions that are at varying stages of consciousness. I work in health-care for an institution that names inclusion and diversity in their mission statement. Therefore, I must take the opportunities given to me such as committee membership, to help bring change in policies, inclusive language, and employee education.

The pandemic, with its new guidelines on patient care, calls me to be an icon of hope, as Nancy suggests, on a daily basis. I work in a skilled nursing facility. Therefore, family visiting protocols, simple social interactions, and the need for staff's increased personal protective equipment have drastically changed a resident's experience in a facility. Many feel isolated, lonely, and sad. One patient simply, tearfully asked me, "Would it be any worse if I caught the virus?" As I interact with patients on my assignment, Nancy's words of the need to "work in the present, not for the present" frequently come to mind. I am challenged to bring to those patients, promise and hope for a brighter future; a return to family visits, vaccinations against the virus, and physical contact with loved ones someday soon. With this I am clearly affirmed that hope remains an essential piece of the healing process.

*Michele Yotz, CDPA
Allison Park, PA*

Participant Evaluations Provide Insight Into the 2021 Event and Future Events

As with past Providence Events, the participants were asked to complete an evaluation form. With this being the first virtual event, the evaluation form was online. There were 154 surveys completed or 71% of the participants submitted the evaluation form. "This is an important source of information for future events and will help the next core team in its planning for the next event," according to Sister Barbara McMullen, WPC director.

Overall Experience

The first question was to rate the overall experience of the first virtual event. The rating structure for all of the questions was based on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the best. 71% of the participants rated the overall experience a 5. Comments about the experience were numerous. Here are just a few:

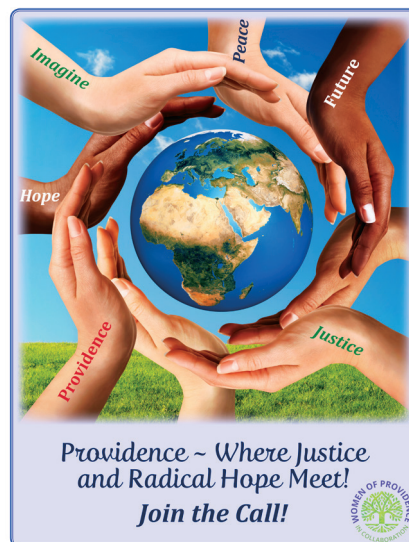
- ◆ Wonderful and thought provoking day.
- ◆ Excellent speaker and very well organized.
- ◆ Inspiring! Technology exceptional!
- ◆ Nancy's presentations were outstanding in their content, delivery and challenges.
- ◆ This conference fed my spirit. Very uplifting.
- ◆ It was a blessed time to be together with so many Women of Providence, to hear Nancy's meaningful talk, hear about the "beginnings" of WPC and participate in the meaningful prayer and PowerPoint presentations.

Opening and Closing Rituals

Ratings on the opening and closing rituals showed a 59% rating of 5 and a 37% rating of 4. The comments included some concerns and accolades. Here is what some of the participants had to say:

- ◆ Beautiful rituals that really matched the event and today's times.
- ◆ Very good and meshed with the theme of the conference.
- ◆ Both of the rituals were reflective and beautifully presented.

- ◆ Loved the flow and how they addressed the theme and complemented what Nancy shared.
- ◆ They were well proportioned not to take too much space and yet were meaningful.
- ◆ These will be more effective when they can again be in person.



Theme/Content

Seventy six percent of the participants gave the theme and content a rating of 5. Some of the comments about the theme were:

- ◆ Very appropriate for today's environment.
- ◆ This was just a beginning for WPC to address the theme of social justice with Providence.
- ◆ The theme and content could not have been more timely. Content provided much food for thought and reflection.
- ◆ The theme was/is definitely relevant to our time and in the pandemic year more so than ever. The idea that 'Providence' stands at the meeting place of 'Justice and Hope' really intrigues me and affirms who I am in my life and ministry.
- ◆ This was such a pertinent theme. I know it was set ahead of time, but given all that has happened with the Covid virus and our elections and fallout, it couldn't have been more on target!

Speaker, Nancy Sylvester, IHM

Many participants are familiar with Sister Nancy Sylvester. Seventy nine percent rated her at 5 while only a half percent rated her at 4. With the participants rating her at 5, there were many favorable comments. Here are a few:

- ◆ Nancy provided a wonderful presentation. It was very insightful.
- ◆ Nancy was so good for us to hear. We need to mull over all this deeply.

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Participant Evaluations

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- ◆ Superb presentation, per usual; stretched my imagination with new concepts to be pursued.
- ◆ Nancy Sylvester always gives triple A+ presentations. Both presentations were challenging. Inspirational and aspirational. She clarified for me some of the questions I have about what's happening in our society both in the political and ecclesial realms.
- ◆ Excellent. I appreciated her ability to weave our theme into her reflections on the stages of consciousness and into the present moment.
- ◆ This was the first time I've heard her speak and hope it won't be the last.

Use of Technology

As this was the first virtual Providence Event, the WPC staff and the Board were interested in the thoughts of the participants on the how the technology was used. Only 63% rated the technology at 5 while 15% rated it at 4. Some of the comments were:

- ◆ On the whole, technology served the process very well.
- ◆ It was done very well. Everyone seemed to be comfortable with it.
- ◆ Found the directions to be very helpful and technology staff superb! Hope we can have more of these more often instead of only once every two or three years.
- ◆ For our first time, I think it went very well. With technology there will always be some glitches we can't foresee. It calls us to go gently with the flow of time.
- ◆ While I do a lot of "virtual" I much prefer in person. I commend those who put it together...no small task with people in three time zones and different languages.
FANTASTIC AND THANK YOU
- ◆ Increases participation, saved travel money, less expensive, less tiring. People who managed the equipment did a fantastic job.

Future Events

Participants were asked if they would prefer virtual or in-person events. Fifty eight percent would like both options while 38% would prefer virtual. Combining these two answers would lead us to believe that 96% of the respondents would accept virtual Providence Events in the future. There were a few comments, such as:

- ◆ A mix of virtual and face-to-face would be nice to get together in person without incurring a lot of expense for our communities, but where? This virtual day worked very well. As someone shared, it cut our carbon footprint.
- ◆ Thank you so much for this opportunity! Not having to travel was a huge bonus... no packing, no hotel reservations, no meal expenses, etc.
- ◆ I would prefer a ZOOM meeting to be good to the planet.
- ◆ While I really like the in-person gathering, I think that the virtual gathering allows more opportunities for participation – for those who live at a distance, those who have health issues and those for whom the finances are a burden.
- ◆ I believe that more sisters have an opportunity to attend this meeting when it is presented virtual.
- ◆ I do think the personal relationships that have been formed over the years of WPC are important. However, as we all age, I can see that having a virtual event will be the wave of the future. I chose the both/and model though just in case there are people who could and would meet in person at an event. Both ways could happen.

And, as the saying goes, A good time was had by all!

David Lavender, CDPA

Core Planning Team



From top, left to right: Debbie Dillow PA; Linda Hoefflin, CDPA; David Lavender, CDPA; Carol Stenger, CDP; Barbara McMullen, CDP, Jacquelin Fernandes, SP; Maggie Pastro, SP. Unable to attend our final Zoom meeting was Margarita Hernandez, SP and Kristen Sheehy from the Saint Mary-of-the-Woods IT department.