



Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

Associate Program

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## The Associate Alliance

### *GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO!*

The angel said to the shepherds, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."  
*Luke 2:10-14*

Glory to God in the highest! The celebration of the birth of Christ the Lord has begun!

Try to put yourself in the shoes of the shepherds. Little excitement would have regularly come their way. They were poor, simple shepherds who spent their days and nights tending the sheep of the fields. That night, a group of them had gathered together for fellowship. It's easy to imagine the scene of talking, laughing and being together. Little did they realize what was about to happen.

As they were gathered, an angel of God appeared to them announcing "good news of great joy!" They must have been stunned. But that's only the beginning. The angel announced that the Savior of the World had been born and then, much to their surprise, they witnessed the whole host of heavenly angels singing praises: "Gloria in excelsis Deo!" "Glory to God in the highest!"

These humble shepherds were the first to be called by God to go and greet the newborn King. What's amazing is that God's first call was not to the "important" of the age to come worship. He called these poor shepherds.

This clearly tells us is that, in the eyes of God, all are equal. God does not pick favorites from among those who are seen as important in the eyes of the world. God sees the great value and dignity of each and every person and desires all of us, rich or poor, powerful or weak, to come to Him in adoration and love.

Christmas is a time filled with many exciting things. Often there are gifts and gatherings, food and good times. But more than anything else, Christmas must be seen as a time for us to step back and take in the deep and rich meaning of this sacred event. We must see first that God entered our human condition and, in doing so, is able to identify with all that we experience in life. God understands human life! He lived it.

Second, we must understand that the birth of the Savior of the World and His appearance to the shepherds reveals that each and every one of us is invited to come and meet Him. God humbled Himself in the most profound way so that we could come to know Him and His perfect love for us. "Do not be afraid," as the angel said, to come and behold the Christ who came as your Savior. Do not be afraid to come to meet Him, love Him, adore Him and get to know Him. God is given to us as an infant. Small, weak, fragile and innocent. Do not be afraid to gaze upon His humble presence and to give glory to God for His blessed coming.

Let us pray:

*Lord, I love You and I thank You for the unfathomable gift of Your divine presence among us. I thank You especially for the invitation You offer me to join the poor shepherds as they come to adore You. May this Christmas celebration be one in which I understand more deeply the incredible love You have for all Your children. May I know that You came for me, to save me and to invite me to worship. May I, this day, enter into that worship and adoration with all the Heavenly Host.*

## Meet Elysee Manshia - Associate from Miami, FL

Having heard God's call to offer her life to Him at 17, she spent her youth serving God as a Catholic missionary and sharing the Gospel in many countries where people need to know Jesus.

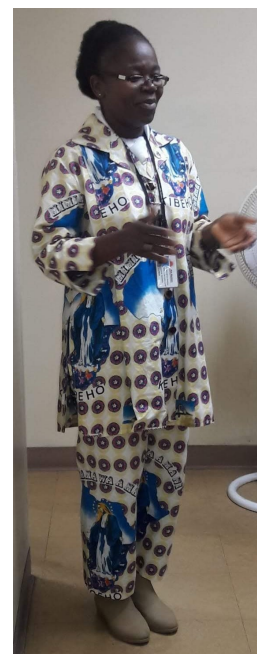
Elysee became an Allegany Associate in 2011, when a fellow missionary introduced her to Sisters Michele Dolyk and Lucy Cardet at Notre Dame of Haiti Catholic Church in Miami. In that parish, Elysee was sharing her spirituality through pastoral work, CCD, and Sacristy.

Elysee believes that Christ is proclaimed not by words but by the example of one's life, one's willingness to suffer or perhaps offer one's life for the sake of another. Christ lives because Christ lives in us - in our bodies, our hands, our feet and our actions. We are called to be vulnerable to grace so that we may be transformed into the living Christ.

She enjoys being an Allegany Associate as it gives her an opportunity to share our Franciscan-Clarian charism and spirituality. Being an Associate helps in her efforts to live out the word of God and to daily grow in faith. What draws her to her Associate Community is the very real friendships shared, the commitment and dedication to be still, the zeal, caring, and respect which each has for one another. The pandemic didn't stop the sharing of their lives and experiences. Even over Zoom, they get together as a congregation and a community, to pray and share their lives and it reminds us of the commitment to live out the values of Jesus, Francis and Clare in our daily lives. Together we work toward becoming Christ-centered persons, following in the footsteps of Francis and Clare.

Elysee loves to participate in the monthly Associate meetings, Congregational assemblies and Chapter as it is the way for her to answer God's call with fidelity and responsibility: first, to maintain a vital relationship with the sisters and, second, to forge new links between the associates themselves and other associate communities.

She is enjoying the opportunity to live a more faith-filled life that centers on service, with a goal of TODAY I WILL IMPROVE A LIFE for Christ to be made known.



Elysee Manshia

## Associates Support House of Prayer for All People

*Kathy Doyle*

Those of us who know her are all so thankful that Sr. Kathie Uhler's dream of a House of Prayer for All People (HoP), has finally been realized. Associates have been supportive of this desire of hers since the beginning, both monetarily and with prayer. Kathy Doyle, who is on the HoP Board and lives about an hour away, spent a day in July with Kathie and Barbara Bartkowiak, osf, who had offered to be the Martha to Kathie's Mary from June to September. Associate Rosemary Weiss, a former band-mate of Kathie's and a member of the Allegany community, stayed throughout the month of October. Besides the scheduled prayer times, they also helped at a local food pantry.

In early November Kathy, who has agreed to spend the first Wednesday of every month at the HoP, presented Kathie with a beautifully inscribed calligraphy Peace Prayer for the prayer room, as a gift from all the Associates.

The HoP is located on the campus of Trinity Episcopal Church in Gulph Mills, PA in a century old house. There is a second bedroom, ready to accommodate anyone willing to come away for a day or more, for any amount of time. A small stipend is requested.

Kathie Uhler can be reached at [kuhler@fsallegany.org](mailto:kuhler@fsallegany.org)



On behalf of all the Associates,  
Kathy presented a gift to  
Kathie Uhler, osf

## Reflections from Isaiah 6

*Sheila Vincent*

As I was reading Isaiah 6 during my prayer time, I realized that part of what I love about it is that I have always wondered what Isaiah was expecting when he walked into the Temple that day to pray? What was running through his mind when he wandered into worship?

We all carry expectations with us every day. Expectations are like the wind in our sails. Expectations are like the wind - you cannot see them, but they do guide you. Try this experiment. Have you ever watched a movie everyone was raving about, and your reaction was, "Well it was no Star Wars"? Ever hear a song that moved someone else's soul, and you couldn't even understand the words? Ever buy some food that your neighbor said was like tasting heaven while on earth, and you thought, "Um, it tastes a bit like seaweed."

We all haul around our hopes, drag around our dreams, carry around a carton of expectations about all sorts of things in life. Expectations are BOTH the wind in our sails and the headwinds we face. Expectations can both push us forward and push against us. Some expectations give us energy to guide our lives. Other expectations work against us, creating uncomfortable struggles. For example, when I sat down to write these words, I felt the winds of expectations in my favor. On the other hand, if I try to convince someone how he or she is wrong, why their perspective is all bent and broken, chances are good that I am working against a strong headwind of certainty, especially in our culture. More and more I realize that through our constant criticism, we are creating canyons of certainty between ourselves and others.

One of the most heartfelt, honest questions we can ask ourselves is, what do I want? Truthfully. Deep down desires. What we want begins to give voice to our expectations. When we do this in worship, we begin to unpack, notice, name something sacred, even if we are uncomfortable with being so honest. Last time you went to church, what expectations did you carry with you? We can think about this in terms of the music or in terms of the sermon or what kind of fellowship we will participate in. At church, do we desire a dance with the Divine where our toes might be stepped on or for God to keep some distance so as not to disrupt our lives, like the divine did to Mary? Do we want God to bless our ways or are we willing, like Isaiah, to have our whole lives upended by the Eternal? All this stirs, swirls, speaks to me because I wonder what Isaiah thought would happen in worship that day centuries ago? Did he expect to be wrapped in the hem of the Holy? Did he expect angels would start singing? Did he expect God to show up, interrupt and disrupt his life by calling him to be a prophet? The text doesn't say. But I guess that most of us would say, "Um, that's a hard pass on completely changing my life, God. But thanks anyway."

Today, spend time prayerfully pondering ~ exploring and examining your expectations ~ your deep desires. Name and notice them. Write them down. What do you expect of yourself? Of your friends or family? Your church? Your community? Your country? Your God?

## With Much Gratitude

*Alba Mejia*

Throughout our journeys there are people who accompany us, encourage us and give us strength to continue. We want to say thank you to the Tampa Associate Community for their support in donating money for the purchase of medicines for families who live in the Miami Trailer Area. Knowing that there will be no other way to say thank you, the families of the Trailer Area send you greetings with hearts full of gratitude.

Mission Our Lady of The Way



Medicines and basic health needs  
purchased for the  
Mission of Our Lady of the Way





The Spanish Franciscan Associate Community of Miami participated in the blessing of the pets on the Feast Day of St. Francis at St. Rose of Lima Parish in Miami Shores. Some of the members were there to assist Father Antonio Tupiza since there were so many pets. In addition to dogs and cats, there were also squirrels, rabbits and many others.



## A Voice at the Table

*Mary Laubenthal, Kathy Doyle, Gloria Oehl,osf*

As Sr. Gloria Oehl, osf stated in her talk at the October meeting of the Allegany Associate Virtual Community, “having a seat at the table provides a voice for the voiceless.”

The Allegany Franciscans’ prophetic role to serve the poor or marginalized can be seen in their investing strategies. In the 1970’s the FSAs joined the Religious Congregations Responsible Investment Group to promote divestiture to end apartheid in South Africa. In 2016 to align and activate their portfolios with their mission for peace, demilitarization, and immigrant’s rights they purchased shares in several corporations. As members of the Investor Advocates for Social Justice (IASJ), they are engaged as active investors with the ability to file corporate resolutions in stocks that they hold.

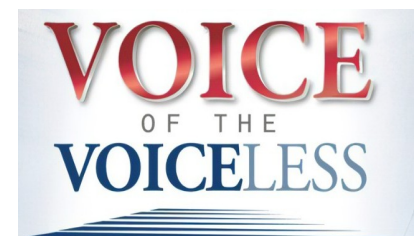
In May 2021 they used their ‘voice’ to call for human rights protections for Wendy’s essential food chain workers (specifically the Coalition of Immokalee Workers - CIW). Despite Wendy’s best corporate efforts to block the resolution, called one of the most important ESG (Environment/Social Justice/Governance) issues of 2021 by The Financial Times, it was overwhelmingly approved (95.28%) by shareholders.

While the vote was unequivocal, Wendy’s has not yet agreed to join the Fair Food Program (FFP) called “one of the great human rights success stories of our day” and recognized by observers from the Harvard Business Review to the UN and the White House. Those who join the FFP are legally bound to assure that every worker in their “food chain” is treated humanely by providing adequate and safe living and working conditions for their migrant workers, especially those along the East coast from Florida to New Jersey. Some corporations that already subscribe to FFP are: Yum Brands (Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, KFC), McDonalds, Burger King, Subway, Trader Joe’s, Chipolte, Walmart. You can choose to boycott Wendy's but unless you tell them WHY it is meaningless - they might think that you just don't like square hamburgers! You can send a direct email to Wendy's leaders demanding the company join the Fair Food Program, using the following links:

<https://actions.sumofus.org/a/ciw-wendys> or <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/wendys-respect-farmworkers-dignity>

Gloria also explained how important it is to pay attention to Proxy Voting in our own investments by voting for resolutions such as these: FOR supporting separation of the roles of Chair and CEO, FOR adding diversity in gender and ethnicity to Board of Directors; AGAINST executive compensation packages in which individual compensation exceeds \$10 million; FOR resolutions that ask for disclosure of Political Contributions and Lobbying Expenditures and FOR those resolutions that promote social justice, the environment, and peace. Now you know why you must read those proxy statements carefully the next time you get one.

Associates who would like more information about the IASJ proxy voting guidelines please contact Kathy Doyle (memadoyle@gmail.com) or Mary Laubenthal (mlaubenthal8@yahoo.com).



God sees us with the eyes of a Father. He sees our defects, errors and blemishes. But He also see our value. What did Jesus know that enable Him to do what He did? Here's part of the answer: He knew the value of people. He knew that each human being is a treasure. And because He did, people were not a source of stress but a source of joy.  
*taken from God's Promises for You by Max Lucado*

Meeting of Associates in Brazil

Rosimeire Dias Noieto, osf

The Associates of Brazil recently held two Zoom meetings. Participation was good and rewarding. The sharing within the group increased the feeling of fraternit as and, with freedom to express their ideas, there was an increased feeling of belonging.



During the first meeting, there was a discussion of St. Clare, the first Franciscan woman, who impacted so many lives with her charism and witness. Sr. Goianira introduced the new Congregational Leadership team to the Associates. While Sr. Rosimeire spoke about the pandemic and the difficulties and suffering it created for people.

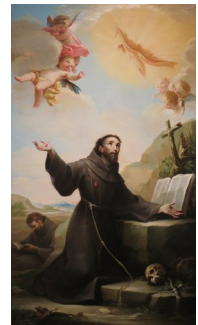
In the second meeting, the Letter of St. Francis to the Faithful, celebrating 800 years, was discussed. The reflection led to good sharing with regards to our Seraphic Father.

The Associates of Macajuba thanked the Allegany sisters for their evangelical presence there for over 30 years. Praise be to God!

In order to better understand the General Chapter, it was decided to study and reflect upon the Directional Statement.

On the last day of the Regional Assembly, the sisters from each local community met with Sr. Rosimeire who motivated them to share information with Associates.

Celebrating the Triduum in Pires do Rio



Celebrating the Feast of St. Francis  
Associates of Pires do Rio  
St. Francis Chapel



L-R: Ilina Machado, Aparecida Mazon, Maria Ivonir Costa, Maria Creusa Oliveira



L-R: Aparecida Mazon, Claudio Oliveira, Ilina Machado, Maria Creusa Oliveira

Still living with the consequences of the pandemic, we had to reinvent ourselves and create ways to continue our work as associates. Therefore, in October, we had our first online meeting of the Associates of Brazil. Almost all attended! It was a new event for most members and brought us great joy!

For most Associates it was the first time they were able to be directly in touch with our Brazilian Coordinator, Sr. Rosimeire, and with communities in various cities in Brazil.

We are living in a new reality, a new world that unfolds before us. That was the feeling the meeting gave to all the members. Sister Oneida, who is already familiar with this type of meeting, was the one who prepared the whole environment and structure for the meeting. Several important issues were addressed, but the most important was the introduction of the communities to this new way of meeting and staying together.

Sister Oneida, Glorinha, Nicinha and Cláudio had already participated in such a meeting in August, but it was the first time with everyone gathered, and the result was very positive. These are new times that require adaptation to new developments ~ Zoom can be very effective, especially in bringing people together virtually. We needed to see the faces and feel the fraternal and welcoming presence of so many people, among them Srs. Rosimeire and Bernadette.

Today our community begins to be part of a new reality ~ this is the future and we are living with the joy of being able to see and hear people who are far away from us. It made us very happy.

After the meeting, we were all very pleased with the interest of all members and we are already preparing for the next ones, which will certainly take place.



Sr. Oneida set up the laptop and projector for the "Zoom neophytes"



Sr. Rosimeire facilitated the first ever Brazilian Associates' Zoom meeting



Masks cannot hide smiling eyes - enjoying the "new reality!"

## 2021 Update from Jamaica

Margaret Jarrett

In spite of being isolated in our homes and still not permitted to gather, we have found new ways of staying together for spiritual sharing:

- During Lent we shared the weekly "Vestigia Santorum: In the Footsteps of the Saint," a Lenten Reflection on a Franciscan saint for each week of Lent
- On March 25<sup>th</sup>, The Feast of the Annunciation, we met online and prayed the Franciscan Crown
- In May we began weekly online meetings to share stories of Marian apparitions, some of which were new to us. We each selected an apparition that we were curious about, researched and then presented the information at the meeting, and led the appropriate rosary or chaplet
- June brought shared stories of saints and martyrs whose feast day fell close to the day of the meeting
- In July we selected Old Testament prophets for discussion

Our weekly meetings, sharing, learning, laughing and praying together has brought us closer together and given us comfort and strength during this most unusual of times.

## Associate Advisory Committee Meeting

*Joyce Ramage, osf*

The committee met on November 7, 2021. Attending were Jo Streva (Leadership Liaison), Joyce Ramage and Linda Dees (Co-Directors), Colleen Brady (Chair), Chris Moll, Rita Canfield, Margaret Jarrett, Rosimiere Dias Noleto, Pat Tyre (Translator), Cheryl Maggio (Scribe).

Reports from all Associate Communities expressed both growth and challenges during this time of pandemic. Zoom has become a valuable tool in allowing everyone to remain connected. Some communities are now known as “hybrid” where some members meet in person while allowing others to join via Zoom.

The new Virtual Community has become a vibrant one, bringing together people from different locations where there may not be a local community. It is providing an excellent formation for new inquirers.

The highlight during the summer months was “Meet and Greet” where communities were combined to enable individuals to get to know each other and one another’s groups. We hope to use that experience to plan future such experiences.

## Tampa Associates Help North Miami Trailer Park

*Linda Dees*

In the spirit of fraternit as, the Tampa Bay Associate community sent a check for \$425.00 to Miami Associate Alba Mejia to be used for medications for her trailer park ministry in North Miami. This is meant to help out with over the counter or prescription needs as Alba and the nurse practitioner assisting her see fit. The funds came from Tampa’s communal funds plus donations from individual members of the group.

If anyone else would like to contribute to this cause, you can still send me a donation and I will forward it to Alba or you can send it directly to her.

We will hopefully hear more about this ministry in the near future.



## A Christmas Prayer

May this Christmas bring happiness into our homes, peace within our lives and Jesus into our hearts. Help us remember this season is about the birth of Your Son and His love for us.

We ask you to humble our hearts and bless us this Christmas. Amen.



**The Associate Alliance** is a publication of the Associates of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY.

Editor/Translator: Sheila Vincent

Proofreader: Kathy Doyle

Contributors: Kathy Doyle; Elysee Manshia; Alba Mejia; Margaret Jarrett; Mary Laubenthal; Gloria Oehl, osf; Leslie St. John; Claudio Oliveira; Rosimeire D. Noleto, osf; Oneida Resende, osf; Joyce Ramage, osf; Linda Dees

Please send articles & photos to: [svincent@comcast.net](mailto:svincent@comcast.net) ♦ Deadline for next issue: Jan 26, 2022