



CCA Notes to our Donors

Summer 2020

CCA is sharing with you today our First Edition of *CCA Notes to our Donors*. You can have a significant impact in building the future of Carmel (ccacarmels.org). **And you did!** This communication is our way of sharing with you recent events and programs that have taken place supported by your generosity. We hope that you find these brief articles of interest and that they give you some insight into the ways our association fulfills its mission and goals and meets the needs of its member communities. The prayer life of each of our members continues to support the apostolic mission of the Church in its proclamation of the Gospel and to lift up with grateful hearts our benefactors to experience God's blessings.

Women at the Well Dialogues - by Claire Sokol, OCD (Reno)

CCA launched a virtual on-going formation program, Women at the Well Dialogues, in 2018. Five sessions over 18 months averaged an attendance of 60 sisters from 12 communities including a community of Carmelite sisters in Scotland. Our methodology was to email reading material and reflection questions to each participant in advance. The 90 minute sessions took place via Zoom technology where we broke into small groups to discuss issues central to our spiritual life today. Participants submitted feedback after each session allowing adjustments for future sessions. This dynamic, iterative process provided an opportunity for the format to be “owned” by the whole participating CCA community and to maximize and expand the depth of the program. Two of the goals we set for Women at the Well Dialogues included developing skills for community living and forming women for leadership within CCA as well as in their own communities. Eighteen of our own sisters participated as facilitators in these sessions — six of whom were facilitating for the first time. Additionally, 11 sisters volunteered their time and talent as note-takers, three of whom were CCA “newer members.” Our communities unanimously affirmed continuing the program for the next two years. As one sister said: "To have seen the 60 or so sisters gather together was very supportive and inspiring. It helps as we discern our next steps in religious life as Carmelites. I hope that our continuing conferences may become places of deeper communication and sharing and that trust and hope will build up among us.... Into deeper communication and communion we go!"



Sisterly Visits - by Judy Murray, OCD, (Baltimore) and Mary Teresa, OCD (Boston)

At the 2016 General Assembly, we added Sisterly Visits to our fourth organization goal which reads thus:

"We have continued to provide active, mutual support to the identified needs of our communities, in particular, sisterly visits of each member community by the Leadership Team or delegates in the next term. "



Sisterly Visit in Cleveland's "new" monastery, 2019

In the last biennium we successfully completed visits to 11 of our 12 communities. These visits invite a fresh perspective on the issues that a community is facing. Because sister visitors are present who understand the challenges of monastic life, these conversations also offer an opportunity for frank discussion among friends and thus promote a sharing of best practices. Thus, they empower sisters to face their current reality and take proactive steps to deal with it.

Here is how one community put it:

The Sisterly visits have helped us in two important ways:

1. Their shared knowledge and lifestyle meant we saved time in not having to explain things which other visitors may not have known or understood;
2. They gave us ideas and help in prioritizing and dealing with the issues we are facing and plans we are making.



Sisterly Visit in Concord, 2019

And best of all, these visits have been an in-person expression of sisterly solidarity and unity that well serves the building up of Carmelite life in this country. Moreover, they have laid the groundwork of trust that will enable us to explore moving forward in accomplishing this goal using Zoom technology in the future.



Newer Members (now: Dream Weavers) - by Celia Ashton, OCD, and Mary Fleig, OCD (Baltimore)



Sisters enjoying seeing each other again

We gathered at the Jesuit Retreat House in Faulkner, Maryland, from across the United States, and as far away as Scotland and Mexico. From the moment we arrived, the energy was palpable — the opportunity to see old friends and the wonderful chance to meet other sisters who are new to Carmel, new to their association, and new to knowing each other.

For most of the next five days, we spent mornings in the "classroom" listening to Constance Fitzgerald, OCD, and others providing input about Carmel's early life in the United States. Each afternoon we toured historic Southern Maryland viewing the early sites in our Catholic and Carmelite history that have made us who we are today.



Touring the original monastery at Port Tobacco, Maryland

Some highlights:

- Celebrating the Eucharist together at St. Ignatius Catholic Church / St. Thomas Manor, Chapel Point, the oldest continuously active worshipping community in the US.



Visiting St. Mary's City museum

- Visiting St. Mary's City, and especially standing in the chapel, Maryland's first, major, all-brick building, and together singing the "Salve Regina." The acoustics were great, but even more, it was a meaningful sign of our communion, great love, and shared charism.

- Visiting Chandler's Hope, where the Carmelite Sisters first landed in this country in 1790, and actually walking around the house and property, and really trying to feel the presence of our earliest founders in that place.

The whole time was a combination of learning and bonding, studying and relating. We had the privilege of driving one of the vans, mostly with Spanish-speaking sisters, and they sang songs, laughed and talked the whole time. The feeling of being connected as sisters was overwhelmingly real. The combination of both learning and spending time together was what made this experience so positive.



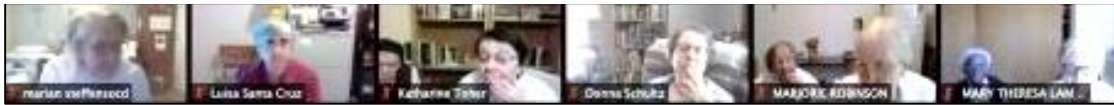
CCA Shared Services Collaborative - by Kate Asselin, GHR Grant Project Manager

Last summer the GHR Foundation awarded an \$80,000 grant to develop an "implementable plan" for a Shared Services Collaborative to meet the needs of CCA communities. The purpose of the Collaborative is to support commitment to contemplative life by outsourcing and sharing the costs of administrative services in health care; technology; financial services; and other areas of need. Over the course of the past year, community needs have been assessed; service providers have been identified and an organizational "model" constructed for the Shared Services Collaborative. In June, a Preliminary Plan was presented and approved at the CCA Assembly that met via Zoom. Funding is now being sought for the Implementation phase projected for January 2021, pending approval of the Final Plan. The CCA Shared Services Collaborative is a "first" for contemplative communities. If successful, the Collaborative may expand to include other Carmelite associations and serve as a model for monastic orders.



Virtual General Assembly - by Monika Bies, OCD

In March 2020 the Leadership Team of CCA made the decision to postpone our in-person General Assembly scheduled for June 2020 due to the Covid 19 pandemic. As we do not know when we can again meet in-person, we decided to have CCA business meetings via Zoom. Those virtual meetings covered reports for the 2018-2020 term as well as proposals from our membership. They were open to all CCA members and about 60 sisters attended. While we were not able to enjoy one another's company in person, we also recognized that many of the older sisters who could not have traveled to a General Assembly were able to participate in online meetings. Not only did we accomplish what we had set out to do, but we also had a great sense of connection and were grateful for the realization that we can conduct business meetings virtually. As a closing to a week of virtual meetings we sang "Salve Regina," a moment to remember.



In Conclusion

CCA is truly grateful to its donors for their generous support, without which the programming of the Association would not be possible. CCA is reliant on dues from its member communities, grants and contributions in order to fulfill its mission and goals. It is our hope that by sharing information regarding some key programs that CCA is properly stewarding your contributions. Please be assured of the continued prayers of the CCA communities for its benefactors. The CCA website is proud to display its honor roll of donors: www.ccacarmels.org/donate.



CCA Prayer for our Donors

I never fail to thank God for you and to remember you in my prayer. --Ephesians 1:16

Good and gracious God, we ask you to bless our benefactors. May your Spirit enliven them and enrich them with your peace and wisdom. As we continue our mutual journey of faith, encouraged by hope in the promises you have made and filled with your unending love, we experience the joy of the companionship of these wonderful men and women whose generous hearts inspire us and support us. We are grateful! We are humbled! We thank you for caring for us all. May their gifts come back to them a hundredfold! This we ask through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.