

# Charity Alive

May 2026

## Charity Responds for the Sake of the World

By S. Kati Hamm



The theme for this issue highlights the theme of our Chapter Statement,

*For the Sake of the World.*

The articles shine a light on ministries that include feeding the hungry, visiting the imprisoned, healing the brokenhearted and using our resources to make a difference in multiple ways throughout the world.

**It speaks of the difference love makes for both those who give and those who receive.**

In late December and early January, we had several Sisters die in a short time. As a way to honour them a donation was made in their name to several organizations that address hunger and offer supportive services to those in need.

**Our Congregation made donations to St. Patrick's Soup Kitchen in Halifax, St. John's Bread & Life in New York, to the Sisters of Charity work in Dorchester, MA and the VCASE: Vancouver Collective Against Sexual Exploitation in the West.**

Over the course of the year, many opportunities to share our resources present themselves for consideration.

At the beginning of Lent the leadership team inaugurated the season of fasting,

prayer and almsgiving by making a donation to an organization

*for the sake of the world.*

The recipient was Catholic Relief Services Project Rice Bowl which was initiated in 1975. For over 50 years it has supported the millions of vulnerable persons experiencing life-threatening levels of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

**The needs are great. We invite you to pray with us as we address this question in Chapter:**

*What is Love asking of us now for the sake of the world?*



CRS RICE BOWL

WHO IS READY TO  
**CHANGE LIVES** THIS LENT?

¡CAMBIA VIDAS ESTA CUARESMA!

# Catholic Sisters Walking With Migrants

By S. Margaret Mary Fitzpatrick

**The Holy Spirit moves us  
to walk in the presence of God  
all the days of our life. (C. 48)**

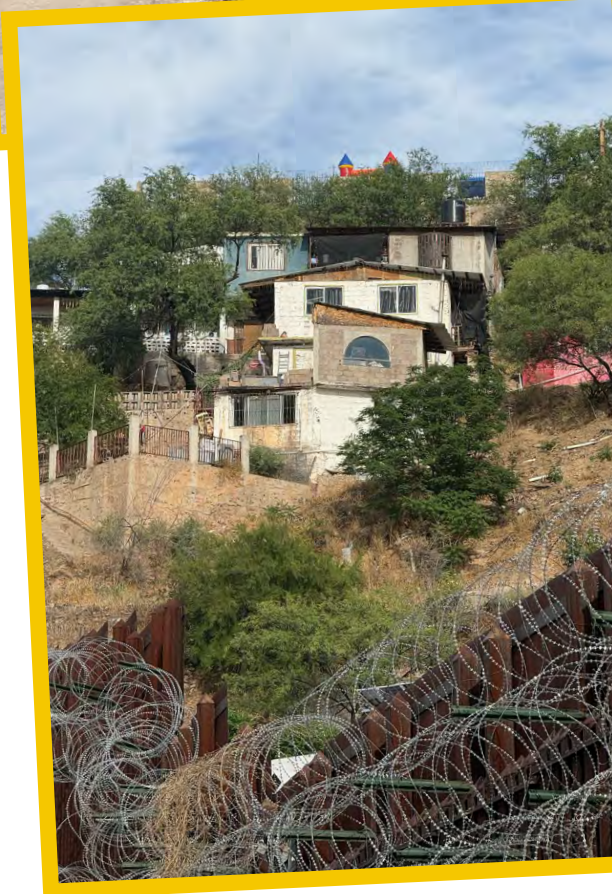
The Kino Border Initiative (KBI) is a bi-national organization located in Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. KBI's vision is migration with dignity. This immersion experience was fully funded by the Conrad Hilton Foundation. I was one of seven Sisters on this journey.

**I hope that, in this write-up, you get a glimpse into the lives of some migrants and their stories, and are left with the urge to answer our Vincentian question, "What must be done?" Thank you for your continuous prayer, advocacy, and love of our neighbors.**

This commentary is not a political analysis of governments in the Americas and their immigration policies. If I have misstated or misunderstood facts, it is unintentional.

This is one of many Sister of Charity stories about how we have and do accompany people and, in so doing, meet God.

This is who we are and what we are called to do  
*for the sake of the world.*





On the day of our arrival, we visited the Border Wall and learned about the migrant experience. We heard of cartels organized to kidnap people for ransom. We learned that women are raped, children are stolen, and many people die trying to find a home in North America where they can be safe and work hard for their dreams.

**“Go to the poor: you will find God.”  
(St. Vincent de Paul)**

We lived in Tucson and worked in Mexico each day—with people being deported from the U.S. and with those seeking entry into the U.S. (asylum seekers). One family told me, “Donde hay vida, hay esperanza,” meaning where there is life, there is hope. This family had made a life in the U.S., and was contributing to the U.S. They have no home to return to and so will try again to come to the U.S.

Next story: in the midst of this week, I met a woman who told me a story of a NY nun who saved one of the families. The family was given bus fare to go to NY, somehow this Sister reached out to a compassionate nun from a nonprofit in NY and she provided them with food, shelter, work, and renewed their dignity.

**Imagine my surprise when she showed me a photo of Marie Sorenson!**

The next day, we went on a desert walk to understand the conditions migrants travel under. Unlike most migrants in the desert, we had water, food, good health, and a guide who would not forsake us. We looked for any remains of migrants so that we could honour them with a burial place on this holy ground made sacred through struggle and unrealized hopes.

**God, our mother and father, welcomed these loved ones, dried their tears, and gave those who died eternal rest. Yet, we could still hear the echoes of their yearning, their cries of loneliness and fear, and feel their determination with each step they took. God help the lost and forgotten.**

In the desert, sensors and towers are used to find those trying to enter into the United States illegally. Technology is used as an invisible wall. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) are stationed at all of the international entries to check credentials. United States Border Patrol (USBP) can operate within 100 miles of any border. Some families get abandoned by their guides because they slow the group down and attract attention when the children cry.

Many migrants are fleeing violence. Currently, the U.S. has a practice of Prevention Through Deterrence. Make the desert as dangerous as possible. Migracion - deportacion con separacion de familias. (Obama administration)

Another family I met was a husband, wife, and three children ages 3-7. They came from a Mexican town along the border with Guatemala. They had a home there, owned the land, and worked. But the cartel wanted their land, killed their grandfather, forcing them to flee through 800 miles of desert. They were found by USBP after crossing unlawfully into the U.S. They were being deported back to Mexico.

Recent U.S. administrations have initiated practices that systematically deport people making a home and contributing to American society based on their legal status in the country. This April, a U.S. appeals court rejected the current administration's ban on asylum seekers stating that the order for swift removal at the border cast aside federal laws affording the right to seek asylum.



It is Tuesday and we went to the Special Proceedings Courtroom at the courthouse. There were 43 men in orange detention center jumpsuits, and four women in red shirts. All were handcuffed with chains and shackles around their legs and feet. I see their faces; they are trying to be brave. The judge offers them two choices: (1) to plead guilty to the misdemeanor offense of entering into the U.S. illegally, receive time served and be removed from the U.S. that day by ICE, or (2) to plead not guilty and be sentenced in the Immigration Court most likely to serve 2-10 years in prison. They had no family present, just us.

From the Court, we went to the Evergreen Mortuary Cemetery.

**The migrants who died in the desert and were found were buried in Paupers Graves where unclaimed remains are buried. Over 3,000 bodies have been found in the Sonora Desert.**

Next, we visited the Sierra Club and heard about their initiative to Support the Borderlands - environmental justice. Our public lands are being blown up to create the Border Wall. It is estimated that it will cost \$4.6 billion to build the border wall with a loss of 500 acres needed for wildlife.

On Wednesday, we met with the Sheriff of Santa Cruz. There is no official role of local police in immigration.



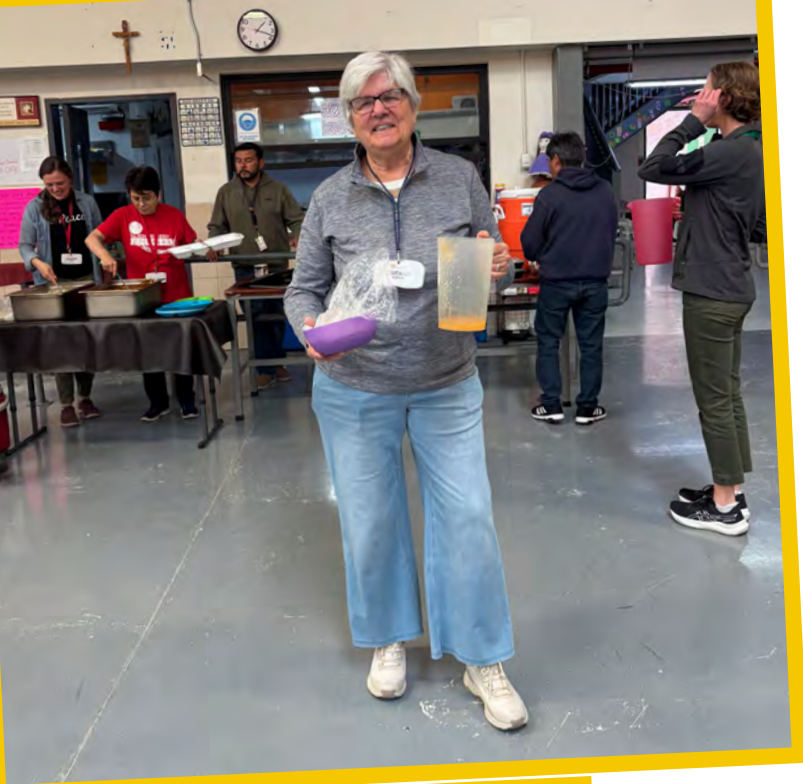
**He lives by two commandments: love God and love your neighbor. His town is flourishing with 95% migrants making a home.**

So, it is 600 military judges who enforce immigration laws and deport migrants.

**His message was for us to be bold in our faith. Act out of our moral compass. Remember the Good Samaritan and you will know who your neighbor is.**

Each day we went to the Kino Center to feed the people taking refuge there. I met Raul, a migrant, who told us that he is not giving up. Even though he was living in the States with his family, ICE came and deported him. He is one of 3.7% of the global population who is a migrant.

**The U.S. has welcomed the largest percentage of immigrants. Borders are where we connect. Each night we prayed and pondered.**



Friday morning, I had breakfast with a former gang member. His mother's name is Evangeline. He told us that his mother is very, very old (70!). The last few nights he slept on the street. However, his old mother told him to find his brother who just came out of prison and bring him home. And so, he was on the search. And so are we, searching for justice for our sisters and brothers.

The air is of hope, despair, and courage.

**The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome  
it. John 1:5**

*What must be done for the  
sake of the world?*

Charity is not just a promise,  
it is a present reality to be embraced with  
joy and responsibility ...  
The poor are the teachers of the Gospel.  
(Pope Leo XIV)



**Sister Margaret Mary participated in the  
Kino Border Initiative (KBI) from May  
2–9. She wrote this reflection on May  
10, Mother's Day.**

# Return to Belize

By S. Jolaine States

**“You are back!” “You are back!” greeted my ears (more so my heart) as several children heralded my return to Saint Martin de Porres School in Belize in January 2026.**

This occasion marked my third visit to Belize and my second year of engaging in a ministry of presence to the students and staff at Saint Martin de Porres.

My inaugural visit to Belize was undertaken to observe and support S. Kerry Rowland in her ministry there. At the end of my visit I was invited by Sisters Kerry and Carletta, SCN and Saint Martin’s administration to return to Belize and offer whatever skills and talents I possessed that might match the needs of the teachers and students at Saint Martin’s. I agreed.

**Trauma was identified as an ongoing and pressing concern, and so I prepared information workshops on trauma for the teachers, as well as individual and class sessions on coping with and managing trauma/stress for the students.**

I also offered behavior observations, consults and recommendations to teachers. Again, I was invited to return and I agreed. Thus, I returned in January 2026.

This year I continued with individual and classroom behavioral observations and consultations. I also engaged classes in art activities to boost self-



Sisters Kerry Rowland and Jolaine States



esteem. Finally I offered case consultations to the two school counselors. I have been invited back yet again, and so plans are in place for next year. As I reflect on this opportunity afforded to me I am humbled by the teachers' and students' openness and willingness to trust and accept my offerings.

**For me, this is a ministry of presence, encounter and relationship building. It is reciprocal in nature and one of mutual care and concern for the other.**

Further, when I ponder religious life and its directive to engage in ministry

*for the sake of the world*

**I feel overwhelmed and inadequate to the task. My call seems more aptly suited to "for the sake of one" or the power of one.**

It is in that intimate ministering to one that change (hopefully for the better) is accomplished and perhaps, through that individual transformation global or world change become possible.



Sisters Jolaine and Kerry



# Serving Those Who Are Poor: A World of Nations

By S. Kathleen Kull

The World Day for Consecrated Life was celebrated in the Diocese of Brooklyn on January 31, 2026 at St. John's University's St. Thomas More Church. S. Maryann Seton Lopiccolo, Episcopal Delegate for Religious, planned this day in collaboration with the Council of Religious, whose membership includes Sisters Susan Dean and Ann Woodford.



To say Sisters Marie and Caroline had a captive audience is an understatement!

## Who better to address the topic serving those who are poor than Sisters Marie Sorenson and Caroline Tweedy, RSM, Co-Directors of St. John's Bread and Life Program in Brooklyn?

And what a team they are, embodying and putting into action the enduring and timely gifts of charity and mercy. St. Vincent de Paul, our patron, speaks of mercy as the feature of God. Mercy foundress Catherine McAuley notes the tender mercy of God has given us one another. Elizabeth Ann Seton eloquently connects the charisms



At this gathering – of close to 100 religious sisters, brothers and priests – all seemed truly engaged.  
Photo © The Tablet



S. Joan Dawber  
Photo © The Tablet

of charity and mercy with our General Chapter 2026 theme and this issue of Charity Alive:

*for the sake of the world.*

**Hope always awake, whispers mercy for the future, as sure as in the past.**

Since its rather humble beginnings in a church basement in 1982, Bread and Life has consistently served the needs of the people of Bedford-Stuyvesant and beyond, weathering numerous humanitarian calamities: the crack epidemic; September 11; Superstorm Sandy; COVID; the migrant crisis.

**In season and out, Bread and Life has incarnated its Vincentian heritage to do what is before us. Today, Bread and Life operates emergency food programs serving about 1.5 million New Yorkers each year.**

Last year, its digital food pantry distributed more than 5.5 million pounds of food. Then there are the innumerable stories of individuals whose lives have been turned around: of some no longer homeless; of some who came for food and stayed as part of the incredibly dedicated and long serving staff; of numerous volunteers – including many of us. The list goes on...

**To quote S. Maryann, “We had a World of Nations present”.**



S. Susan Dean  
Photo © The Tablet



S. Kathleen Kull  
Photo © The Tablet

This truly enriched the day. Invited to converse with someone we just met, the church was abuzz with lively interactions. In-depth discussion with Sisters Marie and Caroline followed, evidencing participants' own interest in and experience of serving those who are poor.

This world of nations was truly visible during the Mass, celebrated by Brooklyn Bishop Robert Brennan. Lectors and gift bearers came from Columbia, China, Ghana, India, Korea, Nigeria, Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Indonesia and the USA. What has brought so many religious from all over the world here to Brooklyn? To serve in myriad ways: parish and youth ministry, education, health care. S. Maryann and her office provide a welcoming hospitality enhanced by on-going practical assistance.

**Nine of us were present to enjoy this truly powerful afternoon; to proudly rejoice in the gifts so generously shared by Sisters Maryann, Marie and Caroline; to be challenged – once again – to serve those who are poor. We left with a newfound awareness of the breadth and length and height and depth of God's love – so palpable to all present.**

Two livestream recordings of our World Day for Consecrated Life at St. John's University on January 31, 2026

(Increase your volume settings to improve the sound)

[Presentation by Sisters Caroline Tweedy and Marie Sorenson](#)

[Liturgy with Bishop Brennan](#)



S. Maryann Lopiccolo  
Photo © The Tablet

# Wellesley Lenten Project Aids School in Uganda

By S. Mary Sweeney

Several times a month, Rev. Michael Ssenfuma, a native of Uganda and current parochial vicar at St. Joseph's Parish in Needham, celebrates liturgy at Mt. St. Vincent in Wellesley. During a recent visit to his home in Africa, he was struck by the many needs of [St. Louis School](#), the school he attended as a child.

Looking for a means to raise funds for the school, Fr. Michael established the Anawin\* project and began to seek support. When he asked about the possibility of taking up a collection at Mt. St. Vincent, Lent seemed like the perfect season for responding to his request. .

**When he asked about the possibility of taking up a collection at Mt. St. Vincent, Lent seemed like the perfect season for responding to his request.**

On a Saturday afternoon, Fr. Michael spoke to the residents and showed pictures of the students and staff as well as the facility. In addition to his words, the children's smiling faces and the obvious needs of the school structure served as powerful advocates.



S. Mary Sweeney and Rev. Michael Ssenfuma  
S. Margaret Mary Bickar (background)





Each Sunday during Lent, the residents of Mt. St. Vincent made contributions to the basket that was set out for the project. Gradually, as the season continued, word spread and staff members, associates, family members and friends added their “treasure.”

When the contributions reached \$2500, the Sisters of Charity, through the Charity Alive Fund, generously matched the amount...and still people continued to donate.

As a result of the Lenten project, Fr. Michael received a contribution of \$5,800 from the residents and friends of Mt. St. Vincent. His deep gratitude as well as the generous response of donors brought additional elements of joy to this Easter season.

## *For the Sake of the World*

\*When Fr. Michael established the fund, the title ANAWIM (“The poor of Yahweh”) was already taken, so he changed the title to ANAWIN

# An Open Space Becomes Market Place

By S. Kathleen Carven



In unprecedented numbers our vulnerable neighbors in Charlestown, MA are availing themselves of the food support provided twice monthly at Harvest on Vine Emergency Food Pantry directed by Tom MacDonald, Social Ministry leader of St. Mary - St. Catherine of Siena Parish.

**I am grateful to be participating in this vitally needed ministry as both leader of prayer and active volunteer setting up and distributing two-week supplies of vegetables, potatoes, cereal, rice, pasta, poultry, fish, meat and household goods.**

Our neighbors in need, who live in the largest housing project in New England,

arrive with hope and ample conveyances. They are Asian, Haitian, Hispanic, American black and white. The global poor confront us at the food pantry.

In 2024 approximately 8.2% of the global population (673-733 million people) experienced chronic hunger and daily food insecurity. One in 11 people go to bed hungry each day. The main drivers are conflict, climate change and economic inequality. In late 2024-2025 over 770,000 people were estimated to be in famine condition.

The overarching question ... what solutions can we bring to this great need? Tom Groome, Boston College Professor, reminds us "to keep practising" through a

telling anecdote. The young musician from Ohio was mesmerized by NYC and very excited about her upcoming audition. As she emerged from the subway at the corner of 56th and 7th, however, she felt disoriented. She knew her destination was nearby but in which direction? Then to her relief she saw an elderly man coming toward her with a violin case under his arm. She inquired “Sir, can you tell me how to get to Carnegie Hall?” The old musician halted, looked pensively then offered, “Practice, practice, practice.”

**Can we not say the same as we expend our energies in response to our Congregational call to live our mission of charity**

*for the sake of the world?*

We contemplate so deeply the core of Christian practices: to live the Great Commandment of love, to embrace the spirit of the Beatitudes, to do the works of mercy and compassion, to work for peace and justice, thus making the Reign of God a reality in our time and place.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops states the following about prioritizing the needs of the marginalized.

**“A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between the rich and poor,**



S. Kathleen Carven

**our tradition instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.”**

As I meet and serve with passion the vulnerable people of Charlestown at our two large-scale distributions monthly, accompanied by about twenty dedicated volunteers, my compassion for food-insecure families has sensitized me, raising my consciousness to the deep issues concerning world hunger.

This awareness has changed the way I organize my procuring, preparing and consumption of food in evermore discerning and practical ways. For example during the winter blizzard which visited Boston with eighteen inches of snow, rendering us marooned for two days with whatever we could shop for in advance, my conscience was stirred with anxiety for the underprivileged without the capacity to make similar decisions. Such is the plight of our worldwide neighbors. I am led forcibly to think globally and act locally.

# Caritas Day

By Heather Sinclair, Caritas Care Team



Sisters Patricia Proctor (RIP), Geraldine Lancaster, Ellen Bernadette Dean and Sheila Moore

Caritas Day is an annual event held every January when the Mount Saint Vincent University community engages in acts of charity and volunteerism stemming from a tradition to thank Halifax for its support after the Motherhouse fire in January, 1951.

**This day honours the Sisters of Charity as founders of The Mount and the city's generosity in the days following the Motherhouse fire, when, in the face of that loss, the people of Halifax responded with extraordinary generosity, opening their doors and offering care and shelter.**

**The Sisters continue to thank and "pay forward" their gratitude through community service and volunteering.**

Every Caritas Day, the Mount students have the opportunity to sign up to volunteer at various charity and non-profit community organizations and initiatives in Halifax and commit the day to volunteering to help those in need.

One of the options for the volunteers is to join the Sisters at Caritas Residence in making sandwiches for soup kitchens and shelters in Halifax (which have included organizations such as Souls Harbour

Rescue Mission, Hope Cottage and Out of the Cold Shelter).

The time with students at Caritas always includes a brief reflection on the history of the Sisters of Charity before the Sisters and students gather to prepare sandwiches.

**Warm and informative chats, along with coffee, tea and cookies, are shared among Sisters and students during the event.**

A beautiful tradition founded in hope, love and charity ...

*for the sake of the world.*

**Every year we witness our charism grow as we share this time and our charism with a new generation of young people.**

We are so grateful for this annual tradition rooted in gratitude, compassion and enduring hope.

Top photo: Sisters Yvonne Pothier and Geraldine Lancaster



# S. Anita's 90th Birthday

By Heather Sinclair, Caritas Care Team

**S. Anita Gagnon celebrated her 90th birthday! It was a milestone filled with love and treasured friendship.**

Her dear friend of 76 years (also lovingly named Anita!), whom she first met in Grade 8 in Quebec, travelled from Toronto with her daughter Maureen to spend the weekend in Halifax honouring this special occasion. This treasured friendship has endured for more than seven decades and continues to grow!

It was a fun and food-filled weekend that included sharing a few meals with the Sisters at Caritas, savouring Halifax's finest seafood including lobster rolls and scallops at The Esquire Restaurant and enjoying salmon and yet more lobster at the cozy waterfront restaurant, The Bicycle Thief. Over the course of the weekend, the trio took a trip to Peggy's Cove, spent time poolside at the hotel where Anita and Maureen stayed and visited Pier 21 (Immigration) Museum.

S. Anita's heart was touched by the outpouring of love she received through emails, cards, phone calls from family and friends along with the heartfelt Facebook messages from present and former Caritas staff.



S. Anita Gagnon



Maureen, S. Anita and Anita

**Each message was a reminder of the many lives she has blessed over the years.**

In her own words, "the cherry on the cake" was a phone call from Darrell, a foster child she lovingly raised for 10 years while serving as House Mother at a private home for boys. Now 62 years old, his call was a beautiful testament to the lasting impact of her care and devotion.

Please join us in celebrating S. Anita as she enters her 91st year as a radiant and joyful witness to love.

# More Than Just a Gift to Charity

By Angela Rafuse, Sisters of Charity Staff

The benefactors of the Sisters of Charity are marked by deep compassion, generous hearts and a shared charism of charity to make a difference in the lives of those in need. These gifts sustain the Sisters' ministries and mission: to give joyful witness to love: the love of God, of one another and of all people.

Every few years, the Sisters prayerfully discern a Chapter Statement that guides their shared commitments. The most recent statement includes:

*“to deepen our communion with and care for one another, all our sisters and brothers and Mother Earth;” and*

*“to engage in a process that seeks to enter into the woundedness and pain suffered by persons affected by racism and to address systemic racism, including an acknowledgement of our own white privilege.”*

These commitments are reflected in the testimonials and reports shared by the organizations and individuals served through the Sisters' ministries. It is deeply meaningful to work in a place where the mission is not merely displayed on an office bulletin board but actively lived

out, visible in action and service every day. I curated some of the testimonies that moved me and to call these stories heartwarming is an understatement. They speak powerfully to both the realities of our world today and the Sisters' current and forthcoming Chapter commitments,

*for the sake of the world.*

Amid the trials and tribulations of our own lives, great and small, it is difficult not to be moved by these witness statements. This impact is made possible through the generous hearts of donors and the Sisters' charism of charity and their joyful witness to love.

## **Support for children and families:**

Access to affordable after-school and summer recreation programs is provided in safe, inclusive spaces for children and youth experiencing food and housing insecurity or other societal barriers.

Beyond sustaining programs, this support builds trust, nurtures confidence and reminds children that they are loved and capable of great things. Family home visits support stability in difficult seasons and create moments of joy and belonging for children facing challenges no child should endure.



**Creation of safe community spaces:**

Infrastructure upgrades, including a soccer field, foster recreation, social inclusion, peacebuilding, collaboration and mental health wellness in formerly at-risk communities and neighbourhoods.

**Compassionate support for survivors of sexual exploitation:**

Survivor-led outreach to women in exploitation situations offers individualized mentorship and support groups. Training helps recognize signs of trafficking and exploitation and supports those exiting these situations by creating a continuum of care that fosters healing, dignity and empowerment.

**Women-led environmental justice initiatives in Latin America:**

Collaborative efforts defend social

and environmental rights, including challenging extractive industries framed as false climate solutions. These initiatives promote climate-resilient, sustainable agricultural practices, improve agroecological knowledge, establish environmental monitoring commissions and strengthen the integration of gender and youth leadership in environmental action.

**Advancing the rights of women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa:**

Literacy and English-language programs expand access to opportunity, strengthen critical thinking and communication skills, reduce stigma and empower girls as they transition into adulthood. These programs engage boys as allies, fostering shared responsibility for gender equity.



### **Climate resilience and cultural preservation in El Salvador:**

Local partnerships in one of the country's poorest regions address the impacts of climate change while strengthening cultural identity. Community supports have generated income for local businesses, improved household economies and deepened community cohesion.

### **Emergency preparedness and disaster response:**

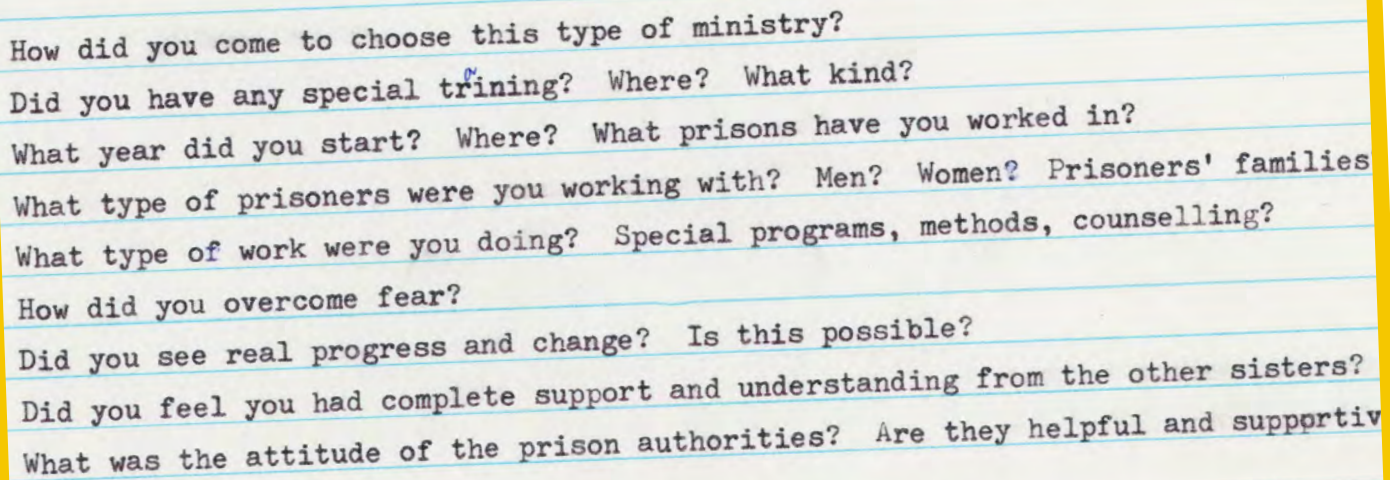
In regions affected by climate change, with severe rainfall and flooding, initiatives include embankment systems for flood protection, safeguards for agriculture and critical infrastructure and coordinated emergency response protocols. These measures reduce the long-term impact of climate-related disasters on livelihoods and food security.

**This is a very small selection of witness stories that reflect the living mission of the Sisters of Charity. This is more than just a gift to charity—it is faith in action,**

*for the sake of the world.*

# From the Archives: Congregational Prison Ministries

By Mary Flynn, Archivist



How did you come to choose this type of ministry?  
Did you have any special training? Where? What kind?  
What year did you start? Where? What prisons have you worked in?  
What type of prisoners were you working with? Men? Women? Prisoners' families  
What type of work were you doing? Special programs, methods, counselling?  
How did you overcome fear?  
Did you see real progress and change? Is this possible?  
Did you feel you had complete support and understanding from the other sisters?  
What was the attitude of the prison authorities? Are they helpful and supportive?

This *Charity Alive* issue's theme of *for the sake of the world* inspired me to look into the Sisters' history of prison ministry. My hunt was made easier by finding the work of Heather Watts, Research Assistant at the Mount Saint Vincent Motherhouse Research Office. During the Congregation's Futures Assembly of 1983, a Sister requested information on the Congregation's history of prison ministry: Who was involved, where was the ministry, what did it entail and what was the attitude of the community towards the ministry?

The request was approved by Congregational Archivist Sister Margaret Flahiff and Heather started her work in the fall of 1983. She invited the Sisters to share their stories by letter, cassette tape, or phone call.

Sister Elaine Therese Boyen

1980

Sing Sing Prison, New York

"I did go to Sing Sing Prison in New York about once or twice a month for about a year - 1980. My friend and I were part of a Charismatic Prayer Group from Marynoll Seminary which included a bishop, a priest, sisters and lay men and women.

We went to the prison on Thursday evening to pray and share scripture with the men. For me this was a very powerful and enlightning experience. Many of the men had come to know God in new and deeper ways in prison since they had so much time on their hands and got themselves involved in Bible studies. The men were very happy and open to having us come but the guards put both the men and us under very strict security and were not too pleasant. Some men stayed away just because of what they had to go through in order to come. We could only stay one hour and bring just a bible with us.

My religious community was open and accepting of this ministry."

**Within the first month, she received 35 responses. The research collected spanned Canada, USA and Bermuda, in five provinces, one territory and three states.**

Drawing on archival records, Heather determined that the earliest ministries were centred in Halifax. The work started with House of Refuge for "fallen women" in Dutch Village in 1862, followed by bi-monthly visits to Rockhead Prison in the North End in the early 1900s.

The accounts collected for the project illustrated that the prison ministries ranged from one-off visits during the holidays or helping set up the chapel for liturgy, to long term relationship building and support through ongoing programs.

For one Sister in Bermuda, her service was in teaching elementary Math and English twice a week for two years. For Sisters in Vancouver, their visits consisted of helping with music for liturgy, social time with the women in prison and counselling.

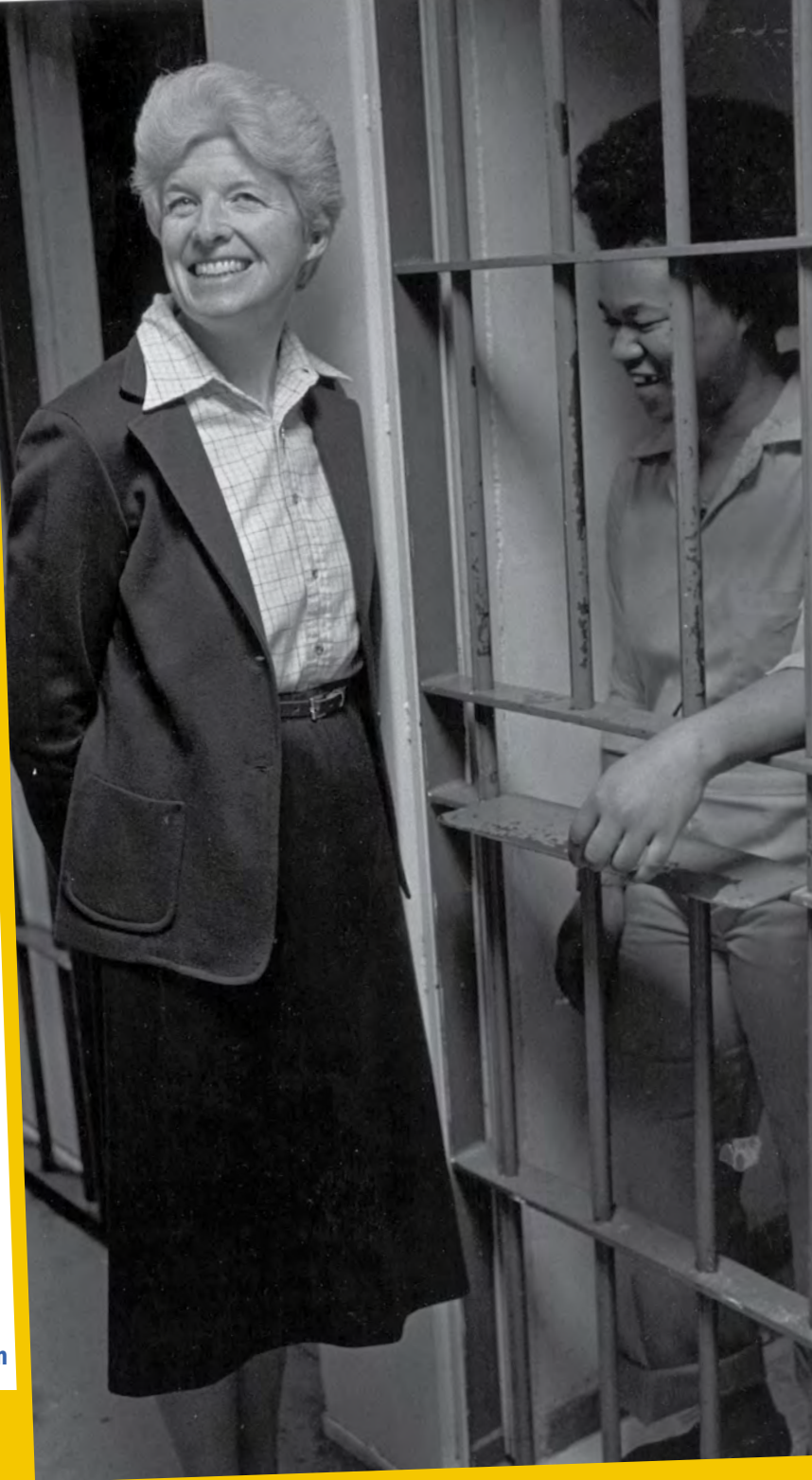
S. Edith Boucher wrote about her decade of weekly visits to incarcerated men in the local prison in Bathurst, NB.

**"As I look back in the process of remembering," she wrote to Heather, "the experience remains vivid and I know that I was enriched through this 'reaching out.' Thank you for the opportunity of sharing this side interest and for the joy I have recaptured in writing about this service."**

For S. Agnes Winifred McMahon, who visited the Cape Breton Correctional Centre starting in 1978, “opening doors for the imprisoned has been for a long time part of the Seton heritage,” referencing St. Elizabeth Seton’s daughter Catherine, who became a Sister of Mercy and was known as “The Prison Sister.” As the Sisters of Charity Constitutions state, “the principal end for which God has called and assembled the Sisters of Charity is to honour Jesus Christ our Lord as the source and model of all charity, by rendering to him every temporal and spiritual service in their power, in the persons of the poor, either sick, children, prisoners or others who through shame would conceal their necessities.” (C. 2)

[To read more on Congregational prison ministry, please visit Sister Mary McGowan’s 175th Anniversary Profile on her work in Washington, DC.](#)

S. Mary McGowan



Charity Alive witnesses to the life and mission of the Sisters of Charity - Halifax, which is to make the love of God visible in today’s world.

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