

Charity Alive

October 2026

A New Chapter of Leadership, a Continuing Call to Charity

By Melissa Falle, with excerpts from the *Transfer of Leadership Reflection*
by S. Margaret Mary Fitzpatrick.

The Sisters of Charity Halifax marked the transfer of leadership at Caritas Residence on September 26, 2026, with gratitude for the past and a shared commitment to the mission ahead.

“Grace empowers us to respond joyfully and gratefully for the sake of the world.”

These words framed the reflection offered by Sister Margaret Mary Fitzpatrick, Congregational Leader, as the Sisters of Charity Halifax marked the transfer of leadership.



Congregational Leadership Team 2026-2030

Sisters Mary Anne Foster, Cathy Stare, Judith Breen and Margaret Mary Fitzpatrick

Her message centred on gratitude, service and the enduring call to be charity for the sake of the world.



Sister Margaret Mary began by remembering every Sister of Charity Halifax who has lived since the Congregation's founding in 1849. She honoured the love and courage of their "yes"—and the "yes" that continues today—in lives devoted to healing wounds, speaking peace, challenging injustice and bringing the compassion of Christ to others.

"We remember the joys, the laughter, and even the tears," she said. "We made the world a better place. And we are not done!"

That conviction carried into her invitation to Sisters, Associates, partners in ministry and friends to continue the mission together. She spoke of vulnerability as an invitation to openness, deeper trust and care for one another, and of the shared responsibility to honour God in people and all life on Earth.

Speaking on behalf of the four-member leadership team, Sister Margaret Mary offered a simple expression of service and a request for prayer.

"In all humility, the four of us are among you ready to serve," she said. "Through God's mercy, we ask you to be with us in prayer and support us on this journey. We love you and our charism."

Looking ahead, she affirmed that care and planning for the Sisters would remain central. She also reflected on the stories of Sisters and Associates: the people they have served, their quiet kindness, their zeal for mission, and their prayers of acceptance, outrage at global injustice and hope for peace. These experiences continue to give life to the Congregation's mission.

Her reflection invited the community to consider both the work of today and the legacy of charity that will reach beyond their lifetimes.

“Together, we will contemplate what is ours to do and we will pray; entrusting ourselves to God.”

As this new chapter begins, Sister Margaret Mary's closing words offered a call to move forward with faith: to act with justice, love tenderly and walk humbly with God.

“We are a thread of charity weaving the planetary tomorrows. We are charity—as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”



Sister Alice Mailman with globe



Sisters Jolaine States and Lorraine d'Entremont

Transfer of Leadership Reflection

By Sister Margaret Mary Fitzpatrick

Grace empowers us to respond joyfully and gratefully for the sake of the world.

We call upon in thanksgiving every Sister of Charity Halifax who has lived since 1849. We cherish the love and power of their “yes,” and our “yes.” We recognize with pride the great ways and small that we have healed wounds, spoken peace, urged the mighty to right wrongs, and to bring the compassion of Christ to all whose lives we have touched. We remember the joys, the laughter, and even the tears. We made the world a better place. And we are not done!

Together, we will continue to be charity for the sake of the world. As Sisters, Associates, partners in ministry, and friends we experience our vulnerability as an invitation to openness, deepening trust, and care for one another. In solidarity, we continue to learn by acting justly through differentiated co-responsibilities. Together, we fulfill the principal end for which God has called and assembled the Sisters of Charity...to honour God in the persons and all life on Earth.

In all humility, the four of us are among you ready to serve. Through God’s mercy, we ask you to be with us in prayer and support us on this journey. We love you and our charism. We embrace the paschal

mystery as we journey together. We will go to the poor and there we will find God (St. Vincent de Paul).

As we envision the fulfillment of our mission, we will celebrate the call of being Sisters of Charity.

The care of and planning for our sisters is critical and will remain central. As we listen to your stories, we know what it means to be a Sister and Associate of Charity. We hear of the people you served, the quiet kindness that you rendered, and your zeal for the mission. We know of the prayers of acceptance, the prayers of outrage for global injustices, and the prayers for peace.

We have a finite number of years to be charity now and to leave a legacy of charity beyond our days. Together, we will contemplate what is ours to do and we will pray; entrusting ourselves to God.

We are all called to act with justice, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with our God. We are a thread of charity weaving the planetary tomorrows. We are charity - as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.



In the Room Where it Happened

by Sister Kati Hamm

“The Room Where It Happens” is a song from the musical Hamilton. Aaron Burr is describing a deal made among Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. It’s a song that describes a jealous Aaron Burr, aware of the lack of transparency, the quid pro quo transactions, and not judging it but wanting to get in on the action. While I was driving home the lyrics to this song kept repeating in my head. “The room where it happened” this June was in one of the several New England themed rooms on the second floor of the Boston Logan Airport Hotel.

The “it” that happened in that particular room in mid-June was the 23rd General Chapter of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. There were close to 70 people in the room including our tech team and Associates. It was not a usual kind of Congregational meeting which most often is on Zoom. This meeting’s goal was to elect new leadership and to draw up a vision for the next four years of our Congregation’s journey to completion. It was more than transparent as the Sisters and Associates had been about the preparation for almost two years. It was in these Zoom circle groups



the questions to be discussed at Chapter were discerned. The deliberations were all made in the framework of offering our charism of loving—for the sake of the world.

Who was in the room where it happened? Those who had been part of the preparation process, the facilitators, those who were present through Zoom livestreaming and those many Sisters of Charity who came before us, those who died during the last six years and many more leading spirits. During the breaks 175 years worth of slides, of Sisters, and ministries, of schools, and community rooms, of hospitals, rallies for justice, of leadership teams, of friends and colleagues, were flashed on the screen non stop. The cover photo was of a light house in Church Point, two Sisters in habit and a burnt orange coloured car from the fifties. They were all in the room where it happened. Did I mention God's Spirit?

When people look back and wonder where it happened...where Charity was brave once again. Where it was agreed that living into this moment of mission and completion, grace empowers us to respond joyfully and gratefully—for the sake of the world, it will be important to remember all who were in the room where it happened and who continue to accompany us this day.



Chapter 2026 Reflection

by Sister Margaret Bickar

I am writing this immediately following the election of our Congregational Leader and Councillors for the next four years. The ink has not yet dried on our ballots and the echoes of Ubi Caritas can still be heard. We will Hazard Yet Forward for the next four years.

During the first days of our twenty-third Chapter, something quite different seems evident to me from preceding ones. Entering the Chapter Hall on Sunday evening, the sight of a much smaller group of tables was startling to me, and it tugged at my heart. My memories of the Chapter of Renewal '68-'69 along with the first Chapter of Full Participation contrasted with the current image: all part of our history, all part of our journey, all part of our fulfillment, all blest by the God who has loved us since our beginning.

It seems to me that we have become closer over these past years, even become more important to one another, perhaps less demanding and kinder, maybe even loving one another more as we help one another on the journey, emotionally and sometimes physically as our median age rises.

As we sat quietly, patiently awaiting the tabulation of election results, I thought of our often mighty, heroic service and achievements over decades past, now relegated to history but still visibly alive in their effects.

Sisters Ann Woodford and Judith Breen
Sisters Maureen Murphy and Mary Anne Foster
Sisters Martha Loo and Cathy Stare
Sisters Elaine Biollo and Margaret Mary Fitzpatrick





Chapter 2026 participants in person
Caritas and Wellesley via livestream

The same zeal and creativity reign as many of us have set aside fulltime ministry, devoting ourselves to other kinds of service more in keeping with who we now are.

Our *Constitutions* #43 continue to direct us as:

Corporately and individually we strive to develop a sensitivity toward those whom the world oppresses, to right in great ways or small the injustices we see around us, to heal the wounds of the embittered, to speak peace to the troubled, to urge the mighty to right wrongs, that we may bring the compassion of Christ to all whose lives we touch.

Is not all of this in some ways still within the scope of each of us regardless of our path to completion, of our age, of our energies? The mode may change but the essence endures: living on together, caring for one another in right relationships, voicing loudly our cry for justice and peace, still firm in our convictions.

During the beginning years of church, people would comment: see those Christians: how they love one another.

May people in decades to come recall us and comment to their companions: how those Sisters loved one another!

Celebrating Charity, With Every Breath

by Melissa Falle

There is something special about gathering to hear the Sisters of Charity Halifax's story told by those who have lived it. At Caritas, the book signing for *Charity, With Every Breath* offered a moment to pause, remember, and celebrate the Sisters' shared life.

Sisters of Charity staff members Angela Rafuse and Mary Flynn welcomed everyone, introduced the book and shared the story of how it came to be. Spanning 2002 to 2026, it tells the story of years marked by profound change, courage and a hope deeply rooted in faith.

The story took on a personal voice as Sisters Mary Beth Moore and Kati Hamm shared readings and reflections from their work. Poetry offered another way to reflect on that shared journey. S. Mary Beth read "Mission," and Kati shared Mary Oliver's poem "Messenger," making space to listen and consider our own call to live charity in the everyday.

The gathering continued with a book signing and refreshments, allowing time to speak with the authors and with one another. It was an occasion to honour the care that goes into preserving a Congregation's story, so that its experiences and wisdom can be shared with those who come after us.



Sisters Kati Hamm and Mary Beth Moore



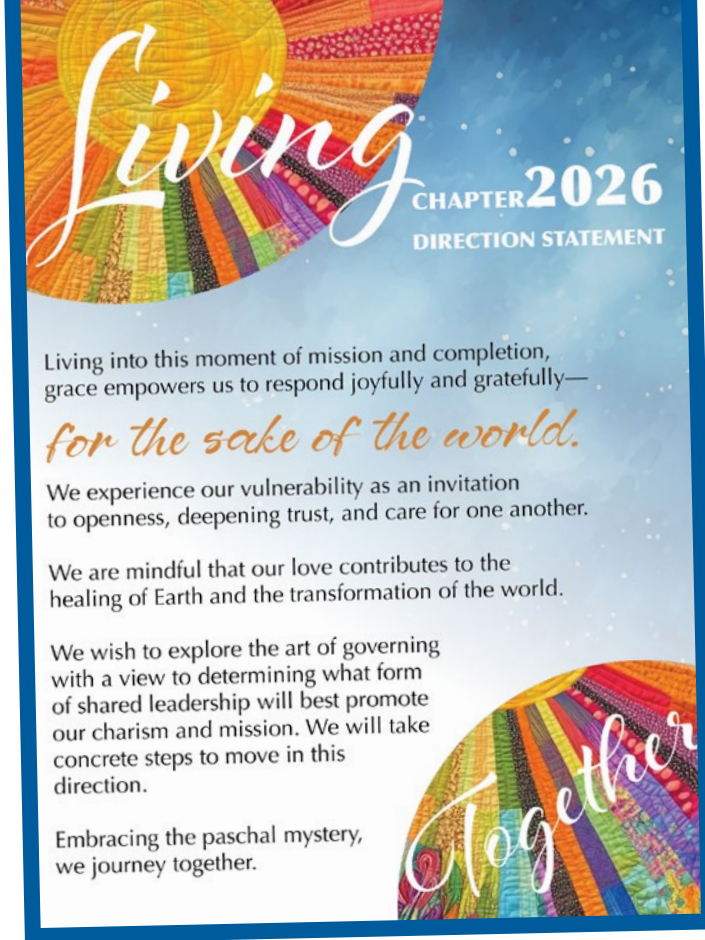
The Chapter Commitment

The Chapter 2026 Direction Statement will guide the Congregation for the next four years, giving us a shared foundation for prayer, discernment and decisions about our life together. As we live this moment of mission and completion, it helps us remain rooted in our charism and attentive to what God is asking of us.

It reminds us that we face the future together, sustained by grace and called to offer our love—for the sake of the world.

To live these words will ask something of each of us: the courage to be open, the humility to receive care and the willingness to trust one another more deeply. In acknowledging our vulnerability, we make room for grace and for the quiet gift of another's presence. We remember that belonging does not depend on what we can accomplish, but on the love we share.

The statement turns our hearts outward, reminding us that our love contributes to the healing of Earth and the transformation of the world. Through prayer, presence and acts of compassion, we continue to live our mission. As we explore shared leadership, we are called to discern together how best to carry our charism forward with faithfulness and care.



We offer heartfelt gratitude to our Chapter listeners—Sisters Gertie Jocksch and Cathy Stare, and Associate Mary Sullivan—and to our Direction Statement writers, Sisters Anne Harvey, Mary Beth Moore and Judy Park.

“Embracing the paschal mystery, we journey together.” These closing words give us a place to rest our hope.

They remind us that God meets us in both the letting go and the unfolding of new life.

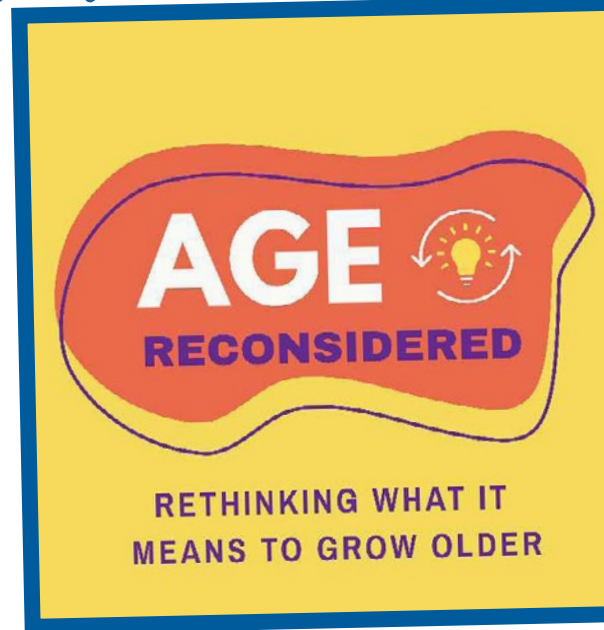
May we return to this statement often, allowing it to shape our choices, deepen our love and draw us closer together—for the sake of the world.

Caritas Residents Reflect on Aging in the Age, Reconsidered Podcast

by Melissa Falle

The Chapter 2026 Direction Statement invites one to experience vulnerability as a path to “openness, deepening trust, and care for one another.”

In the first episode of Age, Reconsidered, Sister Nuala Kenny and Sisters and fellow residents at Caritas give a personal voice to this invitation, sharing how they find meaning, joy and connection amid the changes of growing older.



Hosted by Kelly O'Neil from the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging at Mount Saint Vincent University, the podcast explores new perspectives on aging. Its opening episode, [“Things Fall Apart, Things Come Together,”](#) offers the Congregation an opportunity to reflect on the direction they will live into over the next four years.

Sister Nuala, a pediatrician and ethicist, describes learning about aging “from the inside out.” Her honest reflections on vulnerability, changing independence and gratitude reveal the trust involved in receiving care after a lifetime of caring for others. She speaks, too, of the faith that sustains her hope for new life amid loss.

The women affectionately known as “the Sisters and the ladies” share the gifts of friendship, creativity and becoming more comfortable with themselves. Their reflections on listening—slowing down and simply being present to another—show how our commitment to care for one another takes shape in ordinary moments.

Together, their stories remind us that prayer, presence and love remain vital expressions of our mission. As you listen, you will hear an echo of the Chapter Statement’s closing words: “Embracing the paschal mystery, we journey together.” This conversation invites one to carry those words into daily life, trusting that even amid change, all have much to receive and much to give.

[Click here to listen to Ep. 1 Things Fall Apart, Things Come Together in the Age Reconsidered Podcast](#)



Ailyth Juby, Mary Flynn and Sister Mary Christine McDonald

From the Archives

by Ailyth Juby, Archival Assistant

I'm Ailyth Juby, a recent graduate from Dalhousie University's Master of Information program (where I specialized in archives and librarianship), and Mary Flynn's archival assistant here at the Congregational Archives in Halifax, NS. I'm here for a 9-month stretch which started in May 2026, and runs until February 2027, and so far, have been thrilled to meet everyone and learn your history.

The 23rd Chapter took place within my first few weeks here, giving me the opportunity to delve into its history; learn about what Chapter is and why it is such an important event.

The General Chapters of the Sisters of Charity Halifax began in 1908 and took place every six years until the 11th General Chapter in 1968. Chapters then moved to a four-year cycle before returning to a six-year cycle after the 1996 General Chapter. With Chapter 2026, the Congregation has returned to holding Chapters every four years.

The Chapters were called to elect the new Congregational Leaders and to make large-scale decisions regarding the life, policies and projects of the Congregation, ministries and Sisters.

Due to constitutional obligations towards secrecy, attendance to Chapter was limited strictly to the Mother General and her council, local superiors, selected delegates and other specifically invited personnel. In the Spirit of Vatican II however, the rules regarding secrecy were set aside, and starting in the 1968 Chapter, anyone within the vicinity who wished to attend was then able.

Between the confidential nature of the early Chapters and the Motherhouse fire of 1951, there doesn't start to be an abundance of visual records until the General Chapter of 1976. Compiling the retrospective Chapter slideshow of over 1000 photographs had me spending multiple weeks with Epson Perfection, the Archive's photo scanner and my new best friend. The pictures were scanned from a variety of printed photographs, photo albums, slides, and photo negatives found primarily within the Archive's primary photo collection. The rest of the photos were sent to me directly, found from within the communications files, or found after searching through older editions of the website, books, and even old issues of the *Charity Alive* newsletter.

To keep some of the Chapter slides from being empty or absent, I decided to highlight the administrative team and Congregational Leaders that would've been elected and provide a photograph of the council. Some years were harder to find than others,



and seemingly there are no images of the general administrative team elected in 1968. Not wanting to leave it completely photo-less, two distinct photographs of the Superior General, Sister Irene Farmer, were used. Not only was she the Congregational Leader, but as I have since learned, is highly recognizable and an important figure in Congregational history.

I was able to learn so much about the history of Chapter, the Sisters, and the Congregation through my time researching and digitizing photographs. It is such a privilege to be here and be a part of this history, and while I may only be here for a brief while, know that it is one I will be forever grateful for.



[Click here to watch the slideshow celebrating our Chapter history](#)



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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