



Advent: A Time of Hope, Reflection, and Love

Advent is a time of anticipation and preparation, a sacred season when we pause to reflect on the hope, peace, joy, and love that the birth of Jesus brings into our world. It invites us to open our hearts to the promise of Emmanuel—“God with us”—and to recognize His presence in every moment of our lives.

The hymn “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” often sung during Advent, beautifully captures this spirit. It reminds us that God walks with us, offering strength in our challenges, joy in our successes, and comfort in the ordinary rhythms of life. This promise becomes tangible in the birth of Christ, God’s gift of love to the world.



For the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Advent holds deep meaning. It is a time to honor the legacy of St. Julie Billiart and Françoise Blin de Bourdon, who, through their unwavering faith, laid the foundation for a mission that continues today. The work of the Sisters, along with the dedication of those who serve in their ministries, reflects God’s goodness and inspires hope in all who encounter it.

Advent also calls us to look beyond ourselves. It is a season of heightened awareness of the needs of others, a time to open our hearts and share the gift of hope and love. As Pope Francis so beautifully reminds us: *“Educating is not a profession but an attitude, a way of being. In order to educate, you must go out of yourselves and be amidst the young, accompanying them in the stages of their growth, standing beside them.”*

This spirit of accompaniment is central to the Advent journey. It invites us to walk with one another, to support and uplift each other, and to find joy in building connections rooted in love and compassion. Inspired by the example of St. Julie and Françoise, we are called to reflect God’s love through friendship, respect, and encouragement.

As we celebrate Advent, let us take time to recognize the Goodness of God in those around us. Let us embrace this season as an opportunity to pray, to share, and to deepen our relationships—with God, with one another, and with the world.

Know that you are in our prayers during this season of hope and renewal. May Advent fill your heart with the peace and joy of knowing that our good God is with us always.

Leading the Way: Highlights from the 2024 National School Leaders Conference

This past November, 40 school leaders and members from their senior leadership teams from the East-West and Ohio Provinces of the SNDdeN network gathered in Cincinnati, OH, for the annual National School Leaders Conference. The event featured two engaging keynote sessions, thought-provoking workshops, and meaningful opportunities for collaboration.

Sister Patricia O'Brien, SNDdeN, opened the conference with an inspiring keynote, *Shay: A Story of Leadership*, emphasizing Gospel values and the transformative leadership principles of St. Julie.

Dr. Marcus Mescher, Associate Professor at Xavier University, followed with an enlightening session, *Unpacking the Theology Behind the Hallmarks*, exploring how the Hallmarks connect Catholic social teaching and Notre Dame de Namur's charism to modern education.

Workshops at the conference provided practical insights into global exchange programs, servant leadership, and nurturing future Catholic school leaders. Highlights included Chaminade Julienne's award-winning Senior Social Justice Capstone project, practical insights on fostering international partnerships, visit to the Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN Room and Museum at the Ohio Province Center and a tour of Mount Notre Dame High School, featuring its innovative Learning Lab/Photovoltaic Lab and sustainability-focused education.

The conference concluded with a renewed sense of shared mission and purpose, as leaders departed with actionable strategies, deeper connections, and a collective commitment to advancing Notre Dame de Namur's values in their communities.



2024 School Leaders Conference - Cincinnati, OH



Sister Dorothy Stang Museum located at the Ohio Province Center, Cincinnati.



Brass bells from India found in Sister Dorothy's home in Anapu.



Delaney Proud '25 leads a tour of the Mount Notre Dame HS. With Delaney are: Ashley Hasling, Notre Dame Cristo Rey, Methuen, MA; Jen Dodds, Mount Notre Dame and Alisa Povenmire, Notre Dame Education Center, Lawrence, MA.



Learning Lab at Mount Notre Dame HS where the clean water project work takes place.



L to R: Dr. James Flynn, Academy of Notre Dame, Tyngsboro, MA, Keith Hanley, Learning Lab Project Engineer, Mount Notre Dame High School, Cincinnati, OH, Romina Magner, Notre Dame Academy, Hingham, MA

Celebrating Sister Dorothy Stang's Legacy *Ways to Participate in 20th Anniversary Events*

Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN was killed in February of 2005 for her decades of work defending the dignity and rights of indigenous communities in the Brazilian rainforest. Her tireless commitment to the protection of the land and of all people, especially those made poor, remains urgently needed today. During this coming anniversary year, Sisters

of Notre Dame de Namur ministries are encouraged in a special way to remember her life and share her story as a means of fostering hope and inspiration for a world that honors all life and cares for all creation. **Educational resources and Calendar of events**. Please visit regularly to find teaching tools, post your own events, and share student reflections.



Sister Dorothy's Relics Installed in Rome

On January 10, 2025, Sister Dorothy's relics will be installed at the Church of San Bartolomeo all'Isola. A small container of blood-soaked soil from the site of Stang's murder will become part of the permanent memorial in the Sanctuary of the New Martyrs. The event will be livestreamed and all are warmly encouraged to join the ceremony remotely.

Women's Leadership in Environmental Movements

Panel discussion at the Gregorian University with Sr. Mary Johnson, SNDdeN, Pr. Laurie Johnston and others. **Info & livestream link**.

Sister Dorothy Prayer Service

Created by students at Notre Dame High School Belmont for use by any schools and ministries to unite us in prayer and thanksgiving for the life of Sister Dorothy.

Submit written reflections (A great activity for students!)

Mission Moments

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,

The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among all beings,
To tend the earth,
To make music in the heart.



- by Howard Thurman, 1956



Happenings Across the Province

Be sure to check out the SNDdeN social media accounts - [Instagram](#) & [Facebook](#) - to learn what's happening within our sponsored ministries! Links also at bottom of newsletter.

A New Era for Notre Dame Health Care Center

Commissioning Ceremony Held for Philip Hickey

Tuesday, December 10th, Notre Dame Health Care celebrated the commissioning of Philip Hickey as its new President and Chief Executive Officer. Philip, who assumed his role in May 2024, brings nearly four decades of extensive leadership experience in healthcare. His impressive career spans non-profit post-acute care, long-term care, memory care, assisted living, and independent living communities.

This ceremony honored Philip's commitment to continuing the mission of Notre Dame Health Care while charting a path forward in the ever-evolving healthcare landscape. We look forward to working in partnership with Philip in this exciting new chapter for the ministry under his leadership.



Sister Elaine Bain, SNDdeN performing the commissioning ceremony for Philip Hickey, President and Chief Executive, Notre Dame Health Care, Worcester, MA.



Members of the Notre Dame Health Care community join in during the commissioning of Philip Hickey.



Philip Hickey, joined by his family, Sisters Pat O'Brien and Elaine Bain and Katie Colin celebrating his commissioning.

Nuns on the Bus Inspires Change at Notre Dame San Jose

On October 17, Notre Dame High School in San Jose hosted Nuns on the Bus, a transformative event aimed at inspiring civic engagement and social justice advocacy. The tour stop brought together students and Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur for an unforgettable experience that highlighted the power of collective action.

Addressing the student body, Sister Nancy O'Shea, SNDdeN underscored the importance of actively working for justice, drawing from the legacy of St. Julie Billiart:

“Pay attention, notice who needs help, and get involved!”

Sister Nancy O'Shea, SNDdeN

“One of St. Julie’s favorite sayings was ‘teach them what they need to know for life.’ Pay attention, notice who needs help, and get involved!”

Sister Nancy also shared her experiences volunteering with asylum seekers in Phoenix, AZ, describing their gratitude for basic necessities:

“Their appreciation for help with any small thing has stayed with me.”

“Having access to food is a fundamental human right.”

Kanika Rawat '26

The event featured speeches by four Notre Dame San Jose students, each advocating for solutions to pressing issues: Hunger, Homelessness, Care for Creation, and Access to Mental Health Services. Kanika Rawat '26 spoke passionately about combating hunger:

“Having access to food is a fundamental human right, and all faiths call for us to address the issue of

hunger. ... We can address this by volunteering, donating, spreading awareness, and reducing our own food waste."

Kanika reflected on her opportunity to share the stage:

"I'm really happy I had the chance to speak alongside the amazing nuns and fellow students to advocate against hunger."

Sophia Walker '25 shared her impressions of the event, describing the Sisters' passion for change:

"They didn't just speak about justice; they lived it in a way that was powerful and impossible to ignore. Hearing them speak made me realize how important it is to stand up for what's right."

“Hearing them speak made me realize how important it is to stand up for what’s right.”

Sophia Walker '25

Kanika echoed the sentiment, noting the event's lasting impact:

"I became more informed about the problems the world faces and how we need to advocate for change. I'll do my best to fight against these issues through service and advocacy."

Nuns on the Bus left the Notre Dame San Jose community with a renewed sense of hope and purpose. The Sisters and students alike demonstrated that everyone has the power to effect change by raising their voice, living their values, and working together to address critical issues.



Ashley Rae Mathis, Head of School at Notre Dame HS, San Jose, signs the Nuns on the Bus vehicle.



Student speaker Kanika Rawat '26 from Notre Dame San Jose.



From L-R: Brother-in-law of Sister Joan Burke, Sisters Joan Burke, Yvonne Bondi and Nancy O'Shea during the Nuns on the Bus Rally in Redwood City.

Nuns on the Bus & Friends is a project of NETWORK Advocates, a 501(c)(3) non-profit under the IRS Code, dedicated to advocating policies that advance Catholic Social Justice. Their work is non-partisan, and they neither endorse nor oppose any particular candidate or party.

Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice

Students & faculty from NDA Hingham and Chaminade Julienne gathered at the ISN Teach-In with Sisters Bárbara Gutiérrez, Josita Colbert and Vivien Echekwubelu for an SNDdeN pizza party. During the Teach-In October 24-26, students attended workshops and plenaries on social and environmental justice issues culminating with a visit to their Congressional representatives on Capitol Hill. The ISN Teach-In for Justice is the largest annual Catholic social justice gathering in the US.

Save the date for next year's gathering: November 15-17, 2025!



Calendar | Upcoming Events & Meetings

Please reference and bookmark our [Calendar of Events page](#) on the EW SNDdeN website to access more information about our events, access registration links when they go live and additional event listings.

Oct. - April
1st Mon.
2024-2025

Partnering in Mission

New Faculty/Staff Mission Orientation

Zoom Sessions | 3:45 & 6:15 pm ET / 12:45 & 3:15 pm PT

Please note date change for February session - new date is February 10, 2025.

An orientation program welcoming new teachers and staff into the network of Notre Dame de Namur sponsored ministries and schools. Participants receive a certificate at completion of the program. [Download this flyer](#) for more information.

Register for
Early Session

Register for
Late Session

January
23
2025

West Coast SNDdeN Educators Symposium

Called to Stand with Immigrant Communities

Taube Center at NDNU | 4 to 6 pm
1500 Ralston Ave., Belmont, CA 94002

Attend in-person or virtually. Event will be livestreamed.

As Notre Dame de Namur Learning Communities, we act on behalf of justice, peace and care for all creation (Hallmark #3). At a time when immigrant communities face increasing uncertainty, how do we create school communities that welcome, support, and advocate for immigrant students and families? Experts will provide essential insights into current immigration policies, their impact on families and concrete ways that Notre Dame communities can take meaningful action. Reach out to Katie-Sue Scullin, kscullin@ewsndden.org, with any questions.

Register



West Coast Hallmarks Retreat

Register

The Notre Dame de Namur Villa Angelica, Carmel, CA
The Hallmark Retreat gathers colleagues from our five SNDdeN California learning communities. It offers an opportunity to deepen understanding of the Hallmarks of a Notre Dame de Namur Learning Community that are integral to the mission of each school. The retreat invites helpful dialog and sharing of ideas that can enrich participants and each learning community.

See your administrator or campus minister before registering. Reach out to Sister Louise O'Reilly with any questions
louise.oreilly@sndden.org.



East Coast SNDdeN Educators Symposium

Notre Dame Cristo Rey HS, 203 Lawrence Street, Methuen, MA 01844
Save the date for this dynamic program being offered to faculty and staff from all Notre Dame de Namur learning communities.



East Coast Hallmarks Retreat

Register

Spirituality Center, Ipswich, MA | *Save the date*
Faculty and staff of Notre Dame de Namur schools during the first several years of their tenure are encouraged to attend this retreat to deepen their understanding of the 7 Hallmarks & connect with colleagues across the network.

Please reach out to Julie Dowd with any questions
jdowd@ewsndden.org.



East Coast Healing the Healers Retreat

Spirituality Center, Ipswich, MA | *Save the date*
Any staff members from the Notre Dame de Namur health care facilities are encouraged to attend this day-long retreat for rest, reflection, and socializing with fellow staff from Notre Dame de Namur health care facilities throughout New England. Opportunities to learn more about the spirituality of the Sisters, and optional meditative walks, gardening, yoga, and art. Option to spend the night at the retreat center for those who would like.



SNDdeN Student Leadership Conference

Emmanuel College, Boston, MA | *Save the date*
Stay tuned for more to come soon!

This student leadership conference is an excellent opportunity for your students to interact with students from their school and students from other Notre Dame de Namur Learning Communities.

Sharing in the SNDdeNs' mission and learning about the Hallmarks will allow them to understand that they are all part of something bigger than themselves. Activities and programming will be designed for students involved in leadership roles at your school who may have untapped leadership potential and/or are difference-makers.



2025 National SNDdeN School Leaders Conference

Baltimore, MD | *Save the date*

Mark your calendars for the 2025 National SNDdeN School Leaders Conference, taking place November 17-19, 2025, in Baltimore, MD. A formal Save the Date invitation with more details will be shared soon.

Please note: There will not be a 2026 school leaders conference to allow for attendance at the International Conference in Boston, MA, scheduled for July 2026.

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<https://sddeneastwest.org/>



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