



## Atlantic-Midwest Water Committee

“educates, advocates and acts in collaboration for the dignity of life and the care of creation.”

By Sister Mary Heather MacKinnon, SSND

The Atlantic-Midwest (AM) Province Water Committee has been working energetically to offer information and to take action for the sacramentality, gift, and endangered existence of our global water resources.

AM sisters, associates and colleagues responded eagerly to the committee’s “Ban the Water Bottle” campaign and over 70% of the province communities and 50% of associates have joined the international “Blue Communities Project”:

1. To recognize water and sanitation as human rights
2. To ban or phase out the sale of bottled water in municipal facilities and at municipal events
3. To promote publicly financed, owned and operated water and wastewater services. (<https://canadians.org/bluecommunities>)



Students at the SSND-sponsored Academy of the Holy Angels in Demarest, New Jersey, **USA**, formally banned the use on campus of single-use bottled water. The Director of Caroline House in Bridgeport, Connecticut, **USA** announced that beginning in September 2018, each student will receive a water bottle in their book bag and that they will use pitchers of ice water at meetings instead of bottled water.

In collaboration with the AM Haiti Committee, the Water Committee worked last year to secure grants to bring water catchment systems to seventy families in La Gonave, “The Lost Island of Haiti.” Similarly, the Water Committee helped to finance a borehole well to provide water access to SSNDs and their neighbours in Homa Bay, **Kenya**. To educate on the disastrous effects of fracking in North America, essentially on clean water systems, sisters are giving presentations by invitation in various areas throughout the province

An online course via Zoom (a video conference platform) for the study of *Laudato si’* has been offered for AM sisters, associates, and staff; recently the course was provided also for the Novices and their community members in Rome, **Italy**. Special attention in this course is given to seeing how a spirituality of awe, wonder, and gratitude for all of life, and especially water, is foundational to any action on behalf of justice.

The committee is inspired and taking example from the sisters at Notre Dame Convent, Waterdown, Ontario, **Canada**, who studied *Laudato si’* and are working now to reduce and eliminate all plastic tools, utensils, and dinnerware.

*“To understand water is to understand  
the cosmos, the marvels of nature, and life itself.”*

Masaru Emoto

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## Latin America and Caribbean Branch Meeting

*By Sister Kathy Schmittgens, International Shalom Coordinator*

The ALC Branch meeting was held at the retreat center at Viamao, **Brazil**, March 19-21, 2018. Representatives from six countries were able to attend.

As part of the opening prayer each contact presented a symbol that represented themselves and their area of the Province. Each symbol drew us into communion with that reality.



*S. Bernadine presents Puerto Rico, which still suffers from Hurricane Maria.*



As is typical of branch meetings, it was important to catch up with the realities our sisters and ministries face in light of *Shalom*. There is a great diversity of landscapes, people and ministries. Especially for Sister Eileen and myself it was very helpful to see the amazing work that is being done, often by only two or three sisters. Equally edifying was the great faith that came through each presentation.

A *Shalom* report was given and the duties of the *Shalom* contacts were renewed. Sister Eileen led the group in an activity with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The second day ended with time for personal reflection on the following:

Collecting all that has been heard and experienced these days, reflecting in the light of *Love Gives Everything*, where is the Spirit taking me? What are the challenges? What is the call to continue walking as *Shalom* Latin America and the Caribbean?

Following contemplative prayer in nature in the morning, groups met to share the fruits of their reflection. In the plenary session they made the following commitment:

**Live the spirit of *Shalom*, being a bridge of its values and principles in the light of the Directional Statement of the 24th General Chapter and *Laudato Si'*.**

Plans for the next branch meeting will be made after the international meeting in October.

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## SEDOS Seminar

*By Sister Kathy Schmittgens, International Shalom Coordinator*

Each year SEDOS (Service of Documentation & Study on Global Mission) holds a residential seminar on a topic related to Mission. This year it was held April 30-May 4 in Ariccia, **Italy**. The

theme was Youth and Mission in advance of the Synod on Youth which will be held in October. Each day had a sub-theme: On Young People, On Evangelization, On Vocational Discernment.



*Left to right: Novice Esther, Father Leo, Sister Tatiane, and Father Lucas on the panel of Young Religious*

The third day focused on Vocational Discernment. Bro. Paul Bednarczyk, CSC shared information from the CARA study on vocations to religious life which was done in the United States and discussed ways that it relates to young people in many other parts of the world. Some best practices include being proactive about vocations in the institute, creating a culture of vocations, having a vocation director and/or a team, use of media for Vocation Promotion, and offering discernment programs.

A panel of young religious followed this talk and Bro. Paul moderated. Panelists included a sister from Ukraine, a priest from Argentina, a priest from India and our own Novice Esther from Nigeria. The panelists were very engaging and the discussion was rich.

We were privileged to have Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri address the seminar. He is responsible for the Synod in October. He spoke of the many ways the Vatican is preparing for the Synod. A seminar was held in September 2017; 20 youth from all over the world participated. An online survey drew 600,000 views and 100,000 responses to the survey as well as multiple responses apart from the questionnaire. A pre-synod composed entirely of 305 youth and streamed to 15,000 others was held in March 2018. All of this input from youth will provide insight for the Synod.

*Reflections by SSND seminar participants are on the [congregational website](#).*

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## Eliminating Linguistic Discrimination

*By Sister Eileen Reilly, Director of SSND UN-NGO Office*



My presence at the United Nations (UN) over the past eight years has certainly raised my consciousness of the importance of language. To paraphrase Nelson Mandela's famous quote: "If you talk to me in a language I understand, that goes to my head. If you talk to me in my language, that goes to my heart."

I have had many opportunities to witness the truth of this statement. One of the most powerful experiences has been to watch António Guterres, the current Secretary-General of the UN, in action. At a recent gathering during the Commission on the Status of Women, Guterres, a native of Portugal, responded to each question in the language of the questioner. Not having to rely on the UN interpreters, he won the hearts of many who were present.

Each spring, I have had the opportunity to attend a conference on Language at the UN. This year's theme was "Eliminating Linguistic Discrimination." Discrimination occurs at two levels:

1. Although UN events are typically translated into the six official UN languages – Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish – there are often times when this does not happen because of lengthy meetings, lack of funds, or lack of equipment. In these cases, English is used and speakers of all other languages have to adapt.
2. There is a growing recognition that perhaps the six official UN languages, which were determined at the organization’s founding in 1945, are no longer the most frequently used languages in the global community. What about Hindi? Bengali? Portuguese? Swahili?

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## The Countdown to 2020 Has Begun at the United Nations

The year 2020 will mark several important anniversaries at the UN. Here are a few:

- 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing
- 20th anniversary of UN resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
- 5th anniversary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons



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## End homelessness

By Sister Eileen Reilly, Director of SSND UN-NGO Office



*“It is in the shelter of each other that the people live”  
(Irish Proverb)*

To celebrate their 400th anniversary, “The Vincentian Family,” which is a coalition of NGOs that trace their charism to St. Vincent de Paul (Vincentian Priests, Sisters and Daughter of Charity, St. Vincent de Paul Society, etc.) has formulated the ambitious goal of initiating a project to end homelessness globally.

Among the NGOs working at the United Nations, a Working Group to End Homelessness has been formed and the membership has been expanded to over twenty NGOs, including SSND. Working with the assistance of the Vincentian Institute on Global Homelessness, this group is exploring possibilities of incorporating this issue into the agenda of various UN Commissions.

The Sustainable Development Goals for 2016-2030 focus on “Ending Poverty” (SDG #1) and “Reducing Inequalities by leaving no one behind” (SDG # 10) but neither goal specifically mentions homelessness. Although the face of homelessness varies, it is seen in every nation around the world. We hear of children living in the railway stations in Calcutta, of people living in national parks in the United States, and of tightening restrictions of the use of “public spaces,” in some European countries – just to name a few examples.

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