



*Hopes and Aspirations for Providence Ministries*  
Sisters of Providence



## *Dear People of Providence:*

Our Providence Mission is deeply rooted in the heritage of the Sisters of Providence. Since their beginning in 1843, the Sisters have called on those they work with to care for the poor and vulnerable. Their work is our inspiration and our calling.

When the Sisters of Providence made the historic decision in 2010 to change to a sponsor model and entrust their ministries to laypersons as well as to Sisters, they wrote the Hopes and Aspirations. Their words continue to guide us, to challenge us, to encourage us, and to propel us forward as we transform health for people in our communities.

Much has changed with our health system since the Sisters of Providence wrote these words, and still the heart of our work remains unchanged. Every day we follow our Mission, responding to the signs of the times and reaching out to others as the Sisters of Providence ask us to do:

*We expect that you will be open to the call of those who suffer by addressing emerging needs with wise and discerning responses so the poor and vulnerable may be served in new and more effective ways.*

It is a calling we are all honored to serve.

Regards,



Lisa Vance

Chief Executive, Oregon

### OUR MISSION

As expressions of God's healing love, witnessed through the ministry of Jesus, we are steadfast in serving all, especially those who are poor and vulnerable.

### OUR VALUES

Compassion, Dignity, Justice, Excellence, Integrity

### OUR PROMISE

"Know me, care for me, ease my way."

# *HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS*

## FOR PROVIDENCE MINISTRIES

*Although expressed in different words in different times, we believe that our Mission as Sisters of Providence is to be the living expression and continuation of the Mission of Jesus.*



## NEW BEGINNINGS

In establishing Providence Ministries as a public juridic person of the Roman Catholic Church, the Sisters of Providence take another step in our continuing journey with lay persons to provide leadership for the ministry. This is a significant step for our Sisters and our lay colleagues. We have no fixed blueprint for how to express the role and responsibilities of Providence Ministries other than by reading the signs of the time, trusting in Providence, and embracing our Baptismal call to follow Christ. Except for the requirements of canon law, there are but minimal requirements to provide the frame of hope and faith for the Sisters of Providence. We hope this document will capture some of that spirit and offer to future leaders our hopes and aspirations for the ministries we have been entrusted by the Church and blessed to lead for 153 years.

(Hopes and Aspirations was written by the Sisters of Providence in 2010.)



Sisters of Providence with baskets and capes prepared for begging (though clearly taken in a photographer's studio), ca. 1900.

*With confidence that our Providential God will continue to bless, guide and pray for you, we ask that you:*

## REMAIN FAITHFUL TO THE MISSION

**A**lthough expressed in different words in different times, we believe that our Mission as Sisters of Providence is to be the living expression and continuation of the Mission of Jesus. We have taken inspiration from the phrase, "Caritas Christi Urget Nos," which for us means that the love of Christ moves us, even compels us, to follow his example in providing healing, education and service to all we encounter, with a special concern for those who are most poor and vulnerable. Through compassionate service, we believe we continue the Mission of Jesus, bringing forth "the reign of God," helping to make our world a more just, peaceful and loving place for all. We understand this to be the Mission of Jesus so it remains our Mission, and we ask that it be held in trust as the continuing Mission of Providence Ministries.

We ask that you reflect often and deeply on this Mission so it may become a source of inspiration and strength for you and for all who participate in the work of Providence. Be mindful of the values Jesus expressed in the Gospels, and let those values guide all your actions.

We hope you will develop regular practices of education and formation so that all who work in Providence Ministries understand the Mission and these values and find in them a

Early group of sisters and lay people, St. Mary Hospital, Astoria, Oregon, 1918.



source of personal inspiration. At the same time, we expect that you will continue our practice of inviting into this work people of goodwill who share our commitment to compassionate service and to our values, whether their individual religious and spiritual traditions are the same as or different from our own.

We expect Providence Ministries to be a voice for and a servant to those who are poor and vulnerable among us. This special concern for the poor is at the core of the Mission we share. Like Our Mother of Sorrows, we want to be a sign of compassion and hope to them. Drawing upon the example of St. Vincent DePaul, whose model of service we follow, we first called ourselves, "Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor." When Emilie Gamelin was dying, she called us to the virtues of Humility, Simplicity, and Charity as in the legacy of St. Vincent DePaul. In her final words, Mother Joseph also reminded her companion Sisters, "Whatever concerns the poor is always our affair ..." We offer the same words to the future leaders of Providence.

We hope you will also pay special attention to care for those who carry out the work of Providence. Our workplaces should always strive to model the values we profess and be places where each person is treated with dignity, respect, and justice. As you attend to the physical, mental, social, and spiritual needs of those we serve, pay equal attention to the same needs of those who serve in Providence. We must model in our own ministries the values we profess.



Sister Dolores Schulte, S.P., helps children with dyeing Easter eggs, Our Lady of Providence Nursery, Portland, Oregon, April 1951.

We ask you to pay particular attention to the spiritual needs of people. It is often those spiritual needs that make us most vulnerable and that are ignored by our society. Our tradition offers many resources that can help people. May Providence Ministries always be known as a ministry that attends, in a special way, to the spiritual dimension in our lives as well as the lives of those we are called to serve.

We ask that you be good stewards of all we have been given for this ministry – our people, our resources, and our earth. We have been blessed, particularly in Alaska, Washington, Montana, Idaho, Oregon, California, and El Salvador with an abundance of natural resources that have allowed our ministries to flourish. Yet our society has not always been wise in its use of our land, water, and air. We hope Providence will be a model of good stewardship that we may demonstrate faithfulness to our values and that others may learn sound stewardship practices from us.



Sister Mathilde Mary Albert, S.P.,  
working in the Blood Chemistry and  
Hematology Section, Sacred Heart  
Hospital, Medford, Oregon, 1930.



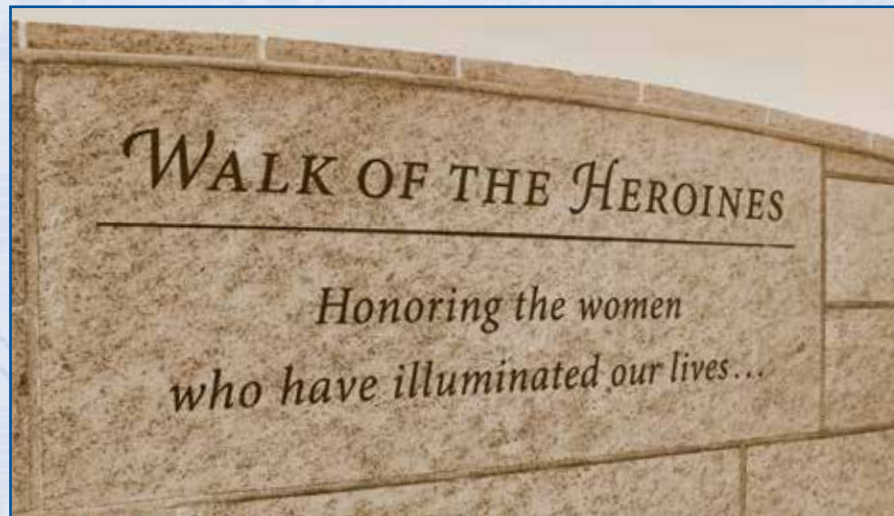


Sister Karin Dufault, S.P., assists a young patient at St. Vincent Hospital, Portland, Oregon, 1967.

# KEEP OUR IDENTITY AND HERITAGE ALIVE

**W**e have always partnered with people of many faiths and expect the diversity within our ministries to grow in the future. Bringing together people of many backgrounds into a common ministry of service creates an important opportunity to build understanding and community. At the same time we must honor our own heritage and identity. As ministries of the Catholic Church, Providence Ministries is part of a larger community to which it must be faithful and with which it must be in regular dialog.

We expect Providence Ministries to ensure that Providence Health & Services engages in regular practices to help sustain its identity and to celebrate its heritage so the Mission and values come alive in all it does. Today we see evidence of this commitment in programs of formation of leaders, education for employees, rituals and celebrations, decision-making processes, and in many other ways. We hope these efforts will develop even more in the future. As Sisters we have understood that we cannot take for granted our heritage, Mission, or values. Only by responding to the call to education, and to the initial and continuing formation of the members, have we been able to continue our work over generations.



The Walk of the Heroines at Portland State University is a special place to honor women leaders who have made a difference in Oregon. The garden features a natural waterway symbolizing the 1856 journey of six Sisters of Providence to the Oregon Territory. Mother Joseph also is honored at the site.



Celebrating the dedication of Walk of the Heroines are (left to right) Sisters Lynda Thompson, SNJM, Margaret Bischoff, S.P., Joyce Greene, S.P., Jeanette Heindl, S.P., Ana Dolores Orellana, S.P., Rita Ferschweiler, S.P., Karin Dufault, S.P. and Lenora Donovan, S.P., 2009.

We expect Providence Ministries to cherish the Mission and values and develop ways to assess the effectiveness of the people and practices required to sustain them.

To help keep our heritage alive, we expect Providence Ministries will see that our practice of maintaining the “Chronicles” is continued, preserving for future generations a written history of the good works of Providence Health & Services.

We hope you will also continue to embrace and tell the stories of those who have gone before us, women like Blessed Emilie Gamelin, Mother Joseph, Mother Bernarda, Venerable Mary Potter, and those other religious women, as well as lay men and women who have inspired us and on whose shoulders we stand. These are our ancestors. Honor them and let others know them so they too can draw inspiration from their lives. In your own time celebrate the living legacy of Providence as lived among your colleagues. In this way, Providence lives faithfully.

# CONTINUE TO RESPOND TO THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES AND REACH OUT TO OTHERS

The Sisters of Providence have always responded to changing times, reaching out to those who are poor and vulnerable. It was this spirit of service that responded to the call of the Bishops to send the first Sisters of Providence to the Oregon Territory in 1852 and 1856. In the same way, Mother Joseph did not remain in the initial foundation in Vancouver but she and her small bands of Sisters continued to respond to serve needs of education, health care, and social services in Walla Walla and Montana that would otherwise have been unmet. Reaching out to new forms of service was done with complete trust in God's Providence as the Sisters moved forward making decisions that were never foolish, but did involve risk. They did all they could for success, but also trusted in Divine Providence. This tradition has continued as we established ministries for vulnerable people who are in need of housing, shelter from violence, education, and pastoral service in El Salvador.



Nursing school students with sisters at St. Vincent Hospital, Portland, Oregon, 1900s.

This outreach or “missionary” spirit is fundamental to the Sisters of Providence and to our tradition in the Church. We expect that Providence Ministries will continue outreach to the poor as a central element of the work of Providence Health & Services, responding to emerging needs of the poor and using its resources to address them with wise stewardship, but also with a willingness to take risks. We expect them to reach beyond the borders of our own country as global citizens exemplified through the witness of Providence International Missions. Such efforts provide transformation, not only for the recipients of the services but also for Providence people who provide services.

In the future, collaboration with other Catholic ministries and organizations that share our values will continue to be strengthened. As transportation and communication bring us closer together, we hope Providence Ministries will embrace a spirit of collaboration, not competition, in service of the Mission. Stewardship of the resources of Providence, our communities, and our society require that we work with others to find new ways to advocate more effectively for the poor and to meet their needs and avoid wasteful duplication. We expect Providence Ministries to search for new ways to carry out the Mission, honoring Providence tradition, but not letting past practice constrict the vision of what is best for the future. Changing needs, social structures and institutions will require new and different responses. We expect that you will be open to the call of those who suffer by addressing emerging needs with wise and discerning responses so the poor and vulnerable may be served in new and more effective ways.



Ford sedan purchased with proceeds of a fund-raising picnic, Sacred Heart Hospital, Medford, Oregon, 1954.

## COLLABORATE WITH MINISTRY LEADERS

As Sponsor of Providence Health & Services, Providence Ministries will address the hopes and aspirations we have outlined through its collaborative work with the governing boards and management. We expect that all in Providence leadership will work to see that these relationships are healthy, creative, and collaborative. We know there will be disagreements on important matters, just as there always have been, but we know too that these will be resolved most effectively when all parties listen carefully to each other in a spirit of discernment and focus on what best serves the Mission.

Providence Ministries has reserved powers which it must exercise effectively. We do not see this as a mere formality. We expect that Providence Ministries will be fully engaged in those matters on which it exercises its reserved powers and that it will have the information and time for discernment needed to make wise decisions. Sponsor, board and management must work together to ensure the integrity of each role is respected in the decision making process.



Group during Medicare conference for all Sacred Heart Province hospitals, Providence Hospital, Portland, Oregon, June 1966.

Experience in other ministries has shown that the role of Sponsor can be viewed in two extreme ways. At one extreme the Sponsor passively receives recommendations and accepts them, but does not participate in identifying issues, placing issues within the context of the role of the ministry, or fashioning potential responses. At the other extreme the Sponsor is actively engaged in all significant matters, but does not distinguish its role as Sponsor from the essential roles of the board or of management. Providence has its roots in community that embraces collegiality, delegation, and respectful distinction of roles allowing each body in governance and management to experience their contribution to the common good. Similarly, we work in communion with the Church to advance the Mission of Jesus to the world. We gather with discerning hearts, open to the direction of the Holy Spirit, while honoring those we have entrusted with authority.

We hope Providence Ministries will avoid both extremes and that sponsor, board and management will work collaboratively within their appropriate roles, supporting each other and bringing their special talents and perspectives to the common work. In this way the ministry will be best served, and each body will attract and retain committed and capable people who are willing to serve in the respective roles.



Sister Maggie Pastro, S.P., receives a congratulatory hug from Jack Friedman, Providence Health Plan chief executive (now retired), at a service awards ceremony. She celebrated 40 years as an employee and as a sister of Providence in 2010.

We recognize that organizational structures will evolve in Providence as they have in other ministries that have adopted new forms of sponsorship. We begin our journey as sponsors, both Sisters of Providence and Catholic laity for Providence Ministries. Providence Health & Services will continue to have a board of directors. We do not know whether this initial arrangement will best serve the ministry in the future, or whether some overlapping or more integrated structure would ultimately be preferable. We leave that to the good judgment of those who serve in those roles in the future, and we invite their ongoing assessment of how best to



Sister Ernestine Marie Reisenauer, S.P., administrator, looking over plans with construction foreman Mike Kadera, Providence Hospital, Portland, Oregon, 1960s.



develop structures that will effectively serve the needs of the ministry. We also understand that Catholic ministry is being shaped to more effectively respond to the crying needs of our time. You will be challenged as well to respond to those who call out for our care and the hard choices will be there when our resources are constrained. However, as St. Vincent DePaul commended to us, "Love is inventive to infinity." Compelled by God's providential love, you will be invited to do more than you ever believed possible because of God's goodness and love of all.



Former administrator Sister Rita Ferschweiler, S.P., says goodbye to retiring friend and Providence St. Vincent Medical Center administrator, Don Elsom, ahead of dozens of other well-wishers. (circa 2005)



*Providence of God, we believe in You.*

*Providence of God, we hope in You.*

*Providence of God, we love You with all our hearts.*

*Providence of God, we thank you for all.*

## CONCLUSION

**W**e know that Providence Health & Services will thrive with the kind of leadership it enjoys today, and we expect that the leadership of Providence Ministries will be equally talented. With people of this caliber and commitment, Providence will continue the Mission for generations to come.

As we express our hopes for the future, we also express our gratitude to all the Sisters of Providence, Little Company of Mary Sisters and the lay women and men who have brought us to this day.

(Hopes and Aspirations for Providence Ministries, published 2010)



## Sisters of Providence

Sisters of Providence in formation (candidates, novices and temporary-vowed sisters) along with vowed sisters from the U.S., Canada and Chile gather in July 2019 in the Washington State Capitol around the statue of Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart, foundress of Sisters of Providence in the West.