



THE WEST VIRGINIA INSTITUTE FOR SPIRITUALITY

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NEWS FROM WVIS

2025 #1

Message from our Board President

Reverend David S. Lake

Hello everyone,

Recently our son and I made a trip into Pittsburgh, PA to Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens for their Orchid and Tropical Bonsai Show. Phipps never disappoints me. I love to go and spend a few hours looking at the flowers, trees, plants, and other display items that are placed around in the different rooms. When we walked into the bonsai room my eyes first went to the display that read KINTSUGI: “Akin to the philosophy of wabi-sabi, kintsugi (golden joinery) is the Japanese practice of repairing damaged vessels with lacquer mixed with powder of precious metals. As these reproductions show, the gold highlights celebrate the imperfections as part of the unique history inherent to the object, adding to its beauty.” I have heard over the years that these “broken vessels” actually become more valuable once repaired due to the now infused precious metal in them.



We are broken vessels; the church is a broken vessel, and WVIS was broken with the passing of Sr. Carole. The joinery that puts us back together is the presence of Jesus Christ in our lives. Every morning, we can celebrate our brokenness and Christ’s joining of us back together. Every time we enter into Almighty God’s holy presence we can celebrate our being joined back together through the Holy One. In our brokenness and in Christ being our joinery, our lives are of more value and greater use for the causes of Christ.

It is with great joy that we celebrate the “joining together” within the WVIS Community with the announcement of Sr. Cheryl Clemons and Sally Orcutt as the new leaders within the WVIS Community, effective April 1, 2025. As they “hit the ground running” let us be in prayer for their discernment, wisdom, grace, and love as they pull us together, as they become the glue within WVIS.

Joined together by the One who calls us and who goes before us, let us be faithful in all we do and say. Christ is with us! Amen!

In Christ,

Rev. David S. Lake

Visit the WVIS website (www.wvis.org) to learn more about spiritual direction, retreat options, and upcoming programs.

Meet the Executive Director

Greetings, WVIS Family!

It is an honor and privilege to share with you this first letter as your Executive Director. Called (I believe) by God to this ministry and having been trained by our beloved Sr. Carole Riley, CPD, and the other outstanding WVIS faculty, I humbly step out in faith at least partially into the shoes of Sr. Carole.

A little about me: A farm girl from Kentucky and one of eight children, I have been an Ursuline Sister of Mount St. Joseph for over 50 years. I've taught in several Kentucky and Nebraska high schools, led the Owensboro Diocesan Office of Social Concerns, served two terms in congregational leadership, taught theology at Brescia University, then served 10 years as the VP for Academic Affairs/Academic Dean of Brescia before moving into spiritual direction ministry. I've been involved in retreat work and adult faith formation for some 30 years. My academic degrees are French from Brescia; Theological Studies from the University of Dayton; and Historical Theology with Concentration on Systematics from The Catholic University of America in Washington.

It's fitting that this WVIS transition is happening within the Catholic Jubilee Year of Hope. Thank you all for your ongoing support of WVIS and its much-needed mission! It is with great hope and excitement that Sally and I have already begun working with faculty, staff, interns, and alumni to enhance the wonderful programs and opportunities WVIS provides. Stay tuned for exciting things to come as



God's Spirit guides us into a bright future!

Sr. Cheryl Clemons, O.S.U., PhD
WVIS Executor Director

WVIS New Director of Operations

God has a new plan!

During the months following Sr. Carole's passing, I felt drawn to exploring how I, with my gifts and skills, might find new ways to serve WVIS. I was very aware of all that Sr. Carole did and knew that alone could not fill those shoes. After prayerful discernment, Sr. Cheryl and I found (we believe) God's plan for us. Team up! Each of us brings a passion for WVIS along with our different gifts and skills. I'm excited and humbled by the faith and trust the WVIS family has put in us.

My background is all about execution and details. I grew up in Northern New Jersey and received my undergraduate degree in Chemistry and Environmental Analysis. After staying at home with my two sons for several years, I returned to the work force and worked as the Marketing and Conference Director for a not-for-profit, as a Production Manager for a national magazine, as the Administrative/Marketing Manager for a civil engineering firm, and finally the Marketing Director for a small client services firm. During my time at the engineering firm I went back to school and received my Master's Degree in Administration and Scenario/Strategic Planning.

God uses everything. I thought this time of my life would be serving as a spiritual director and supervisor through WVIS, God has a plan that includes serving WVIS in an expanded way and I look forward to the joys and the challenges that will be part of this new adventure. I feel blessed to have the chance to be part of this team with Sr. Cheryl as our Executive Director.



Ms. Sally Orcutt, O.P., M.A.
WVIS Director of Operations

Ongoing Opportunities at WVIS

If you haven't visited the WVIS website lately, please take a look at www.wvis.org. Almost Heaven Retreats are getting underway, you can make your plan to do a silent directed retreat of 3-, 5-, or 8-days this summer.

Would you like to learn more about spiritual direction? We have a list of spiritual directors on our Associate Spiritual Director page that would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

WVIS Discernment Day 2025

WVIS Discernment Day was held this year on April 5th. Opened to anyone who felt they wanted a quiet time to reflect on the question of where God is leading them at this time, we were excited to have over 30 participants attend. Our thanks to all those who shared a brief reflection on what the day meant to them.

When asked, "What brought you here today?" I wrote, "God's love never ends, and neither do my questions about 'which way?'" My focus during this discernment retreat was on the balance between 'being and doing.' I also wondered about expectations. What I found was a slowed down time for combing through the weeds of my circular thinking. I found images arising, additional focus, quiet reflection through journaling, and a small group experience in deep affirmation. Questions remain, of course. And, now there's an experience in discernment I can replicate, in this ongoing listening for God. ~ Jill G.

The program was very interesting, and experiencing the process of discernment made it more understandable for me. I thought it was a nice balance of information and experience with the steps. The leaders facilitated a prayerful and reflective environment in which to share, connect, and learn from others. ~ Patricia W.

As I was trying to understand how God is calling me to respond, I found myself entangled in a myriad of pros, cons, and maybes. The discernment retreat helped me find a path through the maze of reasons, feelings, resistances, and hopes. The small reflection groups were helpful in suggesting and affirming as I clarified the question before me and worked toward a response. I appreciated the facilitation of the leaders and truly experienced Jesus saying, "When two or three are gathered in my name, there I am with you." ~ Deborah L.

My experience of the Discernment Day retreat was truly wonderful and deeply meaningful. The instruction was clear and thoughtfully presented, offering helpful guidance throughout the day. I especially appreciated the small group discussions, which created a safe and constructive space to share

my honest thoughts. The feedback from others allowed me to see myself from different perspectives, which was both encouraging and insightful. Overall, this was a truly valuable and enriching experience. ~ Linda S.

Learning how to discern if a decision is aligned with God's desire for me is an incredibly important skill that was expertly taught in a loving supportive environment. I feel more confident now that I am making a move in the right direction for myself, my loved ones, and my community! ~ Kelly F.

On the heels of completing a 19th Annotation Retreat, I was grateful to have the opportunity to participate in an online Discernment Day sponsored by WVIS. This retreat offered some good tools that will assist me in developing my spiritual discernment skills. It was also wonderful to connect, even if only virtually, with like-minded people seeking to better hear how God is calling them in their lives. This is not a topic I can comfortably explore with my regular circle of family and friends. I look forward to more retreat opportunities from WVIS! ~ Margie W.



Is God inviting you to take a vacation with Him this summer? Are you discerning an important decision or a deepening and renewal of a choice already made? This year's Almost Heaven: Ignatian Silent-Directed Retreats are being offered between May 16 to July 21. For more information and/or to schedule your retreat, visit www.wvis.org/retreats.

Visit our website at www.wvis.org

Reflections and Happenings

Charleston Catholic High School Sophomore Retreat...A future full of hope

As 34 high school students passed through the doors of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, their faces were bright, they exuded confidence, and *hope* was in the air! They were greeted warmly by Pastor Randy Richardson, WVIS Spiritual Director, Sr. Molly Maloney, and Charleston Catholic Campus Minister and WVIS Board Member, Molly Linehan-Belcher.

The annual sophomore retreat began in 2023 when Molly Linehan-Belcher contacted Sr. Carole Riley about the possibility of hosting a sophomore retreat at WVIS based on living the Beatitudes. As the vision of WVIS is "to provide an ecumenical center for prayer and spirituality and encourage and promote spiritual life through silence, prayer, retreats, and inter-faith dialogue," a retreat like this inviting leaders of different faith traditions to participate was a perfect fit.

It was wonderful to watch the students move from place to place learning, reflecting, and journaling about a particular beatitude. As Rabbi Victor Urecki, *Bnai' Jacob Synagogue*, Pastor Randy Richardson, *Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Father Philipp Szabo, *Pastor St. Agnes Catholic Church*, together with WVIS Staff (Sr. Molly Maloney, O.S.F., Mrs. Liz Deal, Mr. Andy Malinoski) and CCHS Community Service Liaison, Michaila Williams led the reflections, students were blessed to experience inter-faith dialogue on the beatitudes. Spending the day and being with these mature, gifted young men and women left no doubt that they are our future leaders who will bring much needed hope to our world!

When the students were asked what was most meaningful for them from the retreat, this is what they said:

- The conversations with all of the instructors
- Talking about why people hate
- Learning what different people believe in
- Learning about the Beatitudes
- Learning about Judaism and the discussion about antisemitism
- Our breathing exercises, the relaxation I felt
- Opening up with my friends
- Being able to talk about everything including feelings and relationships

Our thanks to everyone who participated to make this such a memorable day.

*Sr. Molly Maloney, O.S.F., M.A., L.M.T.
WVIS Associate Spiritual Director,
Coordinator of WVIS Associate Spiritual
Direction Training Program*



WVIS Theme for 2025 - Hope

At a recent Ministry Team Meeting of Spiritual Directors, Sister Molly invited all present to share their "HOPE" for the future of WVIS. Some of the responses follow below:

- In new growth in unexplored ways
- To train and support guides in the spiritual journey for the wider "seeking" community
- For WVIS to thrive
- To strengthen the Mission of WVIS
- In the continued commitment of each person here
- For WVIS to maintain the house and offer retreats
- In the collaboration for the good and growth of WVIS
- For the training programs to grow and meet current needs
- For WVIS to continue opening spaces for all to listen to God and to allow connection to all.

Leave a legacy that will help others by contributing to WVIS through The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation. You can donate online by going to The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation (tgkvf.org) and donate to the WVIS Endowment Fund or mail your donation to WVIS Fund, c/o The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, P.O. Box 3041, Charleston WV 25331. Contact Michelle Foster, at 304-346-3634 for more information.

Break boundaries and create hope with us!

These are the first words you see when you visit the website of the *Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods* in Indiana. The sisters are a community of vowed Catholic women religious, who, inspired by their foundress, Saint Mother Theodore Guerin, are passionate about our lives of prayer, education, service and advocacy.

During a recent trip to Los Angeles, WVIS Associate Spiritual Director, Donna Becher had the good fortune to attend the Religious Education Conference. While



walking through the exhibits, she spotted a booth of The Sisters of Providence at St. Mary of the Woods, Indiana. According to Donna, "It's good to know the Spiritual Director

is always IN!" Our thanks to Donna, for sharing this wonderful photo.

WVIS Wish List Items

Our Annual *Almost Heaven Retreats* are getting underway and the needs in the house increase. WVIS receives many gifts on our "needs" list each month, for which we are so grateful for your generosity. We currently have needs for:

- Laundry detergent and dryer sheets
- Monetary donations toward heating, electric, and water bills
- Monetary donations to provide scholarships for Recovery Program directees
- Gift cards to Kroger, Amazon, Walmart, Target and/or Aldi
- Dishwasher pods

Most of these items are available on Amazon and can be shipped directly to WVIS.

Local Volunteers Needed for on-site work and/or meal preparation

WVIS has a need for someone to help with weeding, and filing and for individuals that can help with meal preparation. Do you have an area of expertise that might benefit WVIS? We would love to have you volunteer with us. Contact Sr. Cheryl Clemons at exec.director@wvis.org

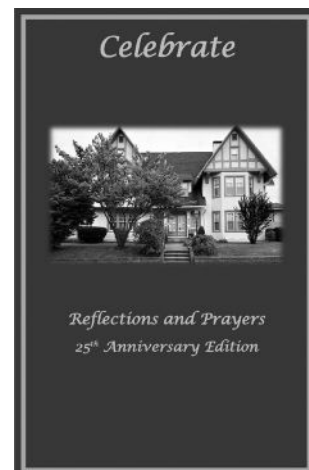
Celebration Booklet

The *Celebrate* booklet is now available from WVIS. This beautiful collection of reflections, including a reflection by Sr. Carole (appeared in the last edition), is the culmination of the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the West Virginia Institute for Spirituality (WVIS).

The themes explored in this booklet of prayers and reflections invite us to trace the arc of a day, mirroring the rhythm of our spiritual lives. Each moment reminds us that, just as dawn gives way to sunrise, our lives can flourish through intentional connection with the Divine and one another. The shifting hues of twilight and nightfall teach us to embrace the cycles of our journey, acknowledging God's ever-present guidance toward clarity and hope.

As you engage with this collection of reflections, may you find inspiration in the words that invite you to deepen your relationship with the Divine and foster community. Let these reflections and prayers empower you to face life's challenges with renewed hope and unwavering clarity. May this 25th Anniversary serve as a beacon of hope to remind us that every moment is an opportunity for spiritual awakening and service to others, a commitment that we at WVIS hold dear and strive to uphold.

To receive your copy, email wvislorena@aol.com or call 304.345.0926. The donation for the booklet is \$15 which includes shipping and can be made by check or through the website (www.wvis.org/donate). If you haven't already made a donation to Sr. Carole's Memorial, you can do that through the same link. All donations over \$50 will receive a copy of the Celebrate booklet in appreciation for your donation.



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