



# NETWORK CONNECTION

FOURTH QUARTER 2016

## IT'S TIME TO MEND THE GAPS

Covering New Ground  
in the Journey for  
Justice

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Looking Ahead to  
Post-Election Politics ... p. 14



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## SAVE THE DATE: ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY DAYS 2017

A National Gathering and Lobby Day in Washington, DC. that provides participants with tools to be effective Christian witnesses to justice, peace, and integrity of creation around carefully chosen issues of national and international importance. Join us April 21–24, 2017.

Learn more at: [www.advocacydays.org](http://www.advocacydays.org)

## ON THE COVER

FLOC (Farm Labor Organizing Committee) members and Nuns on the Bus gather together in Toledo, Ohio.

Photo Credit: Jennifer Wong/NETWORK Lobby

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Fourth Quarter—Vol. 44, No. 4, NETWORK Connection ISSN 0199-5723. Published quarterly by NETWORK, phone: 202-347-9797, fax: 202-347-9864, email: [connection@networklobby.org](mailto:connection@networklobby.org), [www.networklobby.org](http://www.networklobby.org). Annual dues: \$50/\$60 international.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NETWORK, 25 E Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20001.

# Accompaniment, Community, and Collaboration

## Seeing the Gospel Truth Embodied Along Our Journey

BY SISTER SIMONE CAMPBELL

**O**n vacation in Rome, Italy the first week of September, I was puzzled by the intensity of monuments and art depicting faith from other centuries. One of my favorite churches is St. Mary's in Trastevere next to Vatican City. The mosaic in the apse includes Jesus with his arm around Mary in an intimate gesture. I marveled at the centuries old symbols of faith and power. But I must confess that in general I found myself overwhelmed by the Roman mountain of majesty and ornate decoration. I began to wonder about the faith that created it and then about my own faith. My faith feels flimsy in the face of such majesty.

But that reflection led me to something deeper. For me, faith is not “written” in edifices or monuments. Rather it is etched in the daily actions of so many. It is the “social gospel” because the gospel can only be seen in relationships. I came to see that Nuns on the Bus is a faith-action quite as intimate as

Jesus with his arm around Mary; only it gets played out in time, trusting that the message is enduring without needing to create a monument.

Faith is alive in Jefferson City, Missouri at Central Missouri Community Action where Angie and her neighbors are working hard to make their neighborhood a good place to live. Angie lives in a housing project for the first time, but she is caring for all of the children and teens in the area as “her” children. Not one should be lost. This is faith alive in our time.

In St. Louis, Missouri, Ms. Bobbie and her neighbors are working to create their own micro lending organization and have created urban gardens that supply fresh vegetables to food deserts. Ms. Bobbie and her contingent of volunteers in Voices of Women are living their faith in action. They wrap their arms around each other and cultivate a powerful faith.

*(continued on page 5)*



# Notable Quotables

What justice-seekers have been saying this quarter

"Talking with RNC delegates about worries/hopes feels like much needed peacemaking in our mixed up world #peaceispossible"

@susanfrancois Tweet about "Lemonade Ministry" at the Republican National Convention

"Giving from those who have more to those who have less on a systematic level... is justice and it's necessary."

Claire Markham critiquing Speaker Paul Ryan's anti-poverty plan at TalkPoverty.org

"Time to commit to #mendthegap. Thank you for the education, inspiration, and enthusiasm #NunsOnTheBus in Hartford"

@PatriciaKelmar Tweet from a Nuns on the Bus event in Hartford, CT

"There is BIG difference between business & governance. Business works for profit, governance for the common good."

@sr\_simone Tweet while watching Donald Trump's acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention

"I spent my night with nuns talking about social justice and tax policy. Love my life. Love #NunsOnTheBus!"

@MariaECimini Tweet from a Nuns on the Bus event in Providence, RI

"We are being called like our forefathers and foremothers to be the moral defibrillators of our time."

Rev. William Barber II speaking at the Democratic National Convention

"Always fun to sign a bus. Especially when it's the Nuns on the Bus."

@gehringdc Tweet during a Nuns on the Bus stop in Philadelphia, PA

"People are hungry for hope and justice for communities that will stand together regardless of one's race, ethnicity, or culture."

Sister Janet Kinney, CSJ, a 2016 Nun on the Bus, remarks at Union Theological Seminary

"Reweaving fabric doesn't just stitch it back together, it makes it stronger."

Sister Simone Campbell writing about the 2016 Nuns on the Bus trip, published in TIME

"Spend as much time working on an issue as you do complaining about it, discussing it, and posting on Facebook"

Sister Eileen Reilly, SSND, calling for greater political engagement in Concord, NH

"This country was not founded on the static principle of we the white majority. It was founded on the evolving principle of We the People."

Rev. Katharine Rhodes Henderson, *The Content of Our Character*, published in *The Hill*

"We are buying the lie, I thought, that love is wimpy, and violence is the answer.' It is not."

Lisa Sharon Harper, *What I Learned About Love at the GOP Convention*, published in *Sojourners*

At Vincent Village in Fort Wayne, Indiana, four women spoke to us of their experiences of racism in the area. I was shocked to hear about their experience of being denied service because of their race. It was like a crucifixion that gets repeated. The way to new life is to stand up to this injustice every day in a way that can change both hearts and minds.

On the bus we had the privilege of seeing a mosaic of faith and values embodied in everyday service.

I saw budding of new life in Toledo, Ohio, at FLOC (Farm Labor Organizing Committee, AFL-CIO) where Latino youth are organizing to improve their communities. The teenage boys are engaging with the police to create new protocols that will help keep everyone safe. The girls negotiated with the local school board to have the schools address sexual harassment by working with faculty members to prevent it and provide direct help to those who experience it. This is new life bubbling up from the struggle.

The list goes on of human engagement that is our testament for faith in action. In Buffalo, New York churches, unions and secular organizations are working together to revive the city. In Rochester, New York, the Sisters of St. Joseph have created an entirely new “one stop” model of healthcare service for the uninsured and underinsured. In Hartford, Connecticut we talked of the racial divides and the anguish that creates in our nation. We visited Integrity House in Newark, New Jersey and met clients, board and staff who are working together to address the issues of drug and alcohol addiction and the stigma and struggle that goes with it.

On the bus we had the privilege of seeing a mosaic of faith and values embodied in everyday service. Everywhere we went we witnessed the living breathing Gospel in all of its beauty and struggle. As I reflect on the contrast between my Roman experience and my journey with Nuns on the Bus, I realized that Rome is like a museum and it is on the bus that I am truly nourished and my faith restored. It is as intimate as the relationship portrayed in the mosaic in St. Mary’s. I see the risen Christ with his arms around all of his beloved in the people we encountered. The AME Church in Buffalo, New York is correct when they proclaim on their t-shirts “The Church has left the building.” ☀️



# Reweaving

## the Fabric of Society

### *with Love, Laughter, and Lemonade*

In an election season it is easy for candidates to dominate the conversation proclaiming all of the reasons why voters should cast their ballots for them. A one-way conversation, however, cannot bring us closer to the nation we seek to build that has inclusive federal policies actively working to mend the gap in income and wealth and repair the gaps in access. Knowing this, NETWORK made an ambitious plan to go on the road and bring our message to the candidates with the 2016 Nuns on the Bus tour.

The route quickly came together. We had two set destinations: Cleveland for the Republican National Convention and Philadelphia for the Democratic National Convention. If party

delegates and candidates would not discuss real solutions to our “mend the gaps” issues, the Nuns on the Bus would come to town to start the conversation.

Along the way, the bus stopped in other cities and towns. We visited rural and urban communities, meeting families and individuals who are profoundly suffering because of the income and wealth gap and the gaps in access to democracy, healthcare, citizenship, and housing. Everywhere the Nuns on the Bus went though, there were people working together to improve access and to support one another. This is the story of the Nuns on the Bus 2016 trip calling on candidates to Mend the Gaps.



## Setting Off: Madison to Cleveland

On July 11, 2016 ten Catholic sisters from different states and different orders gathered in Madison, Wisconsin. Some were returning sisters from previous Nuns on the Bus trips and some were first-timers, but they all shared a commitment to Gospel justice.

The design on the bus this year featured a large map of the cities we would be visiting, but it was not an ordinary map. Each state was its own patch of fabric so that together the United States became one unified quilt. There were multiple meanings to this design. Like the pieces of a quilt, all of the different regions and states in the United States must be joined together to be a whole. Additionally, quilting and sewing are thought of as skills that women learn more often than men. As the Nuns on the Bus traveled the country inspired by the spirit of NETWORK's founding sisters, the idea that it was women who could heal our nation was strong. At every stop along the way, we invited those we interacted with to commit to mend the gaps and sign the bus to journey on with us in spirit.

The pre-launch blessing was incredibly meaningful as we joined with other advocates for justice, including Jini and Lynne who shared their sister Margaret Mary Kistler's story with all who were gathered. Margaret lost her life in 2012 due to lack of affordable healthcare and Jini shared Margaret's story with Sister Simone and the Nuns on the Bus during the first bus trip. It has stayed close to our hearts ever since then, motivating our work to mend the gaps.

Next, Nuns on the Bus drove to Janesville, Wisconsin (Speaker Paul Ryan's Congressional district) to lift the voices of women and men who are experiencing the gaps in access to healthcare, citizenship, and housing there. From there the bus entered Illinois, stopping in Bloomington and Springfield. In many of the cities Nuns on the Bus visited we held a "Caucus to Mend the Gaps" in the evening. The caucuses allowed different members of the community to come together and discuss the gaps that they were experiencing in their communities with the Nuns on the Bus and each other.

At the caucuses **Sister Larretta Rivera-Williams, RSM** discovered "People are hungry for justice! People are filled with questions of 'why' and 'what can we do?' People are searching for answers in a country of uncertainty. People want to be listened to without being threatened, judged, or silenced." **Sister Simone Campbell, SSS** said "Something encouraging happened as Nuns on the Bus wandered its way through the streets of America, gathering each evening with folks to hear how they might mend the gaps across the American divide: tax justice, living wages, family-friendly workplaces, and access to democracy, healthcare, citizenship, and housing. The light bulb went on as people began to see how the gap they face is integrated with the gap faced by someone else."





After stops in Missouri, the Nuns on the Bus rolled into a state that had just made national news. Indiana's Governor Mike Pence had recently been announced as Donald Trump's running mate and the media, as well as the Nuns on the Bus, had a lot to say about it. In a NETWORK statement, **Sister Simone Campbell, SSS** said: "While Governor Pence has said he is a Christian above all, his voting record in Congress and many of his actions as Governor belie this identity... We at NETWORK urge Governor Pence to get to know the struggles of our people and to recognize that Pope Francis is correct when he says that politicians need to build bridges, not walls."

## Cleveland: Witnessing the Republican National Convention

Everyone felt anticipation as the Nuns on the Bus approached Cleveland. Our first event there was a community action called "Circle the City with Love" that had been organized by local faith leaders, including Sister Rita Petruziello of the Congregation of Saint Joseph. **Sister Julie Ann Krahl, CSA** remembers "We met inside Cleveland at the Hope Memorial Bridge where a crowd of thousands of citizens met to line the bridge in order to circle the city with love. In prayerful silence, the participants demonstrated the power of prayer and the strengthening of community by joining hands and forming a continuous circular community. It was a powerful, visual expression of solidarity strength of the power of love in today's world."



The people we encountered in Indiana showed us very different values than their governor's policies. Following a site visit at Vincent Village, an organization addressing homelessness in Fort Wayne, **Sister Erin Zubal, OSU** said "This organization offers one of the most comprehensive approaches to addressing homelessness that I have seen... Rooted in a belief in God and under the direction of the board, Vincent Village seeks to affirm the dignity of life and all served."

One more stop remained before the bus would travel to Cleveland and be present at the Republican National Convention. In Toledo, Ohio we were surrounded by individuals and groups working dedicatedly for justice, through faith-based advocacy and union organizing. **Sister Margaret McGuirk, OP** said: "The most exciting part of our discussion was the witness of youth who are being trained as organizers [by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC)] and future leaders of the community. It was encouraging to see that the next generation of leaders is carrying the baton and learning from Baldemar Velasquez and other labor organizers who paved the way for them. These young people are learning early how to Mend the Gaps!"

The next morning the Nuns on the Bus went into downtown Cleveland for the first day of the Republican National Convention. There was no way to know what to expect outside the convention or how the Nuns on the Bus would be received. Here, and in Philadelphia, we would depart from the usual event structure and instead offer "Lemonade Ministry" to everyone the sisters encountered.





**Sister Bernadine Karge, OP:** “Two teams of Nuns on the Bus headed out into the warm muggy day with red radio flyer wagons decorated as buses and supplied with a jug of cold lemonade and cups. “Would you like some lemonade?” “How much is it?” “It’s free.” “FREE?” “Yes!” This was our entrée into our street ministry of interviewing folks coming and going

around the Convention sites. We asked three questions: Who in your family is difficult to speak with about politics and why? What worries you about this election? What gives you hope for our nation? Many folks politely responded, “No thank you” and continued on. Others stopped to enter into dialogue. Curiously, the most difficult question was the last one about hope.”

## The Journey Continues: Erie to Newark

Back on the road, Nuns on the Bus drove to Erie, Pennsylvania and upstate New York for stops at site visits, caucuses, and a rally outside the New York State Capitol. Two of the speakers at the rally were immigrants who spoke of the need to fix our broken immigration system and protect working conditions for all workers.

**Sister Eileen Reilly, SSND** listened to their stories and remembers: “Eloy, a Mexican farm worker who has been in the US for more than fifteen years works twelve hours a day, six days a week and still struggles to survive. Martha, also from Mexico, came to be with her husband, a farm worker in a similar situation. She was deeply concerned about his health because of the long hours he works, but coming to the US meant leaving their older daughter back in Mexico. She struggles daily with the gaps in our immigration laws which don’t allow her to go back to Mexico, or for her daughter to come to New York.”

The journey continued into the Northeast for a rally in front of the New Hampshire State House in Concord. There, Jazmine Langley, a college student, spoke about her experience with the gaps. “I have



**Sister Susan Rose Francois, CSJP:** “There was certainly a good amount of ideology and partisanship peppering the answers. We were there to listen, not to judge, and I found myself being stretched in a good way as I recorded responses which expressed frustration, fear, and in some cases echoed the hateful speech and generalizations which are expressed liberally on conservative talk shows.”

After several hours of speaking with convention attendees, reporters, and Cleveland residents, it was time to wrap up Lemonade Ministry. A Nuns on the Bus Prayer Breakfast took place the next morning before leaving Cleveland. The focus of the prayer was Ezekiel’s “dry bones” passage, interspersed with reflections from the sisters. **Sister Mary Ellen Lacy, DC** offered one: “As we travel throughout the country, we ask people to walk amongst their dwindling dry dreams of economic, social and moral equality so that we can explore ways to mend the economic gaps. We ask folks to continue to dialogue long after we leave. Their verbal hope will inspire others to forecast with courage. Someday, the emboldened talk in our family rooms will drift into board rooms and then on to Congressional committee rooms. God’s plan will be made manifest.”

heard so many times that everyone is given equal opportunity in this world. That everyone has the same chance of obtaining this American dream. Well this dream is unachievable for so many people who look just like me... I’ve witnessed the gaps woven into the fabric of our country that are very much racially and socioeconomically based. From drug addiction to poverty, from police brutality to mass imprisonment, from strict voter ID laws to felon disenfranchisement, it has all plagued the people I love so very much.”

“During the opening of our rally in Concord, New Hampshire, United Church of Christ Rev. Gary Schulte prayed for all of us in this ‘pivotal moment in time’” **Sister Jan Cebula, OSF** wrote in her blog. “Yes, we face some critical choices as we decide what kind of a people—a country—we want to be. It’s OUR choice and we all have decisions to make at this pivotal time. Are we going to choose: to remain isolated or recognize the strength of community? To be fearful or reach out with compassion and love?”



After a stop in Boston, the Nuns on the Bus drove into Rhode Island for a Mend the Gaps caucus in Providence. **Sister Richelle Friedman, PBVM** on the caucus: “The caucus first discussed areas problematic to Providence and Rhode Island. Among the issues they raised were a recent defunding of mental services, poverty in the schools as indicated by a 97% rate of kids eligible for free and reduced lunches, a legislature where too much power is concentrated in the hands of the Speaker of the House, and the list went on. The best part of the caucuses is when small groups are asked to talk about what it would look like if those problems with were addressed. After their visions for a better future are shared, a sense of hope fills the room.”

The following morning in West Hartford, Representative John Larson (CT-01) hosted a brunch. The meal brought the

Congressman, the Nuns on the Bus, and local sisters together to share stories of their lives and their ministry in Connecticut and across the country. From there the bus continued on to Scranton, Pennsylvania to an event organized by NETWORK board member Sister Donna Marie Korba, IHM.

## Philadelphia and the Democratic National Convention

The final stop for Nuns on the Bus 2016 was Philadelphia. The Democratic National Convention had just kicked off, and the Nuns on the Bus had three days full of events and activities. In the mornings was “Lemonade Ministry” on the sidewalk, asking each passerby to answer the same questions that were posed in Cleveland.

**Sister Janet Kinney, CSJ** said “With the temperature rising into the 90’s, many folks were happy to receive an ice-cold cup of lemonade from our little red wagon that we pulled through the streets of Philadelphia. Some just took the lemonade and kept walking; others stayed a few minutes of answer our three-questions... One young woman, when asked ‘Who in your family is it difficult to discuss politics with?’ answered ‘my grandfather,’ and began to cry. She told me that her grandfather had just ‘unfriended’ her on Facebook when he found out she supported Bernie Sanders! Dialogue is so sorely needed in this election cycle – even between grandfathers and granddaughters.”

Each afternoon the Nuns on the Bus held a Mend the Gaps workshop open to the public in the Pennsylvania Convention Center. The sisters shared stories from the bus, and Sister Sim-

one led the workshop participants in an activity to better understand our current gap in income and wealth. In the evenings everyone gathered to watch the convention speeches and proceedings and discuss their hopes for candidates who support federal policies that actually work to mend the gaps in our nation.

After a final closing rally in Philadelphia, it was time to bring this Nuns on the Bus trip to its close. As **Sister Rochelle Mitchell, SSS** wrote, “I believe this part of the journey, this bus ride was really only the beginning and hopefully all of us will return to our homes and places of ministry with a deeper appreciation of ‘We the People.’” The message of Nuns on the Bus – Mend the Gaps – will not be finished after Election Day. It will not happen quickly, but with faith, hope, and collaboration we can mend the gaps in our nation.



# Finding Common Ground in Washington

## *Serving the People We Represent Must Come First*

BY U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JOHN B. LARSON

**G**rowing up in the federal housing project of Mayberry Village, my parents—like so many others across the country—worked tirelessly to give us every chance for success. They also had the support of a government that rewarded those who worked hard and played by the rules. I am proud to say I am the product of public housing, public education, and public service, because I have seen firsthand the power of our government to bridge the gaps and help working families like mine live the American Dream.

That's why I am so proud every time I get to work with the Nuns on the Bus, for we share the strident belief in the importance of public services that put us all on equal footing.

Most recently, I had the chance to meet up with Sister Simone and the Nuns on the Bus in West Hartford. In addition to joining their Mend the Gap Caucus, I had the great privilege of hosting a brunch in their honor and introducing them to the Sisters of Notre Dame from my district—including my dear friend from Mayberry Village, Sister Peggy Evans.

Listening to the sisters talk, I was reminded about what makes our democracy so great. Here were remarkable women who recognized the alarming and growing income inequality in our nation, who witnessed the hardships and struggles too many families endure, and who had determined to make their voices heard and do something to enact real change.

Theirs are voices of compassion and civility during a time when—especially on the national level—we hear so



Rep. Larson and Sister Simone during a Nuns on the Bus event in Hartford, CT

much fervor, intolerance, and outright hate. It saddens me every time I hear a major party's presidential candidate call for building walls when—in the words of Pope Francis—we should be building bridges. Or for closing our doors on refugees who have already endured so much.

The Nuns on the Bus never speak of shutting people out or putting them down. Instead, they lift people up. Where others insult, they seek to understand and find common ground. They are a shining example of what we can accomplish when we work together.

It is a lesson Washington needs to remember. In these days of left versus right, Democrat versus Republican, it is easy to forget we are all Americans first. We have a responsibility to represent and help the people who sent us to Congress on their behalf. We have done it before.

We came together as recently as last year to right a grave injustice in the tax code for those who had been wrongfully

convicted of a crime. We came together to pass the first long-term highway bill in six years, providing more Americans with the dignity that comes from a job. But there is so much more we need to do. Families are struggling. The wealthiest nation in the world should watch out for them the way it watched out for my family in Mayberry Village.

Some in Washington would do well to remember that our love of our country—and of the men and women who make it so great—should trump any political differences between us. If they need a reminder, I know a few nuns who are only a bus ride away.

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*Rep. John B. Larson serves Connecticut's first district. He is the author of one of the first Family Medical Leave Acts in the nation, the former Chair of the Task Force on Election Reform, and is currently working to pass his plan to enhance Social Security and prevent Americans from retiring into poverty.*



# Site Visits Nourish and Inform the Work for Justice

**T**he Nuns on the Bus trip stopped often for site visits along its route. This tradition began during the first Nuns on the Bus trip to call attention to Representative Paul Ryan’s proposed federal budget cuts. The cuts would have harmed faith-based and secular organizations’ ability to serve families and individuals struggling with economic insecurity, homelessness, hunger, access to health care, or other issues.

On each trip since then, the Nuns on the Bus stop to visit, listen, and learn at these site visits and ask questions about how federal policy in Washington, D.C. can better meet their needs. The many organizations, agencies, and neighborhood groups that Nuns on the Bus have visited across the country motivate NETWORK’s advocacy and have an important place in our spirit-filled network.



Sister Marian Perpetua LaCroix, SSF in front of the bus with clients at Amos House.



Volunteers serve dinner at Amos House.

## Amos House in Providence, RI

Amos House was founded in 1976 by Sister Eileen Murphy, RSM to serve meals to those who were hungry in Providence. Since then, it has grown into a 14-building campus that works to address issues of hunger, homelessness, addictions, recidivism and poverty. Their services have grown over the years to meet the needs of Providence residents and continue to expand.

Amos House invited the Nuns on the Bus to share a meal with their com-

munity while in Providence. **Sister Alison McCrary, SFCC** said, “I shared jokes laughing nearly the entire time with the woman next to me who was in a recovery program of Amos House. As she departed to her room for the night, she repeatedly shared how good it was to just laugh and have fun.” After spending time and learning from Amos House, it was clear the issues that individuals and communities face are related, and a comprehensive, intersectional plan is needed for federal policies to mend the gaps.

## Living Gospel Justice on Election Day and Every Day

Election Day is quickly approaching, and besides being a day to fulfill your civic duty, it is also a day that can be spiritually nourishing.

Voting gives us the power to express our deep hope for a better and more just society. Hope orients our hearts to active participation in society, knowing that when we do our part it opens the way for God to do more. Voting gives each of us the chance to shape our government and political system.

Pope Francis reminds us to be an active participant and fulfill our civic duties. “Jesus teaches us another way: Go out. Go out and share your testimony, go out and interact with your brothers [and sisters], go out and share, go out and ask. Become the Word in body as well as spirit.”

Throughout the election season and afterward, engage with your community members and your family. Ask how their values inform their political beliefs and what their vision of hope for our nation is. Then, embody your faith by casting your vote, calling your Member of Congress, or going on a lobby visit. If you want to go one step further, invite someone to participate with you. As Pope Francis said, “A good Catholic meddles in politics.”

*Taken from NETWORK Lobby's Joy of the Gospel Election Reflection Guide*



Guests and staff at McAuley Ministries share their stories with the Nuns on the Bus.

### McAuley Ministries, Providence RI

McAuley Ministries was another site founded by the Sisters of Mercy and named after their founder. **Sister Eileen Reilly, SSND** recalls “[At McAuley Ministries] we were privileged to hear the stories of the women in transitional housing who expressed deep gratitude to the staff there for their support, love, patience and help in navigating the educational, housing and service systems.” While speaking with the guests and staff at McAuley Ministries the importance of mending the gap in access to housing was communicated not with theoretical examples or statistics, but with personal stories about finding hope and connection through the transitional housing provided there.

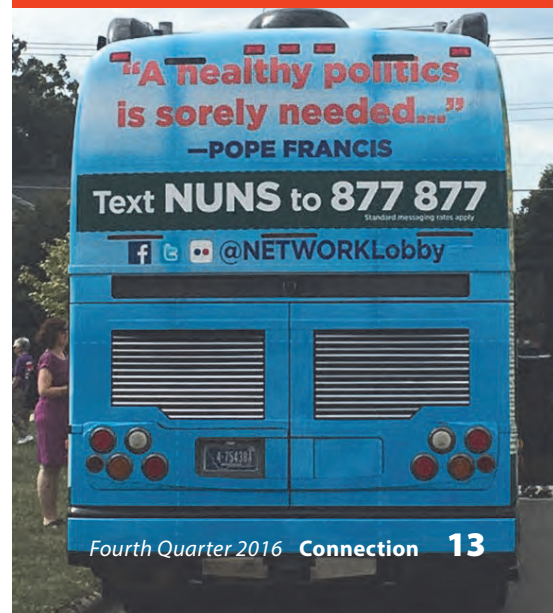
### St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center in Rochester, NY

St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center was established in 1993 as a ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph. It provides comprehensive healthcare, counseling, adult education and social work to individuals and families who lack access to health insurance. The center provides treatment for more than 2,000 walk-in clients a year with a small staff and a large number of medical professionals who volunteer their time and service. Sister Chris Wagner, SSJ described how the center provides customized care for each of its clients, and is also working to address broader issues of access to healthcare and structural racism.

“It was clear that the focus is the health and wholeness of both those who are served and those who work there. Over time, they have developed an integrated system: full primary care, specialties such as cardiology and oncology, mental health services, dental care, X-rays and labs, all under one roof. There are even rooms with chiropractic, massage and physical therapy services,” **Sister Jan Cebula, OSF** said. Sister Chris and the volunteers, staff, and board at St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center reaffirmed NETWORK's belief that healthcare is a human right and no one should be kept from care because of financial status.



Sister Chris Wagner, SSJ welcomes the Nuns on the Bus to St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center.



# Looking Ahead to Post-Election Politics

*Preparing for action as Members of Congress face last chance to provide for needs before the end of the term*



## Access to Democracy: Funding for the 2020 Census

As mandated by the U.S. Constitution, the federal government must count its population every decade. Right now, the Census Bureau is in the final planning stages to undertake the 2020 Census. The data collected determines the number of seats each state has in the House of Representatives and is also used to distribute billions of dollars of federal funds to local communities. It is important to make sure every resident living in the United States regardless of citizenship is counted. Congress will decide this funding in the 2017 federal budget. Without enough funding, the Census Bureau cannot accurately count everyone. Congress must provide adequate funds for the Census Bureau to do its job well.

## Access to Housing: Funding for Housing Vouchers

Many low- and extremely-low-income renters across the country struggle to secure stable housing due to the lack of affordable housing units. Insufficient housing forces many households to pay more than half their income for rent and utilities, limiting their choices on other essentials. This year's upcoming budget appropriations, however, are hopeful. The Senate passed an appropriations bill for Transportation/Housing and Urban Development with sufficient support for existing vouchers, and funding increases for both public housing and project-based rental housing. Congress must finalize the appropriations bills and advocates are working to maintain these funding increases.

## Tax Justice: Ensuring No One is Taxed into Poverty

No low wage worker should be taxed into poverty. Right now there are about 7.5 million adults between the ages of 21 to 66 who are pushed into poverty by federal payroll and income taxes. These low wage workers do not qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) which offsets other workers' taxes because the credit is largely given only to those who have children living in their home. There are bipartisan proposals to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit to these taxpayers, including almost identical proposals from President Obama and House Speaker Paul Ryan. Advocates expect Congress to pass an end-of-the-year package of tax credits comprised largely of tax benefits for corporations. NETWORK and allies are urging Congress to include an expansion of the EITC to childless workers in any tax package that might be passed.



NETWORK—a Catholic leader in the global movement for justice and peace—educates, organizes, and lobbies for economic and social transformation.

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  - Ann Scholz, SSND
  - Judith Sharpe
  - Jerry Zurek

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# HONORING OUR FOUNDING

## Building a Future of Hope



On December 17, 1971, 47 Catholic sisters gathered in Washington, D.C. to form a “network” of sisters to lobby for federal policies and legislation that promote economic and social justice. To get their organization off the ground, they passed a bag and collected \$187. In April 1972, they opened a small office in Washington with a staff of two.

Forty-five years later, NETWORK continues to answer the Gospel call to act for economic and social justice. We remain a leader on social justice policy by promoting federal policies that are consistent with Catholic Social Justice and defending against attacks on such policies. We passionately educate voters on key issues and mobilize grassroots activism in communities across the nation. Our Nuns on the Bus tours support the efforts of communities most impacted by racism and economic inequality and share their stories with the public and policymakers. Through Just Advocacy Week and our work with college students, new generations of social justice leaders become inspired and equipped to seek justice in their communities.

We are so grateful that you have shared in our success and hope you’ll join us as we look forward to the future. **The first 180 days of the new Congress and Administration will be crucial for setting the stage of our legislative and organizing work for the next four years.**

Help us answer the call to Gospel justice by giving a special gift this holy season—or honor the season by introducing another person to our work for justice with a gift membership. Your recipient will receive an introductory package as well as a full year of membership benefits (including four quarterly issues of *Connection*). And with your gift, you’re building the movement for social justice and connecting your loved one to a larger community that, together, is fostering change in our nation.

You can do this online at [www.networklobby.org/member](http://www.networklobby.org/member) or by using the envelope inside this issue.



***“Dancers on Blue” by Sister  
Eloise Hirlemann, RSM***

“This work is about empowering women who are dancing together in unity,” said Sister Eloise. “I had in mind the quote from [Sisters of Mercy founder] Catherine McAuley: ‘Our hearts can always be in the same place, centered in God, for whom alone we go forward or stay back.’ The idea of being together through the good and the bad in life is powerful.”

Sister Eloise’s work was recently one of eight posters chosen by the Michigan Women’s Caucus for Art as part of their “Women, Yes!” campaign. The posters were featured inside city buses on the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority system, adding another meaning to the phrase Nuns on the Bus.