



*Visitation School*

# VISION

*annual report 2020-21*



# *monastery building update*

## **Canonical Structure**

More than eight years ago, Sisters Mary Denise Villaume '56, Mary Paula McCarthy '47 and Brigid Marie Keefe '60 invited a group of trusted friends and advisors to develop a thoughtful plan for the lifelong care of the Sisters and the continuation of Visitation as an independent, Catholic school in the Salesian tradition. This group was established as the HOPE Committee (Help Our Plans Evolve). The lay advisors include Brian Wenger, Anna Marie Ettel '63, Bill Brady and Bob Gilsdorf. Sister Mary Frances Reis '55, Administrative Superior of the Monastery, also serves on this committee, and together they ensure this thoughtful and intentional transition of Sponsorship for the School.

Since their founding, each Visitation Monastery has been the canonical sponsor of its individual school. Establishing an ACF (Association of Christian Faithful) structure for Visitation School ensures that the Sisters' spirit of Living Jesus, received from our founders, St. Francis de Sales and St. Jane de Chantal, remains the foundation of our school. The ACF assumes responsibility for the mission and identity of the School, ensuring that the ministry carries out

Christ's mission and maintains continuity with the Salesian charism and spirit of the Visitation Sisters. Our HOPE committee will evolve to become the ACF. Because the Catholic Church does have many rules and regulations surrounding sponsorship for a school, the Canonical term ACF refers to a dynamic, Canonical body of people and will be comprised of four sisters and three lay persons whose role is make sure that Vis remains Catholic and a place where our life of Salesian gentleness continues to blend with academic excellence to make the school unique.

The Sisters continue to serve on the Board of Trustees. And more recently, they invited representatives from the Hope Committee to also serve on the Board of Trustees to ensure continuity of Sisters' legacy.

## **Current Building Use**

In their absence and through the Sisters' generosity, the Monastery building is being utilized to support the fullness and vibrancy of a Visitation education especially during these school years deeply affected by the pandemic. "We feel the Sisters' prayerful presence every day as we move through the campus and its



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In order to provide an in-person, excellent academic experience that is deeply Visitation, developing heart-to-heart relationships, students, faculty and staff regularly use many portions of the building. Daily Mass is offered in the Chapel. The Salesian Center has expanded into larger Monastery spaces including the Sisters’ Parlor. The Alumnae and Community Engagement Office moved into one wing, which allowed for expanded spaces for the Counseling and Student Support Offices in the School side. The Health Office moved down the hall into the Monastery occupying the former Infirmary. This expansion was in direct response to the pandemic, providing ample space to safely assess student health needs.

The Archive of the Visitation of Holy Mary (VHM) in Mendota Heights continues to be established in the Monastery building to preserve the Sisters’ history. Read more on page 6. Also, spaces that were very special to the Sisters, such as the library and the room where St. Teresa of Calcutta stayed, have remained preserved. Much-needed large meeting spaces are available for faculty, staff and parent events. Faculty have access to quiet spaces and offices. The Sisters’ Dining Room is used for daily lunch and by the Extended Day Program after school. The School continues to enjoy the expansive, beautiful grounds for outdoor classes, athletics and even a VISTA Theater Production last spring.

Visitation Sisters and School are delighted to welcome Archbishop Bernard Hebda into the building to use a small portion of the Monastery building not needed at this time by the School. He will be leasing this space from the Sisters for his personal, private residence.

Sister Mary Paula reflects on the holy friendship between the Sisters and the Archbishop. “We have been assisted as a community by Archbishop Hebda in all of our transition efforts. When there were only three Sisters left in our community, we were no longer eligible to continue living as a monastic community. The Archbishop sheltered us with warmth and tenderness to support our efforts to take our next steps,” she said. “So, when the opportunity to invite the Archbishop to lease a portion of the Monastery space arose, we concur that this is a way we can honor someone who has been very good to us.”