June 25, 2020

JOURNEY OF ONENESS UPDATE: Association

Association moves closer to its Institute reality
As the Church celebrated the feast of the Holy Trinity earlier this month, Mercy Association celebrated a “trinity” of its own—the appointment of three members to the first-ever Institute association staff. This development, as well as progress on the proposed Institute Association Guidebook, not only fulfills Association Development Team recommendations, but also propels association forward as an Institute reality.

Office of Association personnel
The ILT has appointed Tylia Barnes executive director of the Office of Association, effective July 1, 2020, which will also mark the formal establishment of that office. Responsible for furthering the mission and vision of association and coordinating Institute-wide activities and practices, Tylia will lead the transition of association from a Community-based to an Institute-based function. Tylia currently chairs the Mercy Association Leadership Council (MALC) and is the implementation team coordinator for association. Tylia currently chairs the Mercy Association Leadership Council (MALC) and is the implementation team coordinator for association. A staff member since 2011 and an associate since 2012, Tylia also serves as the director of association for the South Central and West Midwest regions, Jamaica and Guam. Additionally, she is a member of the coordinating committee for the Institute Office of Anti-Racism and Racial Equity and was one of 10 recipients of a 2019–2020 Mercy International Association Emerging Leaders Fellowship that promotes culture, spirituality and female leadership. Tylia previously served on the Association Development Team and chaired the Association Design Team.

Joining Tylia as Office of Association staff members, also effective July 1, will be Kathy Schiro and Wendy Burgess, both already familiar with Mercy Association. All three appointees will continue to work from their current locations—Tylia and Wendy in Belmont, North Carolina, and Kathy in Watchung, New Jersey.

As association manager, Kathy will facilitate work in recruitment, leadership development, assistance to local and regional associate coordinators, and common practices (application, orientation, covenants, etc.). An associate since 1995, Kathy has moved through association’s many transitions, serving as a member and, for four terms, as chair of the leadership groups that
preceded what we now call MALC. She has also served as a volunteer leader for association in New Jersey, beginning in 1998, and, since 2008, as a staff member and director of association for the Mid-Atlantic Community. More recently, she was a member of the task force that drew up the sustainability plan, organizational chart and MALC guidelines for association.

As association coordinator, Wendy will provide clerical support, manage record-keeping and data updates, handle requests for association materials, coordinate mailings, and generally help the office run smoothly. Already adept at these functions, Wendy has worked with Tylia since June 2019, widening her responsibilities—originally focused on South Central—to include the West Midwest and the Association Implementation Team in tandem with Tylia’s expanding role. Currently a pre-associate, Wendy hopes to make her covenant this year.

**Institute Association Guidebook**
Over the past year, the MALC Steering Committee has been consulting with association leaders and Leadership Team liaisons on the proposed *Institute Association Guidebook*. Consultations led to revisions and further consultations, most recently with current associates, all of whom were invited to review and comment on sections of the text via surveys or focus groups. Although every section of the guidebook was scheduled for review by two different groups, Tylia reports that the overall response was limited. About 150 comments were received, most of them seeking greater clarity of content or language.

What’s next? The ILT will receive the *Institute Association Guidebook* sometime this summer and, once approved, it will become available to associates and sisters digitally. It will be a living document, since plans are to review and update it every six months.