

Expanded History – National Association of Catholic Nurses, U.S.A.
1909-2018

1909 – Guild of St. Radegone for Nurses (for students & graduates of recognized schools of nursing) in Boston.

1924 – International Catholic Guild of Nurses (ICGN) founded in June 1924, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Spiritual Director, Fr. Edward J. Garesche, S.J.

1933 – 1st International Committee of Catholic Nurses (now CICIAMS), met in Lourdes, France.

1933 – In the United States, a new constitution & bylaws of a “national character” were adopted by ICGN & name changed to “National Federation of Catholic Nurses.” Headquarters moved to Chicago pre-1940.

1935 – 2nd International Congress of Catholic Nurses held in Rome as the beginning of a new united effort of Catholic nurses to organize themselves better in order to carry out, spiritually and scientifically, their apostolic work on behalf of the sick. **“After describing the important work of the Nurse, her lofty vocation and the preparation so necessary for the successful execution of her mission to the sick, His Holiness Pope Pius XI told the assembly that it was the duty of every Catholic nurse to belong to Catholic associations of nurses and to promote them in every way possible.”** (excerpt from G. Cardinal Pizzardo’s letter to bishops).

1937 – 3rd International Congress of Catholic Nurses held in London – on page 25 of the report — the great desire of His Holiness [Pope Pius XI] was expressed: “that ways and means be found to emphasize the necessity of bringing all Catholic nurses within the influence of Catholic Associations of Nurses.”

1938 – G. Cardinal Pizzardo shared the report from the 3rd Congress and wrote each bishop expressing His Holiness Pope Pius XI’s desire **“that ways and means be found to emphasize the necessity of bringing all Catholic nurses within the influence of Catholic Associations of Nurses”** and requested that **“In accordance with this wish of the Holy Father, it is most desirable, Your Excellency, that the Catholic nurses of the United States be gathered into one national association under the direction of the respective Ordinaries of the Hierarchy.”** With Reverend Father Garesche, S.J., who had given his time and energy to effect such an organization, realizing the good that would ensue if this most important work was carried out under the guidance of the Hierarchy but signifying his intention to retire from the movement, **“in keeping with the wish manifested in the words of His Holiness, that the Archbishops and Bishops should organize local associations of Catholic nurses according to the needs of their respective diocese, which in due time, under the guidance of the Hierarchy, might be united to create a National Federation of Catholic Nurses.”** This initiated what became the NCCN-USA and later the NACN-USA.

“...The exercise of the profession of nurse is surely one of those which offer the greatest possibility for the apostolate, but we must not forget that the nurse, in the exercise of her profession, has to employ all sorts of technical means, and lives in a materialistic atmosphere, exposed to the danger of a limited interior piety only, dissociated from the profession and exterior practices enjoined by the Church. Furthermore, modern theories seek to penetrate the minds of Catholic nurses and to make them become unconsciously strong agents for the propagation of eugenics and neo-malthusianism. It is necessary, then, to protect them by means of Catholic Action, which has for one of its duties to sustain and fortify them in their professional and Christian formation.”

(Reference p25 Conference Report – Excerpt from Pope Pius XI address).

Pre-1940 – There were known to be at least 42 local councils in 16 states. Following communications directly from Pope Pius XI, a meeting was held in Chicago in 1940 which led to the end of NFCN & the start of the new National Council of Catholic Nurses – USA (NCCN).

- Three separate groups existed in the city of Chicago. On July 26, 1954 Cardinal Stritch launched a new CCNAC group proclaiming, “I place the Catholic nurses at the foot of our Blessed Lady.” Marie Costello, was the 1st President of this combined Chicago council – CCNAC (Council of Catholic Nurses Archdiocese of Chicago). The CCNAC celebrated its 60th anniversary on July 26, 2014.
- On May 20, 1946 under the auspices of Bishop Edmond F. Gibbons, the Albany Diocese Council of Catholic Nurses consisting of over 260 members from 3 area deaneries: Albany (133), Troy (135) and Amsterdam. Reverend James Prichard was appointed the first Spiritual Director. Mary Femia, CARN, graduate of St. Petr’s Hospital School of Nursing served as President of the Council for 33 of the past 70 years of the council. In 1970 the council was renamed Albany Council of Catholic Nurses (ACCN). The ACCN celebrated its 70th anniversary on January 24, 2016.

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1960-1964-Marie Costello, 1st President, NCCN-USA (National Council of Catholic Nurses). Marie was a professor of Nursing at DePaul University, Lake Forrest, Illinois. Chicago hosted the NCCN-USA convention April 30-May 2, 1964. Fr. John Trese was the Spiritual Director for NCCN.

1964-1969 – Mary Delehanty, 2nd President, NCCN-USA

1969 – February 1970 – Mary Anita McHugh, 3rd President, NCCN, USA

- Those Diocesan Councils that were doing well were encouraged to continue their good work.
- February 1970 – Business ceased.
- December 1969 – Membership given the sad news that it was voted to disband NCCN, USA
- October 1969 – Membership in the Council grew to an all-time high in the early year from its 58 charter members to 22,000 but dropped to 8,500 by October 1969 — it also went from 112 Diocesan Councils to 80.
- Decreasing membership was thought to be caused by a dues increase, differences in perspectives during these societal times, and a lack of leadership in many of the councils leading to disarray.

1970 – 1993 – Local Councils continued to flourish in Albany, New York; Chicago, Illinois; Memphis, Tennessee and other locations in the United States.

1993-1996 – Eula Sforza, 1st President, NACN-USA [Board: Eula Sforza (IL), Marylee Meehan, VP (MA), Mary Pellizzari, Secretary-Treasurer]. NACN-USA reorganized under the auspices of the Joliet Diocese in Illinois with Bishop Joseph L. Imesch as 1st Spiritual Advisor. During Eula's tenure:

- 1994 – Twenty (20) nurses attend the XV International Committee of Catholic Nurses & Medico-Social Assistants (CICIAMS) World Congress in Belgium & NACN-USA becomes full voting member of CICIAMS rendering all members of NACN-USA also members of CICIAMS through the Association.
- 1995 – NACN-USA held its 1st conference in Tucson, Arizona.
- Additional regional & national conferences were held for networking, education in Catholic medical ethics & spiritual growth.
- Members also received email, website and newsletter.

1996-1998 – Marylee Meehan, 2nd President NACN-USA (Also president of CICIAMS North American Region in 1996)

- 2011 – present. Marylee Meehan was appointed by Pope Benedict XVI to represent CICIAMS on the Pontifical Council of Health Care Workers (Pastoral Care).
- 2008-2010 – Served as CICIAMS President following her service as President of the North American Region
- 10/30/96 NACN-USA was approved for inclusion in the Official Catholic Directory & USCC group tax exemption ruling provided for 501(c) status.
- 6/9/98 NACN-USA official Articles of Incorporation were issued by the State of Illinois .

1998- 2000 – Marlene Rasmussen, 3rd NACN-USA President (Also became president of CICIAMS North American Region in 1998)

2000-2002 – Diana Newman, EdD, RN, 4th NACN-USA President

- Held a joint NACN-USA and CHA (Catholic Health Association) Conference in Atlanta, June 2001
- Revised bylaws to include the Education Committee
- Increased revenues by permitting ads from Catholic Colleges of Nursing (CONs) and other Catholic venues to purchase ads in our newsletter which was only hard copy at the time.
- Held a conference at Neumann College.
- Initiated the Delaware Council of Catholic Nurses.
- MidSouth Area Association of Catholic Nurses (MSAACN) formed by Alma Abuelouf, BSN, RN, in the Diocese of Memphis and surrounding areas.
- Sister Victoria Indyk held a conference at Madonna University in Livonia, Michigan, May 2002.

2001 – MidSouth Area Association of Catholic Nurses (MSAACN) – In February 2001, Alma Abuelouf, Director of Community Health Ministry, invited Mary Ann Capocaccia, Janet Hart and Mary Beth Trouy to explore the possibility of forming a local council of National Association of Catholic Nurses, a nation-wide organization which unites all Catholic nurses as well as associated health care professionals. Having been enriched by their involvement many years ago in the Nurses' Association at St. Joseph Hospital, the group agreed to invite all Catholic nurses in the Diocese of Memphis to an informational meeting to determine the level of interest in such an organization. In the fall of 2001,

approximately forty nurses attended the meeting. Subsequently, a task force was formed to establish the name of the organization, mission, goals, by-laws, membership and activities.

The Mid-South Area Association of Catholic Nurses (MSAACN) was established in April 2002. The mission of the MSAACN is to give nurses of different backgrounds, but with shared Roman Catholic values, the opportunity to promote moral principles among nurses within the context of the Catholic Church, and to stimulate desire for further development by offering opportunities for spiritual growth, nourishment through education/formation programs, patient advocacy and integration of faith and health.

The by-laws, the logo which was designed by three members, and the official MSAACN prayer were all accepted by the members during the first MSAACN meeting held at the Catholic Center in June 2002. The group also voted on St. Camillus as the Patron Saint for the MSAACN. Officers were also elected. In order to plan the activities, a survey was sent to all members to determine the needs and areas of interest.

Mid-South Area Association of Catholic Nurses in the Diocese of Memphis is a program under the auspices of the Office of Community Health Ministry within the Diocesan Department of Pastoral Life Ministries.

2002-2004 -Sookie Domingues Escadon, 5th NACN-USA President

2004 -2006 – Thomas Connelly, 6th NACN-USA President

2005-2008 – Amy Hickman, 7th NACN-USA President

2008-2010 – Kathy Kirkpatrick, RN, 8th NACN-USA President

- In October 2008, NACN-USA had 84 members. In September 2010 NACN-USA had 264 members.
- Hosted NACN-USA Conference May 5-7 in Worcester, MA in conjunction with the Healthcare workers for Divine Mercy.
- Councils existed in FL, TN, MI, IL & MA. Councils in formation in NJ, CO and San Francisco, CA.
- Board met monthly to conduct business, 8 page newsletter was printed & mailed to all member 4 times/yr.
- NACN-USA continued to award \$1000 scholarship each year for nursing education.
- With 10 members attended the CICIAMS 18th World Congress, March 9-11, 2009 in Monterrey, N.L., Mexico “Professional Nursing: Global Perspectives Towards Excellence. Chair for Wednesday’s theme: “The Impact of Cultural Diversity.”
- Bishop J. Peter Sartain was the Spiritual Advisor. In Sep 2010 the Most Reverend Joseph Siegal, Auxillary Bishop of Joliet became the Spiritual Advisor when Bishop Sartain was transferred to Seattle.

2010–2012 – Cheryl Hettman, PhD, RN – Cheryl, 9th NACN-USA President, during her tenure

- Began collaborative efforts with the National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC) through the Director of Public Policy, Dr. Marie Hilliard, PhD, JCL, RN and various Catholic organizations across to United States to oppose infringements on religious liberty.
- Members received quarterly newsletters.
- Member and Past President of NACN-USA and CICIAMS, Marylee Meehan was appointed by Pope Benedict XVI to serve on the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers (Pastoral Care) in 2011.

2012-2014 – Alma Abuelouf, BSN, RN – Alma, 10th NACN-USA President, during her tenure:

- Represented NACN-USA at the CICIAMS Conference held in Dublin, Ireland and presented on “Families as Carers for the Elderly in Pan America”
- Hosted annual conferences in collaboration with Aquinas College in Nashville, Tennessee both in

2013 “Nurses on the Front Lines: Christ’s Ministry in Action” and 2014-“The Art of Nursing-Beyond Technology.”

- Two members, Dr. Marie Hilliard, PhD, JCL, RN and Brother Ignatius Perkins, PhD, RN served on the ANA Code of Ethics drafting committee. Unfortunately ANA did not incorporate several recommendations into the final version of the code.
- She secured the assistance of an excellent web design/automation consultant who continues (2016) to serve the association.
- Upgraded the automation and social networking of the association establishing a new webpage along with online membership, conference registration, group emailing and a Facebook page.
- As she completed her tenure as the Immediate Past President, she was asked by CICIAMS to serve as the Chairperson of CICIAMS Professional Committee.
- Member Marylee Meehan continued to serve on the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers (Pastoral Care) appointed by Pope Benedict XVI in 2011.
- Continued collaborative efforts with various Catholic organizations across to United States to oppose infringements on religious liberty and violations of basic bioethical issues by signing onto AMICUS briefs.

2014-2016 –Diana Newman, EdD, RN – Diana, during this 2nd term as President, 4th & 11th NACN-USA President

- In collaboration with Loyola University School of Nursing hosted a conference on Family Nursing in Chicago in 2016 which was also attended by 7 nurses from Nigeria.
- 4 members of NACN-USA were selected to represent CICIAMS at the United Nations and testified before the Population and Development Committee
- United Nations Testimony on behalf of CICIAMS (International Nursing)
 - 1) 2015 – Dr. Patricia Sayers, DNP, RN testified on the Ethical and Moral Consequences of the present program to limit births around the globe.
 - 2) 2016– Maria Arvonio, BSN, MA (HCE), RN testified on the Collection and Distribution of Demographic and Biometric Data by the United Nations.
- Established a new treasurer in New York moving the mailing address there while keeping the business address in the Diocese of Joliet
- Added a blog to the website
- Member Marylee Meehan continued to serve on the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers (Pastoral Care) appointed by Pope Benedict XVI in 2011.
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- Partnered with six (6) organizations to provide testimony to the International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISCCR) on their draft 2016 Guidelines for Stem Cell Science and Clinical Translation – two critical provisions advocated for by the Consortium were adopted.
- Bylaws revision expanding the regions to 7 (North Central added).. 8 NACN regions will be established in 2017. Dues increase approved to increase financial and personnel resources.

2016-2017 – Jane Cardea, PhD, RN (July 1, 2016 – resigned February 24, 2017), 12th NACN-USA President

- Revised BOD Meeting Minute Outline to include “Special Intentions” before Prayer
- Washington DC, Puerto Rico and British Virgin Islands recognized as new regional areas of recognition for NACN-USA.
- Approved set-up funds for 2017 Summit/Conference in Cape Cod
- Several Board and other NACN-USA members attended conference on Catholic Health Care Ethics at the National Catholic Bioethics Center

- Initiated plan to re-distribute NACN-USA pin to members
- Three (3) Board of Director members elected to the Executive Board of CICIAMS
- Dr. Marie Hilliard to head the International Bioethics Committee
- Dr. Marian Nowak elected President of CICIAMS Pan American Region
- Dr. Patricia Sayers elected as United National representative for CICIAMS American Nurses' Association. Provided comments to ANA position statement
 - 1) Artificial Nutrition and Hydration – Nov 2016 – prepared by Maria Kneusel, MSHCE, MSN, RN

2017 – Diocese of Charleston Local Council of Catholic Nurses. Permission granted by the Most Reverend Robert E. Guglielmone, Bishop of Charleston for the formation of a council on February 13, 2017. Founders Kathy Schmutge, Kristie Killough, and Hannah Helm.

2017 – North Alabama Council of Catholic Nurses. Diana Ruzicka, RN, MSN, MA, MA, CNS-BC, President, NACN-USA received permission from His Eminence Robert J. Baker, Bishop of the Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama to form a council on September 11, 2017.

2017-2018 – Diana L. Ruzicka, RN, MSN, MA, MA, CNS-BC, Colonel, U.S. Army Retired, 13th NACN-USA President – (Term February 24, 2017-June 30, 2018). Served during the 100th Anniversary of the Blessed Virgin Mary's appearance to the three shepherd children at Fatima, Portugal.

- Military Council of Catholic Women (MCCW), International. With Pacific Regional Director Ellen Gianoli, represented NACN-USA & provided a display table at the Military Council of Catholic Women, Worldwide Forum in San Diego, April 19-22, 2018*
- 45th Annual Pro-Life March. With Dr. Patricia Sayers, DNP, RN, CICIAMS, United Nations Representative and NE Regional Director Maria Arvonio, BSN, MA (HCE), RN Represented NACN-USA at the 45th Pro-Life March in Washington, D.C., January 19, 2018
- USCCB Pro-Life Mass. With NE Regional Director Maria Arvonio, BSN, MA (HCE), RN, Represented NACN-USA at USCCB Pro-Life Mass, Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land, January 18, 2018 officiated by Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, President, USCCB.*
- The Summit, Cape Cod. Served as President at The Summit held in Cape Cod, MA, October 6-8, 2017 addressing key national issues: Drug Use Pre-Birth to Death, Veteran and Military Suicide Prevention and Healing and Fitness Issues and Solutions (Addressing Reiki, Healing Touch, Therapeutic Touch, Yoga).*
- Catholic Medical Association Meeting. Presented on Redemptive Suffering: *If I am so Blessed, Why am I Suffering; How to Help Yourself and Your Patients*, September 7-9, 2017 in Denver, Colorado*
- National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC) Bioethics Certification Program. Attended initial seminar at the University of Mary, August 11-13, 2017 and enrolled in year program.*
- USCCB Convocation of Catholic Leaders Health Care Panel presenter. *Catholic Health Care: Ministering to the Spiritual and Physical Needs of All People*. Spoke on conscience protection, contraception and euthanasia. July 1-4, 2017 (USCCB Grant Funded)* *At no cost to NACN-USA Membership
- Provided input the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
 - 1) Joint letter to Secretary Price in opposition to requiring POLST orders on all patients.
 - 2) HHS Draft Strategic Plan FY2018-2022 – Dr. Carolyn Laabs, PhD, MA, FNP-BC, RN, Chair, Ethics & Spirituality Committee
 - 3) Interim Final Rules on Religious Accommodations under the Affordable Care Act – Dr. Carolyn Laabs
 - 4) Interim Final Rules on Moral Accommodations under the Affordable Care Act-Dr. Carolyn Laabs

5) Joint Letter on Removing Barriers to Participate in HHS Programs-USCCB Counsel
Positive Outcome: January 2018, HHS established a Conscience and Religious Freedom Division and a mechanism by which individuals can file complaints.

- Joint Letter to Congress urging passage of the Conscience Protection Act of 2017.
- California Board of Registered Nursing (CA BRN) – Requested administrative review of CA BRN rescinding the award of CEU to Heartbeat International for their course on Abortion Pill Reversal in Oct2017.
Positive Outcome: In Dec2017 CA BRN reversed their decision and awarded CEUs again. Ellen Gianoli, BSN, PHN, RN, Pacific Regional Director identified the issue and arranged a meeting with the CA Conference of Catholic Bishops Counsel. Dr. Carolyn Laabs drafted the letter.
- American Nurses' Association. Provided comments to ANA position statements:
 - 1) Artificial Nutrition and Hydration – Nov 2016
 - 2) Ethical Responsibility to Manage Pain and Suffering
 - 3) A Call to Action: Cultivating Moral Resilience and A Culture of Ethical Practice.
- American Medical Association
 - 1) Urged AMA not to change their policy of opposition to physicians assisted suicide (PAS) in letter dated Feb2017 (drafted by Dr. Marie Hilliard) and another in Aug2017 (drafted by Dr. Carolyn Laabs).
 - 2) Denounced the World Medical Association's proposed change forcing physicians to refer for abortion and perform when services not available in collaboration with AAPLOG, ACP, CMA, CMDA, and NCBC.
- AMICUS Briefs (Friend of the Court)
 - 1) Masterpiece Cakeshop, LTD and Jack C. Phillips vs Colorado Civil Rights Commission heard by the Supreme Court 5Dec2017. NACN-USA Chair, Ethics and Spirituality Committee attended dinner hosted by Mr. Phillips following the oral arguments. Decision pending.
 - 2) Case to end surrogacy contracts which treat the child as a commodity similar to human trafficking – Aug2017. Signed on to the Medical Brief. SCOTUS declined to hear this case.
- UN Human Rights Commission. Urged UN HRC not to exclude the unborn from a right to life and thus impose a worldwide right to abortion by signing the C-FAM petition.
CICIAMS (International Committee of Catholic Nurses and Medico
- United Nations Testimony on behalf of CICIAMS (International Nursing) – Changing population age structures and sustainable development. Dr. Mimi Nowak, DNP, MPH, RN, CSN, FCN, FAAN testified in 2017 on how the suppression of births over the last 50 years has resulted in cascading births and dangerous problems for millions of people.
- CICIAMS (International Committee of Catholic Nurses and Medico-Socio-Assistants). Eight (8) members served in International positions:
 - 1) Dr. Mimi Nowak, Pan American President,
 - 2) United National CICIAMS Representatives:
 - a) Dr. Patricia Sayers, DNP, RN
 - b) Dr. Mimi Nowak, DNP, MPH, RN, CSN, FCN, FAAN
 - c) Maria Arvonio, RN, BSN, MA
 - d) Patricia Staley, RN, CICIAMS
 - 3) United Nations Youth Representatives
 - a) Courtney Donahue, MS, RN, FNP-BC, PCCN
 - b) Sarah Donahue, BSN, RN, CICIAMS
 - 3) Dr. Marie Hilliard, PhD, MS, MA, JCL, RN, Chair, Ethics Committee;
 - 4) Dr. Shannon Simonovich, PhD, RN, Member Committee on the Family
- Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (IHD), The Vatican

- 1) Initial Meeting. Three (3) members attended the 1st meeting of the newly created Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development under which the Pontifical Council of the Pastoral Care of Healthcare Workers was integrated with three other Pontifical Councils: Marylee Meehan, MA, RN; Dr. Patricia Sayers, DNP, RN; Maria Arvonio, MA, HCE, RN.
- 2) 2nd Meeting – Access to Care Worldwide. Three (3) members attended: Dr. Patricia Sayers, Maria Arvonio and Ellen Gianoli, BSN, PHN, RN.

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