



Hospital Sisters of St. Francis

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Hospital Sisters of St. Francis redefine sponsorship of its healthcare ministry

(Springfield, IL) –The Hospital Sisters of St. Francis have received Vatican approval for the formation of a new entity, Hospital Sisters Ministries, to assume sponsorship of Hospital Sisters Health System (HSHS) and its related organizations. Established under Church law as a public juridic person (PJP), Hospital Sisters Ministries will be governed by a Ministry Board directly accountable to the Church. This structure was approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Vatican City, on July 2, 2015. This action follows a growing movement in Catholic healthcare that has seen religious sponsors of large, Catholic Systems take proactive steps to extend leadership beyond the religious Sisters.

“After many years of deliberation and evaluation regarding the structure that will ensure the continuation of our Catholic healthcare ministry, we are pleased to have been approved for a model that builds on our legacy while looking forward to the future,” said Sister Maureen O’Connor, OSF, Provincial Superior of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis. “This is a next step in a legacy of careful planning by the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis. With the founding of HSHS in 1978, programs of Mission Integration and Franciscan Formation for those who serve with us, and mindful of our Community’s decreasing number of Sisters, we have taken steps over the past 30 years in preparing others to work with us and ultimately fulfill the responsibility of carrying forward our healthcare ministry in the name of the Catholic Church and in our Franciscan tradition,” Sister Maureen stated.

From the time of Christ, care of the sick has been an important work of the Church. Traditionally, religious communities of women and men have been the founders and sponsors of healthcare institutions. Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the role of lay women and men in this ministry has greatly expanded. Today, lay people serve at virtually every level in guiding and providing healthcare. It follows, then, that new organizational models are needed to support these changes. The PJP, described by canon law as a group of persons or things dedicated to the purpose of helping the church achieve its mission, is one structure that is recognized by the Church as a vehicle to oversee the Catholic nature of hospitals and healthcare and ensure that the works are carried out according to Catholic principles.

Hospital Sisters Ministries will be governed by a board of directors, Ministry Board, comprised of Sister Jomary Trstensky, OSF, Chair, Sister Janice Schneider, OSF, Deacon Allison C. Laabs, James H. McDermott, DDS, and Thomas C. Vernier. During the immediate transition, this board

will work collaboratively with the current corporate members of HSHS, Sister Maureen O'Connor, OSF, Sister Trudy O'Connor, OSF, Sister Rosily Menachery, OSF, and Sister Janice Schneider, OSF, who serve as the Provincial Council of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis. Following a suitable transition, the Ministry Board will assume responsibility for the oversight of HSHS. Sister Jomary Trstensky, OSF, served as a nurse and clinical nurse specialist in HSHS hospitals, in hospital administration and, as the HSHS Executive Vice President and President from 1988-2006. From 2007-2015, she served as Provincial Superior and as Chair, HSHS Members. Sister Janice Schneider, OSF, served in accounting at HSHS facilities, has board experience with several HSHS hospitals and organizations, and from 2007-2015 served as Provincial Secretary/Treasurer. Presently, she serves as Provincial Councilor/Canonical Treasurer. Deacon Allison C. Laabs served in administrative positions at several HSHS hospitals from 1974 until 2000, including HSHS St. Anthony's Memorial Hospital, Effingham, IL; HSHS St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center, Green Bay, WI; and HSHS St. John's Hospital, Springfield. He serves as a permanent deacon for the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois and volunteers on the Chiara Center Advisory Council, HSHS Franciscan Formation Committee, and at Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach. James H. McDermott, DDS, is a dentist in Springfield who has a long association with the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis. Among his charitable activities, Dr. McDermott has offered free adult dental service to the poor of Springfield for over 25 years and started a children's clinic 20 years ago - both of which continue with assistance from Catholic Charities. Furthermore, he led over 15 medical mission trips to serve the poor in Jeremie, Haiti. Thomas C. Vernier was associated with HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Belleville, IL, from 1978-2010 and held a variety of positions including Director of Education, Director of Marketing, and Administrative Director for Mission and Pastoral Care. After he retired, he wrote a book about the history of the Hospital Sisters in Belleville.

The United States has several PJPs including Catholic Health Care Federation (1996), Catholic Health Ministries (2000), Bon Secours Ministries (2006), Mercy Health Ministries (2008), and Ascension Health Ministries (2011).

The Hospital Sisters of St. Francis is an international congregation of Franciscan Sisters founded in Germany in 1844, and their Provinces include Germany, Poland, USA, Japan, and India. The American Province, based in Springfield, IL, was founded in 1875 when Sisters from Germany arrived and began a healthcare ministry. The Province is the Founding Institute of Hospital Sisters Ministries which sponsors 14 hospitals and an integrated physician network across Illinois and Wisconsin through HSHS, the Province sponsors a mission in Kemonondo, Tanzania, Africa, and the Province sponsors Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach – a recovery and world-wide distribution of life-saving medical supplies and equipment. In 2007, the Province opened Chiara Center – a Franciscan Place of Spirituality for individuals and groups seeking a retreat and conference center. For more information, visit www.hospitalsisters.org.

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