

## **The beginning ...**

### **1977 – 1999**

The **Cenacle Retreat House** (1114 Virginia Street, East) came to be when The Most Reverend Joseph H. Hodges, Bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston requested the Religious Sisters of Our Lady of the Cenacle to develop a retreat house in downtown Charleston.

Initially, three volunteers came to staff the Cenacle: Sister Dorothy O'Brien, Sister Anna Carulli, and Sister Mary Pellicane from the Sisters of Eastern Province. Sister Carole Riley, a Sister of Divine Providence, offered to be an adjunct member.

The Cenacle was: a living prayer, in the heart of the city; a sacred space, in constant ministry, training disciples, among the faiths. For twenty-two years many activities were provided, including: directed retreats, seminars, spiritual direction, training of spiritual directors, contemplative prayer, retreats for youth, programs and workshops, 30-day retreats, women's retreats, as well as community and international programs.

## **WVIS development and growth ...**

The West Virginia Institute for Spirituality has continued to grow and expand while maintaining its commitment to the formation of competent spiritual directors.

Throughout its history, WVIS has trained both lay ministers and clergy representing the Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, Unitarian, and Baptist faith traditions.

The on-going associates program provides "hands-on" experience of praying with the Scriptures, a holistic approach to spirituality and the tools and skills to qualify them for the ministry.

### **In 1998...**

An ecumenical group gathered to provide continuity to the spiritual ministry begun in Southern West Virginia by the Cenacle sisters. The West Virginia Institute for Spirituality (WVIS) was formed to provide space and opportunities for deepening mindfulness, prayer practice, interior peace, and for integrating moral and ethical values.

### **In 1999...**

A Certificate of Incorporation in the State of West Virginia, as a non-profit organization with 501(c)3 status was issued on December 23, 1999 to the West Virginia Institute for Spirituality.

### **In 2000...**

WVIS leased the property at 1414 Virginia Street, East in Charleston, WV and quickly set an organizational structure in place with:

- Linda Cooper served as President of the Board of Directors of WVIS from 1999-2002.

- Sister Carole Riley was appointed Executive Director of WVIS.
- Sister Mary Pellicane was appointed Retreat Director Emeritus
- Sister Dorothy O'Brien was appointed Administrative Assistant and Spiritual Director
- Sister Laurensia Riumanu was appointed hospitality Coordinator

The WVIS Spiritual Direction Formation Program got underway with participants from a number of churches, including Presbyterian, Methodist, Church of Christ, Baptist Temple and others.

### In 2001...

In 2001, the Board of Directors set the vision and mission:

*WVIS VISION is: "To provide an ecumenical center for prayer and spirituality that is located in the heart of the city. This ministry encourages and promotes spiritual life through silence, prayer, retreats, and interfaith dialogue."*

*WVIS MISSION is: "Dedication to providing space and opportunities for deepening mindfulness, prayer practice, interior peace and integrating moral and ethical values."*

WVIS continued to expand its offerings, established new programs as well as its identity (logo), and was recognized for its excellence in the formation of spiritual directors. These events included:

- Sister Carole Riley receives the 2001 Mary Emil Penet Award from the national Religious Formation Conference for her outstanding leadership in the work of mentoring in spiritual formation throughout the world.
- The program to train Spiritual Directors continues to grow.
- WVIS seeks to expand its offerings and establishes contemplative prayer groups, prayer groups of professional women, journal-writing workshops, etc.
- Development Committee established to design a 5-Year Plan.
- The WVIS Logo came to be.

### In 2002...

The search for a permanent property for WVIS continued in 2002. Finally, on October 21, 2002, 1601 Virginia Street, East became the permanent home of The West Virginia Institute for Spirituality Retreat House. The retreat house was named '[Ville Marie Therese Couderc](#)' per the request of a benefactor who wanted to honor the Saint who is called: A "Great and Humble Soul" co-patron of retreats.

In 2002, LaRee D. Naviaux, Ph.D. served as WVIS Board President and several new members joined the WVIS staff including: Sister Molly Maloney, OSF, Reverend Virginia Derr, Father William J. Petro, Sister Rose Ann Hefner.

### **In 2003...**

A Rite of Blessing and Open House was held for the retreat house in July of 2003.

WVIS expanded its mission beyond West Virginia as Satellite locations opened in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania and Hilton Head, South Carolina.

Sister Carole Riley received the Mary Emil Penet National Award.

### **In 2004...**

Ardath S. Francke was elected to serve as Board President.

### **In 2005...**

In 2005, Robert J. McAteer was elected to serve as Board President. Using his skills, he continued to help raise awareness and opportunities for WVIS as he established a database and webpage for WVIS.

Seeking to expand capacity at the retreat house to accommodate the growth WVIS continued to experience, plans were discussed for the renovation of the second and third floors of the retreat house as well as the renovation/rebuilding of the carriage house into a hermitage which would be handicap accessible. In July, Passionist volunteers began work on the 2nd and 3rd floors to make rooms usable for retreatants or those staying at WVIS.

### **In 2006...**

In 2006, progress continued on the Hermitage Project until in April, the Ardath Francke Hermitage became a reality. Groundbreaking occurred in July and on November 25, 2006 a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held and the doors to the Ardath Francke Hermitage opened.

Margaret B. Llamas was elected President of the Board in 2006 and Sister Ritamary Schultz, ASCJ joined the staff as an Associate Spiritual Director Intern. Additionally in 2006, Sister Carole Riley initiated the Certificate Program for Supervisors.

### **In 2008...**

Reverent Diane D. Shoaf was elected Board president in 2008 and another Satellite location opened in Southern, WV (Princeton-Bluefield).

Two new programs were initiated by Sister Carole: Spiritual Direction Internship and Sabbatical Program.

### **In 2009...**

WVIS initiated the inclusion of Board members living outside the Charleston area. Board meetings were scheduled with the dates published in advance. Where necessary, meetings were held through teleconferencing.

Another new program was initiated: Certificate in Advanced Studies.

Sister Carole celebrated 50 Years as a Sister of Divine Providence.

### **In 2012...**

On Christmas Day 2012 Father Paul Wharton was celebrant at the first Mass in the Nazareth Prayer Space.

### **In 2013...**

The second and third floors were remodeled to provide retreatants with a private room.

“Almost Heaven Retreat” was held at WVIS in June and at John XXIII Pastoral Center in July.

Continuing to create spaces on the property in support of WVIS’ mission, the greenhouse was torn down and Nazareth (a beautiful, spiritual prayer space) was built and dedicated.

Also in 2013, the grounds at WVIS received a renewal with space for walking and enjoying the beauty of the grounds, space for individual prayer, and space for enjoying the outdoors. Flowers, shrub and trees were planted; the fence and gates were repaired/replaced/repainted; fountains and statues were added; a garden was planted, and the fruitfulness enjoyed by many.

New website launched: [wvis.org](http://wvis.org)

### **In 2014...**

Continuing to expand its online presence, a Facebook page launched in February.

*This page remains under construction. Our thanks to Virginia H. “Ginny” Masters who was instrumental in compiling much of this information. Copies of the complete publication are available at WVIS.*