

Greetings: My name is Kathleen Kanet. I'm a Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary and I have been with this organization since it began!

Welcome and thank you very much for choosing to be here with us tonight. All of you are connected to us in some way. You are part of our community. In addition to board and staff, you represent collaborative communities with whom we have worked, past Recognition Night honorees, generous donors which allow us to do the work and we welcome new friends also.

Whatever we do to make our world a better place, we know we can't do it alone, we work together, we collaborate and by this we create community with one another. And tonight we are celebrating this!

This year at Recognition Night we are honoring all those former (and present) board and staff who have journeyed with us over the past twenty or more years. We have been so heartened to learn about all the wonderful things in which they are involved. What they have shared about their commitment to dialogue and peace is encouraging and gives us something to celebrate. Their responses to our invitation motivated our creating this Journal.

I would like to share some words about how we got to this moment in our history and mission. Reflection on the past and raising some stories are important to help us decide now how we can continue to make choices that will create a world where the dignity of each person is respected.

Our history as an organization goes back to 1984! And as we have grown, we have changed our name three times! Always a story to everything! Initially in 1985 when we began the founders came from three countries, the Philippines, Germany and the USA. Those initiators, inspired by Vatican II and motivated by the belief that action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world was essential to being Christian, being Catholic (for that matter) formed an international organization to bring together people from northern and southern parts of the world to provide opportunities for local level ordinary people working for human rights and peace to share what they are doing and to learn from one another. They formed what was called the Christian Initiative Center of International Learning.

Together over the early years we tackled huge questions. With our partners in the Philippines, in Germany, in Nicaragua, in Ghana and in the USA we held two to three week workshops: Issues included: escalating worldwide militarization, economic conversion, Fascism, Religious Fundamentalism, We approached such questions as: “What do people need to live?”, and, about aging in dignity in a sustainable world, And in 2002, a three day workshop: “Neighborhood by Neighborhood how can we build a Sustainable World?”

It is so wonderful that some of those participants are still connected to us and some are here with us tonight!

Soon our USA community, our board, our staff, our colleagues included people who are Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and some who did not prescribe to any religion. To pronounce our inclusiveness we changed our name to the Center of International Learning. Our name now expressed welcome to all!

And then in 2005 we changed our name again with the help of our dedicated consultant, Pat Jobling, who had been guiding our board at retreats and meetings and we became “The Network for Peace through Dialogue”! We moved toward more focus and more attention to one essential element and value in making peace. Dialogue!

What a challenge for us! Questions about the importance of dialogue, how it relates to peacemaking, what it is, and how to practice it, remain important conversations in our board and staff meetings. Imagine the interesting conversations we have at board and staff meetings?

Topics of some of those conversations:

- What do you do if the other does not want to dialogue?
- Why is it so hard to do?
- How do we know what dialogue really is
- If I think I am right and have nothing to learn on the issue, how can I dialogue?
- Where is it practiced?
- Do we practice dialogue?

We have learned some things:

- we believe that the practice of dialogue on all levels, personal and structural is an antidote to violence.

---We grow more committed to Dialogue, listening, trying to understand someone who is different and it remains a vision that we want hold onto and to further.

---We have learned that to enter into dialogue, one has to have a vulnerability, to realize that we do not have all the right answers to what will save the world and

---We cannot do it alone. We need each other.

So what have we done?

---Created some principles of High Quality Dialogue

---Infused these concepts into our Living Room Dialogues

---Infused dialogue in our youth leadership program which focused on human rights.

---Held two national Conferences "Why Dialogue 2007 and Dialogue In/As Action" 2009

---continue to write articles and blogs

---Worked creating an empowerment program for youth for seven years

The goal for tonight is to celebrate our collective effort, have a good time, to urge that the values of the Network are carried out which include desire to promote dialogue, to live with a sense of joy, to develop a contemplative attitude, to hone the skills of working in collaboration, to build community, and to contribute to creating a culture of non-violence be carried out by more and more people.

Thank you for joining us this evening and for your support!