Barbara (Ann Barbara) Beesley, IHM, serves as one of Marygrove College’s campus ministers. Part of her role involves organizing liturgies, prayer services and retreats, but it also includes a strong emphasis on “service learning.”

“That was one of the things that prompted me to apply for the job,” Sister Barbara recalls. “I had been part of planning the Social Justice Program at Marygrove, although I never saw myself ministering in higher education. When I was told the open campus minister position included service learning, I applied, and I’m now in my eighth year!”

“I love the creative visioning in this ministry,” says Sister Barbara. “It’s an opportunity to integrate social justice/community concerns with student life, and it’s a joy to see the participation and inclusion as the students become involved. Everyone has a voice.

“I have the opportunity to meet with people at other colleges doing similar work,” she continues. “That keeps my world wide – just the way I like it!”

As part of her role as Service Learning/Campus Minister, Sister Barbara and college students explore and become involved in myriad projects benefitting the community, projects as diverse as fetal alcohol syndrome, affordable housing, even an effort to promote more interaction between Marygrove students and businesses around the college.

“The students came up with an idea to have a small coffeehouse/art gallery in the neighborhood,” she notes. “And they are working on a proposal to make it happen.”

In addition campus ministry, Sister Barbara also teaches two classes in Marygrove’s Social Justice Program.

“One is on elections and campaigns. Students make non-partisan presentations to parishes, schools and community groups. This requires them to do research so they are able to really explain the issues, and as a result, they are great community resources. A campus-wide group is planning involvement in ‘TurboVote’ – a voter registration initiative – in the fall.

“My other class is on organizing for social change,” says Sister Barbara. “Currently, I’m working with a project the Hamtramck Community Initiative, headed up by a graduate of Marygrove’s Social Justice Program. The project is concerned with the safety and well-being of Hamtramck’s Muslim women residents…. Hamtramck is about 40 percent Muslim and we’re having material translated into Arabic to
better communicate with these women about some of the issues they face and to let them know what their rights are.”

Sister Barbara’s ministry is one of hope. “My favorite definition of hope is ‘having faith in spite of the evidence and watching the evidence change,’” she notes. “My challenge is to try to facilitate change in a realistic way, and one of my greatest joys is when that transforming moment occurs,”