Sister Margaret (Frances Margaret) Gaffney, IHM, is a spiritual and retreat director. She describes her life in community and ministry as a circle.

“When I came to the community, I was submerged in prayer,” she reflects. “Then I went out to my first ministries to teach. I still prayed daily, but I got busy with many things. Now as a spiritual director and retreat facilitator, I’m closer to the beginning of my circle.”

Sister Margaret’s first ministry was in the classroom, teaching in Catholic schools in Michigan, Ohio and Florida for 16 years. When Michigan voters denied public support of private schools through Proposal C in 1970, many schools closed. Sister Margaret loved education and wanted to remain in this ministry. She began teaching in the Mason Consolidated Schools – a public system in Erie, Mich.

After teaching fifth grade for a year, she became the district’s reading director. She spent 20 years as the district’s administrator, and in her final year with Mason, she was the acting superintendent.

“I felt it was my call as a religious sister to teach through my values,” says Sister Margaret. “I walked with people through many challenges and enjoyed being there to support parents, teachers and students.”

After she retired from the Mason school district, Sister Margaret spent time on sabbatical in Ireland, where she learned about Celtic spirituality. The directing priest was called to Rome, and before he left, he asked Sister Margaret to facilitate some of the retreats. Through the experience, she realized this was an area she wanted to pursue.

Back home, she enrolled in the spiritual direction program at Dominican Center for Religious Development in Detroit.

Her new direction quickly took root.

“During my last year of classes, I was approached about facilitating a retreat,” Sister Margaret says. “I was also asked by the IHM community to become director of Visitation, Monroe, for a year. ‘For a year’ turned into seven years!” she chuckles.

While ministering at Visitation Monroe, Sister Margaret gave retreats and offered spiritual direction. “The challenge for me – or for any spiritual director – is to recognize my role in helping someone discern God’s call. It’s their discernment with God,” Sister Margaret notes.

“Retreatants want to have doors open to them as they journey with God,” she continues. “It’s so rewarding to accompany people looking for Christian values – people who want to deepen their relationship with God.”

Sister Margaret works out of Visitation North in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., however, she ministers in Monroe. She can be reached at mgaffney@sistersihm.org