



CLG Reports to the Congregation

As the Congregational Leadership Group met in Saint Paul from September 15-19, 2016, we continued to build on our shared experiences, particularly of our retreat last September and our subsequent meetings in Albany and in Peru in February. We grounded our days in contemplative dialogue, and we recalled our commitment to keep the vision of the whole as the horizon for our reflection and the well-being of the whole as the desired outcomes of our decisions.

We reflected that as Sisters of St. Joseph we have never remained static: we have always moved forward in response to God's call and the needs of the dear neighbor. Thus, much of our conversation focused on the continuation of movements already in process.

We reviewed the work of the Process Design Team—the Zoom calls and the contemplative dialogue retreats that have enabled sisters from across the congregation to reflect on who we are together, and how we are being invited into the future where God is already present, calling us anew to respond to and to participate in the mission of Jesus.

Acknowledging the gift that over 700 of our sisters have or will participate in the contemplative dialogue retreats, and have or will reflect upon the emerging possibilities, we too, took time to reflect prayerfully on those possibilities. In addition, we attended to the preparation for the congregational consultation that will occur in November, following the completion of the retreats, and we finalized some of the details for the Extraordinary Congregational Chapter to be held in April 2017 in St. Louis.

We heard and discussed a report from the Congregational Vocations Offices Think Tank that was charged with the task of presenting a possible process for the consolidation of the vocation offices. Affirming that we are intentional about moving forward with congregational approaches to vocations and formation, we gave further direction for continuing the process toward a congregational vocations office.

We discussed the upcoming consultation with the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL), a follow-up to the on-site visit of our congregation during the Apostolic Visitation. Sisters Mary McKay, Mary Ann Leininger, and Jean Wincek will travel to Rome to meet with representatives of CICLSAL on October 18. We believe that this is an opportunity for true dialogue, and therefore we approach the conversation as an opportunity to share the richness of who we are.

We finalized the site for the consolidated archives, which will be located at Carondelet in St. Louis, and reviewed the process and timeline for that consolidation. The archivists met in Albany in October to continue their work on the consolidation.

We affirmed the value of the congregational *Carondelet* magazine, which was sent to donors and friends, and the decision to offer another edition during the spring of 2017. We will also ask the congregational communications group to explore the possibilities offered by technology and to consider an electronic edition for the future.

We gave direction to the congregational treasurers for their meeting in October, to help us come to a congregational picture of our finances across the congregation.

The St. Louis and Los Angeles leadership teams shared with us the work they have been doing with their sponsored ministries in response to the Chapter 2013 Call to Action on "Partnering with New Eyes."

As our own experience of oneness deepened, we spent some time identifying the myths that could prevent us from moving freely into the future where God calls us, and discussed ways to address these myths.

We recalled possibilities for ministry that have emerged in recent years, and reminded ourselves that these opportunities continue for any sister who might feel called to respond to these needs, even for a limited amount of time:

- the ministry to immigrants arriving at our southern borders through the program in El Paso,
- the mission in Gulu, Uganda—a mission of the St. Louis Province,
- the need for a sister to be present with the sisters needing care in Hawaii.

We also discussed our desire to respond to the needs of the many Syrian refugees seeking shelter and safety.

While all these discussions and decisions involved hard, sometimes intense, work, we did also include some fun into our time together. The St. Paul Leadership Team hosted us for an evening out, a wonderful dinner at Nicollet Island Inn on the banks of the Mississippi River. We also met with the sisters and consociates of the St. Paul Province and shared dinner and lively conversation. Three members of CLG—Sisters Barbara Dreher, Sally Harper, and Suzanne Jabro—participated as a panel as part of the CSJ Salon—a half-day experience for first-year students at St. Catherine’s University—inviting them and engaging them in the mission and charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Many of us in attendance were both proud of our sisters, who shared stories of ministry, and of the young women, who were so attentive and engaged. Finally, each of the members of the Congregational Leadership Team hosted the province leadership team with whom they relate as liaison for dinner. When we returned, there was quite a contingent watching the Packers-Vikings football game (even if we rooted for different teams!)

The prayer and ritual provided by leadership from Peru, which included a video of Peruvian campesinos using traditional methods to construct a footbridge over a deep chasm, moved us to contemplate daily our need for relationship and what is required to form those bonds.

Together we continue to turn beyond ourselves to serve a world in need, just as our sisters have always done. Together we listen to the voice of our God leading us into the future; together we respond! We are striving to work in a manner that is for the good of the congregation, while recognizing our responsibilities in our local areas.

Our experience is perhaps reflected in the words of a song by Sara Thompson which wove itself throughout our time together:

“By breath, by blood, by body, by spirit...we are all one!”