



The Congregation of the Passion, Holy Cross Province
The Promise of Abundance in the Passion of Christ

Visioning Package for Working Groups

Leading up to the June 2019 Chapter

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Prayer for a Vibrant Vision

Loving God,

We, your servants, have embarked on a visioning process for Holy Cross Province.

May Your Spirit be upon us in this process. May we come together, open to Your Spirit's guidance.

And so we ask,

Open our eyes to better discern the signs of the times.

Open our ears to better hear the needs of the people.

Open our minds to better recognize the resources You have given us, and

Open our hearts to deepen our solidarity with the crucified of today and the passion of the earth.

Help us find creative responses to the needs around us so that Your love in Christ Crucified may be even more clearly revealed through us to those whom we serve.

We ask this in the name of Jesus and Him Crucified. Amen.

Co-chairs for Working Groups* **Leading Up To The 2019 Provincial Chapter**

*Confirmed by Provincial Council August 23, 2018
Visioning Commission Shepherd(s) in parentheses

Charism (Trudi Stinson and Tim O'Brien)

How we are keeping alive the memory of the Passion of Christ in our own hearts and impelling us to respond to the suffering in the world.

- *David Colhour, CP; Kate Mims*

Collaboration (Elizabeth Velarde and Keith Zekind)

How we are deepening and fulfilling collaboration of vowed and laity within the Province and among local communities as well as forming meaningful collaborative relationships with external groups for sustaining mission, community life and ministry.

- *Alfredo Ocampo CP; Faith Offman*

Community (Jim Strommer)

How have we evolved the Passionist communities of today into a multi-leveled concept “a Community gathered at the foot of the cross” with both distinct and integrative structures and qualities.

- *Don Senior, CP; Dan O'Donnell*

Outreach (Joe Castro and Phil Paxton)

How we are reaching an ever greater number and variety of people, both virtually and visibly, connecting those inspired to serve the crucified of today through exposure to and formation in the Passionist charism.

- *Bruno D'Souza, CP; Jean Bowler*

Preaching: (Mike Higgins and Richard Burke)

How we are preaching Christ Crucified in a dynamic and deeply connective way whether in retreat centers, other ministries, parishes, communities or through contemporary or social media.

- *Jack Conley, CP; Michael Cunningham*

Role/Responsibilities for the Working Group Co-chairs

- With the Shepherds review the names of those who attended the initial meeting of the Working Group during June Assembly (see attached listing which is not fully accurate) as well as other members of the Passionist Family who you wish to invite to join the group. A group of 7-8 members is ideal (in addition to the Co-chairs and Shepherds) and some individuals may prefer to be connected in on an as needed basis;
- Develop a work plan to accomplish the deliverables in preparation for Leadership Day (November), Community meetings (fall/spring), Pre-chapter (January) and Chapter (May-June);
- Develop meeting agendas with a clear statement of “by the end of the meeting we will have 1, 2, etc.”;
- Reach agreement on a discernment process and provide leadership to ensure it is followed;
- Encourage every member to be engaged and use group processes that enable polling, brainstorming, content and process review points;
- Determine with the group whether sub-groups are needed; a Co-chair or Shepherd should participate in each;
- Seek and use assistance, feedback from Visioning Commission Shepherds;
- Determine with the Working Group what information is required;
- Ensure that a record is kept of key conversations/views, proposed planning actions and next steps (template included);
- Work initially with the affirmative statements and initial Working Group notes;
- Achieve clarity and agreement first on what is encompassed by the Working Group’s visioning topic/issue;
- Ensure that the elements identified are incorporated into each group. They are media/technology, vocations, diversity/ multiculturalism/youth and care of Earth- our common home;
- Once a ‘good enough’ idea of the vision for the 5-10+ year timeframe is in place, focus time on planning the action initiatives needed to get there; and
- Check back frequently in the group to ensure that the initiatives are in support of the visions.

Role/Responsibilities for the Working Group Shepherds

In general:

- Bring continuity from the process over the last 2 years, especially the 2018 Assembly, and use that wisdom to shepherd their Working Group;
- Shepherd the process as needed, such as agendas, chair support and guidance;
- Connect the Working Group to the overall Visioning Commission and vice versa; and
- Care for and guide “the flock” and return strays to the flock.

Specifically, this may include:

- Creating a structure for opening prayer, both prayer for vision and asking members of the Working Group to offer prayer;
- Assisting the Co-chairs with agendas, notetaking and planning tools;
- Facilitating conversations, as necessary, ensuring that all voices are heard;
- Offering a summary at key points in each meeting;
- Observing and supporting a healthy group process;
- Reporting and updating the Working Group on what would be helpful from the Visioning process as a whole; and
- Representing the Working Group’s thinking, choices and discernment in Visioning Commission meetings.

Working Group Attendees at the 2018 Assembly

Please note: the listing may be incomplete.

Charism

(Trudi Webb-Stinson & Marci Madary) Megan Silas, Kate Mims, Joe Barbieri, James Anderson, David Colhour, Alan Phillip, Arthur Carrillo, Patricio Manosalvas, Eduardo Farfan, Ivan Martinez

Collaboration

(Elizabeth Velarde & Keith Zekind) Kyle Kramer, Toby Tabaczynski, , Faith Offman, Ron Bickers, Mike Cunningham, Peter Smith, Chris Gibson, Alfredo Ocampo, David Horvath, Matt Greenough, Patty Masson, Julia Senn-Reeves, Card Hund, Dan O'Donnell, Joe Moons

Community

(Jim Strommer & Tim O'Brien) Kurt Wernert, Sharon Brewer, Cedric Pisegna, Soohoon Hur, Claire Smith, Mac Johnston, Ron Corl, Ronan Newbold

Outreach

(Joe Castro & Phil Paxton) Bruno D'Souza, Paul O'Daniel, John Van Dyke, John Schork, Jean Bowler, Clemente Barrón, John Patrick Day, Sandra Arnould, Joe Mitchell, Marta Salgado-Nino, Kenneth O'Malley

Preaching

(Mike Higgins & Richard Burke) Bob Weiss, Blaise Czaja, Jack Conley, Angie Kwasinski, Hugo Esparza, Enno Dango, Christopher Jungers, Pat Brennan

2018 Province Assembly Invitees with Email Addresses

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Those without known email addresses:

Jim Griffith, CP
 Frank Keenan, CP
 Eric Meyer, CP
 Richard Parks, CP
 Alfonso San Juan, CP
 Maria Antonia Cruz

Guidance Note for Selection of Working Group Members

- The Working Group Co-chairs and Shepherds will work through this task together.
- Aim for a group size of 10-12 in total including Co-chairs and Shepherds.
- Review the names of those who attended the first Working Group session at Assembly. While all should be invited (as promised at Assembly) you may know some who have already indicated they are either very interested or not available. An email can be sent to check on their interest and availability. We think we should be able to offer people a less time demanding form of participation by being part of a group that is contacted as needed either as particular resources or for feedback on your progress in general.
- Consider including additional members to fill out the group who bring
 - Representation across vowed and laity, communities and ministries;
 - Differing experiences and perspectives;
 - Mutual respect and true openness for all voices; and
 - Understanding and commitment to a bold prophetic vision and action outcomes.
- A list of Assembly invitees and their email addresses is included to assist you in making contact; at the same time we know that phone calls are a more personal and effective way of inviting people into this task.
- Please be aware that some people will be sought out by more than one Working Group.
- Work as quickly as possible to complete your group and send Keith Zekind the confirmed list at keith@cppo.org.

Below is the high level question for each Working Group as presented to the Co-chairs:

Charism -*How we are keeping alive the memory of the Passion of Christ in our own hearts and impelling us to respond to the suffering in the world?*

Collaboration -*How we are deepening and fulfilling collaboration of vowed and laity within the Province and among local communities as well as forming meaningful collaborative relationships with external groups for sustaining mission, community life and ministry?*

Community -*How have we evolved the Passionist communities of today into a multi-leveled concept “a Community gathered at the foot of the cross” with distinct and integrative structure/qualities?*

Outreach - *How we are reaching an ever greater number and variety of people, both virtually and visibly, connecting those inspired to serve the crucified of today through exposure to and formation in the Passionist charism?*

Preaching- *How we are preaching Christ Crucified in a dynamic and deeply connective way whether in retreat centers, other ministries, parishes, communities or through contemporary or social media?*

Working Groups – General Timeline, Key Steps and Dates

August 28 th	Visioning Commission ZOOM meeting
By Sept. 4 th	Letter from Joe Moons to Co-chairs plus attachments including role descriptions for Co-chairs and Shepherds, process for selecting working group members, general timeline, important dates, insights /issues document, Chapter 7 from <i>The Art of Change</i> , appreciative inquiry and discernment guidelines
Sept. 4 th onwards	Members for all Working Groups have been selected, initial meeting date/time/agenda has been communicated to all Working Group members
Sept. -Oct.	Working Group meetings (via ZOOM) scheduled regularly in order to bring a progress report to the Leadership Day in November (including elements of future vision for their area, initial thinking on key initiatives that will achieve the vision and questions they want the Leadership gathering to consider)
Sept. 13 th	Visioning Commission ZOOM meeting
Pre-Leadership Day	Local community gatherings similar to spring 2018 with insights/issues document, high level Province/Community data and questions for the gathering to consider through prayer, reflection and conversation
Oct. 14 th	Visioning Commission ZOOM meeting
Nov. 5 th -8 th	Leadership Day, ALS meeting, PRCB meeting; Holy Name Passionist Retreat Center Houston, TX. <u>All Co-chairs and Shepherds will be invited</u>
Nov. 14 th	Visioning commission ZOOM Meeting
Jan. 15 th -16 th	Pre-Chapter ZOOM meeting

Sample Working Group Agenda and Meeting Template

Agenda

For each principle agenda item briefly state:

- The objective and expected outcome: share, review, discuss data/information, identify the best choices, reach agreement, draft goals, create an action plan, etc.
- Pre-meeting preparation required and by whom?
- Relationship to other agenda items together will form our approach to technology/media, etc.

Each meeting will begin with prayer (either the Visioning Prayer or something contributed by a Working Group member).

Each meeting will conclude with a process check: “What was most helpful to us in this meeting?”, “What might we do differently?”, “How satisfied are we with our work output and our work process – scale of 1-5?”; “What very brief thoughts, hopes, reflections, insights or gratifications can we share in the Visioning Newsletter?”

Working Group meeting will include a very brief update from the Visioning Commission Shepherds about what is happening in other Working Groups.

Item	Objective and Conversation Key Points	Action Items/When/Who
	Objective Preparation Key points from conversation	○

Sample Working Group Meeting Summary

Date of Meeting _____ Co-Chairs _____

Attendees

(Agenda attached)

Recommendations/Actions

Regarding Vision Statement

Regarding Key Initiatives & Action Plans

Regarding Who is Responsible and Timeline for Next Steps

Notes on Key Points of the Meeting Discussion

The Passionists of Holy Cross Province

**Observations, Insights and Issues Emerging for Province Visioning
From the 2018 Assembly**

Introduction

This document began as a reflection following the June 2018 Assembly and is based upon reports and other conversations that took place at that time and has been further added to through discussions with Visioning Commission members and the Provincial Council in August 2018.

The headings are intended as indications of the subject area and the content is not a comprehensive account but rather some highlights.

Charism and Visioning - Because we experience that the charism as alive in us, we cannot assume that necessarily takes us beyond where we are today. What does it mean to be especially for the crucified today in all aspects of ministry? This visioning process has been described as requiring prophetic and bold measures, of being cutting edge signaling a threshold change in many key aspects of how mission, ministry, charism and community are defined in the future and by whom.

Outreach - An understanding that this doesn't just or even principally mean reaching out to bring a wider group of people to retreats but rather it strongly suggests that the work of preaching will go out into our parishes, communities, diverse groups - where we find the crucified of today/tomorrow. With the foreseeable reduction in vowed Passionists, the question of what future we see for the four retreat centers will need to be addressed through the visioning process.

Diversity - It was spoken that diversity cannot be only the recognition of the many groups in need, of their dramatically different forms of suffering and faith. It also means facing that diversity and responding to it. Facing the diversity we see also means that we Passionists (vowed and lay) will also have to 'be the face' of diversity, be representative and bring the lived experience.

Collaboration - there is a wide gap between the laity and vowed in terms of their experience and perceptions of what has been accomplished in bringing greater numbers of laity into a partnership in leadership of the Province's mission/ministry. Laity is asking "how do we navigate to 100%, how do we secure a voice" and the vowed are feeling that this has been mostly achieved. How may we provide the tools needed for our laity to grow and represent the Passionist Community? Are we inviting others in? The rather striking imbalance of vowed and laity in self-selected attendance at the Collaboration Working Group may have something to tell us. At the same time there is sensitivity around the value of recognizing just how much change has been occurring and is still evolving across the Province in many areas. The expression

‘working from the growing edges’ speaks to this evolution and appreciates it. It is right and appropriate to ask both “what is your story or experience, and what is your expectation?”

Partnership - Much recognition and readiness to continue the path of forming partnerships with St. Paul of the Cross Province, Passionist Sisters and other possible Passionist entities and with other Catholic faith groups (e.g. diocese) on a more local basis. The participation of experienced laity in these planning conversations will be vital and offer an opportunity to further develop the Province’s process of collaboration.

Vocations - a keen desire to promote and bring in new vocations; perhaps a renewed energy in this regard would be tied to the future vision for the Province. As we may be seeing a trend in younger ministering in more individual areas and in contact with the day-to-day lives of those who are in need (common in most religious congregations) how may our planning for the future take this into account. This is also related to the future planning of retreat ministry.

Vowed Life - The expressed need for a continued and increased focus on the transition process as vowed enter a phase of aging, health concerns, reduced ministry availability, housing and community life in general. Great appreciation for PHAAB and a need for broader reach and empathy of laity for this phase of vowed life. Including the younger vowed in an intentional process of planning for their future in community and ministry.

OME - The historical pattern has been that each new Director brings exemplary gifts and adapts the program accordingly. As a result, as one conversation expressed it, the gifts and programs are then lost when a new Director takes the role. The OME is in need of a continuous program most especially in the area of lay formation. There are different views about the ‘required’ nature of participation in formation programs with such a dispersed Province. This would be even more pronounced if laity became more diverse or younger when attendance at a lengthy program may be very difficult. Is the question of requirement one that needs to be preceded by mutual expectations?

Signs of the Times - The signs of the times (demographics, societal issues, the Church’s position, the needs of the crucified of today and the needs of the earth/ecology) and the realities of Holy Cross Province (demographics, corporate and community level culture and internal dynamics, finances, retreat center ministry, partnerships) are recognized and need much more dialogue in much more detail as we move forward. The material which Joe Moons distributed on young people and the church is a good example of where sharing stories and experiences remains a key part of an appreciative visioning/planning process - as are Mark Clarke’s articles - *Discerning a Future Based on a Smaller Community*, *Building a Future by Collaboration*, *Culture Impacting Congregational Transformation* etc. Keith’s Finance Presentation and observations/questions need to be available to the Working Groups, not to constrain the vision but to look back in order to look forward.

Interconnectedness - Some key elements have been identified through the visioning process thus far - **technology/media, diversity (e.g. youth, unchurched, multicultural), vocations, formation and care of Earth- our common home.** These cross all of the five primary elements of the vision, and Working Groups will need to address each of these.

Summary - The time has come to communicate that the train is at the platform and readying to leave the station on this journey. We can best shape and influence by participating. We ask for this participation, and we understand that each of us is in a different place as we look towards the future. The Working Groups have a challenging and exciting task to represent the issues through a bold, prophetic and appreciative planning process. Can we think about ways for others to be involved along the way?

To conclude with two quotes offered to the 2017 Assembly by Don Senior:

“We are asked to change our lives in view of a future that is already breaking into our lives”.

“Live now by the future you most earnestly desire to see.”

2018 Province Assembly

Initial Working Group Discussion/Reports

COLLABORATION

A.M. Session – Affirmative Statements

In ten years, the Passionists will have discerned specific new goals for sharing their charism and will have formed collaborative relationship with internal and external groups to do so.

The steps we took were:

1. identified needs
2. inventoried and developed internal capacities
3. researched potential partners/partnerships
4. reached out and formed relationships
5. worked together and learned from each other
6. reassessed and readjusted as necessary

We are actively looking to collaborate with those who will further our mission.

Driven by the Spirit, we are:

1. connecting and communicating,
2. sharing resources,
3. working together, and
4. learning from each other.

1. In collaboration with CTU and HCP ministry sites, we have a formalized multifaceted Passionist formation program required of preaching team members, governing boards and operations staff of ministry sites.

2. We have an external strategic initiative to reach out to non-profit and for profit partners to seek continuing opportunities with like-minded operations to fund visibility programs to further the Passionist mission.

3. We have in place thru out ministry sites availability for psychological counseling and spiritual direction for the crucified of today. Wisdom gained will create the basis for mobile education programs.

P.M. Session – Working Group Reports

1. How do we navigate to 100% collaboration.
2. How does laity secure a voice in the decision making process?
3. Project based collaboration with external resources.
4. Internal collaboration among HCP ministries.
5. North America Passionist collaboration in all areas of ministry.

OUTREACH

A.M. Session – Affirmative Statements

We are reaching an ever greater number and variety of people by being a visible connecting point between those inspired to serve and the crucified of today by exposure to and formation in the Passionist charism.

1. Update the Passionist Lay Ministers
2. Technology and social media
3. Presence
4. Invitation to ministry partnerships

We are engaged in preaching the Passion of Christ in unique and varied ministerial sites. Therefore, there is no one model for Outreach.

We accomplish outreach by paying close attention to the following:

1. Provincial communication between sites and the Passionist Family eg. Newsletter
2. Each site reflect on how the can strengthen outreach at their site.

Eg: Captains Program (MD)

Enhanced Programs (HN)

Supporting Parish Programs (St. Joseph's, etc)

P.M. Session – Working Group Reports

Major choices to be made

What does outreach encompass

- a. the necessity to read the signs of the times
- b. inviting people into the outreach
- c. building relationships

Assumption: The charism is alive in us

1. thinking that takes us beyond where we are
2. paying attention to the spirit working organically
3. flexibility and unconventionality are key to the process
4. humility is key to outreach
5. listening beyond our own agenda

Choices: Who? Where? How? Long-term commitment?

Priorities:

Resources and the creativity beyond what we have to offer.

6 Steps of Ignatius can help us pay attention to the movement.

Is it Individual Engagement – Local Level – Province Level

What happened to technology and young adults

Got lost in priorities today

It is about the people we want to serve

Young adults are in our perspective attractive opportunities to serve

Value of outreach as to public preaching

Our Development Office outreach

Direct Mail

Donor Relations

Website

Technology as outreach includes:

Purpose

Mission

Strategies

What will the follow-up be when we do out outreach

Assumed: that crucified of today is our priority - street perspective is included

Focus:

Bringing forth these ideas is our homework. We realize that mandate must come from this committee. Our decisions have international implications.

This committee could grow to sub divisions:

Marginalized

Youth/Young Adult

Mental Illness

Immigration

We have history of recognizing and responding the poor and marginalized

Concrete proposal are needed to ensure:

Follow through

Accountability

CHARISM

A.M. Session – Affirmative Statements

We are keeping alive the memory of the Passion of Christ by allowing the cross to claim our hearts, and to impel us to respond the suffering in the world.

We are being challenged by the Passionist Charism to create a formation for our laity.

P.M. Session – Working Group Reports

A proposal to the Provincial Chapter to further invest in the OME office through resources and personnel so the charism may be promoted among the laity of the Passionist Family. Seekers of Passionist spirituality and those we have yet to touch.

PREACHING

A.M. Session – Affirmative Statements

We affirm that we preach Christ Crucified. We do that in a dynamic way by connecting with people, in our retreat centers, parishes, communities and social media. This is done in partnership with vowed and laity. Our goal is to identify and reach the crucified of today.

P.M. Session – Working Group Reports

Proclamation	Teaching
Mission Preaching	Homilies – Parish
Retreat Preaching	Lay Preachers
“Sent” by the Church to preach-approved	Catechetical preaching
Preparations for preaching	Motivational preaching – i.e. movement of self
Street preaching	Repentance in a general way
Move people too communion	Prophetic preaching – move people to action
Prosperity Gospel	Influence of cultural differences
Resources for preaching – available studies, workshops	
Models of preaching that are counter cultural	Preaching in team dynamic – diversity is a plus
Preaching as individual	Needs of audience
Preaching on media	Preaching: strict sense, general sense
Preaching in regard to evangelization	How use of preaching ministries in all their forms
Reach out to tomorrow’s people, esp. youth to deepen their spirituality	

COMMUNITY

A.M. Session – Affirmative Statements

In 5-10 years, we are merged with other vowed Passionist entities in North America, We accomplished this by:

1. Created a process to discern if it is of the Holy Spirit, having invited all stakeholders to participate.
2. Created working committees of vowed and lay experts to merge departments of entities.
3. Created planned opportunities for stakeholders to know each other in greater ways.

P.M. Session – Working Group Reports

What is the scope of our committee’s work?

What does it mean to be a member of a Passionist Community?

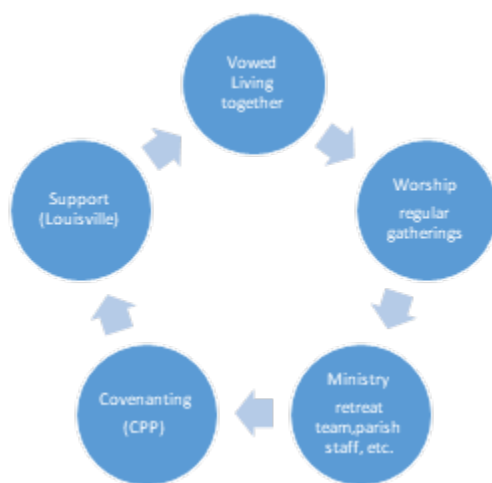
1. levels of membership

Formal – vowed

Heartfelt membership

2. Who are we?
3. What does it mean?
4. How can I grow?

“A Community gathered at the foot of the Cross.”



Appreciative Inquiry

In this visioning process we approach the future from the perspective of Abundance.

Appreciating and Valuing the Best of What Is

Describe a time when you /this group were meeting your/their highest purpose as part of the Passionist family of HC Province. What were the circumstances at that time?

Tell me about some aspect of your work/life that you feel most engaged, energized, or happy about?

What gives life here? What are the core factors that give life to the Province's mission and to its people?

What is already happening that makes it possible to fully live our mission?

Envisioning What Might Be/Provocative Propositions

What opportunities for adapting/extending our ministries can you see within your current situation?

If you left and came back in 10 years, what would you like to find that has renewed / transformed our Province in fulfilling what is needed by those we serve?

What do we believe that God, the world is calling us to become?

Dialoguing What Should Be

What assumptions would you want to challenge or test to uncover opportunities for the future?

What is taking shape? What are you hearing underneath the variety of hopes and opinions being expressed?

What new way of operating and organizing are coming into focus?

What would the Passionist Family of Holy Cross Province be like if it were designed to nourish and protect our charism and accelerate the achievement of our purposes/goals in keeping with the signs of the times?

Innovating What Will Be

From the question we explored re "if you left and came back in 10 years"... What were the most important first steps?

What conversation, if begun today, could ripple out in a way that creates new possibilities for the future?

If our mission as the Passionist family of Holy Cross Province was completely guaranteed what bold steps might we choose?

Five Steps of Discernment

These 5 steps for discernment were offered by Joe Mitchell, CP, during morning prayer and reflection at the June 2018 Assembly:

- It is used for significant decisions;
- It is very important to ensure that we have clearly defined the question;
- Reaching a state of equanimity through the blessing of the Spirit (prayer, deep conversation, reflection);
- Thoughtfully listing the advantages and disadvantages; and
- Experiencing utmost emotional well-being and joy from the decision.

The Art of Change: Faith, Vision, and Prophetic Planning

CHAPTER 7 Conversation: the Foundation of Prophetic Planning

Conversation takes time. We need time to sit together, to listen, to worry, and dream together. As this age of turmoil tears us apart, we need to reclaim time to be together. Otherwise, we cannot stop the fragmentation. MARGARET WHEATLEY

PROPHETIC PLANNING with its fourfold thrust (building on the past, being grounded in faith, conversion and healing, acting boldly) and discerning the will of God for a particular organization can encompass different methods or processes which are all based on quality conversations. The processes encourage as much participation as possible from shareholders—those who participate in and/or benefit from the mission of the organization.

Conversation is at the heart of each of the three planning models described in this chapter. According to Otto Scharmer in *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges*, there are four different levels of listening: downloading, factual, empathic, and generative. Downloading is probably the most common form of listening. It affirms what one expects to hear. Factual listening is more discriminating. It is open to new information. Empathic listening stands in the shoes of the other and “feels” with them. Generative listening is the deepest kind of listening. It brings about a change in the listener so that the person is transformed and connected to a deeper source of knowing.

The quality of listening determines the outcomes of groups who plan together. Initially, it is not uncommon to have a great hearing what they want to hear. Gradually, facts begin to be heard and are either denied or affirmed. As relationships are built, empathic listening begins to heal and bond new groups. Generative listening happens when “communion” or grace permeates the environment because individuals truly are reflective and deeply listening within. This kind of listening is powerful in that it allows one to let go of previous convictions and be open to new ways of thinking, relating, and being. As groups are empowered to work together and are guided by deep listening, Prophetic Planning takes root. The following models pull together many aspects of previous chapters into workable ways to do Prophetic Planning.

The three planning models, the “Eight Step Process,” the “Retreat Model,” and “Appreciative Scenario Building” are some ways to do Prophetic Planning. Each engages people in dialogue based on quality listening. Each invites those most affected by the change to help design what will be new. Each involves understanding the gifts of the past and the current reality, and given that, imagining a preferred future. Each is built on the premise that every organization is a living entity capable of changing and growing.

Each organization is called upon to discern an emerging truth and act in harmony with it through listening, reflecting, and acting. Prophetic Planning is not about rearranging the deck chairs. It is about building capacity for depth and greatness. It is a journey of conversations, both inward and outward. It calls for confidence to look beyond the everyday. It requires humility to recognize the sacred ground of profound change on which organizations may be walking. It is about an exchange of meaning between people who share in the mission of the organization or are influenced by it.

Change recognizes what is trying to emerge, what is trying to grow, what is trying to be released. When observing Michelangelo's unfinished sculptures in Florence, Italy, one vividly sees figures trying to come forward from marble blocks. As one child said to his mother upon seeing the unfinished statue of Saint Matthew, "Mommy, Mommy, look! A man is trying to come out of that rock!" This is what planning is all about—seeing, naming, and acting upon what is emerging for an organization.

CHAPTER 8 Creating a Culture of Prophetic Planning and Effective Action

If I knew planning could be this productive and this much fun, I would be much more committed to planning efforts. A RECENT CLIENT

Culture of Planning THE PROPHETIC PLANNING JOURNEY is not always productive or fun. In fact, sometimes the best laid plans wind up on dusty shelves or lost somewhere in an office drawer. Creation of healthy attitudes toward the planning process itself is one important factor that makes a big difference in efforts that bear good fruit or initiatives that cost valuable time and money, but go nowhere.

In this chapter, we will explore the notion that one important task for leaders is to develop and nurture a positive and valued culture of planning, as well as effective implementation of the plans throughout their organizations. Some organizations have already developed a culture of planning throughout the various levels within the college or parish or nonprofit. Too many other organizations, however, do not have a positive and successful history with past planning initiatives or simply refuse to engage in any formal planning initiatives at all.

Some leaders seem more focused on maintaining the status quo or just surviving challenging times, while others are deeply committed to transforming their current reality into something new and creative for the common good in their own communities and beyond and to thriving in the midst of all the challenges and changes around them. Why is this so? Many times, leaders are unfamiliar with the key elements necessary for a healthy culture of planning to exist. Some of these elements include:

- Encouraging participation by shareholders throughout the organization and listening to their hopes and concerns in a genuine manner.

- Acting consistently as a learning organization willing to gain insight from past successes and struggles, while applying these insights to present realities and challenges.
- Promoting effective communication characterized by both honesty and respect.
- Having the courage to explore the tough questions and address any “elephants in the room,” so that all the critical issues are discussed.
- Creating multiple opportunities for forums or other approaches to bringing people together to explore the hopes, concerns, realities, and challenges facing the organization.

We will now explore the meaning of diversity, culture, and co-culture and what is required for organizations to embrace a culture of planning. We will then apply these understandings to the realities of planning, change, and conflict.

The Meaning of Culture

One way to approach an understanding of culture is through definitions of three distinct and related terms: diversity, culture, and co-culture.

Diversity is a word that means “all the ways we are different as human beings” and can be divided into external and internal differences. In general, external differences are the easiest to notice, while internal differences are the most significant. These differences can be summarized as follows:

- External differences: physical attributes, visible physical disabilities, dress, musical interests, speech patterns, mannerisms, etc.
- Internal differences: values, customs, history, personality, beliefs, place of origin, learning styles, world view, sexual orientation, various types of ability and disability, hobbies, habits, etc.

Eric Law, an Episcopalian priest and author of several books on diversity and culture, uses the image of an iceberg to illustrate the impact of external and internal differences. While the external differences or “above the surface” tip of the iceberg are forces to be reckoned with, it is what lies “below the surface” that has the greatest impact. When trust and respect for our differences exist to a high degree in an organization, they are experienced as sources of richness. Conversely, when trust and respect do not exist at all or only to a minimal degree, diversity or differences are experienced as threats to the status quo.

There are many definitions for the meaning of the word “culture.” One favorite is from A.J. Marsella: “Culture is a learned behavior which is transmitted from one generation to another for purposes of promoting individual and social survival, adaptation, growth, and development.” A shorthand way of thinking about culture is to think of it as “the way we do things around here.”

One organization may be very casual in how folks dress at work. For example, at Microsoft, blue jeans are often the norm, while coats and ties for men and dresses for women are rare. IBM or

the FBI, on the hand, are well known as workplaces where white shirts, coats, and ties are the standard attire for men, while women are expected to “dress up.” In similar fashion, some organizations maintain formal records of transactions from years and even decades past, while other organizations barely keep up with their recordkeeping responsibilities. While differences themselves are not good or bad, they are all significant and have much to teach us.

While genuine differences in organizations are definitely manifested in styles of dress or in a variety of work styles, they are profoundly represented in various approaches to planning. If represented on a continuum, they might range from “make it up and make it happen” planning on one end of the continuum to “periodic or every few years” planning in the middle of the continuum to “ongoing or a very consistent culture” of planning as learning on the other end of the continuum.

Some important questions are: How often is a culture of planning embraced by leaders and organizations, and what allows this culture of planning to thrive? Sadly, in our experience working with many leaders and organizations, far too many people have only a limited understanding of the word “culture” and do not view it as connected at all to planning. Rather, they understand culture as simply referring to one’s ethnic or racial heritage. While ethnicity is an important meaning of culture to be sure, it is in truth just one dimension of many.

This is why we have found much of value in learning from the work of L. Samovar and R. Porter. They have taken culture (“the way we do things around here”) and added to its meaning with a new term: co-culture. A co-culture involves groups or social communities exhibiting communication characteristics, perceptions, values, beliefs, and practices that are significantly different enough to distinguish them from the other groups, communities, and the dominant culture. Members of co-cultures also share some patterns and perceptions with the larger population.

This means that individuals have many co-cultures including ethnicity, age, birth order, vocation, hobbies, marital status, sexual orientation, and more. In the same way, organizations can be said to have many co-cultures as well, including leadership styles, age groups, professions, work styles, and more. When the meaning of co-cultures is applied to organizations, it broadens the approach in Prophetic Planning to include many different dimensions of organizational life.

To embrace an effective culture of planning, leaders and organizations must come to an understanding and commitment that planning is an ongoing reality. A strong organization will facilitate increasing levels of new learning through detailed strategies for both planning and implementation. In addition, through the regular monitoring of expected performance and of frequent evaluation of actual performance, new insights will emerge that then are funneled back into the next planning cycle.

Characteristics of Learning Communities

Learning communities are formed when organizations operate out of a culture of shared visions and talents. They become highly productive because they share talents and vision and develop a group synergy that is based on shared intelligence, convictions, and values. Learning communities form a secure home for a culture of planning.

Live by a Shared Vision

What is it that we want to look like in five years? If we hold a common vision—one that is energizing and satisfying—it will be easy for a group to coalesce around that forward movement. If an organization has not envisioned its future, that is the first step to creating a learning community. If it lives out its mission and values, what will it be in the future?

Engage in Positive Imaging

Seeing things in a positive light energizes learning communities. Reframing the way we look at things in a new light so the affirming aspects can influence our thinking is a distinguishing mark of a learning community. This is not “pie in the sky” thinking. Rather it is a focus on what is positive in any situation. Sometimes it means looking at the situation from the one thousand feet perspective, rather than the fifty feet perspective. Sometimes it means imagining what the situation could become in three to five years. An organization cannot even think about planning for the future until it can imagine, even in the wilderness zone, a constructive positive change.

Encourage Creative Thinking

Learning communities promote creative thinking. Does the group’s climate invite all to look at ways to do things better? How is creative thinking acknowledged and rewarded? To create a true learning community where Prophetic Planning can flourish, one needs to create an environment where it is safe to “think out loud.” Three things encourage creative thinking: 1) a structure for positive interactions; 2) an environment where members can solve their own problems; 3) a public acknowledgement of successful creative solutions to problems.

Support Boldness

“Safe” parishes, schools, colleges, and other organizations where risk-taking is not valued are doomed to stagnate and diminish. Learning organizations that embrace Prophetic Planning are ones where risk-taking is not only tolerated, it is encouraged. How can we be ten times bolder? This kind of thinking in learning communities unleashes potential. Sometimes individuals or small groups initiate the first bold thinking. To nurture and refine the boldness, they need a supportive community of co-learners with whom they can explore the boldness. Risk-taking is rooted in intuition and imagery. What would it look like if we were...? Learning communities support boldness, because no one person is the risk-taker—the community is. The community shines when successes occur and is supportive when boldness does not reach the desired results.

Six Insights That Contribute to a Culture of Planning

Believing in the significance of planning as learning and committing to an ongoing process of planning and learning is a critical first step.

1. Recognizing the need for good communication and opportunities for sharing on a significant level help form communities supportive of the culture of planning.
2. There is power in differences. Dealing with differences by showing respect and encouraging various perspectives can lead to dynamic and creative ways of working together for the good of the organization.
3. Using co-cultural mapping particularly focused on the organization can begin to build bonds of understanding, acceptance of differences, and increasing levels of trust and respect.
4. Forming learning communities helps guarantee a continual culture of planning.
5. Building on the strengths of the past gives energy for the future, while considering opportunities to promote healing and reconciliation is a genuine gift available throughout a planning process.
6. Reflecting on all that the people in the organization share in common gives a healthy foundation to addressing the important things that may be experienced as challenging differences.

As important as planning is to an organization in moving through the wilderness zone and into a real and meaningful new beginning, it remains at its best a crucial means to accomplishing a larger end. The end is most often experienced as a creative and dynamic implementation process. The true goal of any effective planning process is not a “perfect” action plan, but rather an action plan that empowers leaders and their organizations to be more faithful and effective in living out their mission and values. This happens in Prophetic Planning processes, while there is also a commitment to achieve multiple goals and live into one’s vision that is prophetic, “ten times bolder,” and inspiring.

The above has been taken from:

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Mark
Clarke
February
2016



**Discerning a future
based on a smaller
Community**

Discerning a future based on a smaller Community

We live in a time and era of unparalleled change both in society and in religious life. This means that leaders of religious Congregations face a unique call to create a shared direction amidst the back drop, internally, of an aging community and fewer new members, and externally, of an interconnected, and a diverse technological and global age. At the same time, statistically, newer members are becoming more ethnically diverse and search for an ever-deepening spirituality and a sense of community. The ministry focus of these members tends to be more about being on mission with those on the margins than stepping into traditional sponsored ministries. These newer members come with a new set of dreams and different questions that both complement and challenge traditional religious life.

These demographic changes contribute to a significant paradigm shift that is even more extensive if you include the influence of the millennial generation. Previously, religious life was shaped and framed by congregations comprised of larger numbers. With greater numbers, members were able to form bonds of connection and peer groups primarily within the congregations. Congregational resources were adequate to facilitate a future stemming from a wealth of contacts, financial resources, property and membership. With this capacity, both mental models and world views were shaped primarily by the congregation. Because of this functional independence, there was less need to forge a relationship across the larger world of religious or with the laity.

In contrast to this, in the current paradigm being forged, newer members are often formed within a model of inter-province and sometimes inter-congregational communities. This very different formational experience leads them to be more comfortable and open to collaboration with the larger congregation or among congregations . This is a part of a new mental model as identities are being shaped across the congregations rather than predominately in an individual congregation. Among these newer members, there is often a greater openness to explore and capacity to recognize that many of the solutions for both community life and ministry will happen in collaboration across the spectrum of religious life and outside entities.

In many ways, this reality is one of two “competing” mental models and world views. Each framework has its own set of assumptions and perception of religious life. These differences create tension around how to solve the critical issues facing the congregation. The desire of younger members to be on mission is often challenged by the overwhelming administrative needs, commitment to sponsored ministries and health care needs of the congregation.

This means congregations, of necessity, are being called by God to remain rooted in their charism while at the same time create a courageous vision based on these complex, emerging realities. Although we have realized the impact of the demographics for decades, we have now

reached a tipping point that calls for action. In coming together to create a courageous vision, it is significant to note that the newer members remain a minority and will continue to for at least the next decade. Most members entered and have been formed during a time when communities were still much larger. This difference creates a unique tension within the discernment process for creating a future. The tension of those who were formed in one worldview and those formed in another is augmented. Decisions and choices will be made using the current mental models often held by a majority that given age and health will not feel the impact of their decisions around community life and what it means to be on mission in a smaller community.

The challenge:

Many congregations have addressed their property, healthcare and sponsored ministry issues from the lens of diminishment. Yet, the questions remain, what does it mean to live quality community life and what does it mean to be on mission as a smaller community? This is the courageous visionary question of our time.

The reality has continued to unfold over the past decades and has now reached its tipping point. This calls for a discernment process grounded in three essential elements:

- Creation of a safe container for generative and contemplative dialogue
- Transformative discernment that implores the creation of a “Courageous Shared Vision” based on being a smaller community
- Emergent and strategic framework that is adaptable in these changing times

This is not a new invitation from God. Rather it calls the congregation to embrace what many know to be their own foundational story many of which are based on risk-taking, sacrifice and immergence in the mystery of the unknown. The majority of congregations began with a few sisters filled with passion and missionary zeal leaving their homeland with limited resources to come to the wilderness of the United States. These courageous first members through radical detachment created a new vision and dream while remaining rooted in their charism.

In the book **Clay Water Brick**, the author, Jessica Jackley speaks about the ability to be an entrepreneur. She shared a quote from Howard Stevenson, a business professor at Harvard, who stated, “Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity without regard to resources currently controlled.” She went on to say, “In other words, entrepreneurship is the ability to pursue opportunity without money, or permission, or pedigree or most other means that make the pursuit easier” (2015, p. xxiv). This leads one to think of the many risk-taking women who have lived this call in the founding of the religious communities that are spread throughout the landscape of the United States and the world.

Another powerful image is the parable of the mustard seed. The gospel of Mark states, “It is like a mustard seed that when it is sown in the ground is the smallest of all the seeds on the earth. But once it is sown, it springs up and becomes the largest of plants and puts forth large branches, so that the birds in the air can dwell in the shade” (4:30-32). The early communities dreamed of and with limited resources planted many seeds of faith. They were called hospitals, schools and social service agencies. The results have been astounding. For example, the current expanse of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, the sisters would be amazed if they saw the fruit of their healthcare vision and the scope of services on the campus impacting wellness globally.

A Pivotal Question:

The question must be asked, what is the invitation by God today as congregations move toward being smaller communities? Perhaps it is to envision a dream that future generations will be able to take for granted. This pilgrimage of discovery will demand a deepened spirituality and the creation of a safe container that allows the members to enter into transformative dialogue in order to explore difficult issues. This dialogue is the foundation for creating a courageous vision and establishing an adaptable framework to embrace God’s radical call to act in the name of the gospel.

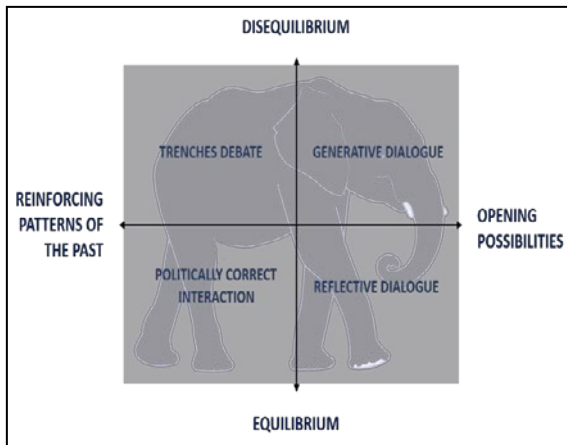
Creation of a Safe Container:

The ability for leaders and religious congregations to create a safe container is essential for generative and reflective dialogue. With the generational shift in society and religious congregations, we have a range of cultures and experiences that increase the diversity of opinions and insights. These will need to be blended and sorted out in order to create a bold shared future.

This means at the center of the transformative discernment process there is a need to focus on three essential elements: a deepening of the collective communal spirituality; establishing a generative and reflective dialogue practice; and recognizing the call to embrace a courageous vision that will mean a deeper sense of resurrection in the life of the community.

When we enter into dialogue about challenging topics with no easy solutions, it is important to recognize this invites us into a transformative process. These types of conversations will ask each of us individually and collectively to be aware of our entrenched beliefs. At the same time, we are invited to be open to the reshaping of individual community beliefs through compassionate and transparent dialogue. Many of our beliefs or thought patterns have become so habitual that the words fly out of our mouths without conscious thought. In dialogue, one of the important elements of establishing a safe container is the ability to become aware of these thoughts in ourselves and others in a non-judgmental manner. This awareness takes prayer and inner work both on the individual and communal level. Being present to resistive elements with compassion and kindness heals past hurts in a way that allows the entire membership to effectively seek common ground.

In the book **Adaptive Capacity** author Juan Carlos Eichholz speaks to the challenge of creating generative and reflective dialogue. The graphic below depicts the tendency to reinforce the past while in the same moment being open to new possibilities. The challenge facing communities is to enter into the mystery of recognizing both the gifts and shadow of our current story and through dialogue create a daring vision. Often there is a deep desire for a different future while at the same time being engrained and stuck in our old mental model. These patterns can block us from entering the resurrection process of dying and rising to an often hidden and mysterious future.

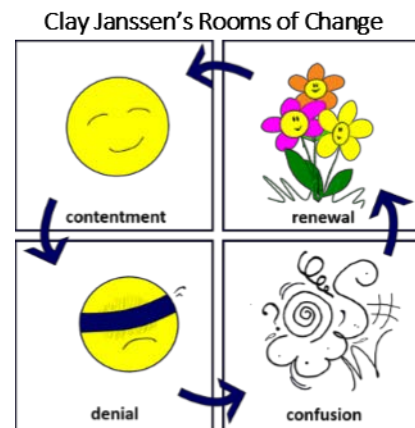


It has been stated that we avoid elephants in the room. Yet, these elephants when opened can offer the seeds of individual and collective change. They are the kernels of the underlying truth. They are most often avoided at all cost; yet in the exploration of these emotional realities we are invited into the truth of the resurrection, new life and the ongoing revelation of God's call. The more the elephants remain buried or negated, the more we continue to live in Good Friday or the grief of Holy Saturday blocking the new life of resurrection.

Graphic adapted (Eichholz, 2014 p. 108)

Change Process

In his model, *Four Rooms of Change*, Clay Janssen explores the change process as moving from contentment to denial to confusion to renewal. It is important for the community to take all of the critical issues and explore where there is contentment, denial, confusion and to explore the possibility of doors opening to renewal. This is a profound spiritual path, not for the faint of heart. The challenge is to enter into and drink deeply of the Paschal Mystery to experience the dying and grieving and to be surprised by the joy of resurrection. All of this demands a powerful sense of "kenosis" letting go of previous constructs, habitual patterns and practices that no longer work. This often dark, murky path is the very foundation for the light of Christ to open hearts to renewal and transformation that fosters a passionate shared direction.



Graphic adapted (Weisbord and Janoff, 2015, P. 34)

Transformative Discernment:

Transformative Discernment is steeped in the scriptures and foundational to the spiritual journey. It is accepting God's open invitation to enter into the mystery of this moment in our collective history. In the process of exploring God's call, it means being vulnerable and detached from the outcome as we enter uncharted waters leaving the comfortable and familiar.

Henri Nouwen defines the purpose of discernment as "to know God's will, that is to find, accept and affirm the unique way in which God's love is manifest in our life. To know God's will is to actively claim an intimate relationship with God, in the context of which we discover our deepest vocation and the desire to live it to the fullest" (2013, P.8). What Nouwen describes is not a passive submission, rather a profound penetrating of God's mystery intersecting with each historical moment of community life.

As we discern the movement to a smaller community, it calls for entering into the discovery of a new paradigm for religious life. The transformative discernment process asks us to reflect and discern three important questions:

- What does it mean to have quality community life as we continually become a smaller community?
- What does it mean to live our charism and be on mission as we have fewer and fewer active members?
- How does our charism continue with a charism family and partnerships that may or may not include vowed religious?

As the congregation ponders these three questions, it will be challenged to transform the very systems that previously created a profound sense of purpose and identity. This is a difficult path given the majority of current members have been formed and shaped in this religious identity. The voyage is to treasure the gifts of an ending era while taking intentional and timely steps that allow for the unfolding of a new call. It is important to recognize that these questions need to be addressed from a new framework while at the same time remaining historically rooted in one's charism.

The discernment should reimagine the congregation's story and its myths as it establishes a shared direction for a new era in religious life. The discernment process invites us to hold this emotional path in tension while continually making the choice to move forward. The respecting of both the emotions and need for action is not easy and will require entering even more deeply into contemplative prayer, detachment and action.

Thus, discerning the congregation's future requires being grounded in compassion and empathy to unleash the passionate energy needed for a shared direction. This sense of connection allows the above questions to be unwrapped from a listening heart guided by the

spirit to make choices and act. The collective opportunity to act means entering into a mixture of fear and anticipation as the divine opens to us what it means to be a vibrant smaller community. We must live the African Proverb, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together” (Braun and Adler, 2014, p. 218).

Courageous vision:

The development of a courageous vision means answering this scripture passage from Matthew 20:22 “Can you drink the cup?” In creating such a gutsy vision, the collective body must seek to enter the mystery of change and conversion.

The development of such a vision is a call to action by entering deeply into the collective heart space and choosing a radical yet rooted sense of purpose. In the book, **Promise of a Pencil**, Adam Braun shared this statement from Roy Chambers that speaks to the profound gift of creating such a vision. “Think how the world will change in the next ten years and how you and your resources and networks will change within it, use that as a compass to determine how you can affect as many people as possible” (2014, p. 218). It will mean acting long before the group has total agreement. This will be uncomfortable for communities used to making decisions by consensus. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first female elected head of state in Africa said, “If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough” (Braun and Adler, 2014, p. 244).

In order to create such a bold vision, it will mean risking and acting even though the path is not clear. This allows each action to become a learning that offers guidance to the next steps. It will mean having the courage to test pilot thus allowing the vision to emerge. This emergent model will ask the group to let go quickly of prototypes that have no possibility of working and rapidly building upon those seedling that show promise. The road will not be easy because the tendency is to wait for everyone to be ready and on board. Waiting for each member to come to a moment of readiness, can at times leads to paralysis, not making decisions, and missing opportunities that can enhance the congregation's future. There is a delicate balance between being sensitive to the needs of the whole, and letting the congregation become mired in endless conversations and inaction.

Adaptable Future:

As the community continues to become smaller, it is part of an interconnected global and technological world with porous boundaries that opens us to disruptive change at warp speed. This rapidity of change means that we need to have a discernment and implementation process that remains adaptable. The idea of creating a visionary direction for three to five years is no longer a reality in this world environment. As a congregation, in order to participate and share our charism in this climate, we need to create plans that can readily adapt, that is, be held lightly and modified as needed. Furthermore, it means inviting our extended charism family into this process for broader, more relevant thinking.

The world we live in today is exploring the increased use of robots in schools, cars that self-drive, and space exploration for ordinary citizens. These inventions will continue to transform our worldview, our spiritual understanding, and will redefine what it means to be in relationship.

Yet, the majority of the sister's roots were not grounded in the technological age. This in itself will present challenges as they engage with Generation X, Millennials and their children who are technologically natives. We are already experiencing the generational differences in how to solve critical societal issues. Generation X and Millennials are bringing fresh perspectives to solving social issues such as the environment. In addition, they are exploring nontraditional collaborative models between business, government, church and nonprofits to address the issues of poverty. Finally, they are seeking new philanthropic models such as the Zuckerberg's, millennials and founders of Facebook, who created an LLC rather than a traditional foundation so they can fund nonprofits, invest the money, and be part of policy debates. This is one example how they have grown up and are comfortable in an adaptable and changing world. At the same time, these younger generations are moving to have dialogue that transcends gender, faith, sexuality and culture. They are redefining themselves as global citizens.

This is where the extended Charism Family can have a vital role. They offer the smaller community resources and connections while being grounded in the charism. These connections can open doors for potential partnership and resources as they deepen their spiritual connections through walking more closely in prayer and mission with the community. An important part of any discernment and shaping of a courageous vision is answering how to engage this web of relationships both on the spiritual and mission level.

In many ways, the pioneer story offers insight into this question. The dependency of the early sisters on others created a deep sense of mutuality, creation of a gutsy direction and spiritual companionship. These relationships will need to be redefined for this era as we move to smaller, vibrant congregations.

Pope Francis is calling all people to walk with their brother and sisters globally as people who exemplify gospel love and compassion. The Pope stated in *Evangelii Gaudium*: "If we allow doubts and fears to dampen our courage, instead of being creative we will remain comfortable and make no progress what so ever. In this case we will not take an active part in historical processes, but become mere onlookers as the church gradually stagnates" (129). So in order to have a vibrant charism it means being adaptable and flexible as the world evolves through increased partnership and connection with the Charism Family.

Summary:

At this time, we are increasingly called to become visionary believers in an unseen future and to step forward with openness to the path in faith. This pilgrimage will demand a well-formed safe container that allows honest and trusting dialogue. This allows us to enter fully into the mystery of God's call in the wake of these changing times by taking bold action in collaborative participation with others.

This level of discernment and reflection by its very essence means deepening contemplative prayer, intellectual rigor, commitment and detachment. The early pioneer sisters are a model for entering into the unknown to find seedlings of truth and visions that over time have been taken for granted. This radical summons invites each generation into renewing the meaning of religious life for its time. Again, God is asking us to envision a future that will, in truth, be shaped by a smaller, pioneer community and by a new generation who is bringing new insights for these times. This invites us to respond with courage, hope and a creativity born of faith and holding deeply to charism of the congregation. This path will demand a radical placement of trust in Christ and trust in each other.

As Lin YuTang, Chinese writer and inventor states, "Hope is like a road in the country; there was never a road, but when many people walk on it, the road comes into existence" (Jackley, 2015, p. 184).

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Discerning a future based on a smaller Community
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**Building a
Future by
Collaboration**

Building a Future by Collaboration



At this moment, religious communities are doing a balancing act between dealing with the challenges of a diminishing population and envisioning a future. Each of these realities creates a tension as enormous as a tsunami. Community leaders are pulled between the limited numbers and aging population while trying to create a direction that fosters the charism for these times. A critical challenge is finding opportunities to increase capacity while walking a tightrope of loss and direction setting. In a pioneering age, collaboration is a central component to traverse the white waters rafting of change.

As the world becomes more complex, the solutions become more and more dependent on cooperation and collaboration. It becomes vital for religious communities to create a collaborative framework that allows them to participate in solving society's most pressing challenges. Every congregation has the ingredients for creating a strong, collaborative model due to their extensive eco-system. For this to happen, communities must establish a mutual and interdependent relationship with others. This is critical as religious life returns to a

more pioneer existence of continual transformation.

Ilia Delio states in her book ***Making All Things New***, "I propose that open-systems theology begin with the book of nature, that is insights from modern science, as well as culture, economics, music, shopping malls and Wall Street; a theology that begins with learning and experience rather than teaching; with creativity and imagination rather than a fixed set of principles; a theology where people continually expand their capacity to create the world they truly desire; ...and where people are encouraged to see the whole of life together rather than as competing tribes."¹

Collaboration is not an abstract concept. It is a core principle. It is the fundamental stance that undergirds the ability to think of expansion rather than a limiting perspective. There is a vital need to encompass collaboration in its many forms of philanthropy, services, sharing of influential contacts as well as the alternative use of buildings. Too often, collaboration is pursued in a comfortable silo with those who share our charism or beliefs. Expressing this collaborative framework within this silo creates partnerships that fit within the group's comfort zone but leaves little room for constructive or meaningful change. Collaboration requires us to step outside our comfort zone and risk change.

Today, we are called to go beyond the comfort of who we know and what we believe. We must embrace the thought of partnering with organizations like private business, foundations, non-profits and

¹Ilia Delio, *Making All Things New* Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness, (Orbis Books 2015), Print. 145

governments. Together, we must actively engage with these organizations to solve many of the local, national and global concerns. Social responsibility is the call of all individuals and groups.

Collaboration is a holy and collective pilgrimage of transformative presence in an ever-changing world.



It must be embraced by a radical predisposition that implores the religious congregation to create a vision that has collaboration as one of its core foundations.

The community through having an intentional collaborative framework, opens itself to a range of diverse ideas and activities which generates greater opportunities to accomplish the vision. Simultaneously, cooperation with others will often challenge the group's pre-existing assumptions.

When a congregation enters a planning process, we must ask the question, "With whom can we partner?". Collaboration expands the religious community's relationships and options to participate in solving climate change, immigration, human trafficking and other pressing

societal issues. At a fundamental level, collaboration opens the heart and soul of a community. It enriches relationships through working with different cultures, ideas and exploring more expansive options.

The creation of a collaborative community has three important qualities, which are addressed below. These qualities are:

Using collaboration to focus on assets rather than diminishment

Engaging a larger eco-system

Exploring collaboration as a spiritual practice

Collaboration to Focus on Assets Rather than Diminishment

There is a tendency for a group in crisis to focus on their limitations and problems rather than assets. This dilemma is a common tendency for religious communities, as they are confronted with very real issues of an aging population and consequences for the whole. Khzir Khan in his book, *An American Story*, speaks to focusing on assets. *"Always try to comfort others, even if you are suffering. Offer compassion to your neighbor, to the stranger, to the roiling, boisterous masses of humanity. Share your gifts with the world, no matter how meager those gifts may."*² Kahn recognizes that no matter how difficult the situation, we still have a contribution to offer.

Frans De Wall writes *"Mutual cooperation is marked by working together toward an obvious goal that is advantageous to all and depends on well-coordinated action*

²Khzir Khan, "An American Family" A Memoir of Hope and Sacrifice, (Penguin Random House LLC, 2017), Print.

*and shared payoffs.*³ Cooperation is a fundamental building block in creating quality community life. The common good is often diminished in our individualistic culture. Thus, cooperation and collaboration will open our hearts to see our role in creating and enhancing the quality of life for an increasingly interdependent world.

We must ask the question, “What does it mean to be a collaborative group in an evolving society?”. Dave Gray in his book ***The Connected Company*** describes it as being “made out of people for complexity, for productivity, and for longevity. Most important, a connected company must be able to respond dynamically to change-to learn and adapt in an uncertain, ambiguous and constantly evolving environment. A connected company is a learning

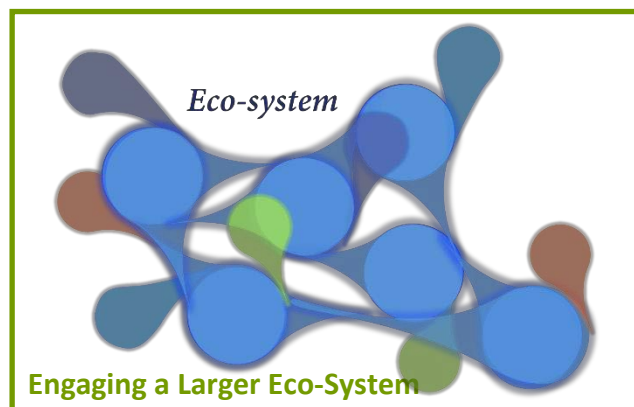
company.”⁴ Reread this phrase and change the word *company* to *religious community* or *congregation*. Ponder and ask yourself, “Where is our congregation in relation to this definition?”.

In these times, collaboration is essential to create a more expansive way of sharing the charism in a shifting world.

It is life-changing when a religious congregation explores the world from a stance of being in communion with its eco-system.

The depth, quality, and expansiveness of these relationships are truly impressive. As one uncovers this gift with its new possibilities, ways of being interdependent enhance and enriches the charism.

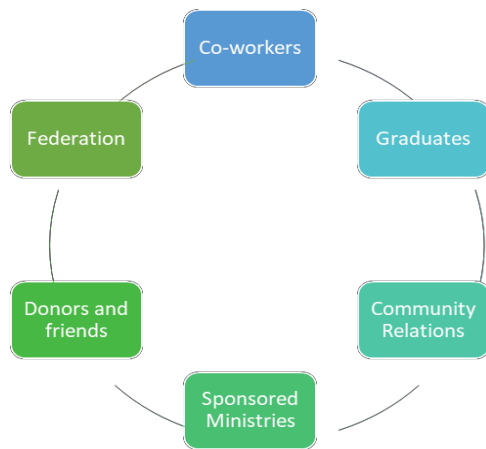
Far too often, we remain frozen or paralyzed in our current reality of limitations. This paralysis blocks an openness to exploring new ways of collaboration that often holds hidden answers. View these limitations as doorways to working with others to achieve a social good that neither could do alone.



A powerful tool used in moving from a diminishment to an expansive model is called “asset mapping”. This process enables an organization to explore its assets. One of the most poignant assets is the long-term relationship with co-workers, alumni, community leaders, donors and friends, etc. In other words, the most powerful asset a community has is the relationship with other people. The simple graphic below begins to name some of these relationships. Religious have powerful connections based on their long-term credibility and commitment to solving the social challenges of their time.

³Delio 52

⁴Dave Gray, *The Connected Company*, (O'Reilly Media Inc. Sebastopol 2017), Print.



When a group explores the vastness and gift of their eco-system, it automatically triggers asking the “what if” question.

For example:

- What if congregations with schools in a similar locale collaborate around new educational models?
- What if we connect with national organizations to expand our outreach to immigrants?
- What if regional congregations leverage their philanthropic contributions to meeting needs of the marginalized?
- What if the congregation collaborates with the local Mosque, Jewish Community or LGBT groups to deal with a pertinent social or discrimination issue?

Where and how do we begin? This is the most often expressed question. The paralysis of this first step is very real. One technique is a human design approach. This model focuses on creating a prototype or experience that allows one to learn and mature with a concept and discover the outcomes. Too often we become trapped by the perceived magnitude of this

challenge. The human design model offers a way based on four steps:

Research the need
 Create a Prototype
 Test the prototype
 Build and scale

The group exercise below explores this methodology.

Choose one social issue you want to impact.

Select one of the above eco-system example clusters and explore how collaborating with this group could create greater opportunities to address this issue.

After exploring the potential partnership, create an action plan for the next 90-days. Focus on the two first steps of the human design model listed above.

After 90 days, assess what has been learned from these collaboration efforts and create another 90-day plan.

This model creates a framework in which to begin. Keep in mind that in the early stages of this process, the learning and insights that are leveraged are equally as important as the outcome.

Exploring Collaboration as a Spiritual Practice

“As the world grows more complex, time more rapid, and needs more numerous, we have discovered that we can only meet the challenges we face when all the gifts given by our creator God are unleashed to work

in harmony for the common good."⁵ This is one of the most important and essential spiritual calls of our time - to expand our ability to cooperate, collaborate and exist in communion with each other for the common good.

Collaboration is rooted in the fiber and texture of our sacred texts. In Acts: Chapter 5, when the Spirit came upon the people "*each one heard them speaking in his own*

language."⁶ In One Corinthians 12: 4-6: "*There are different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit there are different form of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.*"⁷ These passages call us to contemplate the abundant riches God offers in solving today's challenges.

The call to increased collaboration opens us to new opportunities, while at the same time triggers our collective biases, prejudices, and tribal nature. This tension calls us to share our gifts and reconciles the ways our shadow blocks us from engaging others. Collaborative relationships by their very essence call us into the spiritual journey. It is an invitation to embrace communion with others through cooperation that forms a healthier world.

Collaboration is a providential means to explore cooperative solutions to social

issues like immigration, environment, and poverty. Through being more collaborative, congregations and communities alike will encounter a deep sense of connection. This deeper participation will enrich and expand the charism in our world. As a congregation experiences this gift, it will lead to a process of collective transformation. This quote from by an Aboriginal Activist Group, in Queensland, speaks to the spiritual journey of collaboration. "*If you come to help me you are wasting your time. If you come because your liberation is bound up with mine let us work together.*"⁸

These three qualities are a discipline and spiritual practice. It is not a checklist. As an old medieval story goes: *A traveler came across three stonecutters. "What are you doing?" the stonecutter asked the first woman "I am making a living," the woman said. "And what are you doing?" The traveler asked the second woman and the woman said, "I am practicing becoming the best stonecutter in Europe." Then the traveler asked the third laborer. And the woman answered, "I am building a cathedral.*"⁹ In today's world, organizations and religious congregations cannot journey alone. We must have cooperation and collaboration to create the cathedrals of our time.

⁵ Loughlan Sofield, ST and Carroll Juliano, SHCJ Collaboration, Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry, (Ave Maria Press Inc 2000), Print. Foreword

⁶ NAB

⁷ NAB

⁸ A fierce Heart, Finding Strength, Courage and Wisdom in Any Moment, (Spring Washam 2017) Print. 76

⁹ Joan Chittister, Following the Path, The search for a Life of Passion, Purpose, and Joy, (Crown Publishing Group 2012), Print. 161

Building a Future on Collaboration



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