

## Fall 2017 Leaven Group Responses

*The following includes the collated responses from all of the Fall 2017 U.S. Leaven Groups. Some groups requested that the responses go to all Sisters. The following is the compilation of the responses. Please note: where copy appears in **boldface** in this document, the **boldfacing** came directly from certain Leaven Groups.*

### VOCATIONS and WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

1. We need a conversation together (Associates also) about inviting women to become Sisters and the development of welcoming communities to accept them.
2. A discussion around vocations. Will we continue to invite vocations? If so, what are we inviting women to regarding ministry expectations, community living, age gap in members?
3. How are we living and what are we doing that is different from individuals not living in community? How does our lifestyle attract women? Or does it?
4. Should we continue to invite young women to join our community? If yes, what do we need to do as a community? If no, what do we need to do as a community?
5. Other questions to ask, ponder, discuss, answer, and then do:
  - Is it time to consider merging with other communities? If this is not an option for us, it might be good to get some information about this.
6. **A community-wide discussion of the topic of new vocations to the community and ways we can be a more welcoming community.** Other ways we might look at vocations and different levels of membership. A consideration of whether we should cease to accept new vocations.
7. **Conversation about Vocations:**
  - a. Talk about how we are inviting young people to join us. Ask people outside the community what we could do to invite. Talk to lots of groups and a variety of people.
  - b. Do we want to continue inviting women to join us as we age? What are we inviting them to? Is our current formation program adequate?
8. Accept the challenge of future vocations: extend the invitation to different nationalities (African, Filipino, Mexican American), etc. Continue the work with the Vincentian Family network. Provide more connection with USM and CRKs City students.
9. How do we continue to have conversations regarding enriching a culture of vocations in our local communities to invite, welcome, support, and nurture our newer members? Are we inviting others to join us and creating vibrant communities that sustain them?
  - What about our lifestyle is not appealing to youth? Should we be looking at our lifestyle?
10. Revisit the report of the responses of young people on why they are not entering religious life. What can we discern from that report?
11. We need to have conversations about what shape religious formation should take to better prepare candidates for the way in which we live and minister today.

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### VINCENTIAN FAMILY AND CHARITY FEDERATION

1. We need a conversation about collaboration possibilities with the Vincentian family and Charity Federation. Example – What are others doing to "Welcome the Stranger" (Immigrants)? Associates should be involved, also, so they can contribute too.
2. Influenced by the *Symposium in Rome*, our discussion led to the question of how can we be challenged to collaborate, and be engaged more actively, with all branches and members of the Vincentian Family as well as other groups, organizations and institutions outside the Vincentian Family who share our same goals and vision on the local, national and international level?
3. At the Vincentian Family Gathering last summer in San Antonio, there were many young people deeply committed to ministries within the Vincentian Charism. The spirit of Vincent is alive and well. Colleges with the Vincentian spirit are instilling this charism into their staffers who work with students to live this spirit.

### SANCTUARY MOVEMENT and DACA

1. We need a report back to the Community on where we are on issues such as the Sanctuary movement, DACA, etc. Seems like temporary asylum might be ending for some parents and they might have immediate needs and legal help where we might assist.  
Where are we on the theme of sanctuary, which we discussed at length previously?
2. Study of our being a sanctuary for various groups.  
A process is needed whereby the SCL Community can respond to critical needs as they present themselves. For example, the increasing numbers of global refugees presents a challenge whereby we could make statements or take action in a shorter amount of time.

### MINISTRIES

1. We need to have informed conversations around the social, political, religious and economic context in which we are called to live and minister.
2. Form a task force of sisters from the entire community to re-envision our sponsored works.
  - i. We may need to educate the community on what each sponsored work does and what their major issues are at this time.
  - ii. May need to have separate groups for each sponsored work.
3. What are the bridges we need to build that will bring us together and facilitate our growth?
  - i. What are the ministries to which we are being called today?
  - ii. How might we multiply our presence, making the most of who we are?
4. Critical needs are the health needs round us, especially those of our elderly. We need to exert more effort to make life better for our elderly, our congregational elderly as well as those in communities in which we serve. Perhaps we could better utilize our gifts, resources, and creative thinking in how we might better accomplish this.

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### CHARISM

1. We had great energy around the charism, which is alive with our varied ministries. We suggest that we have conversations around our ministries and how the charism is lived today and into the future. This will empower us to strengthen our personal and communal gifts as we collaborate, share and respond to the needs of NOW.
2. We encourage all of us to be more aware of how we witness, plant seeds, and/or invite people to live the Vincentian charism. We cannot just “let it happen,” rather we must make conscious efforts to move forward with open hearts and minds.
3. Ask those who are poor what they need. Ask questions about people and their lives. Don’t assume.
4. At the Vincentian Family Gathering last summer in San Antonio, there were many young people deeply committed to ministries within the Vincentian Charism. The spirit of Vincent is alive and well. Colleges with the Vincentian spirit are instilling into their staffers who work with students to live this spirit.
5. Who are we now? How do we express our charism now? Who do we want to be? How do we live community?

### FUTURE

1. We need to be purposefully intergenerational and inclusive in conversations around the future of our charism. These need to be mutual: older to newer, newer to older, adult to adult. These conversations need to be facilitated, deep, significant, and enduring.
2. We have been blessed with multiple resources. How will we continue to share them in the future?
3. Rather than looking at numbers and statistics to define our current reality, let’s name our personal and unique gifts which are our real assets as we live into our future.
4. What is our relationship with and commitment to the Charity Federation? What about the Vincentian Family? What about our Associates? What is our plan together for the future?
5. We also need to have discussions about our property and possible plans for the future. We realize we have had discussion around several of these topics but we strongly believe it is time to make decisions and do something.
6. How do we encourage sisters who form new ideas and dreams? Especially the younger sisters?
7. An analysis of Mother House, Ross Nursing, Marillac Retreat Center, and use of SCL owned properties using a model for future planning, such as a Business Plan, which includes input from all Sisters, flow charts, financial projections, people projections, etc., in order to develop a 5 year action plan that ALL Sisters can approve and accept. Plan should be updated yearly.

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- SCL Council invites ALL SCLS to participate in discussion, analysis and decision making of the use of all our properties within a time frame beginning in 2018.
  - SCLS meet
  - Discuss results from Leaven Groups
  - Prepare questionnaires/send/compile within time frame
  - Repeat as necessary within time frame
  - Submit recommendations to Leaven Assembly within time frame
8. Study our local properties in the near future (3-5 years) and later future (5-10 years). (Discussion included preservation of land, of the natural beauty of the campus, and/or provision of hospitality to those in future whose needs may dictate our sharing.
9. Have honest conversations about our future:
- Length of terms of officers and community director
  - Start talking about joining with another community
  - Look at needed changes to our constitution
- Since we are all aging and many of us are the age to be coming to the Mother House and/or Ross Hall, is it time for us to evaluate, by those currently living there, to what others are coming home? Are there adequate opportunities offered for sisters to be heard on matters concerning their lives?
10. Are lines of communication open and lines of responsibility sufficiently clear at both the Mother House and Ross Hall?  
Have these lines been evaluated by the sisters that to be sure they are of service to the residents?
- a. Not a question for the total community, but an observation that there is no one from the Mother House on the Governance Committee.
11. SCLs have a history of coming together to face issues together in sharing ideas and prayer. Sometimes we wonder how decisions are made but we realize we have all come together to find the answers to challenges we face. For instance, as we were dealing with resolving the challenges of our hospitals, we prayed, collaborated with others, worked hard, and trusted in our leaders.
12. It was suggested that whenever we have meetings together that we build the meetings around the Mass as it should be the integral part of our deliberations, not tacked on or cut out of the schedule.
13. **New uses for our resources and tangible assets, such as our Mother House property, for greater living of our SCL mission.** New ways our property might also be used by lay groups or individual people.

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### ASSOCIATES

1. We need a conversation about collaboration possibilities with the Vincentian family and Charity Federation. Example – what others are doing to “Welcome the Stranger” (Immigrants)? Associates should be involved, also, so they can contribute too.
2. We see an urgent need to include SCLAs in our conversations as we affirm our evolving charism and re-envision or ministry. How can we do this?
3. **A deepening of personal and communal spiritual life of the sisters so as to enter more fully into authentic communal discernment.** How to bring each other to a greater level of transparency and vulnerability in our prayer together. How faith-sharing groups can better meet the spiritual needs of the sisters and include associates and other lay people.
4. **Conversations about finding ways to be supportive of programs with young people.**
  - a. Support the good works of the SCL Associates
  - b. Focus on getting young people into the SCL Associate Program
  - c. How can we be in relationship with young people who could join us in ministry or our works.

### GOVERNANCE

1. So we perceive the open system concept evident in the external arenas but lacking the internal structures and governance of our communal lives. There is an obvious inconsistency.
2. Openness is more than just words but includes an approach that invites input and genuine consultation prior to the decision making of recognized authority.
3. We appear to be hanging on to past structures:
  - a. Mother House Coordinator – authority is not commensurate with the position.
  - b. Lay Assistant to the Mother House Coordinator was not presented for input prior to the implemented decision.
  - c. There were no Mother House/Ross Hall Sisters or Sisters who regularly eat at the Mother House on the Committee to determine the food service contract.
4. Our experience of governance under the new council comes across as more of a business/hierarchical model as opposed to the relational/participate mode of the previous council. We feel the relational model allows more capacity for the fullness of the Spirit to guide us toward the future to which we are being called. We would like to return to a more relational model.
5. We need to be more involved, we need a strong commitment to do this rather than having things from the top down – Xavier involved the entire community in decisions and with our

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smaller size, this is again possible. At the spring Leaven Groups, seek more commitment for this.

### ASSEMBLY

1. We would like a flexible agenda for the summer Leaven Assembly so that as new insights arise, we can share them. This Leaven Group supports the concept of an open system. We saw it manifested in the Community meeting this summer in the presentation by the Leadership Council and in the process in which we were invited to make personal commitments to the identified critical needs.
2. Conversation: Internal open system concept and decision-making processes.
3. We felt constrained in the way our Leaven Group, Leaven Assembly and our last Chapter meetings were structured. The agendas seemed to be very cut and dry and not open to anything different than what the committees designed. We would like to see breathing room for spontaneity in response to the working of the Holy Spirit in our gatherings.
4. What is the fear, energy, vision, resistance, excitement that is part of confronting our current intersection? What is the comfortable and safe path and what is the more risky and challenging path? Revisiting the Council Presentation of: "At the Crossroads" with time for community RESPONSE may be of benefit.
5. More discussion on open systems, what they mean and their impact on crossroad moments.
6. Use the process that was used for the 400<sup>th</sup> celebration of St Vincent that involved the entire community to deal with other issues and decisions.
7. We would like to see everything that was turned in by all groups – not just on the web, but emailed to everyone.

### COMMUNITY

1. As we consider the size and age of our community, we believe it imperative to have an in depth discussion about community, what it means, and how we define and live out community today. Is it time to seriously rethink community living configurations? Might we form living situations that include students, Sisters, Associates – a mix of individuals living together for a year or two? A nice place to experiment would be on the Saint Mary campus. Individuals could come together to live for a year or two with specific goals and intentions. We also believe we need to ask, ponder, discuss, and answer the following questions and then, as best we can, live into the answers.
2. We need to have serious conversations about the imperative of a simpler lifestyle (individually and communally).
3. **Conversations Related to what we want to do/who we want to be:**  
Know what we want to do, where we want to go as individuals and a community to get us out of the box.

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- a. How do we get out of our comfortable lifestyle?
  - b. How do we work together, pray together, and challenge ourselves to do something for others?
  - c. Make a commitment to do something in my/our life/lives.
  - d. Ask those who are poor what they need. Ask questions about people and their lives. Don't assume.
  - e. Who are we now? How do we express our charism now? Who do we want to be? How do we live community?
4. Community is a great gift. Those who live alone have to address the many needs of caring for a household. Community is essential in order to be able to give to others.
  5. Community is essential in order to be able to give to others. Should we be looking at our lifestyle?

### COLLABORATION

1. New groups who can be collaborative voices with the community.
2. Opportunities for relating between retired sisters and University of Saint Mary students and staff.
3. We recognize an urgent need, in addition to our collaborations with NETWORK, LCWR, CHARITY FEDERATION and CHA, to seek further collaboration with groups not necessarily involved in our traditional group affiliations as a means to broaden resources and action.
4. **Conversations related to collaboration:**
  - a. Working together with others of like mind
  - b. Helping others who are already doing good works
  - c. Fine tune to get a system to do that.
  - d. As individuals in our local settings, we should choose to be collaborative.
  - e. Ask someone to research where or how we can be collaborative
  - f. Choose to act.
5. Let us give priority to our call to respond to the prophetic challenge offered within our own country. We see this as a commitment of our members and associates to support and collaborate with others to both share and work with and for the poor of our country and world.
6. How might we propose to facilitate collaboration across the Vincentian family and/or beyond? How do we connect with projects other religious communities are involved in which would fit with our Community priorities.

### OTHER

1. Language is important. We are a community. . .not an organization. Organization implies business. The heart of who we are is COMMUNITY!
2. There was consensus that some of the topics in the Leaven Groups' discussions has been repeated. For example: talking about "critical needs".

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3. What do we mean by evolving charism?
4. We need a serious conversation on climate change and how our use of resources (individually and communally) impact this issue.
5. We need conversations that enable us to be bold in our own expressions and experience that articulates our values, moral code and peace for human dignity survival in our world.
6. **Conversations about when and how to Share the Good News:**
  - a. Educate others to good things that are happening.
  - b. Share the whole of Catholic Social Teachings.
  - c. How are we present to others?
  - d. We are called to be: relationships.
  - e. How do we let people know about the good things that we do?
7. Make a film
8. Do a YouTube video
9. Put all our small videos together to inspire others and ourselves.
10. Discussion on removing our name from the Health Care System.
11. Sisters stay on the missions too long and are not inspiring examples as people think we are working our sisters to death.
12. Many feel sorry for us that the perception is that sisters never get to retire; we are worked to death. This is a detriment not an inspiring invitation to join us. Many times, we are not aware of what people go through in the struggles in their lives. We should be grateful to our many resources and blessings. We should live in a spirit of thankfulness. One sister who dreaded coming home thought she would be bored. She found that she came home to a vibrant Mother House community.
13. The sisters' outfit or "habit" should reflect HOPE to those who see it.
14. I concur with what was mentioned by the group at the Mother House: are we too comfortable, are we open to inviting others to join our community? I would like to think that we are, but we are all not on the same page at the same time. Time and personal experience make a big difference. As far as staying too long on a mission, we need to consider the people we serve: am I really physically capable to do the same work in the time and best way I used to? Is it necessary that someone else needs to continue this service the way I have been doing it? Time and methods need to change as we strive to update and use better ways and equipment to improve methods of service. Do the people really need this job to exist? We have to be open and accept the answers to these questions. I personally feel that the Community leaders need to keep close contact with the Sisters in question, so as to see the need for our Sisters to go home when it is time. Some will only move when told to do so by a Community Councilor or Community Director.
15. What needs are about us? What and who calls us forward?
16. How do we evangelize when the other knows nothing of God?
17. What resources, gifts, and energies are ours?