

Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
Leaven Assembly
July 31, 2018

Sister Constance Phelps

Greetings from five of the leadership group. Clorinda, the sixth member of our leadership group is with us as a participating member for this session. She was unable to join in our preparation because of the illness and death of her sister.

And before I begin, we thank all of you for your whole hearted participation.

As you know and heard from Carole yesterday, our 2016 Chapter approved a collaborative governance model based on a circular model of leadership. We have used this process almost two years. I am sure we all recognize that it is a different way of being and interacting for us. It takes time and effort to prepare for Leaven groups, as well as for Leaven Assembly. Yet, it is becoming the norm for us now.

There is the temptation, or maybe inclination to suggest how to proceed differently. Granted, any model has its pros and cons. The integrity for this model to work efficiently ultimately rests upon the people involved – their belief in what they are doing, why they are doing it, and their willingness to carry it out. The process may not be a panacea, but we chose it, we are in it together as we discern a new way of interacting, being together as we face the future.

It is important to consider that this is a work in progress rather than something perfected. Let us view this process as an ongoing evolutionary journey. Let us view ourselves as a learning community that affords opportunities for growth – opportunities to focus on what is possible not what is wrong. And, let us view our mishaps and mistakes as just bringing us to more clarity, more insights. Therefore, in this process, we will: Keep it simple, write nothing in stone and continue to experiment, pray, think and evolve.

- I. Governance Model – *PowerPoint chart*
 - i. “As Vincentians we should not be doing the same thing over and over” *John Freund, CM*
 - a. We are living into this model of governance

Show chart: Power, Work Flow, Boundaries, Accountability, Efficiency Ownership and Skills

This chart shows the various models of governance: hierarchical – a closed system, concentric and circular – an open system. Our process is based on the circular model.

Power, Work Flow Boundaries

Accountability: (circular model)

- ii. Member to member LV groups and interest groups,
 1. ad hoc groups you form
- iii. Member to leadership
 1. In your responses from your Leaven Groups we hear you
 2. We share your responses with the community
- iv. Leadership to member
 1. This is our opportunity to respond and interact with you on the areas of concern deemed as urgent; those surfaced in the Leaven Groups and beyond
 2. You indicated readiness for more and deeper conversations, and we want to discover where the conversation will lead
 3. We will pose questions we ask of ourselves

Efficiency, Ownership and Skills

- b. We approved a different model of governance because
 - i. We are different. In fact, we are experiencing an “ing” reality: changing, sharing, waiting, and expecting, evolving. The inessential will fall away leaving only what matters.
 - ii. Some of the traditional responsibilities of leadership are distributed to a wider circle of members who share elements of leadership in a more egalitarian manner – mutuality, co-responsibility, shared ownership.

We envision our time together as opportunity to enter into dialogue with an attitude of openness, to listen and let ourselves be enriched by one another’s contributions as we share our insights. --all for the good of the whole, all for the sake of mission. We will engage one another in the process of direction setting, and at times, problem solving, however, we need the tools to do so. That is what this collaborative process in which we are engaged assists us to do. If our discussions are about better language, word smithing, or analyzing and just explaining the concern before us, or even seeking another model, or different tools of approach, nothing will change. The future is brought into the present when reach deep inside ourselves, when we engage each other through questions of possibility, commitment and dissent. So that we are enabled to probe more deeply in that which matters for our future.

- II. What has brought us this far?
 - a. Guiding Principles
 - i. Key elements: You Sisters as you have engaged in each level of the process, the process, the LV 2017 Assembly, the resources shared by Governance Committee and our presenters
 - ii. Awareness that the needs of the people we are called to serve have changed and are changing
 - iii. The theme of the Assembly: We together, affirm our Evolving Charism. As we continue to discern our path.
 - iv. For us, the center is and has been always mission. (*demonstrate with umbrella*)
 - 1. *Refer to umbrella* – the cover is mission
 - 2. The handle - “evolving charism” supports the mission and is central to all the spokes that hold the raindrops, culled from the Leaven Groups responses that we address today. We heard the need to have deep dialogue about difficult community concerns. Dialogue about who we really are and what we are really about in this this our day.

As I close, I share two quotes: one from Eric Jantsch: “To live an evolutionary spirit is to let go when the right time comes and to engage new structures of relationships,”

The second from St. Louise de Marillac:

Remember the Past,
Embrace the Future
“Do not believe that things
will always be
as they are now.”

Now, we begin to look more deeply into some of the issues that are of concern to us. S. Eileen will introduce and reflect on the first raindrop from our umbrella spokes --- our living the Paschal Mystery, our embrace of Contemplation in Action, and our Prophetic Witness as Gospel women.

	Hierarchical	Concentric	Circular
Power	Top-Down	Center-Outward	Reciprocally Shared
Work Flow	Delegated	Leadership Collaborative	Mutually Collaborative
Boundaries	Clear, "Need to Know" Basis	Clear, Semi-Permeable	Clear and Permeable
Accountability	Member to Leader	Leader to Member Member to Leader	Member to Member Member to Leader Leader to Member
Efficiency	High	Medium	Low
Partnership Ownership Involvement	Low	Medium	High
Skills	Command and Control Administrative Maintain and Delegated		Contemplative Dialogue