

“As Earth makes fresh things grow; as a garden makes seeds spring up, so will God’s integrity and justice spring forth.”

Isaiah 61:11

MAY 2014 - JULY 2015

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| 1. Feedback from the Council of the Congregation | <i>Community Meetings were held in May 2014</i> |
| 2. Invitation to participate in Forum Preparations | <i>In Nov 2014 all sisters receive this invitation to participate in ongoing preparations for the 2016 Congregational Forum</i> |
| 3. Reviewing and reflecting on 2011 Forum Directions and their integration in our living | <i>The CLT & Community Leadership Teams will provide materials to resource small groups and/or Community reflection & discussions</i> |
| 4. Building a picture of current Brigidine realities | <i>Material will provided for reading, reflection, prayer and discussion</i> |
| 5. Tuning into some current realities of the world | |

JULY 2015 - JANUARY 2016

(Community Leadership Teams will co-ordinate these activities)

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| 1. Deepening our awareness of the world in which we live and minister and generating some critical questions for our future | <i>Personal reflection & reading will lead into sharing in small groups, clusters and Community meetings</i> |
| 2. Reviewing Governance & Leadership changes since 2011 Congregational Forum | <i>Resource material outlining changes in Leadership & Governance across the Congregation since 2011 will be distributed by the CLT. Feedback from all sisters will be invited</i> |
| 3. Preparing for the election of delegates in each Community | <i>Supported by materials from the CLT, Community Leadership Teams will arrange discernment processes and meetings in each of the three Communities</i> |
| 4. Electing Forum delegates - during Oct - Dec 2015 in NSW/NZ & VIC; during Jan - Feb in I/UK/US | |

FEBRUARY 2016 - MAY 2016

(Delegates will plan and facilitate these activities in our three Communities)

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| 1. Deepening discussion on critical questions for our future as a Congregation with a mission. | <i>Drawing on the fruits of previous meetings, delegates will prepare a summary of critical questions and shared within each Community.</i> |
| 2. Building a picture of the critical questions surfacing across the whole Congregation | <i>Insights will be shared across our three Communities; delegates will prepare a summary of their Community’s response to the critical questions arising across the whole Congregation</i> |
| 3. Gleaning wisdom on Congregational matters | <i>Receiving & reflecting on reports from the CLT, the Resources Task Group, the Spirituality Enrichment Task Groups.</i> |



BRIGIDINE LIFE & MISSION UNFOLDING

2014–2016

“As Earth makes fresh things grow; as a garden makes seeds spring up, so will God’s integrity and justice spring forth.”
Isaiah 61:11



This Graced Moment:

Divine Energy animating fresh possibilities

Preparations for the 2016 Congregational Forum

Dear Sisters,

You are invited to engage in the ongoing processes of preparation for the Congregational Forum which will be held at Teach Bhríde, Tullow 15-31 May 2016. The theme chosen for the Forum is *This Graced Moment: Divine Energy animating fresh possibilities*. This theme will be a unifying mantra throughout the Congregational Forum preparations as we trust God's energy will release dreams and possibilities for how we want our future to be.

As a springboard for thinking and reflection we have drawn on the ancient wisdom of the prophet Isaiah whose message is both perennial and ever-new, "As Earth makes fresh things grow; as a garden makes seeds spring up, so will God's integrity and justice spring forth" (Is 61:11). We begin this phase of our work aware of our rich heritage that draws inspiration from Jesus of Nazareth, Brigid of Kildare and Daniel Delany. We are being called to live and plan in the contexts of our time in history: a time of expanding knowledge and deepening awareness; a time of amazing technological advances; a time of obscene accumulation of wealth by some and the abject poverty of millions; a time of new challenges and threats to the future of humankind and the planet. Most profoundly we are being drawn into an evolutionary process of change which has at its centrepiece Love, the God of Love. We have an deepening appreciation that all in the cosmos is one and that Love is at the heart of the universe. In *This Graced Moment, Divine Energy is animating fresh possibilities*.

The Council of the Congregation Report (May 2014) called us to see the space between the Council and the Congregational Forum in May 2016 as 'an invitation to a renewed awareness of the interconnectedness of all aspects of our lives' and a call to 'integrate our current Forum Directions'. This leaflet outlines some of the activities and gives a broad timeline for our preparation. **We invite you** to engage in these processes of shaping a shared future with an openness to God's Spirit bringing forth fresh insights and imaginings.

In general the **PURPOSES** for our 2016 Congregational Forum are:

- To deepen our understanding of the realities of the whole Congregation and of today's world in which we live and minister
- To review the 2011 Congregational Forum Directions
- To set Directions for the next period of time
- To discern and choose Congregational leadership (cf *Brigidine Constitution #19*)

What we hope to do together in the preparation phase through gatherings, small and large, is

- to share reflections about our Congregation, our Church and the world and ask ourselves questions like, 'What is our call in furthering the mission of God?'
- to see with new eyes, unearthing and re-imagining our frames of reference
- to explore and deepen the underpinning connections between the 2011 Forum Directions
- to imagine a future that is faithful to our history as women religious and that lays the foundations for creative gifting to a future beyond us.

What we do personally in prayer, reflection and grappling with the changing contexts of our time will count. What we do together as Communities will count. Let us engage with hope and in the spirit of the 'joy of the gospel' as we 'Go forward on the road that has brought us to where we are' (Phil 3:16) and pray:

*Holy Mystery, Ground of Being,
You are the Divine Energy within all that is.
You are at the heart of this moment
beckoning us forward.*

*Stay with us in our dreaming and our planning
as we cross the threshold to the next stage
of the unfolding Mystery of Life.*

Louise O'Leary Claire Griffin Kathleen Butler Mary Flattery
Congregational Leadership Team

Let us be aware of our rich heritage and some of the realities of our time as we consider God's call to us today.

OUR INSPIRATION:

We draw inspiration from Jesus of Nazareth, in who lived a new and radical spirit of inclusion and healing. He spent his life 'making whole' by going out and by gathering in. In Jesus the Christ, God's presence is revealed to us, drawing together and unifying all of creation.

We are inspired by the memory of our Patroness, St Brigid of Kildare, a hospitable and compassionate woman. She took action to resolve conflict, intervening in disputes to bring reconciliation. Brigid was at home with the seasons and the cycles of life and, as a leader in her time, drew together and included both men and women when forming a community in her double monastery.

We are inspired by the vision and story of our Founder, Daniel Delany who took action to nurture his people in new ways in times of oppression and injustice. His words to the first community of Brigidines – "Love God and live together in peace and charity" are still relevant to us and to all peoples.

OUR CONTEXT:

We live in a time in which there is a deepening awareness that the cosmic story of creation which has been unfolding for over 14 billion years is still unfinished; the gradual unfolding of the dynamic universe continues in and through a dynamic God of love.

Our world is marked by significant divisions and conflicts. Poverty, discrimination, materialism and injustice affect millions:

- The suffering of our planet and the devastating impact of climate change on the quality of life for all beings are among the most urgent challenges of our time
- Peace is being compromised both regionally and globally by escalating war and violent atrocities
- The number of people forced to flee their homes across the world now exceeds 50 million for the first time since the Second World War and half of these refugees are children
- It is estimated that over 27 million people are victims of trafficking and modern day slavery today

Our Church is called at this time "to be a house of the Father with doors wide open ... rather than being confined and clinging to its security." (Evangelli Gaudium 31)

Our time is indeed 'a graced moment' – one in which there is a new awakening of consciousness which draws us further into an ever deeper sense of the interconnectedness of life and the sacredness of all creation.

OUR ONGOING COMMITMENT TO PREPARING FOR THE 2016 CONGREGATIONAL FORUM:

Personal Preparation:

Each Sister is invited to recommit to making time for prayerful reflection as we open our hearts and minds to the Empowering Spirit within and among us and as we attend to the urgent needs of our world and to choices we are facing. (Common readings and other materials will be made available to unite us in this reflection).

Communal Preparation:

Sisters are encouraged to participate in the variety of small and larger community gatherings, to listen and to share their insights and understandings as we discern how we choose to be together and what we want to create together.

