



## CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

### UPDATE #10, MARCH 2020

#### 1. MEETING IN IRELAND

We gathered in Dublin on 7<sup>th</sup> March for what we thought was a planning meeting of nearly 3 weeks but COVID 19 had other plans. Margaret and Anne returned to Australia on the 20<sup>th</sup> March and are now in two weeks compulsory isolation. The virus has wrought havoc on what we all might know as normal life and whilst we are needing to restrict our usual way of being, it is also a time to reach out to others in need and, in compassion, hold the many ill and suffering in our prayers.

We do hope and pray that each of you, your families and friends remain virus free and can live as fruitfully as possible. Attached to this Update is a prayer circulated by the Union of International Superiors General that you might like to pray.

Solas Bhride was the venue for one of our meetings and we observed very strict social distancing to protect each other's health. The photo shows us at lunch, well within hearing distance but observing the Irish 2 metre rule.



On this occasion Rita Minehan observed:

“Humans have spent decades destroying the lungs of Earth and now a tiny bacteria is taking only weeks to destroy the lungs of humans!”

#### 2. PLANNING FOR THE 2021 FORUM

The virus has created many uncertainties, but we carried on with our planning for the Forum preparation process and will adapt the plans according to circumstances as they arise. We met for 3 days at Emmaus Retreat Centre with Judith King, the facilitator for the 2018 Council of Congregation, who will also lead us through the next phases. The process begins this year with Preliminary Gatherings followed by Hemisphere Gatherings leading to the election of delegates and the final stage of the Forum in May 2021. Because of the current limitations of gathering, we met with only some members of the IR-UK Leadership Team to discuss the details of the process. They will share it with the remaining members and we will soon be in touch with all other Leadership Groups for the same purpose.

*Choose Life: Now and into the Future* is the theme for this process and a formal letter with more details and a prayer card will be circulated shortly.

#### 3. COMMON PROJECT

We were also to have met with Anne Carthy from Misean Cara who facilitates our Congregational Common Project contribution to the Reuben Centre's birthing unit but that was also cancelled. This was disappointing because Anne had arranged for us to meet the CEO and staff, however we will be having a Zoom meeting with her in the near future.

#### 4. CHANGING GOVERNANCE ISSUES

For all of our Congregation's existence the canonically approved Brigidine Constitutions have been accepted in our civil law dealings. This is changing at a rapid rate. We met with the Governance Group of the Irish Leadership Team to study their newly written and extremely detailed Brigidine *Civil* Constitutions required by the Charities Regulator.

This highlighted for us the complexity of Governance in our times and the need for highly skilled persons to assist us in our compliance with Civil Law.

It also relates to the question raised at the 2018 Council of the Congregation about the possibility of separating leadership in a pastoral context from the demands of administration and compliance.



#### 5. LEADERSHIP FOR COMPLETION TASK GROUP

We are all aware that we have a decreasing number of sisters across the Congregation who are able to maintain our current leadership structures. As we move into the closing decades of our story, we will need to work together in different ways. Any new structures will ensure that all are well cared for, that current and future ministries are provided for and that our properties and assets are well managed as we meet the increasing array of civil compliance.

In light of this we have decided to set up a Leadership for Completion Task Group. Further details will be made available shortly. It is worth noticing that we are not alone in this project and we will be drawing on the experience and wisdom of other Congregations who are on the same path.

#### 6. NSW LEADERSHIP DISCERNMENT

As the current Coordinating Group completes its 3 year term at the end of June this year. The Leadership Discernment will take place in late May and a letter to this effect will be circulated to NSW Sisters shortly.

#### 7. CARBON FOOTPRINT

In the first half of our term of office we made a substantial donation to *Fifteen Trees* a Victorian based organization and as a result 2,500 trees have been planted in a re-vegetation program in Gippsland. Next year we will make a second donation to a project in the Northern Hemisphere possibly with a focus of re-vegetation in Africa.

#### 8. CONCLUSION

As we live into these unusual and difficult times, we might recall the 2016 *Invitation and Call* which reminds us that our influence is increasingly one of presence. Let us embrace this role in all the communities of which we are part.

Cathy Anne Margaret Theresa