



# CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM

UPDATE #11, OCTOBER 2020

## 1. MEETINGS WITH LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Over recent weeks, the Leadership Group from each area and the CLT met to share the impact that Covid 19 was having and the ways in which positive life giving practices were being put in place.

We give thanks that, apart from Srs Cabrini, Virgil and Bernadette in San Antonio, no sister has tested positive. Despite their positive test, each of these sisters was asymptomatic and is now showing no signs of the virus.

Across the Congregation it is a wonderful tribute to all sisters in that each one has taken the precautions that keep herself and others safe and well.

The last two editions of Weavings and the newsletters from various areas also testify to the many fruitful ways sisters have found to continue their ministries in new and creative ways. Others have also embraced the 'ministry of presence' called for in the *Invitation and Call* from the 2016 Forum, by reaching out to other sisters, family and friends to keep hope alive.



## 2. REVIEW OF FORUM PREPARATION TIMELINE

In conversation with the Leadership Groups we learnt that, despite numerous plans all of which have had to be cancelled, no area has been able to begin or to fully implement the proposed process for the Preliminary Gatherings. These gatherings are intended to include Brigidine colleagues and Associates enabling us to insert ourselves into a larger context of our way forward as a Congregation. They are also designed to propose agenda for the gatherings of sisters in each hemisphere, prior to the Forum.

Consequently, we have revised the timeline. Given regulations regarding numbers that can gather and travel restrictions, which are still very uncertain in each country, we hope to begin again in 2021 and we will have further information about dates in the near future.

## 3. ONLINE PORTAL

Many of us have engaged in a very steep learning curve in the use of technology in recent months. The use of Zoom and other online platforms has become common place. Indeed, it was through Zoom meetings that the CLT was able to communicate with our various Leadership Groups over the course of this year, meet quite frequently with each other and engage with external groups on numerous occasions.

In establishing the *Leadership for a Changing Reality Task Group*, we noted that over coming years the capacity of a many sisters for international travel will be lessened for health or age reasons. Nonetheless, Brigidines have a desire to remain as one Congregation and retain life giving communication between the various geographic areas in which we live. The number of sisters from various parts of the Brigidine world who watched the live time streaming of the funerals of our dearly loved Srs. Nance McFadden, Michelle Vaughan and Mary Dalton is witness to that.

For these and additional reasons the CLT, encouraged by similar initiatives in several other Congregations, has decided to engage a media company to establish a zoom based 'Portal' for Brigidine use.



Each sister in the Congregation who wishes to be involved will be able to do so. It will enable us to meet with each other for Community/Area and international gatherings when travel and other restrictions prevent us from gathering in person. This will simply require an 'app' to be downloaded onto our computers, ipads or tablets and, should they wish, sisters who do not have such devices will be provided with one.

The Leadership Group in each area will give you more information over coming months once this is set up.

#### **4. WEBSITE**

In the meantime, we are conscious that Claire Griffin maintains a constant flow of information and enrichment for us through the website. We are very grateful to Claire for this significant contribution in keeping us all connected not only with Brigidines but with many issues of significance in the church and the world. The Portal will exist alongside the website and will be accessed only by Brigidines, hence the website will continue to be our 'face' to the world.

#### **5. LEADERSHIP FOR A CHANGING REALITY TASK GROUP (LTG)**

You will have read the letter of appreciation from the LTG acknowledging the encouraging level of participation across the Congregation in the recent consultation process. The members of the LTG are currently distilling the themes and possibilities that resulted from the consultations.

Originally this Group was to have proposals ready for the Northern Hemisphere gathering planned for this month and the Southern Hemisphere gathering planned for next month. As these events have now been postponed until 2021, the urgency for developing proposals has eased.



#### **6. ARCHIVAL TASK GROUP (ATG)**

Archives have been described as "Extensions of human memory". The writer goes on to observe that: "Archives play a critical role in the preservation of culture and heritage and will facilitate future generations knowing what we valued most. In essence, archive material is a conversation with posterity". (Journal of the South African Society of Archivists, Vol.46, 2013).

The CLT is grateful to the ATG for their generosity in serving in this capacity on behalf of the Congregation. The members of the Group are: Kathleen Butler csb (Chair and NSW Archivist) Paula Conway csb (Trustee of the Delany Archive), Mary Teresa Cullen csb (Archivist San Antonio), Anne Phibbs csb (Archivist New Zealand), Bernadette Deasy (Delany Archives, Carlow College) and Barbara Kowalski (Victorian archivist). Cathy O'Connor is the CLT liaison with the ATG.

Kathleen has facilitated several meetings and the task group is actively working on and making progress on the following objectives to:

1. share and gather information on the state of Archives in each Community/Area and the current status of digital preservation
2. establish guidelines and protocols in consultation with the CLT regarding authorization of access to archival materials for research
3. make specific recommendations to leadership groups in defining what is archival material and what needs to be retained/destroyed in compliance with data protection regulations in each jurisdiction
4. research Archival Trusts that could guarantee the preservation of archives into the future and make suggestions for the long term housing of archives in each Community/Area
5. provide a realistic budget for the development of the archives in each Community/Area.

The work of Archivists is often in the background and unseen, until we are in need of some information. It is a vital work and the outcome of the ATG deliberations will be a significant part of our legacy into the future.

## **7. RESOURCE TASK GROUP (RTG)**

The RTG, Maree Marsh (Chair, NSW/NZ), Carmel Mc Evoy (IR/UK), Mary Teresa Cullen (USA), Halyer Rayner (Vic) and Theresa Kilmurray (CLT liaison), met for their regular catch up meeting on 1/2<sup>nd</sup> October. Australia was waking up, Texas was enjoying the evening sun, while Ireland was preparing for slumber! The difference in the time zones is a constant reminder of the uniqueness of each Community/Area as they work with leadership teams, bursars and business managers to present at the forthcoming Forum:

- the financial plan for addressing the needs of the sisters for their anticipated lifetime
- the support of current congregational ministries
- the value of the remaining assets and the plans for the bequeathing of same as our legacy beyond the lifetime of the Congregation

These are always very informative and inspiring meetings and we look forward in hope, despite these challenging COVID-19 times, to sharing the fruits of this ongoing work at the Hemisphere Gatherings and the Forum.

The CLT is grateful to the members of the RTG for their continued commitment to this task on behalf of the Congregation.

## 8. EXTERNAL MEETINGS

An important aspect of the role of the Congregational Leadership Team is to connect with other organizations and stay abreast of developments and initiatives in support of Religious Life and ministry. Despite the COVID-19 impact on gathering in groups, various organizations have worked hard to maintain contact and provide for their annual gatherings through virtual meetings, mainly on Zoom.

Cathy, with Mary Teresa Cullen and Margaret Doyle from San Antonio and 900 other Sisters participated in the three day Annual Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in the U.S. in August. She also joined in the conference of the Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland (AMRI) in September and will participate in the conference with RCRI (The Resource Center for Religious Institutes) in November.

## 9. CONCLUSION

*Life after the Pandemic* is a collection talks given by Pope Francis and a quote on the back cover of the book reads

*If we act as one people, even in the face of other epidemics that threaten us, we can make a real impact. ...*

*May we find within us the necessary antibodies of justice, charity and solidarity. We must not be afraid to live the alternative—the civilization of love. ...*

*In this time of tribulation and mourning, I hope that, where you are, you will be able to experience Jesus, who comes to meet you, greets you and says: "Rejoice" (cf. Mt 28:9). And may this greeting mobilize us to invoke and amplify the Good News of the Kingdom of God.*

May this be our prayer with and for each other.

Cathy Anne Margaret Theresa

