

Dear Sisters and Associates,

Our Associate Work Group was blessed to safely arrive “home” at St. Elizabeth Motherhouse in Allegany on July 5<sup>th</sup> and collaboratively work together through July 9<sup>th</sup> for five full and very meaningful days of prayer, reflective dialogue and planning. In the true Allegany Franciscan spirit, we were warmly welcomed to this peaceful place with endless smiles, laughter, hugs and generous hospitality!

Working Group participants included: Co-Directors, Linda Dees and Colleen Brady, OSF; Leadership Liaison, Jo Streva, OSF; Margaret Jarrett (Jamaica); Mary Laubenthal (New York); Paula Lyn (California); Cheryl Maggio (Florida); Ellen Nash (North Carolina); Rosimeire Noletto, OSF (Brazil); Pat Reid, OSF - translator (New York); Robin Roche (New Jersey); and via Zoom, Rita Canfield (North Carolina) and Marcia Gill (Florida).

This gathering resulted from the “Deep Dive” process, which began a year ago in Tampa and has continued via Zoom meetings. Each of us desired to gather as an in-person community once again and to include the representatives from Jamaica and Brazil who were unable to attend the initial “Deep Dive” weekend.

Many Associates across all regions have expressed how much they miss the gatherings with our Sisters for assemblies and each of us are seeking to better understand the transformational journey of our Sisters. By “coming home” to Allegany, this sacred space where our call as FSA Associates first took root for so many of us, we believed it to be the best place for our Franciscan-Clarian spirituality to be enriched, and our relationship with our Sisters and one another to grow and deepen through this transformation process.

Our first full day began with a one-day “Invitation to Transformation” retreat presented by Colleen Brady, OSF based, in part, on Ted Dunn’s material. Following the retreat and shared reflections, Jo Streva, OSF explained more about the C.A.R.E. (Conversational Approach to Relational Effectiveness) sessions, which are underway across the Congregation and facilitated by Ted and Beth Dunn. C.A.R.E. is a process of “training” in conversational skills that will help us to talk with each other effectively, honestly, and lovingly about what is most important to us, to seek mutual understanding and to find common ground whenever that is possible. The

C.A.R.E. process is an intentional way to strengthen and deepen our communal relationships --- a significant choice to grow together while we journey toward personal and communal transformation. The presentations by both Colleen and Jo were enlightening to all.

Bonded by our call to Gospel living and our Franciscan-Clarian charisms and core values, we seek to better align our Mission, Vision and spiritual paths as both Sisters and Associates. Much like the life cycle of a butterfly, we understand that the transformational process takes time, but together we have no doubt that God is at work in each of us and beautiful things are emerging.

During our time together, Helen Lodge, OSF and Marigene Kennedy, OSF partnered in a presentation about the Associate Program founding and its early history, beginning at Haddonfield, New Jersey, after Chapter 1988. We were delighted that Joyce Ramage, OSF, our former Co-Director with Linda Dees, also was able to attend as a contributing guest.

Additionally, over the course of our days, we also met with several Congregational Staff members including Anne Holliday, Kristen Luther, Claire Majot and Ellen Winger, who generously shared their time and knowledge with us. These experiences will help us to create more open communication among our Sisters, Partners in Ministry, and one another, while we continue to update our Handbook and reshape the Mentoring process.

The Communication Committee, working in conjunction with Congregational staff, will explore a variety of forms of communication in which information can be disseminated to all Sisters and Associates in the US, Jamaica, Brazil, Bolivia and Mozambique. As Associates, we will put systems in place to ensure our contributions are both current and informative with the goal of merging and unifying all written communication with our Sisters and creating a space that welcomes communication reflective of our Allegany Franciscan Mission and Charisms.

The goal of our Mentoring Committee is to explore the use of a team approach, to move from a course of study to a more transformative process. We believe that mentoring should be a Franciscan journey focused on the individual and reflective of the culture of the local community.

In conjunction with these two committees, the Handbook Committee will organize and maintain in multiple formats, a more user-friendly and accessible version of the current Handbook/Guidebook. This new living document, which is retitled "The Transformative Journey of the FSA Associates," will be easily updated and more relevant to all Associates.

There is still much work to be done as committees and as a collaborative group, which we have renamed: the TAU (Transformational Associates Unified) Team -- where the Holy Spirit is indeed our guide. The prayerful presence and supportive embrace of all has truly graced us with inspiration, spiritual energy, and exciting productivity as we endeavor to expand our resources for revitalizing our journey as Associates!

With joy and enthusiasm, please join us on this Franciscan-Clarian faith journey into the Mystery of the unknown. We ask each of you for your continued prayer for our work, and wish to assure each of you, our Sisters, of our continued prayer for you on your continued journey of transformation. Led by the Holy Spirit we know that all things are possible as we continue to be transformed by God.

Blessings of Peace,

The Members of the TAU (Transformational Associates Unified) Team