

Steps necessary to address before the “Completion chapter” and request for commissary

The Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O’Fallon, MO and the Franciscan Sisters of Mary came together in 2013 to begin discussing a way forward for our congregations. Both had made the decision to stop actively recruiting new members. We realized that this meant we would have a limited pool and a limited time frame for persons able to serve in elected leadership. Covenant relationships were very much in discussion at that time, but we felt that was not a fit for us. We wanted to provide both civil management and canonical governance for our congregations, with an emphasis on providing for canonical governance. After years of work, Collaborative Governance was officially incorporated in 2019.

At present, the two founding congregations are the only participants. The following are the criteria we have agreed upon for ourselves and any future participants. These seem to be issues that any congregation facing a “completion Chapter” will need to address prior to that Chapter.

1. A congregational decision not to recruit new members.
 - May seem obvious, but it is KEY.
 - Cannot straddle the fence on this painful decision.
 - Our 2010 Chapter called us to face the question directly after years of skirting the issue.
 - By 2013 we began working with the FSMs to form what has become Collaborative Governance.
 - 160 members at time of our 2010 Chapter; 140 members by 2013; currently 69.
2. Commitment to and substantial progress towards divestment or alienation of major properties
 - We agreed that we did not want to burden CG staff with the divestment of major properties since it is a complex and time-consuming task.
 - We have been working with our Motherhouse property since 1998.
 - 1998 – Sold SMC and SMA to City of O’Fallon
 - 2008 -- Senior Apartments & proposed Village of St. Mary’s
 - 2016 -- Sold skilled care
 - Now trying to transfer senior apartments, complex structure.
 - Trying to sell 30 acres since 2014.
 - Still own two other properties.
 - A vacation home; will continue to own as long as sisters are able to use it.
 - One other home in which two sisters live.
 - Sale of these properties will not be as complex.
3. Formerly sponsored ministries now autonomous
 - Two high schools and junior college became financially unsustainable.
 - Chose to divest from a Montessori School in an upscale neighborhood.
 - Transferred successful adult day care ministry to another congregation.
 - FSMs have established a public juridic person for their health care system.
4. Formerly sponsored associate programs now autonomous
 - Partners in Mission have about 100 members
 - Small Faith communities of sisters and partners; sisters’ ability to participate is declining.

- Asked the PIM Board to establish a sustainability committee to look at how meaningful relationships can be maintained as sisters' participation declines.
 - Executive Director salary paid by congregation; will continue that as an annual budget line item.
 - Currently a member of the leadership team serves as a liaison; cutting back on that "direction."
 - Commissary will become the liaison to Executive Director as needed.
5. Debt free
- Self-explanatory
 - Need to be able to sustain members of congregation
6. Self-funded and able to assume financial responsibility for being a member of CG
- CG cannot assume financial responsibility for care of members of participating institutes.
 - Participants also need to be able to cover their share of the costs of CG operations.
 - Currently the costs of executive staff are shared 50-50
 - Executive Director
 - Health Care Director
 - Finance Director
 - Communications Director
 - Costs for other staff members are shared proportionately based on the time they spend serving each institute.
 - Other overhead costs (e.g., legal services, staff enrichment, etc.) are shared 50-50.
 - Sharing of staff is possible because of geographic proximity of two congregations.
7. Procedures and guidelines established for distribution of any assets not needed for care of the sisters and for operational expenses.
- We are in the fortunate position of having assets over and above what is needed for community support.
 - We drafted a legacy statement that gives a broad description of the legacy we've already given through relationships and ministries.
 - Will need to flesh that out in terms of how that applies to our tangible legacy of finances and artworks.
 - In very initial conversations with a foundation that may be open to managing the funds and distributing them according to our criteria.
8. Existing staff transitioned into being part of CG staff.
- In January 2020 all employees of both congregations became employees of Collaborative Governance.
 - Developed new employee policies, pay scale, benefits.
 - Was done quickly because of insurance coverage issues.
 - Requires careful planning and employee engagement.
9. Will engage in collaborative processes regarding governance.
- Any collaboration requires a give and take.

- It takes time to move from “we/they” to “us.”
- Needs honesty and compromise.
- Needs support of decisions even if not your first preference.
- Office space our most touchy decision.
- Discernment process for selecting person for Commissary required a strong sense of “we.”

10. Will agree to comply with the Statutes and Bylaws.

- Though specific to CG, participants in your collaboration will need to abide by the agreements of the group.

11. New Participating Entities shall be in their final term of elected leadership.

- Need to have all the above in place.

12. A final note on our final Chapter in 2022.

- Sisters thought we had people to serve two or three more six-year terms.
- Did an anonymous Zoom poll (during Covid); two persons open to considering service as president; six persons open to considering service as council member.
- Held meeting to discuss potential changes to *Constitutions*.
 - Length of term
 - Number of councilors
 - Possibility of immediate reelection to current position.
 - All sisters able to vote were present via Zoom; 100% affirmation of changes.
- Did further education of requirements / capacities for service as Chapter Member and member of elected leadership. (Lynn Jarrell and Nancy Reynolds)
- Went into 2022 Chapter with one person on slate for president; three for councilor.
- Chapter chose to elect two councilors for a term of three years.
- All members of current team served on previous team.
- Term will end on June 30, 2025.
- Will request a Commissary prior to that time.

Post-zoom note: One of the items I did not mention is that during the previous 6-year term (2016-2022), two council members resigned. This may have helped the sisters be more realistic about the capacities necessary for leadership.

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