

Community Assembly Affirms Vision and Purpose

By Linda Taylor, CSJ

On November 14, approximately 150 persons: 114 sisters, 34 consociates and 2 candidates attended the third Community Assembly of 2015. In keeping with the CA's goals to "do something new", to be inclusive, and to empower leadership, Consociate Cheryl Maloney of the CA Planning Committee facilitated the daylong event, Consociate Donna Hauer introduced the morning presentation on demographics, Mary Vincent, CSJ guided the Partners in Justice process, and Jill Underdahl, CSJ led the affirming the CA Vision and Purpose.

The day began with a prayerful remembrance of community members who died since November of 2014. No Consociates died during that time period, so all were Sisters: Manette Durand, Julitta Walsh, Eleanor Lincoln, Mary Anne Wolter, Kathleen Foley, Margaret L. "Maggie" Kvasnicka, Helen Coughlan, Mary Catherine Stensrud, Isabella Farrell, Susan Jane Neisen, Ann Denise Sullivan, and Frieda Kalenze. Using photos, music and biographical information, participants reflected on how each person expressed her "passion for justice and love of God and neighbor without distinction" in her own unique way. (Pictures and biographical information on each sister are on page ____ of this Together and on the community website: www.csjstpaul.org/forum/news/obituaries.)

The speaker for the morning was the Minnesota State Demographer, Dr. Susan Brower, who focused on the demographic and economic changes occurring in the state of Minnesota. Using her academic background in sociology and public policy, her training in social work, and her work with poverty issues, Dr. Brower gave sisters and consociates a clear picture of the impact the changes are having on those living in the state. She also gave emphasis to the needs and challenges of persons living in poverty, including children, parents, families and the elderly. Her goal was to give sisters and consociates the information they need to make "smart decisions" as they consider ministries, partnerships with others, new membership and sharing of resources. Among changes she spoke of are: 1) the growing number of immigrants and others moving into the state, some of whom are more educated and skilled than the people already living in Minnesota, as well as many coming without education or skills; 2) the number of immigrants of color who are young adults in the parenting age group; 3) the increase in the aging population whose medical needs will consume resources that might otherwise be used for education and training of children and young adults; 4) the large group of "baby boomers," 50% of whom have no plan for caring for themselves as they age and expect the government to take care of them; 3) the number of Minnesotans living below the poverty line (1 in 10) and the shrinking number of residents who qualify to be in the work force. Her presentation can be viewed on the DVD of the 11.14.2015 Community Assembly available at the Administration Center (Contact Barb Aubert at 651-690-7033).

In the afternoon, the Partners in Justice (PIJ) Board led the annual reflection to determine priorities for funding in 2016. CA participants talked at tables about areas of need and groups of people they want PIJ to focus on during the next funding cycle. At the end of the discussions, table members turned in sheets of paper indicating their preferences. Partners in Justice Board members collected the papers and promised to announce the 2016 priorities right away. Sisters and Consociates received forms to use for recommending organizations to the PIJ Board. The forms are due by December 15, 2015.

As the final business of the day, participants affirmed a draft of the "Initial Community Assembly Vision and Purpose Statements" as a working document for about two years. **The affirmation of the statements sets the direction of the Community Assembly and makes it possible for it to move forward.** It was the result of intense work by Community Assembly participants who discussed, clarified and prioritized concepts they saw as important to include in the documents at the January and November

CAs. It was also due to the hours of tallying ideas, and writing and rewriting drafts of the statements by members of the CA Planning Committee. Following are the statements approved at the assembly:

INITIAL VISION AND PURPOSE STATEMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY

Vision: The Community Assembly gathers people who share the passion for justice and spirituality of loving God and neighbor without distinction, continuing the mission of Jesus in the world today.

Purpose: The Community Assembly promotes new ways of engaging with each other, partners, experts, and those directly impacted by social justice issues in order to:

- 1) develop and strengthen relationships among persons who intentionally live the CSJ mission;
- 2) understand and support the unique ways individuals and groups are living the mission;
- 3) engage in significant dialogue around the Acts of Chapter;
- 4) educate ourselves about emerging needs and resources and
- 5) take action for justice and ministry within our local communities and the larger world.

The Community Assembly collected \$953.10 to donate to Sister Manette Durand's "Mercy Fund" to be used to support people of Jonestown at Christmas.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! THE NEXT COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY IS SATURDAY, JANUARY 9TH!