

Community Assembly and Commissions Realized in Ritual

by Linda Taylor, CSJ and Jill Underdahl, CSJ

*Today three Province Commissions said 'yes' to guiding us and our mission.
How do we keep becoming who we are? Anything is possible! Thank you to all
those who made this day come together.*

~ reflected Linda Napier upon experiencing the Community Assembly on
September 10.

Through a Commissioning Ritual the participants witnessed, affirmed and celebrated the fulfillment of the Community Assembly and its Commissions dreamed of and called forth in the audit process. Since 2014 the Think Tanks of each Commission, the Community Assembly Planning Committee, and Community Assembly itself have been hard at work discussing vision and purpose statements, responsibilities and work plans. Consequently, there was much to celebrate as ritual leaders called forth members of each of the three new Commissions (Justice, Ministry, Relationship and Association). Each Commission read statements of their Vision and Purpose. In response, the Community Assembly asked: "Are you willing?" "Can you bring this vision to life?" All of the Commission members responded, "We are willing! We can!" Following these exclamations, everyone celebrated the beginning of the new Commissions by song, applause, shakers, bubbles and affirmations. At the end of the ritual, some Sisters, Consociates, and Partners in Mission heard one another saying, "This is a historic day!"

After the ritual, everyone gave support to the Commissioners by suggesting possible topics for future assemblies and actions for Commissions to take—all to strengthen our future. These were written on sheets of paper and gathered for distribution to the Commissions to use in the future.

After lunch, Representatives of the Community Assembly Planning Committee explained:

Purpose and Vision Statements and Work Plans are written.

Commission Members have been selected and commissioned.

Now what will this new structure of our Community Assembly and Commissions become?

Like all living things, we know that they will evolve and change... by all of us who participate in the Community Assembly, members of the Commissions, and the needs of the times.

Currently, the Planning Committee for the Community Assembly is made up of two members from each Commission, two from the Acts of Chapter Committee, and leadership from the Consociate Service and Province Teams. It is this group that sets the agenda for the Community Assembly. Members of the Community Assembly and Commissions can suggest agenda items by giving them to persons on the Community Assembly Planning Committee.

Other agenda topics for the Community Assembly included Partners in Justice and the Federation Event 2016. Therese Sherlock, Co-chair of Partners in Justice, introduced representatives from two organizations that have received grants from Partners in Justice. Each of them shared how money from the grants has made a difference for the people they serve. Lilly Long, CSJ presented information about Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas, which serves

immigrants, many of whom are undocumented. Lebo Moore, Food Hub Manager at Big River Farms CSA, on Marine on St. Croix, MN told how the organization provides immigrant and minority farmers with instruction and certification for organic vegetable production. They also help their students to gain access to resources and markets for growing, distributing and selling those vegetables, and a forum in which they can develop and practice business skills.

Partners in Justice announced that the areas for grant making in 2016 -2017 will be the same as they were in recent years, i.e., mainly support for women and children. Forms for Sisters and Consociates to use in suggesting groups to be invited to submit grants will be available this month and will be due December 15.

Andrea Pearson Tande, Consociate, who served on the planning committee for the U.S. Federation Sisters of St. Joseph Event in Orlando, FL, July 9 – 12 gave the context for the Federation and opened sharing by persons who attended it. Among those who shared were Sisters, Consociates, Partners in Mission, and Students from St. Catherine's University.

All who participated in the Community Assembly (100 Sisters, 42 Consociates and 7 Partners in Mission) expressed enthusiasm living the CSJ Mission of loving God and their neighbors. In response to the question on the evaluation form, "Would you like to continue to participate in Community Assemblies?" 99.9% answered "Yes!" Some said, "Absolutely!" and "YES!!!!!" The next Community Assembly will be on January 14, 2017.