**CARAVAN DISCUSSION** on 4-5-24

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* The Engagement Team’s task was “to engage broader community to create a description of *Purpose, Scope of Work, and Structure* of the community-based leadership group.” *The Bridge and the Table* document (though obviously an initial draft) seems in line with that directive – yet we’ve never discussed that document or those topics when we’ve gathered in assembly.
* Might there be clarification on whether we will be doing a one-year experiment with a Common Table – and *then* a separate consideration/discussion around the Community-based Leadership Group after a year? The Proposal did not mention the C-bLG in any of its sections.
* The Proposal seems like we’re repeating ourselves – the same structure with different names.
* Who would carry out the preparations needed for the Common Table gatherings (e.g. scheduling, announcing, publicizing to the Wider We community, scheduling meeting rooms/ensuring charges are paid, arranging any necessary hybrid capabilities)?
* Assemblies have been presentations vs. sharing.
* What difference does it make that I am here? What difference can *we* make? Who’s coming? What kind of difference are you making in your life? I look for the *energy* when I come.
* Community should be doing things where each person makes a difference – where we are confirmed and challenged – where we see intersectionality and new possibilities – where there is outreach.
* We can partner with other organizations to advocate in the broader community.
* There is a need to get acquainted across the Wider WE – to get to know what/who the various groups are.
* There is a connection between structure and function. We need to know where we are going. What are we doing when we come to the table?
* All is evolving. The 1-year experiment is to close the loop (where individuals are doing things in the world, because of the Charism/Mission, often working with other groups; want that information to come back to the CSJs so people know about opportunities or movements). How is the charism coming into the world?
* CSJ work is not limited to what was done in the past, including our current structure, which was set up when many of us were younger. We know from the discussions last summer about justice that many of us feel less able to commit to a year or more of being on a workgroup. At the same time many if not all of us are doing some kind of justice work, yet we aren’t aware of what each other is doing.
* The CSJ Charism and Mission move us to places we would not otherwise be, and it’s difficult for any structure to be nimble enough to allow us to tell each other about current opportunities, invite each other in, and/or pray for justice work that is being done. For example, I ended up working with several community organizations to support *Driver’s License for All* at the MN Legislature last year. There are other issues that other people and organizations are leading, and I find myself doing many things that I wouldn’t be doing if I weren’t part of this community.
* There are many different ways to support justice work - listening, connecting, praying. We want the Charism and Mission to live on after we are gone.
* I was on the Justice Commission for 6 years. There was discussion around people not wanting to join Working Groups (due to several years of commitment). Yet there is a need for that kind of longer commitment.
* It was unclear and difficult to see how the Commissions feed into the current Community Assemblies (was difficult to get space on the agenda).
* When the two additional Commissions (Ministry/Relationship and Association) and the Community Assembly planning committee were created, we didn’t have a defined process.
* When individual community members are out working on justice issues – they can speak to *why* they’re involved (because they are part of the CSJ community). Since we don’t have recognizable community identification (a pin, T-shirt, etc.). Then bring that back to our community table and invite other community members to be part of that work/event/engagement as well.
* Really, justice is our core – the core of our existence together! Along with individual accountability and seeing where individuals fit in and determining with whom we’re going to partner.
* At *Stirring the Fire*, I made commitment to show up at community meetings/discussions. There’s always a concern about “navel gazing” – but when I entered the community, it was because of the outward focused work of people like Rita Steinhagen. But I’m finding inspiration in our sharing right now.
* Consider this work/engagement on 3 levels: individual – community – systems level.
* Need to look ahead 5-10 years with an awareness of our demographics – what other structures/ministries will be needed? Need to figure out how to not lose contact with the ministries in NDO.
* We need to examine our own assumptions. Do I know the “behind-the-scenes work of the Relationship & Association Commission, or the DEI&B, the Justice Commission, the CV Justice Seekers? How about the Stirring the Fire Planning Committee, which starts planning in June/July for the January retreat. How about the current Community Assembly Planning Committee? Subsidiarity is important. We need to hear from existing groups/committees/commissions (perhaps through *State of the House* reports)
* Also need to examine the concerns/questions/confusion brought up at the March Assembly.
* At the Engagement Team meetings, everything seems disjointed – with each table engaged in their own disparate discussions. There’s no opportunity to come back together as a whole group to reflect together – to invite Spirit into the moment/sharing – to pause and reflect and then share – to discern (not refute) – to come to consensus so people are comfortable with decisions and next steps. Without that, I can enter the meeting happy to be with these people whom I love . . . and leave thinking that I haven’t felt heard, connected, belonging.
* I resonate with justice as our core – and get encouragement from the people here.
Yet Consociates need some kind of core that unites us – Consociates need to figure that out.
* The Working Groups can be considered forums – reaching out to other organizations and partnering. As the NDO ministries are already doing.
* Aren’t Sharing of the Heart groups the place where we share how the charism touches our hearts and moves in our lives as we move out into our world?
* Sharing of the Heart groups have a different focus – they are intended to be more about the spiritual growth of an individual, rather than focusing on work people are doing in the world.
* We also must keep our eye on the *systemic impact* of the charism.

*Barbara McIlquham (recorder) with gracious edits from our group*