**CARAVAN Discussion 2.19.24**

Today, the caravan included Rosemary Curran, Peg Schwendeman, Kay Egan, Kathy McLaughlin, Connie Bowen, Kate O’Connell, Karen Zeleznak and Susan Hames

Began with the Table Prayer of the Community-based Leadership Team (CbLT)

**Check-in and notes:**

Wanting to support the work of the Engagement Team from the edges

**Falling in love with the CSJ Community again, through experiences/resources:**

* seeing each others’ faces on this zoom,
* the Feb. 10 2024 Community Assembly,
* hearing about how The Bridge has continued to evolve as it carries the Charism and Mission into the world,
* the August 2023 Emergence videos on the CbLT website,
* Andrea Tande’s 2023 thesis

**The Community Assembly (CA):**

* It was supposed to be a chance for all to come together, pray, talk about what is going on, get re-energized, go back out again, and come back again – like a living, breathing creation in the Charism and Mission
* That helped us know more about what was going on, in the presentations and the table conversations
* Breathe in, breathe out
* CAs were meant to help us with what Einstein said - “Our task must be to free ourselves... by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty”[[1]](#footnote-0)
* But if coming together doesn’t stimulate, if people aren’t inspired, they won’t come back

**What isn’t working?**

* The CA has too few gatherings, trying to fit items in a “theme,” not flexible, difficulty of items being included in a CA, Sisters holding onto too much and needing to let go
* The Consociate Assemblies aren’t held often or attended much, indicating that they weren’t inspiring or life-giving

**What do we want?**

* We need to come together; we can deal with the legal (e.g. canonical) issues
* We need to create new relationships together
* We want to be inspired and connected
* We want to strengthen our “circles of compassion” and become beacons of light
* Want to learn how to deal with struggles and difficulties together:
  + Inspired by how Sr. Mary Ellen stayed at the table with a sister she didn’t agree with – “I sure did love her”
  + Sr. Genevieve Cummings was a CSJ leader who noted during a very difficult time and discussion that people in the CSJ Community at that time must have “deep affection” because no one left a meeting filled with clenched teeth
  + Where is the deep affection that people have for each other?

**What has worked? Where are we finding deep affection?**

* For Stirring the Fire, people were contacted and asked to be Table Leaders (that flowed from Rachel Barth’s way with “The Four Pivots” gathering)
  + “I need you to help – I need you to be a Table Leader”
  + Being asked to help in this way deepened people’s commitments and anchored something in them
  + It also helped that Kimi Denny organized folders in advance for Table Leaders
* Other examples: Weekly meetings (Karen, Kate, Connie) to craft the Doing Something Just newsletters, Signs of the Times drumming and prayers, going places with people like Mary Root, who courageously calls people asking for rides (e.g Michele Norris at Westminster)
* The 2/10/24 Community Assembly – less rigidity than other CA’s, more chances to share with each other. In fact, we wanted to continue the discussions

**What do we suggest for developing and supporting this deep affection?**

* Reflections from 2/10/24 CA:

Relationship is the foundation of everything that we are. We talked about ways that we can invite each other. We have things like Doing Something Just that comes out every week, but then how do people follow up from that? We could go down the list of the directory and call people, but we don’t know who’s interested in what. Are there ways that those with tech expertise and those willing to learn could construct information so we know who is interested in going to various things and who is doing what, with open invitation for others to join.

* + - For now, may just need to just call each other? Find better ways to do that?
* Appreciated the sharing at the Feb, 2024 CA of having “the experiment of making the Community Assembly into the ‘common table’”
* Have 5 Community Assemblies a year (replace Consociate Assemblies)
  + Would like to see more CA’s like 2/10/24, that is, rather than focusing around a topic, have the CA center on prayer, sharing our stories with each other on what is happening, what excites and/or concerns us, how we can be with each other in the ways the Charism and Mission are moving in us, participating in ritual
  + Focus on developing ourselves as centers of compassion as we do whatever we do, as opposed to focusing on what we’re doing
  + Would like to hear more about what is happening around justice
* Forums can help keep us connected between CA’s:

It’s hard to get a focus on what we’re doing from the time before, and before that, etc. So we are interested in the ‘forums.’ Those who are nuns, remember back when we had forums and they were places where people met regularly. To talk about Community issues [on zoom or in person], then you brought what you talked about to the next Community Assembly so it wasn’t just, ‘here we have it, then we go away.’ It’s [interest-forums] a real continuity type of thing. I think we should look seriously at that.

* Appreciate “The Bridge and The Table” idea on CbLT’s website
* Can we learn anything from other associations that are value-centered and support each others’ work?

**Next time**

* We’ll meet again after Feast of St. Joseph
* Invite Andrea Tande to talk about her thesis – if we could help organize an event that she plans to give, that could help her
* Rosemary and Karen will talk with Andrea

1. The full quote and powerful information can be found here: [Einstein on Widening Our Circles of Compassion – The Marginalian](https://www.themarginalian.org/2016/11/28/einstein-circles-of-compassion/), which also notes the connection of this concept with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.s’ “inescapable web of mutuality” [Martin Luther King, Jr. on Justice and the Four Steps to Successful Nonviolent Resistance – The Marginalian](https://www.themarginalian.org/2015/03/18/martin-luther-king-letter-from-birmingham-city-jail/) [↑](#footnote-ref-0)