

INITIAL RESPONSES.....more to follow

The following statements summarize the **initial responses** to the evaluation of the structural reconfiguration options presented at the St. Louis Assembly of Cluster Congregations.

MIXED CONGREGATIONAL GROUPINGS

OPTION A

QUESTION 1: How might this option enhance our Dominican life and mission?

It could provide a stronger voice, more visible witness of Dominican charism, a new vitality/creativity for mission, encourage new leaders and attract new members. We would create a corporate Dominican identity as we could experience ourselves more as Dominican than individuals. A reduction in number of persons needed for congregational leadership and internal ministries would free persons and resources for mission/ministry.

QUESTION 2: Are there additional strengths, limitations for this option?

Strengths: Spark of energy, new creativity and diversity in ministry, social justice and common life.
Limitations: Delegate chapters, loss of identification with existing congregations, demands on time and financial resources, focus on structures, building relationships, etc. could deter from mission focus

QUESTION 3: Are there any changes you would suggest?

Call for more specific information given, i.e., of regions and regional leadership

Summary of main new ideas

- Consideration of full participation in chapters
- Use of new technology for connections and meetings
- Reduction in number of regional meetings
- Large leadership team, at least at first (one per congregation)
- 6 regions

OPTION B

QUESTION 1: How might this option enhance our Dominican life and mission?

This model creates possibility for new vision of Dominican life and a creativity and passion for the mission similar to the freedom of Dominic and our original founders. It could attract new members; create a new structure, new energy and a clear and unified mission focus. It is a new model for other Dominicans now and in the future and hope for younger members.

QUESTION 2: Are there additional strengths, limitations for this option?

Strength: Conscious choice to birth new life with stance of prophetic risk. Limitations: Financially, emotionally and physically depletes existing communities; Divisive; Diocesan structure not advisable at this time; Lack of clarity and focus concern for financial aspects.

QUESTION 3: Are there any changes you would suggest?

A portion of responses wanted to drop the option B. Other responses want to combine options A and B.

Cautions for Option B:

- Avoid words with emotional, judgmental connotations
- Avoid assumptions about young vs. elderly in relation to the mission
- Diocesan vis-à-vis pontifical
- Concern for finances on both sides

Suggestions:

- Vowed and non-vowed members
- Try first with small group
- Define discernment process for this
- Each congregation one person on the transition team

OPTION C

QUESTION 1: How might this option enhance our Dominican life and mission?

--A possible intermediate step to union

QUESTION 2: Are there additional strengths, limitations for this option?

- Duplicative of other forms of collaboration
- Does not achieve any greater unity
- Not visionary enough
- Does not address the needs of small congregations
- Does not address the problem of aging and resources
- Federation leadership would have authority but no real power

QUESTION 3: Are there any changes you would suggest? No

OPTION D

QUESTION 1: How might this option enhance our Dominican life and mission?

Gives a diversity in the time-line for movement
More options for sharing, ministry, congregational positions, deepening relationships, spiritual growth
Strengthens corporate voice
Interim step

QUESTION 2: Are there additional strengths, limitations for this option?

Would have to be done again later
Divisive
Diocesan communities would have to give up that status
Many now have full participation and would not like delegation'
Could create bad geographic spread
Based on merger concept (larger taking care of smaller), lack of equality
Loss of identity
Driven by need rather than vision
Canonically more complicated than merger
Who moves together: What is critical mass?
Statistics show that this still may not meet the need

Strengths: Addresses immediate needs to move but needs to go slower
Might interest congregations outside of the 7

QUESTION 3: Are there any changes you would suggest?

Expand to 2 or more entities
Divide into 2 options with more clarity, one for merger with image,
One for union with image
Eliminate merger
Full participation in chapters

Find other ways of dividing into 2 groups

See as an intermediate step, not an end

Cluster creates two geographic ministry focused Congregations, then individual members have the choice of which congregation to join

INITIAL RESPONSES BY AGE COHORTS

OPTION A

Out of 42 groups, 2 groups chose not to respond and 4 groups indicated no support.

QUESTION 1: What excites you about this option?

Excitement for this option ranges from none to all in the group.

Option provided for new energy, new life, vitality, corporate voice and identity, stronger OP identity and presence. Strengthens ministry focus and makes collaboration easier.

Option frees people for ministry by having less leadership and internal ministry positions.

Pooling our resources can be our gift to ministry. Won't have to do it again in five years.

QUESTION 2: Do you have any concerns?

Concerns: loss of identity – deal with grief, care of elderly and younger members, let go of rootedness

Strong desire for full participation in chapter, with election of leadership. Concern for loss of voice.

Timeline to develop a new constitution and structures. Amount of time, energy, resources that may take away from ministry.

Regions – how will they be formed? What are definitions? Structures?

QUESTION 3: What potential might this have for our age group?

Companionship - larger peer group

Freshness, revitalization, free for ministry, life-giving, opportunity for collaboration, enthusiasm, sharing resources.

More options – ministry, living for all age cohorts

Time is of the essence. Let's move while we still have the energy. It's a "long term fix" that will carry us into the future.

Would we spend the best years doing internal work and less ministry?

Larger group will help newer vocations and the smaller communities.

Technology will help us keep informed and connected.

Glad to be urged into this process for the mission. To move ahead or not move ahead are both risks.

QUESTION 4: Any other reflections?

Where do associates fit at the table? Bigger community may enable better use of gifts/resources

Consult other congregations who have reconfigured

Be creative in fostering a new community identity

What will really take us to new level of revitalization?

Hope younger members will be attracted to us

Do we think if we will be bigger, we will get more members?

OPTION B

Out of 42 groups, 21 groups chose not to respond and 8 groups indicated no support

QUESTION 1: What excites you about this option?

- Possibility of establishing a contemporary structure
- Opportunity for those who have a new vision

- Gives spaces to focus on the frontiers of our culture
- Responds to needs of older and younger members

QUESTION 2: Do you have any concerns?

- Too divisive
- Financial concerns
- Diminishment of existing congregations
- Leadership drain
- Inadequate response to the needs of the elderly

QUESTION 3: What potential might this have for our age group?

(Few answers under this question)

- Possibly fresh vistas
- New congregation could be open to vowed and non-vowed
- Opportunity for expression of wisdom for this age group
- Chance for a new beginning

QUESTION 4: Any other reflections?

OPTION C

Out of 42 groups, 11 groups chose not respond and 8 groups indicated no support

QUESTION 1: What excites you about this option?

Option C allows us to retain our congregational identity and offers benefits of unions without dissolving the congregations. It could provide further collaboration and energy for ministry. May be a first step to further restructuring leading to the participation of other congregations in the process. It has the potential of sharing leadership, ministry, finances and personnel as the possibility of taking stronger stands on social justice issues.

QUESTION 2: Do you have any concerns?

Range of no response to a litany of concerns regarding:

- Leadership selection/role/layers/willingness to assume
- Finances
- Canonical/non-canonical status
- Duplication of efforts of Alliance/Federation
- Name “Federation” and its role to be clarified
- Is it a first step to further restructuring?
- Whether it meets the needs of smaller groups
- Whether it addresses needs of aging population

QUESTION 3: What potential might this have for our age group?

This option meets needs of age groups, retains identity while joining forces, could happen more rapidly, allows further collaboration and could develop into a more perfect union of Dominicans.

QUESTION 4: Any other reflections?

This option asks the least of us, has little structure. Some sorts of ministries need to be established to hold us together in a more substantial way. It is a step toward total union but does not address serious concerns about leadership and finances. There are concerns about a possible option to remain as we are, the benefits of canonical vs. non-canonical federation. What values would characterize this as Dominican? What is the task of Central Team?

OPTION D

Out of 42 groups, 15 groups chose not to respond and 9 groups indicated no support

QUESTION 1: What excites you about this option?

- Not exciting
- Gives options and time for decision by small groups
- Manageable size and less stress

QUESTION 2: Do you have any concerns?

- Divisive
- Intermediate step to further change
- Limited critical mass
- Issues regarding leadership, associates, further members, chapter participation

QUESTION 3: What potential might this have for our age group?

Concerns: Loss of identity, finances, relocation, health and energy

Alternative to Option A

Large peer groups

QUESTION 4: Any other reflections?

Clarify merger and union in an image.

INITIAL RESPONSES BY MINISTRIES

OPTION A

Out of 44 groups, 2 chose not to respond and 2 groups indicated no support

QUESTION 1: Is there any way this option might limit your ministry?

- no limits
- election of leadership could limit the ministry if leadership positions are expanded
- ministry options could be expanded
- possible personnel issues
 - more than enough people in a specific ministry
- regional structure could affect ministry

QUESTION 2: What potentials for the future might this option have for your ministry?

More collaboration, choice, support, creativity, preaching

--strong prophetic voices; witnesses; better delivery of education; healthcare, etc.

--leveraging of our resources; collective voice to speak to our institutional church

Renewed energy

Divide into groups by:

- life style preference
- traditional religious life
- communities based on 4 pillars
- communities based on ministry to the marginalized
- contemplative life style

More ministry options

Potential for more vocations

One treasurer, regional finance offices

QUESTION 3: Any other reflections

Canonical union which would provide for geographical and ministry groups

More feminine approach/less bureaucratic structure; more leadership in members rather than regional leader;
more conversation on vision and values before structure

Magnet houses that attract new members.

Be Dominican women of 21st century

Focus on forming a union for revitalization not security

OPTION B

Out of 44 groups, 21 groups chose not to respond and 8 groups indicated no support

QUESTION 1: Is there any way this option might limit your ministry?

Negative impact on finances which could limit ministry options

Limiting to leadership ministry

No limits because procedures for discerning ministry would continue

QUESTION 2: What potentials for the future might this option have for your ministry?

Could involve Associates, lay people, and “temporary” vocations

Greater choice and support in ministry

QUESTION 3: Any other reflections

7 Congregations remain with the challenge of letting go;

--mentoring new group;

--care of the elderly;

--diminished leadership pool

Don't separate by age

Maybe A and D or B and D combinations

Could be divisive and stressful for middle and active members

New Dominican identity could be life giving and strengthen vocations to both the new and present groups

Be midwives to the Sisters who want to bring new and future life to the Dominican heritage

Could form new group and also choose another option

OPTION C

Out of 44 groups, 14 groups chose not to respond and 15 groups indicated no support

QUESTION 1: Is there any way this option might limit your ministry?

May or may not limit ministry depending on authority federation is given.

QUESTION 2: What potentials for the future might this option have for your ministry?

Sharing resources

Intermediate step

Strengthens ministry collaboration

Has potential if canonical

QUESTION 3: Any other reflections

Eliminate non-canonical federation

OPTION D

Out of 44 groups, 15 groups chose not to respond and 9 groups indicated no support

QUESTION 1: Is there any way this option might limit your ministry?

Planning would take time away from ministry.

QUESTION 2: What potentials for the future might this option have for your ministry?

Share resources for common good and elderly.

QUESTION 3: Any other reflections

Temporary solution.

Basic Building Blocks needed in whatever model we choose:

Relationality – the basic building block of everything in the universe.

Interdependence – all living beings, including us, rely on one another for our very lives.

Interiority – the inner life that Dominicans call contemplative, is the source of our planning and decision making.

Diversity – not uniformity, is the essence of life and to be cherished and fostered.

Sustainability - ecologically and economically, will be a strong norm of our decision making.

The focus of our study, community, and ministry will expand to include the new reality of the universe story.

Evolutionary principles – it is not the majority that makes the new breakthrough but the maverick.

Ministry Group

In whatever we do, we hope to see an emphasis on study. A Dominican involvement in higher education is important. Ongoing preparation of members is necessary for higher education.

Women's leadership is needed in higher education and in each of our fields:
(Philosophy and theology, science, education, mathematics)

Note need for education in new places. New emphasis in educating the outcast.

To: Cluster Committees
From: Sr. Cathy Galaskiewicz, OP
Re: Configuration Options
Date: February 3, 2005

Thank you for the options we have received. Here is another one to consider.

Current Situation



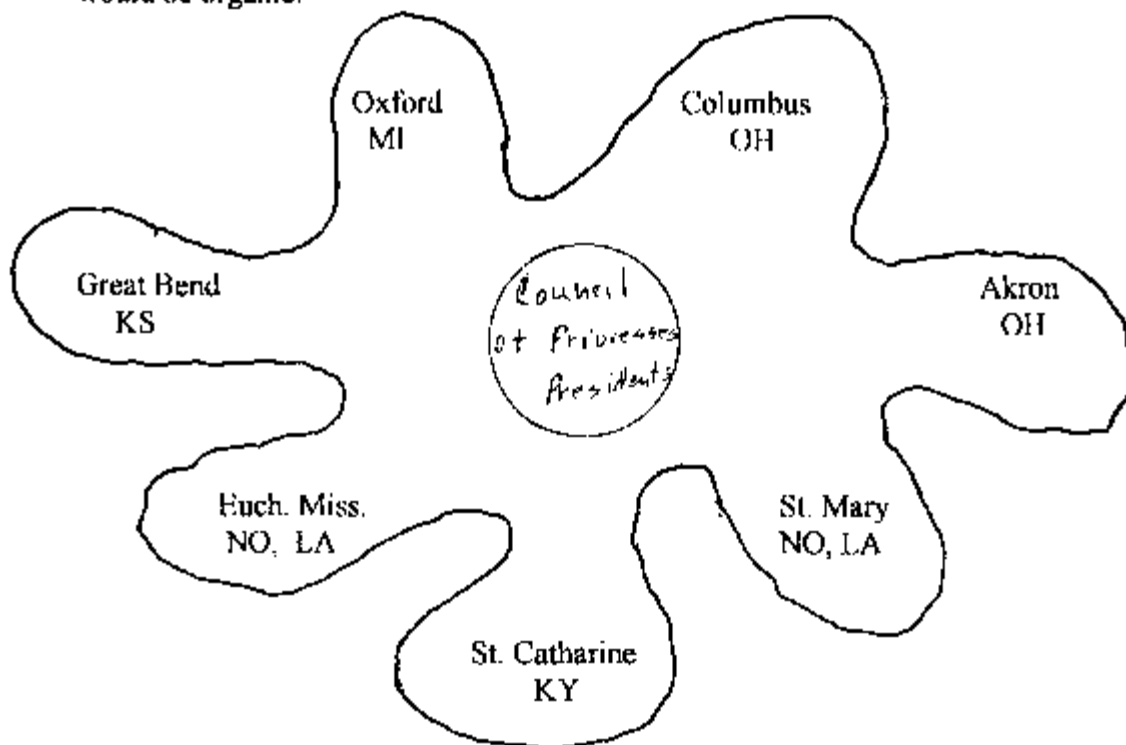
Dynamic Cluster

Each congregation maintains its identity, internal government and finances.

A Council of all Presidents/ Prioresses meets quarterly for communication and coordination. Chairs rotate.

There is an intercommunity flow among members for the sake of mission, including opportunities and encouragement for intercommunity formation, retirement, health care, ministries, sponsored institutions, living, committees (preaching, justice, ecology), associate formation/life, retreats, ongoing formation, and so forth.

Some congregations may choose to merge within the Dynamic Cluster, gradually resulting in fewer "petals." Eventually there may be one entity, but this development would be organic.



**NEW OPTION – New Vision and Work for 21st Century – Nation, World
(Preaching outward and Responding, Blending Resources)**

Name of Option: Weaving

Description: A gradual bringing together of our visions/dreams for the world in the United States. Biggest need – gradually we realize and name financial investments, houses, circles = refound congregation.

Relationships: Intercongregational, “none left behind”, woman-friendly

Leadership: One representative from each congregational leadership with back and forth watching, sharing

Advantages: Gradual, creative, open to future, unfolding, developing, prophetic. Individuals can initiate at any time – leaders are communicators.

Limitations: (none noted)

