

Cluster Dreams for Reconfiguration Response Sheets

Columbus Gathering • September 10-12, 2004

- ❖ Geographic hubs – loosely structural – room for evolution
- ❖ Keep the structure and the spirit in balance
- ❖ Non-canonical entity with leadership encouraging more collaboration for mission team or apostolic endeavors
- ❖ Strong moral presence of Dominican together – Holy Preaching
- ❖ Geographic connections among cluster members
- ❖ On-going development
- ❖ Mother Angelicas of the future – solid theology with Dominicans on television and radio –Holy Preaching
- ❖ Move toward identity as Dominicans, rather than as Oxford, Columbus, Kentucky, etc.
- ❖ Leadership Team of Cluster – one from each congregation, plus leadership of each congregation.
- ❖ Go together with certain ones more closely related, e.g. regional groupings as an initial step. Instead of 28 leaders, have a core of leaders (like a spider web). Communication possible in moving. In 6 years become more centralized.
- ❖ One group with leadership team & representatives divided into regions with free flowing movement geographically
- ❖ Centralized leadership and offices that can be combined in order to free more members for mission, i.e. one treasurer, one peace & justice promoter, one formation director, etc.
- ❖ Shared leadership, resources, ministry with social justice orientation, could be canonical or non-canonical entity. Each leadership autonomous with overriding governing board.
- ❖ Coordinate some of the directorships of the congregations, i.e. formation, associates, etc.
- ❖ Dominican Sisters new name - Leadership with 4 or 5 regions with one regional leader
- ❖ Less burden on leadership rather than more
- ❖ Something is happening – can we control it?
- ❖ Result in more powerful corporate stances
- ❖ Some functions and committees can be across the board, i.e. peace & justice
- ❖ Inter-congregational health care centers
- ❖ In locations that are new centers of learning and transportation
- ❖ New inter-congregational groupings
- ❖ International congregation modeled on Dominican men religious
- ❖ Face the reality – we have an international responsibility for mission
- ❖ Create an umbrella board of seven Dominican congregations for unity and collaboration
- ❖ “If we don’t shape the future, it will shape us.” “If you want to predict the future, then help to create it.”
- ❖ Commit to incremental steps with emphasis on internal attitudes – stress Dominican identity and less emphasis on congregation. Then organic growth.
- ❖ Work more on Dominican Alliance to get to know more Sisters and delay Cluster. Okay with shared leadership, resources and ministry.
- ❖ Goal is a renewed Dominican life - authentically contemplative and on fire for souls responding to critical needs of our time so much so that we transcend our individualism and are detached from habitual practices and ways of relating. All for the higher good of preaching the Gospel.

- ❖ How we structure ourselves – I don't care! Take lessons from creation – plant the tree and allow it to grow, water the roots – unknown what shape it will take. Depend on Spirit to guide next right step.
- ❖ Collaboration as a beginning around areas. Decision to cluster with little/no picture of what the structure is...then determine best way to collaborate in some areas by stages with structure/relationship developing. Collaboration in areas of similarities (retreat centers, foreign missions, etc.) and needs. Provide availabilities and possibilities for mission in each congregation. As the reconfiguration process continues need to be mindful of need to nourish new life separating immediate needs from new life and mission aspects. Develop mission/ministry opportunities to share those already in existence and new opportunities not claimed by any existing congregation.
- ❖ Begin to develop infrastructure starting with governance structure to care for immediate needs/and the mission/ministry opportunities. Develop models for leadership then lastly financial options/responsibilities. This would all stay in flux while caring for dying aspects but moving to the future. Individual congregational decisions could continue to be made or specific elements are developed.
- ❖ Let no Sister Be Left Behind-each member really cared for (old or young); bonding of newer members; would not lose international sense of order (DSI)
- ❖ Federation Model (canonical or non-canonical) with special attention to new members and associates. Every sister would have a sense of being a Dominican who had a history in a specific congregation, loving both their roots and their new grouping whatever it is called. Pooling of finances and energies for ministry. Contemplative component such as a House of prayer (non-permanent commitment)
- ❖ Province Model according to geography – renewal in prayer and preaching; mission/ministry on the margin; shared life-mission and ministries; shared government with leadership that can preserve the best of the large or small congregational experience; transformation of the Preaching; newer members (from Collaborative Novitiate) looking forward together in mission/ministry as reformers with their own sense of Order rather than congregation.
- ❖ On the way – meanwhile we need more time to know each other, our ministries, and our experiences. Continue to plan as we have been doing; great concern for the small congregations to help them. The Process should not kill/exhaust the Committee Members, etc.
- ❖ Seven Point Star of Light-seen as supportive. – 1) Seven prioress (current ones) live a year with each group of the seven-returning every four months to one's own group to report, etc. 2) Sisters (any number) move into other congregations for a period of time, to experience differences and likenesses. 3) One administration for 7 groups formed by prioresses of each. Sisters interchange ministries and living in congregations as they choose. 4) Exchange making retreats in all 7 congregations. 5) Keep the present committee as needed. Form a board of 7 members, one from each group to act as a liaison/representative for all. Each congregation keeps its own particular form of government and personnel. In time as needed communities can choose to join another.
- ❖ One entity – top leadership – each of 7 choose one for leadership team – regional decision making for needs of that area.
- ❖ Ministry groups (ecology, education, administration, etc.) all having representative on top mission group – there could be crossing of congregational groups for ministry. These would meet with main leadership group if that is our structure.
- ❖ Get to know those in like ministries – remain as we are until needs arise for further collaboration in areas of need (motherhouse/residence.) Hire more lay persons as needed.
- ❖ “Letting it happen” as needs arise.

- ❖ Have a common leadership team – then subgroups geographically or any combination. Subgroups choose a leadership and others (treasurers, formation directors, etc.)
- ❖ Continue each of 7 congregations as they are, take time to move as Cluster to alleviate fears and move slowly together. Let Cluster groups work together to make a difference in society. Marketing is important to let the world know what we are doing – proclaiming our mission! This could stimulate vocations.
- ❖ Share money to make power points for TV presentation of our ministries of the cluster partners in mission. Others like Associates can contribute as partners in mission. Ideas: justice, advocacy letters, ecology, education, social work, etc., all the power we bring to ministry.
- ❖ Collaboration/sharing – care of elderly; administration and personnel (some have more proficiency and would be able to share); finances-types of property.
- ❖ Formation & Education – well established groups in higher education might share with others.
- ❖ Look at Models of Fathers-provinces – Hope model-difference of opinions; Federation model - Federation of Mercy??
- ❖ Make sure various missions are kept, i.e. rural
- ❖ Assure all are cared for
- ❖ Work in stages – closely knit government structures; all members represented in structure; approved by members.
- ❖ Take easier pieces first – many pieces very unclear to get dream. More difficult ones like finances later. Many questions like assets, properties, portfolio, etc. How to share
- ❖ Human resources most important – don't have too many steps
- ❖ Most be centered on unity and strength of group – share what we are able, example leadership; keep each community. Maybe have areas and a leader of two different groups as leaders of area.
- ❖ Aged able to choose motherhouse of choice. Keep motherhouses as long as possible.
- ❖ Missions important
- ❖ Use internet for administration
- ❖ Don't want a new entity
- ❖ Each group be available to each other
- ❖ Take cultures into account – rural, city, etc.
- ❖ We have to risk
- ❖ Define the pillars that hold us together – community – What it means etc., relationship Fundamental question?
- ❖ Help with staffing each others ministries; draw others to simple/back to earth living; faith-unity-strength - not geographic boundaries; left hand being aware of right hand and vice versa; being in the places where the needs are, invite others; awareness of our common ground; coming together to enhance simplicity in all aspects of our lives (administrative, financial, human resources, etc); the process should bring out the best in all of us; feel good that something good is about to happen; roots of a tree coming together into fullness of life; a collage of beautiful colors coming together to reveal the face of God, rather than remaining individual “blobs” of color; various instruments playing together to produce a beautiful symphony with the Holy Spirit as the conductor.
- ❖ Create a General Leadership Team with defined responsibilities – congregations remain separate (no transfer to vows). Emphasis on Mission is priority (e.g. could be done through commissions; bringing together persons of similar ministries). Emphasis on Younger Members remaining connected with one another. Collaborate more efficiently and effectively (e.g. one donations committee, one justice and preaching promoter;

connect our Associates). Perhaps a Coordinator (Regional leadership) for each congregation. A Wisdom Council coming together yearly to vision.

- ❖ More Closely Related congregations with one central leadership team. In this model congregations are more closely connected but still separate.
- ❖ A Union of Seven Congregations – a central leadership with defined responsibilities. The focus and energy is MISSION
- ❖ For a new entity
- ❖ If the emphasis is on MISSION and reason for reconfiguration focus on creating a ministry which we could not do alone but could do together (e.g. a peace institute or...). This idea came from the desire or need to see some effect of collaboration on the MISSION. Concerns: Do we have enough time to bring this dream to fulfillment? Will the model truly free up sisters for ministry?
- ❖ Environmentally sensitive (geographically close) areas/centers sharing personnel (focusing on mission there – keeping each congregation in tact. – multi-tasked and focused.
- ❖ Inter-congregational movement toward living and working together as one larger entity.
- ❖ Two to three regions with mission orientation regionalizing around groups and tasks (schools, spirituality, ecology) each congregation kept intact.
- ❖ Give up names as distinct congregations/canonical change
- ❖ Central administrative center e.g. St. Louis/Chicago (formation, government structures, leadership)
- ❖ One administrative team representing all congregations sharing ministries.
- ❖ New entity (retaining some separately incorporated investments to enable need for retirement, health) common focus to speak with one voice on special issues.
- ❖ Seven congregations form a union and elect leadership; form ministry centers according to purpose; such as retirement, education, and foreign missions.
- ❖ Go slowly to get acquainted. One leadership person from each congregation attend the seven congregations council meetings. Then later elect one prioress and council from the seven leadership groups.
- ❖ Be itinerant and work among the people with regional centers for ministry and rejuvenation.
- ❖ Go slowly and place together first those needed most help.
- ❖ Merge the four small congregations into the three larger congregations.
- ❖ Create a union with a leadership team from the seven congregations. Have one constitution for the seven groups. The seven groups share the ministry.
- ❖ At the beginning have one team member attend meetings of all seven congregations and bring back concerns.
- ❖ Whatever model is chosen must support life of those in active ministry and be energizing “fan the flame”
- ❖ Models of regional cooperation responding to specific needs of individual groups.
- ❖ A shared governmental/administrative system (with “provinces” on local level)
- ❖ Staying as the congregations we are and sharing services
- ❖ Creating a “new entity” for all sisters in active ministry which would include a central umbrella (administrative) for the seven congregations and sharing/combining some facilities (retirement/infirmery) as per need; creating a new tradition while honoring historical contributions; be creative, embrace newness!
- ❖ Keep present government structures of the seven congregations, BUT sharing health care centers, sharing sponsored ministries and housing; sharing vocation/formation/associates and other internal ministries. (This could be step toward union)

- ❖ Become one congregation-union with four regions – one leadership team composed of four regions (east, south, west, and Midwest) - one prioress and assistant - suggest Kentucky as the motherhouse (geographically central and oldest)
- ❖ Keep present congregational government structures but have a governing board with one representative from each congregation.
- ❖ Merger of small groups with larger group within the seven Cluster congregations or of small group with one another. Comments: We do not want to be concentrated in one geographical area, keep us scattered. Reservation: loss of congregational identity is hard.
- ❖ Enhance corporate impact
- ❖ Collapse some internal structures, i.e. one finance office, one common formation process in order to free our members for ministry
- ❖ One or more new congregations – a new congregation perhaps, with members spawned from each of the seven cluster congregations
- ❖ Process of clustering must continue developing relationships and collaboration
- ❖ No Dominican will ever be alone i.e. this does not settle living situations
- ❖ Making some corporate choices around sponsored ministries.
- ❖ Freeing more people for mission/ministry - too many now in leadership/administration
- ❖ Put financial, peace & justice, leadership, ecological, etc. persons together from each congregation and determine the best for those positions and free up others for the mission in other areas.
- ❖ Analogy: We will be like a rainbow, still individually unique, beautifully blended – no gray areas – enriching ourselves, the Dominican Order and the Church.
- ❖ Variety is the spice of life – we’ve been enriched by these gatherings and others – Lands of Dominic, Parable Retreats, etc. Our reconfiguration will make these opportunities possible on a regular basis.
- ❖ Concerns: 1) Have to think of our younger Sisters, and what is best and most life-giving for them. 2) Impossible to get to know so many more sisters. How will we bond with each other? 3) Afraid of losing our identity as an individual congregation. 4) Concerned that the extroverts will be more explosive, the introverts more introverted. 5) Location? Where will we be? Will we keep our same motherhouse? 6) Seven groups too many to put together – perhaps doing in twos or threes.
- ❖ New entity with central administration for all seven congregations with several possibilities of substructures – local structure would follow former congregational lives; geographical/regional restructuring/ministerial determination.
- ❖ Maintain own congregation identity but share resources personnel, formation, ministry, retirement, etc.
- ❖ Possibility of more than one grouping of new entity
- ❖ Strong desire to be pontifical and canonical yet an openness to a way of serving God’s people as initially non-canonical.
- ❖ Whatever reconfiguration and/or new entity evolves would be seen as a beginning – a seed for a global Dominican reality.
- ❖ Union of the seven congregations with each congregation being a province/region of the entity.
- ❖ Together we may energize a “new fire”
- ❖ An emphasis on cultural diversity (who are really a majority in the Church) based on new ways of ministry and appreciation for cultural diversity.
- ❖ Beginning of a new process that is open to continual evaluation.
- ❖ Continue the just and fair sharing of resources

- ❖ Maintain individuality of each group but increase how we collaborate and support each other while maintaining own.
- ❖ What is the need that will give us passion?
- ❖ As congregations we would share our ministries. We would see ourselves as Dominican women working together
- ❖ Identity to be more Dominican, not geographical.
- ❖ Continue to have gatherings to re-energize.
- ❖ Include in some way input from our laity. Also, that they take leadership among themselves.
- ❖ As we proceed in the Cluster process, we understand we don't take the same steps at the same time.
- ❖ This table was a table of most practical people. We looked at regional leadership whatever that may mean. One thing that we looked at was a leadership team for the seven congregations with representatives from each congregation. We also felt it was important not to lose what we have such as our sisters being buried at their own motherhouse, and yet being open to new possibilities.
- ❖ Union Model – 1) One leadership team representative of all seven groups; 2) Three or four regions of membership focused on ministry or geography or culture; 3) Common goals, constitution, mission and values; 4) Share all e.g. personnel, buildings, ministry opportunities, finances, solid communication; 5) Contain subsets for ministry, younger members, etc.
- ❖ Federation Model – 1) Shared leadership with representatives from all congregations; 2) Shared resources: ministry, finances, formation; 3) Retain canonical & cultural identity; 4) Possible common properties ownership or retaining local ownership of properties; 5) Three or four regions.
- ❖ Questions: How will associates fit in Union Model? How will it attract new members?
- ❖ Ministry collaboration – groups in ministerial areas – itinerancy, sharing resources, collaboration, come together for mission.
- ❖ Work together in promoting vocations
- ❖ Develop new language of thinking of each other, more family than guest
- ❖ Awareness/sensitivity to common good
- ❖ Look at the BIG picture, not just one congregation
- ❖ Awareness of urgencies – limited resources – financial, leadership, folks available to mission
- ❖ One movement – there will be more
- ❖ Image – entering each others congregation
- ❖ Sharing resources – doing vocation/ecology together
- ❖ Able to transform our view of Mission
- ❖ Force us to look at our lifestyle
- ❖ Next Q – if this is our vision, what new structure will support it
- ❖ Associates in mission
- ❖ Seven sisters need sense of place – challenge “younger members” to itinerancy for mission
- ❖ Need to incorporate folks who are not here
- ❖ Connection of new members – help mentor, add for “flame of fire” for mission
- ❖ Maryknoll model of sharing mission
- ❖ Consider shared leadership
- ❖ Challenge ourselves to itinerancy, sustainability, passion for mission, responsibility
- ❖ New burst of the common good
- ❖ What structures will support what we want to do?

INDIVIDUALS DREAMS ON CLUSTER RECONFIGURATION

- Divisions (groups) according to ministries; each division has a “coordinator” or “council”; each “council” or “coordinator” meets periodically with general council (made up of member elected by members of organization).
- Beware of hierarchical models
- Continue learning to know each other – as individuals, culturally
- Collaborate now by continuing to eliminate personnel that we can have individually (in seven congregations)
- Proceed from this point to intertwine gradually, living together, studying what should eliminate next.
- Form some sort of board/council that will enhance our coming together
- Gradually help us to speak as one when we want to (respect for life, etc.)
- Question: Are we all (seven of us) on the same page on this continuum? Three congregations have been working together longer than seven.
- To do an exchange program. Maybe two or three sisters at a time to live with sisters in different areas for one or two months, e.g. 2 or 3 from Columbus go to New Orleans; 2 or 3 from New Orleans go to Oxford; 2 or 3 from Oxford go to Great Bend, etc. Of course, all volunteer!
- A feminine vision of Dominican Men’s Province – centralized leadership; mission, community life well articulated in common; the lived experience throughout the entire province.
- Keep the current locations but have representatives from each congregation into a governing board or a senate.
- As numbers decrease, facilities do not need to be closed or sold but used/transformed for a mission in assisted living for skilled care.
- Look for areas to collaborate to save financial/resources for ministry.