



# Cluster: a Dominican journey in faith

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NEWSLETTER OF THE DOMINICAN CLUSTER

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## Cluster Grows!

As the Cluster grows, so does the promise of the gifts each congregation will bring to enrich the Cluster process for all. In October 2003, the Kentucky Dominicans announced their congregational decision to join the Cluster process, followed by the Oxford Dominicans in November and the Great Bend Dominicans in January 2004. These congregations followed unique journeys toward their decisions to join the Cluster, but we are all grateful for the common journey on which we now embark together, following where the Holy Spirit will lead.

### Kentucky's Journey

The Dominican Sisters of St. Catharine, Kentucky, began their Cluster journey through a letter sent out in April 2003. The letter told the sisters that an invitation had been extended asking the community to join the Cluster process.

This letter reminded members of the congregation's commitment to begin steps toward "a closer union" with other Dominican congregations, which had previously led to joining the Dominican Alliance. The letter reviewed all that had been accomplished through the Alliance and asked members to explore the idea of considering an even closer union.

In September 2003, the four regions of the congregation gathered to discuss this invitation. At these meetings, the sisters used a polarity management tool to consider the positives and negatives.

Many expressed the belief that this movement is of the Holy Spirit, others cited that it is Dominican to engage in dialogue to arrive at the truth. Some stated that it is true to the pioneer spirit that we be risk-tak-

ers. Many felt this was the right time to begin a wider conversation. Understandably, responses also included some concerns.

After thorough consideration, the decision to enter the Cluster was made with overwhelming support from the congregation.

The first cycle Cluster meetings followed in January. These meetings were held in several locations, all following similar schedules and the same format of the fall meetings conducted by the original Cluster communities. In addition to the video from Sr. Margaret Ormond, the sisters were pleased to have an extra letter from Sr. Margaret specifically directed to Dominicans from Kentucky. *(Note: This fifth letter will be distributed to all members in the coming months.)*



*Srs. Patricia Henderson, Maria del Rey Mangan and Rita Carr at the Nebraska meeting*



*Sr. Roberta Anne Semper*



*Sr. Louise Quinlan*



*Columbus Sister Anne Keenan listens to Kentucky Sister Rosemary Rule at Kentucky's meeting in Chicago*



*Sr. Joan McVeigh reads a letter from Margaret Ormond to the Kentucky sisters attending the Chicago meeting*

## Oxford's Journey

The Dominican Sisters of Oxford were introduced to the Cluster at our Annual Assembly in 2003.

Dominican Alliance activities are always reviewed at the Assembly, and

Leadership felt that since the Cluster is

composed of Alliance congregations, it was important the sisters

be informed about the happenings of the Cluster. After the presentation, the sisters agreed that the congregation should gather more information on the Cluster.

Our Prioress, Sr. Teresita Lipar, contacted Sr. Anne Kilbride (Columbus) to ask if Oxford could send representatives to the Cluster Coordinating

Committee (CCC)

meetings for the purpose of gathering information. The response was positive.

Sr. Joan Marie Jereb, a grassroots representative, and Sr. Gene Poore, a leadership representative, attended the August

2003 CCC meeting in Columbus.

Then, during September and October, we held regional congregation meetings with our sisters in Waterford, Oak Park, IL and Oxford. Gene and Joan Marie presented the information they gathered at the CCC meeting and shared the Power-Point presentation that was used at the fall Cycle One meetings of the Cluster congregations. Handouts were distributed to sisters for private reflection.

In the midst of these congregational meetings, Joan Marie and Gene attended the Cycle One congregational meeting of the Akron Dominicans in mid-September, and were able to hear Sr. Margaret Ormond's presentation of the letters she had written to the Cluster congregations.

In mid-October, as part of an on-going viability study we have been undertaking, Tony Gittins was invited to the Motherhouse for a study day on Mission. The day was very appropriate and the input was well received.

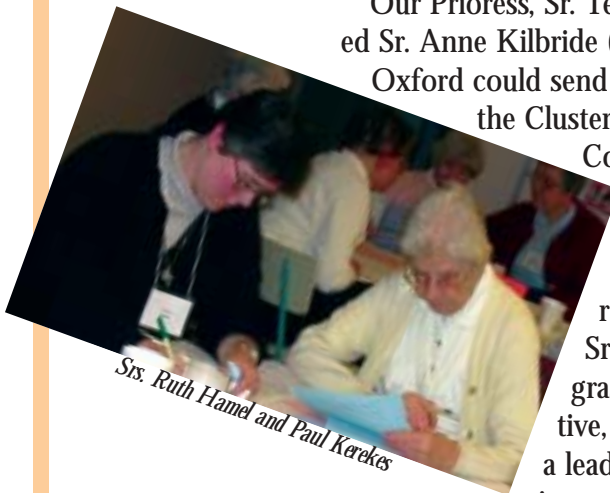
At the end of October, Teresita, Joan Marie and Gene traveled to Akron for the Prioress meeting and a CCC meeting. Congregations gathering information were asked to make a decision about entering the Cluster by the end of December. To aid us in making that decision, we invited CCC Chair Sr. Therese Leckert (New

Orleans St. Mary) to Oxford for a Cluster Study Day. Sr. Therese provided input and updated the sisters with current information.

The sisters spent this final discernment day listening and sharing. At the end of the meeting, the sisters voted to enter the Cluster process.



*Srs. Mary Ann Fedor and Sue McMahon*



*Srs. Ruth Hamel and Paul Kerekes*



*Srs. Teresita Lipar, Audrey Rash, Nancy Zajac, Frances Mary Kernasovich, Gene Poore, Mary A. Deane, Rosalyn Seda, and Sharon Marie Kern*

## Great Bend's Journey

In January, when this year 2004 was just two days old, the community of Great Bend Sisters gathered for a discernment day to come to a decision about whether to enter the Cluster conversation.

After having been in the Dominican Alliance since its second year, we had been keeping a watchful eye on the Cluster process. We gathered some preliminary information about the Cluster and then our Prioress Sr. Gemma Doll accompanied the Cluster Prioresses at the Cluster Coordinating Committee meeting in Akron in October 2003. She brought back more information for us to use in our decision-making process.

The community invited Sr. Joan Scanlon (Kentucky), Executive Director of the Dominican Alliance, to lead us all in a day of prayer, reflection, and discussion in working toward a decision.

During the day, the members listened to Sr. Margaret Ormond's four letters to the Cluster communities, which she had delivered in person to the Cluster congregations in the Cycle One meetings last fall. We then viewed the Cluster PowerPoint presentation (also from those meetings), shared in small groups, and voiced our views of the pros and cons of joining the Cluster at microphones set up around the room.

Using a polarity grid, Joan asked each member to list advantages and disadvantages for both entering the Cluster process and for not entering the process. Then we all got up and made our way among one another, sharing with one or two others at a

time and meeting as many as possible, to share our insights and voice our concerns. It was a real mind-opening experience for all of us to think of the positives and negatives for both perspectives on the decision.

At the end of the day, Gemma asked each member to complete a ballot. Those who were not present at the meeting were phoned for their vote. By asking sisters to return their ballots by noon the next day, Gemma gave us all another chance for overnight private reflection and further discussion with other members.

A 60% majority vote of the members affirming joining the Cluster process would have been needed for the community to move in that direction. When the ballots were counted, 80% of the Community had affirmed joining the Cluster process!



*Srs. Gemma Doll, Rene Weeks, and Joel Christoph*



*Blood Sisters Amadea and Edith Marie Hauser*



*The Great Bend community assembled for the discernment day on the Cluster*

# Cluster Subcommittee Updates



The work of the **STRUCTURAL RECONFIGURATION SUBCOMMITTEE** so far has included developing a glossary of terms and a reading list for members, which will be distributed in the future. **Above, seated:** *Srs. Carmelite Zibilich (NO-SM), Waldia Warden (NO-SM), Mariellen Phelps (Akron)*; **standing:** *Srs. Denise LeJeune (NO-EMD), Peggy Martin (Great Bend), Janice Bachman (Columbus), Eleanor Tierney (Kentucky), Claire McGowan (Kentucky), Pat Thomas (Columbus), Connie Schoen (Oxford), and Delia McDonald (NO-SM).*

The new **RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE** will be meeting soon and will study data, both actuarial and projections, regarding human, financial, and property resources of the congregations.

The **COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE's** work has included developing the PowerPoint presentation for the Cycle One congregational meetings, two newsletters, the recently launched website, news sheets for each congregation's internal distribution, and Cluster Updates. This subcommittee also has formatted and distributed the first of Margaret Ormond's letters to the Cluster (created by the Prayer and Ritual Subcommittee).

Check out the new Cluster website:  
[www.dominicancluster.org](http://www.dominicancluster.org)

The new **SPONSORED INSTITUTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE** will compile information regarding the institutions of each community and explore the special relationships between them and the congregations. Members are assembling materials for their first meeting.

The **CONGREGATIONAL HISTORIES SUBCOMMITTEE** has been working on a PowerPoint presentation about the stories of each Cluster congregation, to be presented at the upcoming Cycle Two Inter-Congregational Gatherings in September.

The **DOCUMENTS AND GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES TASK FORCE** is preparing a matrix on the documents of every community to facilitate further examination and reveal the common threads and distinguishing emphases of the congregations.

The **PRAYER AND RITUAL SUBCOMMITTEE** created the Cluster prayer cards and rituals for the Cycle One meetings. Recently they developed reflection questions to be distributed with Sr. Margaret Ormond's letters, and are working on the rituals for the upcoming Cycle Two Inter-Congregational meetings. **Below:** *Srs. Amy McFrederick (Great Bend), Mary Hilary Simpson (NO-SM), Jeannine Halloran (Columbus), Bernadette Campbell (Columbus), Mary C. Daniel (NO-SM), Luisa Derouen (NO-EMD), Marilyn Ambrosic (Akron) and Marilyn Jean Mihalic (Akron).*



## Cluster Calendar



2004

Please note the dates of the upcoming Discernment Cycle Two Inter-Congregational Gatherings (the date of the Columbus meeting was incorrectly printed in the previous newsletter). Look for more details in the coming months!

- ✓ Inter-Congregational Gathering I in Columbus
- ✓ Inter-Congregational Gathering II in New Orleans

September 10-12, 2004  
September 24-26, 2004