

SPIRAL DYNAMICS FEEDBACK

May, 2006

Participants: Sisters: 122; Associates: 4

Cluster congregations participating: Akron, Columbus, Grand Rapids, Great Bend, Kentucky, St Mary's New Orleans, Eucharistic Missionaries New Orleans, Oxford

Two response sheets without a number participating

1. As you reflect on Phil's presentation, what observations would you like to make? How might these observations apply to reconfiguration?

Observations on spiral dynamics

Spiral dynamics gives us a language to describe what is happening. The DVD was definitely a help in understanding the concept of Spiral Dynamics. The handout was very helpful in understanding the various colors/memes since it was difficult to take it all in through the video only.

How many times in even one day we may be in various stages of spiral development! We would like to find ourselves living in yellow/turquoise a few more moments each day as time passes. As we grow in this, we feel our cluster connections will thrive.

Values instilled by parents without formal education transcend culture.

The Cluster meetings and conversations have begun the spiral in those participating.

We have a basic desire to expand our consciousness.

Nothing stays the same and that movement urges us to be open and look toward the future. Life and culture are not static.

What is the good in all the levels and how do we get a handle on it?

One stage pushes us to the next as the work of one stage nears completion. Various levels of life, such as age and experience, have various persons in different levels in the spiral. We can be in two colors (or memes) at one time - maybe more.

Growth as expressed in the green level has been happening. However, there are problems at that level so we need to seek a new level.

Today's problems cannot be resolved with today's techniques. Though the concepts of spiral dynamics are not easy to grasp, the introduction of this way of moving into the future with processes that are still evolving forces us to look beyond the familiar and struggle to understand other possibilities for coming to decisions. What we are engaged in today – creating a future based on new approaches – should be cyclic.

Moving from group bonds (green) to the universal (yellow/turquoise) is difficult — one aspect of this is our fears of letting go of our congregational identity to create something new.

We identified ourselves as mostly in the green level, moving into the yellow level, and touching the turquoise.

We can relate to the exhaustion of the “green” world. We know that when we are frustrated, this is a call to change, and that as Christians, we must strive to be beacons of hope.

In a school system, the leaders try to integrate the various backgrounds and cultures of the students and staff to make a more natural flow. This seems to have aspects of yellow and turquoise memes.

We are called to be prophets and pioneers (turquoise and yellow) in religious life. Can we do this better together in Cluster? I think so.

Congregations and individuals are at different levels (2) and we must learn to value and respect all stages in others and in ourselves. This will impinge on our associations with others. It gives us a collective consciousness and a collaborative interconnectedness. Individuals as well as Congregations have a trace of each color. Too much of “power” (red) is not good.

We must be willing to change in a positive direction and that will lead us to growth. Not all will move at the same pace, but we must go forward and not backward.

Our differences are not our problems, it’s the judgment we make about them.

Something - Holy Spirit - is moving us to go on to the next level - into the yellow level.

We have willingly been pushed into a lot of growth in our community, preparing us to continue moving forward.

We will be/are going back and forth in the evolution of consciousness.

If I can appreciate the evolutionary dimension of consciousness and culture, it will help us value each level and see its essential need. If not, I will canonize my own place/level and cause increasing polarity, setting our evolutionary process backwards. This will diminish the presence of religious life in our era.

Categories give way to spiral. There is good and bad — assets and drawbacks at each level. There is something of each level in all of us. It helps us to have more appreciation of the opinions and ideas of others.

As we have evolved, we have become more human. The more human we are the more divine we are.

As one goes up the spiral the good of the whole emerges as well as the valuing of being. Balance in one’s life-style is needed. If addicted to “doing”, “being” can be a challenge.

We see that the spiral dynamics is a way to think about going to a next level of initiating innovations that will adjust to the pressures and crises of our times. It is a way of thinking about developing beyond ourselves, with the clear choice of advancement or going to a lower level for security or survival. With adequate inner and corporate work we can move to the second tier, and we will be better able to honor and accept differences with increased diversity as we enter a more complex system. We also see the second tier as being better equipped to bridge with younger

women who have more overt expressions of purple and blue levels for example, the desire to pray in Latin, a yearning for the old traditions of Catholicism.

There could be a more human process for change, a nature-based process with a more spiritual foundation rather than one using artificial, memory-based color coding, with a vocabulary from modern science, employed in industry, social science and secular education. Another process to help with change is that called Circles of Trust also available on the net. The most human of the Circle of Trust is that of Parker Palmer which is based on personal transformation as well as for political and policy changes to make a better world. Why not use the very successful design for religious women set up by Nancy Sylvester, IHM, Mary McCann, IHM and program consultant Mary Jo Klick called Circles of Dialogue and Contemplation available on the net.

Reconfiguration

We are called to transformation rather than reconfiguration as we emerge and develop from one stage to another.

Remember that our responses to life must be from a place of freedom.

There are stages that need to emerge in religious life that lead to reconfiguration.

We have come to be aware of a larger world for which we are responsible, and reconfiguration calls us out of parochialism into a larger family. Second tier sees values in all others and is global. Clustering may help us appreciate values in all other Cluster congregations and take a more global perspective.

Respect for others and self in a contemplative mode may apply to reconfiguration as we study truth in one another, ourselves and in Jesus.

We are at a moment where we are living into what we want for the rest of the world.

We see how many of the movements that we have made as a community have come from moments of crisis. As we live through the uncertainty of cluster reconfiguration there will be times of fluctuating forward and backward in our growth, personally and communally. If we can recall the dynamics of this process it will help us to be more accepting and forgiving, less judging, and more gentle with ourselves and with others.

Being a part of the cluster reconfiguration we may be able to serve with one another in moments of disaster, thereby enhancing our service and our support for one another. We note also, that it is hard to discern just how many issues each of us can respond to. Sometimes we feel the bombardment of all the pain in the world puts us on sensory overload and often we are left with a sense of helplessness.

Rituals are one way of defining us; they are an indication of how we come together, and would come together with other congregations with their rituals and culture. The time and energy to do this is a concern.

The entire entity must be involved in creating trust, designing the appropriate structures, finding the right people, implementing the congruent systems.

Our community has lots to give other cluster groups, and we have much to receive from them.

Evolution of consciousness seems to parallel evolution of life on the planet.

For the reconfiguration to be effective we need extremely good communication and because of our technology such is possible.

2. What awareness is awakened? Do you believe this awareness is crucial to our present historical situation; to the values, truths and actions that support reconfiguration?

Awarenesses

In appreciation of all creation, we see benefits and good in all. We need that in the reconfiguration process.

Moving to higher levels does not negate any of the previous levels, but incorporates them. The challenge is to move forward.

Awareness is a growth process. Growth is sometimes so subtle that it needs to be pointed out to us, and can often be seen only by looking back, by comparing.

We need to integrate or pull together in the diversity.

It is important to be aware of the level out of which we are operating — and move to a higher level.

We are called to move to the 2nd tier.

Respect for all levels, respect for others' opinions. Reconfiguration would foster this awareness of respecting others.

It's a risk to go forward, but circumstances impel us to do so — both as a society and as a congregation. It's not so much a choice, it's happening. Once you're aware, you choose how you respond.

If we let people know our own struggles and what we do to deal with these struggles, then others will be willing to reveal to us what they are searching for.

We find ourselves in situations we never would have imagined. Family life and education have changed, thus impinging on religious life. Young people can perform in service ministries without a religious vocation.

In looking at our Congregation we see that, in many regards, we bear a lot of the orange color with individualism, entrepreneurship, interest in developing one's profession. However, a significant component has moved to the green level with more communitarian mindedness and a realization of the interconnection of all. We believe that certainly within significant numbers we have "flashes" of yellow, where we see all of this as a process and have begun to recognize the limits of what has gone before. However, we differ from Phil St. Romain in that we feel that there have been holy men and women before us that have lived predominately in the yellow and turquoise levels for example, Jesus, Catherine of Siena, and other mystics.

Liberal thinking is a step up from conservatism. We need to strive for greater freedom of thought and movement to another stage of development. If we could develop a more liberal way of thinking, we might be able to make great changes in the world.

How have we as a congregation actualized our Vision Statement (or Mission Statement) in to a living organism?

Think about what we hold sacred and be mindful of these things rather than letting our present “beigeness” overwhelm us.

Reconfiguration

Crisis has always called people from one level to another.

We are aware that changes come from crises. Does or does not our present crises support reconfiguration of the seven congregations? Would it be possible to reconfigure individual congregations?

If going into an upward spiral is occasioned by a crisis, we have to admit that religious life is in a crisis — that there is no simple solution like “just pray for vocations” which people have been doing for years.

Awareness of fact of the reconfiguration for the whole church. Upon what values will we reconfigure? What truths will drive the decision-making process? What actions do we individually bring to the process? How do we expand outside of ourselves to involve members of the whole Dominican family as well as the Cluster?

We are aware that the Holy Spirit is working and that something new is being birthed. Our awareness is crucial for this new life to be brought about. We must step out as Abraham did. As we look over the growth and changes we have made in our past, why would we doubt that the Holy Spirit will lead us? Together we can take the steps necessary and we can support each other along the way.

We need to evolve into a new way of being Dominican.

Congregations were founded from different influences and in different cultures. It will take time to adjust and gracefully move with and into other groups.

Awareness of what .can happen will often draw us into the good, help us develop values, truths and actions that will propel us forward. The cluster process is doing this.

The whole world is changing, Our community is changing. The Holy Spirit is guiding us in accepting change, to be prophetic.

Process of change is not of itself prophetic, it is what we do with it that is prophetic. The cluster process is moving us more deeply into a prophetic stance.

Transformation will take place in each person, and each needs to be open to the transformation. What one person does can .affect all of us.

As we become more conscious of levels of the group, it could affect a correlation with physical and mental health.

3. How might this awareness effect human transformation and global reconciliation?

More people/groups would be instruments of peace/growth/reaching out in a better way to God's people.

We can be a model of cooperation, respect for others, commitment to a common mission, dialogue for deeper understanding of the other, risking new birth.

Understanding the need for the integration of diversity may lead us to become more accepting and see the whole picture.

What we see on television and read in newspapers, etc., makes us realize that there are many other people out there and our country doesn't always have the right answer. There are different reactions noticeable after the tsunami and Katrina. We are more aware of other people as neighbor.

Springing from the example of Nelson Mandela, in which Don Beck used the cultural organization of spiral dynamics to bring about peace and a non-violent end to apartheid, we see the paradigm or the concept of spiral dynamics having significant value in enabling the United States to bridge its deep polarizations and create a more just society.

The knowledge of this meme dynamic should encourage people to see the need of the individual to participate in the process of systemic change.

We seek good questions as we look at the awareness of the global community and Earth consciousness.

We need to create new and innovative ways to address the difficult problems that continue to hinder our full emergence as a planet.

4. Ilya Prigogine says that when previous systems start to dissipate, we reach that zone where there will either be an upsurge to a more complex system or a downshift to a less complex one. How might we find a path to an upward ladder of emergence? Some say that deep dialogue is required. What do you say?

Emergence

We need to allow the reconfiguration to emerge; not looking back or holding on.

Importance of strong leadership, rooted in God.

We say this is a leading question! We find a path by examining our assumptions, looking at underlying values, deciding what we need to let of to move along, place our trust in the Holy Spirit and in the deep spirituality of each person to move towards God's will. We also need to deepen our contemplation, be attentive to the moment, continue contemplative discernment, and catch ourselves when we shift downward. Finally we need to mutually support, affirm and encourage each other.

Global awareness is with us - We can see many of the needs, we have the desire to respond accordingly.

This was compared to salmon going upstream with great effort, it lays eggs and gives new life.

As we adapt to one stage we have to go to the next to be satisfied/fulfilled.

Clustering has been leading us to this next step. The more we associate with and learn about others the more we can move upward. In this process we have a progression. It caused much soul searching.

“Change takes us where we have not been before and could never have imagined that we’d go.”
Joan Chittister OSB, *The Way We Were*

Dialogue

We need study/prayer/reflection/dialogue, a Spirit of openness and learning from one another, new ways of “being” and not just “doing.”

The best way to bring peace is to learn to live with ourselves and others in a peaceful way. Deep dialogue is necessary for this to happen. We need discernment for decisions even when we have our minds made up, not so much to change our minds, but to get in touch with the motivation that move us to a decision.

Deep dialogue is needed if we want to assist in affecting a changing world view.

The importance of the need does require deep dialogue and a willingness to act according to what we learn through dialogue.

We agree that deep dialogue with reflective listening is critical, characterized by deep faith sharing, as well as basing actions from a contemplative stance.

The film stated that an upper level is not necessarily a better level. Deep dialogue and reflective prayer is needed. Is there a way that this awareness could lead to more tolerance and understanding of others who live at different levels in the spiral?

Dialogue, prayer, continuing to grow in awareness, the desire to find the path, being open to the movements of the Holy Spirit in each person, each group, and in the call to change.

Dialogue has been blessing to us. It takes a great deal of openness.

Dialogue is part of a growing life, no matter what the outcome.

We must imagine the future and dream of possibilities. We need reflection circles to discuss aspects of our life together besides structure. How are we called today to be prophetic? How ought we shape our lives in order to respond creatively and with a Gospel spirit to the issues of our time?

Questions:

- Do different aspects of our personal/congregational lives reflect different points of the spiral?
- Would we place “us” at different points according to the issue being discussed?
- Has the cluster conversation resulted in our focus becoming the “beige” questions rather than mission (maybe green) ones? We seem to say this is for mission but what have we clarified in this arena?
- Do we pay attention to where our questions originate?
- Will the meme discussion become a tool for labeling and excluding? Will we be identifying ourselves and others by colors and thus exclude those for whom this schema is confusing and not helpful?
- Where might we place our own congregation on the spiral? Where do we think a congregation three times our size might be? How would we get there?