

For October OGF Constant Contact to each Sister/Convent



The Ongoing Formation goals assigned by Chapter Implementation are:

2019 - 2020 *“Cultivate a spirit of racial inclusion, cultural sensitivity and respect for persons with disabilities, generate an awareness of the dynamics of racism and understand its effects.”*

2020 - 2021 *“Respond to the emerging needs for ministry with inclusion and cultural sensitivity.”*

Dear Sisters,

With an awareness of incorporating our charism, leadership practices and a vocation culture within the congregation, the Ongoing Formation Committee met their first assigned goal in the OGF Gathering held in October, 2019 with Dr. Bethany Welch entitled: “United in Love: Different Cultures One Faith.” All Sisters, IHM Companions, and Formation Discerners were invited, and the day presented much for consideration at the personal level of our living and apostolate.

In this time of social distancing affecting each and every facet of mission life and ministry, our second year of work has been interrupted in unimaginable ways, yet the work of the next goal is more vital than ever. Since the early months of 2020, our individual and local responses to the global realities have called each one of us to respond to daily life and living with more inclusion and cultural sensitivity. *This* truth led us to pose 4 questions for consideration to each of the OGF Committee Members in late August and to our individual Sisters in the September *Angelus*.

We invite you to ponder the OGF “Living Witness” narratives received from Sisters who considered the questions (repeated below). We believe that all IHM efforts since March are part of the Providential ways in which we have continued to be *Faithful Witnesses* and those efforts have made our assigned goal even more concrete in its reality unfolding, still. This month, as October unfolds, we will share the responses for question #1. Look for Sisters’ responses to questions #2 in November and questions #3-4 in December. If you missed sharing insights to any of these questions and still wish to do so, please email the OGF Co-Chairs [patriciamicklos@gmail.com / mengelp@chc.edu] with what you would like to share. Please note that narratives posted here will be shared anonymously (with the exception of the work of S. Helen David, shared here with her permission as it accompanies her response; her own response shares specifics of a singular ministry and therefore would not be “anonymous” at all).

Members of the Committee: S Patricia McDermott (council liaison), S. Sonia Avi, S. Joyce Bell, S. Dolores Joseph Bozzelli, S. Agnes Cummings, S. Rosemary DePaul, S. John Evelyn DiTrollo, S. Kathleen Douth, S. Judith Geschke, S. Laretta Linsalata, S. Marie Claire Matsinger, S. Bridget McCullough, S. Patricia Mengel (Co-Chair), S. Patricia Micklos (Co-Chair), S. Francis Mary Murray, S. Anne Marie Stegmaier, S. Marie Danielle Bernadette Truex, S. Silvan Vega, S. Catherine Ward

Questions Being Pondered

- 1) In light of our goal for 2020-2021, how have the past 6 months redefined your understanding of “emerging needs” in ministry?
- 2) In light of our goal for 2020-2021, where have you seen the need for more efforts with inclusion and cultural sensitivity in your local mission/ministry? Can you give specific examples of efforts made in your “world” in last 6 months?
- 3) In light of our goal for 2020-2021 & in consideration of our charism rooted in an awareness of Divine Providence at work, cite examples of the presence of Providence or a new awareness of how & where it can be more visible in this coming year.
- 4) In light of the pandemic and ongoing civil tensions here in the U.S., what is *your response* to this goal as Fall 2020 unfolds?

October: “Living Witness”

Goal: *“Respond to the emerging needs for ministry with inclusion and cultural sensitivity.”*

Question: 1) In light of our goal, how have the past 6 months redefined your understanding of “emerging needs” in ministry?

Responses:

- “I am not sure that my understanding of ‘emerging needs’ in ministry has been redefined, but in the past 6 months the focus of the ‘emerging needs’ has shifted to be the emerging inclusive needs of our own Sisters and their needs relative to the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, for every IHM Sister, the emerging needs in ministry have been to align ourselves and our actions with proactive, preventative measures to protect ourselves and others from the virus [spread]. We IHM’s have had to adapt to the insidious nature of COVID-19 which has affected our culture. We have had to be culturally sensitive to ourselves.”
- “... there was a great technological shift because people could not leave home for in person encounters. This exposed all the deficiencies in households where there was a lack of multiple devices for online work and online learning at the same time. It also exposed generations of people who were not technologically proficient. It forced adults [including me] to look at learning in a [whole] new way or give up!”
- “[In very real and ever-present ways,] the global issues of the pandemic, racial injustice, economic crisis, and immigration... have affected our ministries, especially [for] the most vulnerable of those we serve.”
- “My ministry centers around mentoring first year teachers. As I respond to ‘emerging needs’ in our Church and schools, I am more conscious of advising the teachers to go beyond the documentation required for ‘Protecting God’s Children.’ Now I ask them to protect in an additional way by spending a few minutes at the beginning of the first week’s school days to listen to their worries and concerns. This builds a good relationship between the children and their teacher to know that someone will listen to their fears of coming back face to face, or not being able to do so because some families only want virtual learning, etc. This assures them that they have a teacher who will listen and console them that they are safe, not only because of all the PPE present in the rooms, but because their concerns are valid!”
- “[When pondering the ‘emerging needs,’ I was] made even more aware that ‘the poor you will always have with you!’ COVID has widened the gap between rich, middle class, and poor... and the poor are at our doorsteps! [I ask myself]: How can I reach out to them, especially through education? How can I somehow help and support our Sisters are currently doing such marvelous work in areas such as ESL and literacy?”
- “In education, students need help in understanding how to navigate a new way of learning. Some find it difficult to transfer from an active, vibrant classroom to sitting in front of a computer learning from a ZOOM lesson. As a teacher, I have to be aware of any frustration that a student is experiencing and intervene and help.”

- “Recently, I have assembled a new exhibit to celebrate my friends and former students in the Black Community. This is my visual way to affirm and support ‘Black Lives Matter.’ This show displays twenty of my paintings depicting the people who have enriched my life at the center in Southwest Philadelphia. I describe my 14 years there as a university of life where I experienced great wisdom, generous hospitality, warmth, and exceptional talent. My hope is that my paintings reveal the dignity and the beauty I found in the Black Community on 46th Street!”



“Double Dutch on 46th Street” Helen David Brancato, IHM (2020)

- “Over the past months, as the days dragged on, I was amazed at the emerging needs I found that I seldom or never experienced prior to COVID, both personally and communally. Coming from myself daily, I questioned how was I going to handle the daily fear and anxiety over the spread of the virus, physical and psychological tiredness, dependence with an inability to do anything about the situation, stress and strain coming from others and their ways of dealing with the isolation. There was great difficulty in finding God in our world and in finding something for which to be grateful. Coming from within my ministry daily, I wondered how I was going to handle all that was required to protect those to whom I ministered: following precise protocols, taking extra times of service for all that had to be done, keeping spirits up for the good of others, being positive (without apparent reason) , and finding calmness to relate to others and their needs. I felt weary and vulnerable in every way and sensed that others were the same of worse off.”
- “The shock and reality of the pandemic took more than one week to process. As the medical concerns became clearer, the protocols became stricter, and there was a deep anxiety about everyone doing what needed to be done to keep the virus from spreading. I tried to *pray through* the news cycles and keep a hopeful eye toward a bigger perspective of needs beyond myself and outside the necessary needs of my own local convent. I did not always succeed! All facets of ministry became *remote* but the concerns and emerging needs from the realities at hand... were anything but remote! Keeping an even pace of ministry and rest, “play” and prayer did help; using ZOOM for more than ministry also helped to bridge social distancing with what buoyed up the mind and heart when connecting with those loved as well as those I knew to be more isolated as *today’s ‘emerging needs’ became new neighbors* both inside and outside my door!”

Articles for Further Consideration:

- <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/world/ministry/news/checking-sisters-around-world-covid-19-has-constrained-ministries>
- <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/spirituality/column/moment-needs-transformational-leaders>
- <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/coronavirus/news/amid-pandemic-women-religious-persevere-ministries-those-need>
- <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/coronavirus/column/god-present-sister-nurse-time-covid-19>