



Dominican Sisters of Springfield, Illinois
Sacred Heart Convent
1237 West Monroe Street
Springfield, Illinois 62704-1680

January 12, 2017

Dear Sisters,

We begin this New Year celebrating the lives of our dear Sisters Mary Rose Schleeper, Doris Taylor and Janice Greenwood. Their goodness permeated many decades and hundreds of persons as they daily preached the Word Incarnate. Most of us have stories to tell of our relationships with them: as sister, as friend, and as companion on this journey of faith. They, like many, have witnessed to their dependence on God, their fidelity to a life of service, and their love for this congregation. We have been so blessed!

The intent of this letter is to update you on a few of the issues the leadership team has been working on over the past few months. During the General Assembly in June, you were informed that leadership would be reviewing the recommendations given to the previous leadership team from the studies underwritten by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) and evaluating what has been implemented and what still needs to be addressed. These studies included a comprehensive evaluation of our elder care, a cost analysis of our levels of care, an efficiency study of staffing at Sacred Heart Convent, an assessment of readiness to establish a development office, and the application of the TRENDS forecasting software program. Many of the recommendations were implemented through the expertise and hard work of our sisters and coworkers.

Yet, we are aware that we cannot sustain the mission and care for our elder sisters into the long-term future without making additional significant changes. To that end, the leadership team contacted NRRO for further consultation. During the first week of October, we were blessed with a two-day visit from two NRRO consultants who had worked with us previously, Sr Hertha Longo CSA and Br. Robert Metzger, SM. They assisted us with the review and evaluation of what has been accomplished and what studies were still necessary to help us with future decision-making. We were once again granted permission to apply to participate in another NRRO planning/implementation process. This process will help leadership gain assistance from professional consultants who have experience in the area of elder care, building utilization, analysis of levels of care and financial creativity. The depth of the studies we undertake will be contingent on obtaining NRRO grants to assist in paying for them and implementing their recommendations.

There are several areas that need further exploration which we will bring to this planning:

Shared Responsibility

- To engage our sisters in dialogue to determine clear principles to guide us in this process
- To commit to ongoing communication of the process and progress, and allow for shared decision-making when appropriate

Eldercare

- To determine the best sustainable means of caring for our aging sisters now and into the future
- To develop better, more sustainable, use of our current programs, personnel, and buildings for independent living, assisted living and skilled care

Current Life Assessments

- To develop and use an objective measurement assessment tool to determine baseline health information of sisters 70 years and older
- To develop an ongoing monitoring tool for the health needs of sisters and to determine how that care will be provided

Stewardship of Properties

- To determine appropriate current and future options for existing property and buildings
- To assess all buildings and the projected costs necessary to continue to maintain them properly

Future Ministry and Sponsorship

- To explore alternatives for sponsorship focusing on sustainability of the mission
- To assess on-going ministry placement and trends for incoming compensation.

In November and December, we interviewed two organizations that provide comprehensive services that would assist us with the above consultations. Both firms have worked with religious congregations throughout the country for many years. On December 16, 2016, we sent an RFP (Request for Proposal) to each organization, asking them to look at our needs and provide a detailed proposal with costs. We have asked for the proposals by February 20, 2017. Once we have chosen one of the organizations to work with us, we will be able to use this information to apply for a grant asking NRRO's assistance in funding the studies. We will keep you updated as this process continues.

Our Community Day will take place on February 11, 2017. Sr. Carol Zinn, SSJ, former President of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, will reflect with us on the evolution of religious life and share some of the challenges facing congregations during this time of transformation. Sr. Carol will facilitate a dialogue that will assist us in naming the guiding principles for

imagining our future together. We will surface questions for further study and preparation for our General Assembly in June. We look forward to having you present for our Community Day of input and dialogue. The schedule is summarized in a news item in this mailing.

Thank you to all of you who completed the survey about dates and times of General Chapter 2019. Your input was very helpful and although there were varying responses, the majority of sisters, both in general and the subset of those who see themselves serving as delegates, voiced a clear consensus. *General Chapter 2019 will be held in one session, beginning with the Chapter of Elections, and followed by the Chapter of Life and Mission. It will take place from April 22-28, 2019.* Installation of new leadership will be held in June, 2019. We are grateful for the good number of sisters who indicated their availability to serve on the Chapter Planning Committee. The next step is for leadership to hire a facilitator. Then we will invite sisters to participate in the planning process. We will keep you posted.

Enclosed in this mailing is a list of our 2017 Jubilarians. We know you join us in wishing them a year of abundant blessings.

As we close this letter, we offer deep gratitude for your loving service and generosity of spirit. We continue to imagine the world we wish to inhabit and take responsibility for bringing it to birth, united in the Spirit who makes us one. In this new year we pray:

What we choose
changes us.
Who we love
transforms us.
How we create
remakes us.
Where we live
reshapes us.

So in all our choosing
O, God, make us wise;
In all our loving
O Christ, make us bold;
In all our creating
O Spirit, give us courage;
In all our living may we become whole.

* *In Wisdom's Path*, Jan L. Richardson, Pilgrim Press 1989

In the joy of Dominic,

Sr. Rebecca Ann

Sr. Barbara

Sr. Kathlyn

Sr. Kathleen

Sr. Kathleen