



Session 4 – Case Study

New Communities Association (NCA) has a membership of sisters drawn from 4 communities. The current NCA Leadership Team has been working to integrate a sense of hope and renewal in both the NCA statutes and the NCA mission & vision. *Cor Orans*, as well as current realities among the member communities, call for change. In light of this, the NCA Leadership Team is seeking to hear from membership on potential practical changes. Each member community has been asked to engage in creative possibility thinking regarding what re-structuring is essential for sustainability while continuing to uphold the vision and mission of the NCA.

A particular concern for the NCA Leadership Team is that communities are reluctant to put forward the names of sisters to serve on the re-structured NCA Council, due to the constraints of balancing community life and association leadership. The NCA Leadership Team has decided to use a discernment process to explore potential areas for change within the association.

Background on NCA:

The full membership of the NCA recommitted to the following values and is in agreement that any changes under consideration remain faithful to these essential commitments:

- NCA identifies its mission and vision as the guiding principle for all.
- NCA is committed to deepening communion by being a community of communities in fellowship with national and international Carmelites.
- NCA will use a 'partnering mindset' striving to be supportive of individual communities.
- NCA has implemented a new leadership model designed with the expectation that more sisters will share the responsibilities of the association.
- NCA is committed to encouraging appropriate community level creative structuring to free up sisters to actively participate in the work and mission of NCA.
- NCA will promote more engagement in NCA responsibilities through a redesign of organizational structures, thus utilizing the full depth of the gifts of non-elected sisters. Furthermore, the design and utilization of renewed delegation practices will encourage the development of future leaders.

NCA Mission: New Communities Association (NCA) is a nationwide association of communities of Discalced Carmelite nuns formed to support one another in the deepening of the Teresian contemplative life. We embody the prophetic spirit of the Carmelite charism in our witness of love with faith and hope in the Triune God. We nurture relationships among our member

communities and with the Carmelite family in the U.S. and abroad. We creatively collaborate to create mutual respect and practical support. We recognize, value and honor our differences while working to strengthen our unity in diversity.

NCA is comprised of 4 communities and each community is encouraged to use a communal discernment model to fully explore their thoughts and the impact of any decision for their particular community.

Context:

Currently all initial and on-going formation practices are being done by the 4 individual NCA communities. The potential change NCA is considering is to move to a practice of partnering for formation across all communities. The hope is that through providing consistent, quality formation NCA could leverage the gifts of the sisters across the member monasteries for this important work. (*see Cor Orans 141. i below- pg. 3*) Additionally the NCA Leadership Team believes such an approach may lighten the burden of each individual community, thus opening opportunities for each community and the association. The NCA Leadership Team therefore has requested input from each community on re-organizing to a common association formation model and has asked that each community use a discernment process to formulate feedback.

Small Group Identity:

Each Session 4 Women at the Well small group will take on the identity of NCA Community #4. You are considering the question given the composition of community #4. Be careful to stay within the fictional and practical framework of this case study. Small group facilitators will guide the process and notetakers will capture key ideas. In working through the discernment model the small group may discover a need for additional information and/or uncover additional questions. Both of these can be valuable to capture and include in feedback to the NCA Leadership Team.

Community #4 of NCA is a 10-member monastery. The composition of sisters is:

- 1 in Long-term-care
- Of the sisters living in the monastery:
 - 1 sister has dementia
 - 1 elderly sister in need of assistance with her activities of daily living
 - 6 active and able-bodied sisters (1 with English as a second language, 2 skilled formators – one of whom is in her late 70's)
 - 1 novice

In total Community #4 has 9 solemnly professed sisters and 1 sister in formation. The reality for Community #4 is that the older sisters are doing significant daily work and the younger sisters are needing to take on more of the daily responsibilities. Concerns loom regarding sustainability of the community's current structure and the pressure on younger sisters.

Discernment question:

How would moving the association to a shared model of formation impact community #4?

Cor Orans

141. The Federal Assembly:

- a. receives the report of the Federal President on the state of the Federation and of the individual monasteries;
- b. elects the Federal President and the Federal Council;
- c. elects the Federal Financial Administrator;
- d. deals with issues of major importance;
- e. makes decisions and issues norms that all nuns are required to observe, after the definitive approval of the Holy See;
- f. develops for a six-year period, the common formation courses that each community is obliged to carry out;
- g. promotes the creation of new foundations and the methods for implementing them, both as single monasteries and as a federation;
- h. identifies a monastery as the place of initial common formation for the monasteries of the Federation[95];
- i. establishes a formation plan for those who are called to exercise the service of authority [96] and for the Formators [97].**