



Session 1 – Final Summary

March, 2019

Women at the Well Dialogues is designed in response to encouragement from Pope Francis' apostolic constitution *Vultum Dei Quaerere*; Fr. Saverio's Formal Proposal on On-Going Formation for the Discalced Carmelite Nuns (Feb. 2016) and letter to the nuns on formation (July, 2012), and the CCA Newer Members proposal at the 2018 CCA assembly for a virtual program of on-going formation. Each session is a stand-alone experience with themes building on one another from session to session. The format includes three components:

- **Pre-session** – each participant is asked to prepare for the virtual session by reading/watching materials on the theme and reflecting on provided reflection questions.
- **Session** – each session includes opening reflection, brief input talk, facilitated small group discussions.
- **Post-session** – each participant is encouraged to engage in ongoing post-session activity (ie. one-on-one conversation, inter-community conversation, and/or intra-community conversation.)

Project Team

The Leadership Team commissioned a Project Team, comprised of 2 Carmelite sisters and an external consultant, tasked with the design and implementation of the initiative. The Leadership Team asked that the Project Team invite exploration of themes through the particular lens of leadership and Carmelite spirituality. The Project Team works in collaboration with the Leadership Team and the Newer Member Task Force.

The Project Team developed a website with both an administrative-working section and a participant-user section. The website includes a calendar, copies of resource materials and pre-session readings, registration, evaluation and feedback forms. (Project Team also sends materials in standard email for ease of participant use.)

The program is an iterative process therefore the Project Team relies on the insights shared in evaluations and feedback forms to adjust and refine sessions.

Evaluation & Feedback Methods

- **Registration forms** elicit participant hopes for a session.
- **Participant evaluation forms** seek concrete data on individual session experiences and insights gained
- **Facilitator Post-session feedback forms** provide opportunity for facilitators to share their experience and details on key themes and experiences in small group work. Following post-session work participants are invited to share how they creatively and practically engaged with others after the session.
- **Participant Post-session feedback forms** provide an opportunity for participants to share what (if any) follow-up steps (i.e. discussions within or among communities) they have done in the weeks following the session and what insights they have gleaned as a result.

Session One Theme: *Leading in Times of Change*

The goal for this initial session was to strengthen relationship building within CCA, test and utilize Zoom technology for virtual conversation among participants. Three articles explored the theme from various perspectives:

Adaptation in Carmel, Fr. Daniel Chowning

Leading Through a Time of Change, Ray Dlugos

Unearthing the Potential of Uncertain Times, Donna Fyffe

Session Statistics:

65 sisters participated in Session 1 from 11 communities of CCA

10 facilitators provided guidance in small group break-outs and provided a report-out to all (in session)

10 facilitator feedback forms were returned

45 participant evaluation forms were completed

28 post-session feedback forms were completed

Pre-session

Participants shared their hopes and concerns at the time of registration. Common responses were:

- a) Opportunity for relationship building among sisters and between communities; and
- b) Concerns and fears about using technology

Session 1 Flow

As participants gathered on the Zoom conference call a joyful noise was made as sisters greeted one another, many reconnecting with sisters who are not able to attend large in-person meetings.

Sr. Claire opened with a welcome and prayer, sharing Jan Richardson's poem *Stay*, from her collection of poems *Circle of Grace*.

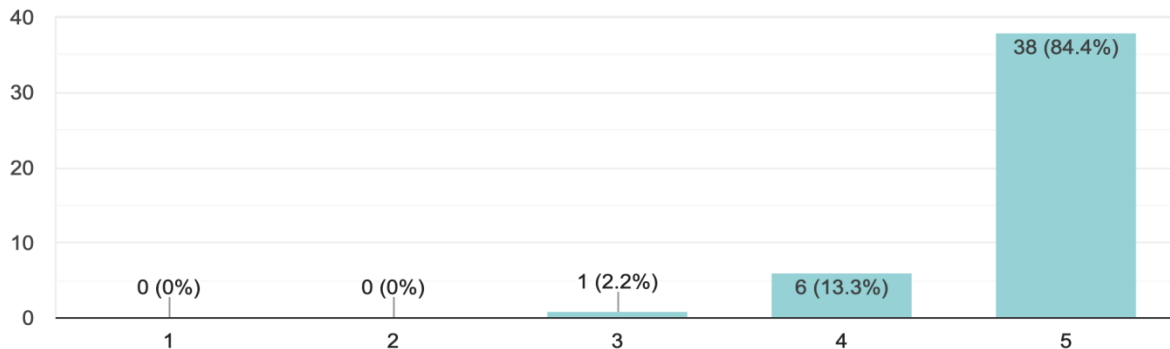
Elizabeth McCabe provided a 15 minute Input Talk sharing the genesis of the program and highlighting key themes in the pre-session readings (recording available on W@W Dialogues website).

10 small groups met in Zoom break-out sessions, each with a facilitator. The Session 1 facilitators are ten sisters serving as sister-visitors. Following small group discussions, each small group facilitator shared a report-out of key insights discussed in small groups.

Session 1 Evaluation Feedback Summary

How did you find Daniel Chowning's article, "Adaptation in Carmel"?

45 responses

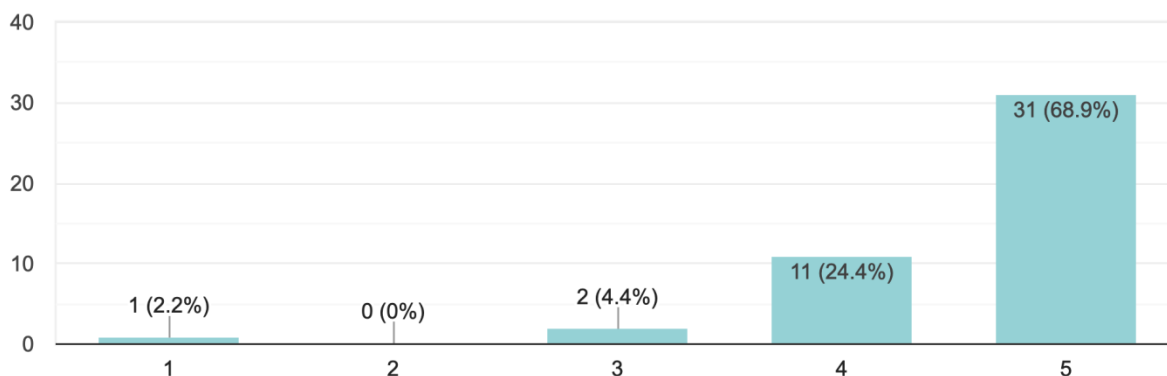


Summary of Comments about "Adaptation in Carmel" (25 responses)

- Dan Chowning knows the challenges the Sisters face and the importance of living in hope with the grace to adapt and live Carmel in the circumstances we find ourselves in now.
- Many commented the article was rooted in our Carmelite charism and spirituality giving us a common starting place.
- Challenges us in a positive way and calls us to take responsibility for our personal continual internal transformation.
- Suggests change and chaos open up new possibilities if we embrace the unknowing in prayer and with hope.
- Good companion to *Cor Orans*
- This article calls us to *adaptation* - accepting in faith, hope, and love the challenges, diminishments and crisis we face every day.
- The article is heavy on background and light on ways to move forward.
- We are called as a community to discern and evaluate. Importance of community and together developing a spirit of communion. We share so much in common. We need to strengthen bonds and accompany one another. There is a sense of hope and joy in being able to address issues together.
- We have a desire to change in a meaningful, intentional way. Remaining rooted in God and choices will help us go thru challenges with flexibility. God's action is in everything and God is doing something new. Accept change as a Dark Night experience. Build on experiences of other communities. Places of resistance are sacred. Carmelite spirituality is our grounding.
- Questions raised for further exploration:
 - What does it mean to live our vocation at this time in our history?
 - What does fidelity mean in our changing circumstances?
 - How do we Teresian Carmelites live our charism in the here and now in this culture and society with our present challenges and crises, yet remain faithful to our original charism?
 - What must I/we do?

How did you find Ray Dlugos' article, "Leading Through a Time of Change"?

45 responses

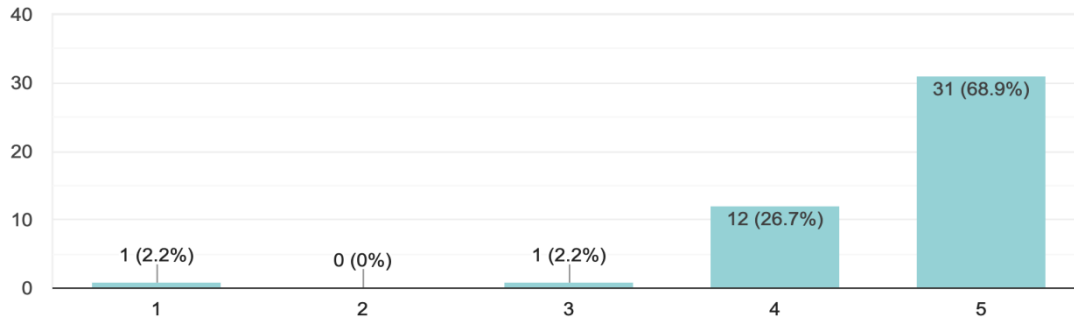


Summary of Comments about “Leading Through a Time of Change” (22 responses)

- Dlugos was able to put such a positive understanding on concepts and experiences of indecision, ambivalence, expectations and resistance, sacrifices, that I hoped those of us in leadership could breathe more easily and be less self-critical so we could actually enjoy the mystery of the journey.
- The following comments echo the voice of many in response to Dlugos article:
 - You cannot deal with a problem if you do not "know" what it is. We need to "own" our own reactions to change and recognize/accept that other's reactions may be different. However, we cannot allow ourselves or others to just "not deal with" or "ignore" the changes hoping that "someone else" will deal with them. This responsibility cannot be left only to the "leader" but must be accepted by all members of the community.
 - Life requires a capacity to live with change
 - Praying in a way that allows us to tell the truth about what is happening in our lives.
 - Often what shapes and forms us are the things in life that we resist most.
 - Need to name the reality, our ambivalence and challenge it. Would help to get at the root of our fear and inaction.
 - "Places of resistance are so sacred. If we resolve the tension that we feel in them too easily then we are missing most of what religious life can do for us."
 - Importance of contemplative listening space/contemplative dialogue
 - Our need to move together
 - Sacred place of resistance, faithful response, God's voice in the call
- We need to raise expectations of each other, and ourselves in a non-judgmental way.
- Outside facilitators are helpful but our own voices are important. Important to find our own voice and to make a contribution to our discernment of change and adaptation. Take our future in our own hands, be present to the here and now. Allow ourselves to be disturbed with possibilities.
- Change is transformation, change is opportunity. Flexibility is key. Collaboration and connection are vital. Elephant in the room is indecision – let's use a variety of choices, explore possibilities.

How did you find Donna Fyffe's article, "Unearthing the Potential of Uncertain Times"?

45 responses

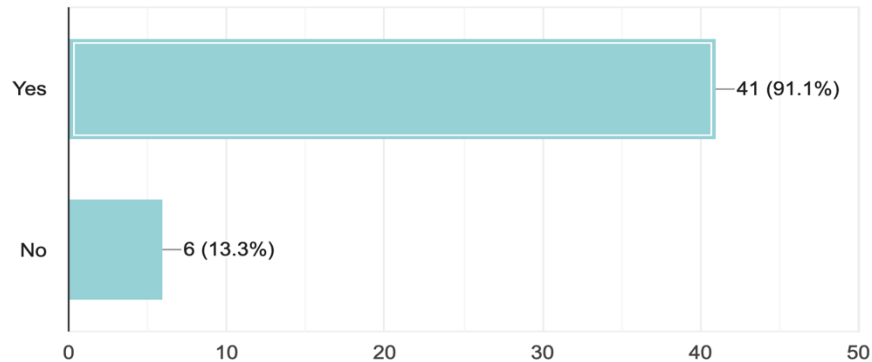


Summary of Comments about “Unearthing the Potential of Uncertain Times” (21 responses)

- Common comment themes:
 - Allow myself to feel all the emotions that surround changing situations and have the inner freedom to break patterns that keep me stuck
 - Ask for the grace of resilience
 - Change as a “potential” rather than a “threat”
 - Failure to change can in itself be a “danger”
 - Indecision is paralyzing
 - Need to “adapt and thrive” and the concept of “possibility thinking”
 - Need for deeper relationships and connections with each sister
 - Need to collaborate and to know when to say “enough”
 - Shaking off what encumbers us
 - Tapping the potential of all the members of the community
 - Her approach softened my heart to letting go
- Phrases from the article named in evaluation as illuminating:
 - Chaos is the place of rebirth
 - Our challenge is not to preserve the status quo but to adapt to, thrive in, and shape our world (and communities) of constant change for the better
 - Co-creating with God what is yearning to be birthed today
 - "Groups can feed one another's desire for change and movement or groups can also feed fear and anxiety that restrains changes."
- I like very much what Donna says about resilience--balancing self-sufficiency and interdependence (individual & community) and the need for collaboration among diverse interests. The effects of holding on to a fixed view of things is a scary warning. I like that we name the life we have NOW, looking at what is essential as we strive to live faithfully in the now. We go forward & build on that, not on a past that is no more and a future we may never experience.

Did the reflection questions invite you to a deeper reflection on the theme, "Leading in Times of Change"?

45 responses

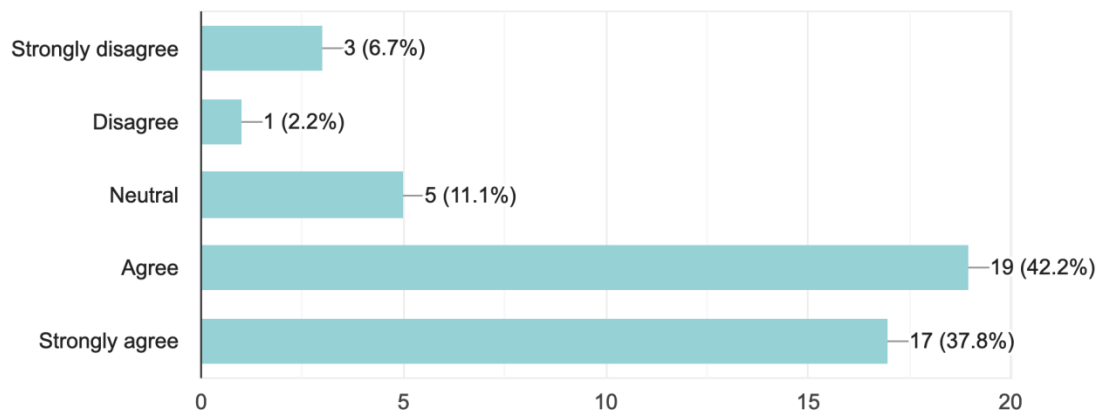


Summary of the Comments on the Reflection Questions (20 responses)

- Positive Feedback:
 - Overall – they were helpful
 - Keywords seemed to be helpful to most
 - Made me think about my own need for transformation
 - Made me grateful for the way my community has made transformative changes
 - Very thought provoking and helpful both personally and communally
 - Helped me realize what I am hoping for from CCA at this time
 - Challenging
 - Helped me to be attentive and open
 - Provided a jumping-off point for discussion
- Negative Feedback:
 - Unsure how to use them
 - Were thought provoking, but thought we would talk about them in the small group
 - They were overwhelming. Difficult to get through all the input provided.
 - Not enough time to answer them all.
- Suggestions:
 - Have a question ahead that we know would be the focus of our small group discussion would have been helpful.
 - Perhaps the sisters would like to submit their own questions for the next session.
- Wonderings:
 - How will the more mature members of our communities respond to a changing reality and how can I be compassionate?
 - How will these changes challenge us to be flexible but still be faithful to our charism?

Was the Input Talk thought-provoking and helpful?

45 responses



Summary of Comments on the Input Talk (28 responses)

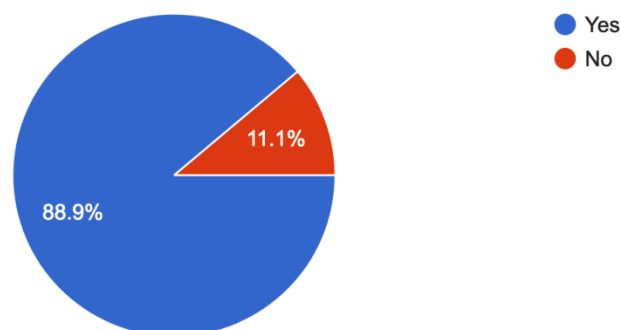
- Positive Feedback:
 - Excellent summary
 - Very clear and to the point
 - Concise and was able to pull out the salient points of the article
 - Inviting and good explanation of the process
 - Found the common introduction helpful
 - Very inviting of the small group sharing
- Negative Feedback:
 - Was impatient with the talk since I had spent hours reading and answering the reflection questions
 - Not what I expected. Expected a different talk on the topic rather than a summary of what we read.
 - Too long
- Suggestions:
 - Would find it helpful to have a copy
 - Was hoping Elizabeth would have added new material
 - Could be longer

Summary of Comments about the Project Team's communications (29 responses)

- Overall people thought they were good, helpful, clear, and invited their participation.
- Much appreciation and gratitude.
- Professional
- Recognition of the amount of team work
- Prefer shorter communications
- G Suite is complicated for some. Appreciate having the links emailed directly.

Do you find the Women at the Well Dialogues website resources easy to access and clear?

45 responses

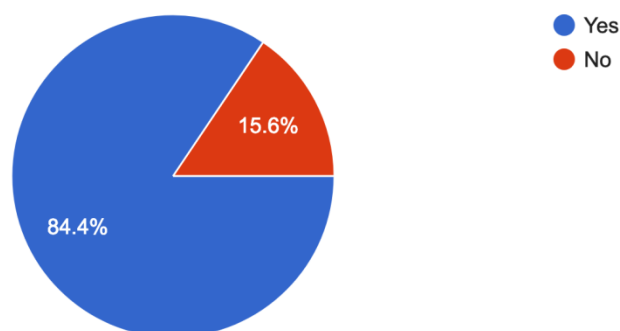


Summary of Comments about the Women at the Well Dialogues website (22 responses)

- Many found accessing the website through G Suite difficult because of having to have another Google log-in
- Website is beautiful and inspiring
- Some have never been on the website

Did you have the tools and training necessary to navigate Zoom?

45 responses

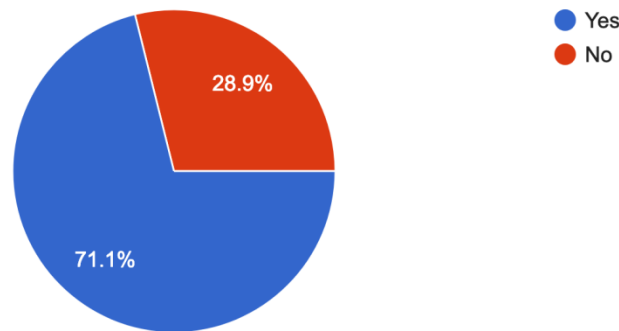


Summary of Comments about the Zoom training or about Zoom in general (28 responses)

- Wonderful source of communication
- Those who had trouble received the help they needed
- Good alternative to in-person meetings
- Most communities had someone in the community who had used Zoom previously
- Everyone was grateful for the technical support the Project Team provided

Was 90 minutes a sufficient length of time for Session 1?

45 responses



Summary of Comments about the time of Session 1 (35 responses)

- Need more time for small groups
- 90 minutes was what most of the Sisters felt they could manage
- A brief break to stretch or use the bathroom would be helpful
- Smaller groups might allow for more dialogue
- Desire for more time to connect in a social, personal way
- Some found it long
- Too much input to digest

Summary of Did Session 1 meet your expectations (45 responses)

- Most everyone said “yes”
- Some didn’t know what to expect

Summary of additional feedback on Session 1 (28 responses)

- This has become a good community resource
- Technology is a blessing. There are so many uses for virtual connections in CCA. Too many layers of material were presented for discussion which were all very good but not much time to cover them
- Desire to say hello to everyone and having different small group configurations
- Time to follow-up as a group
- It would have helped to have more specific details about what would actually be covered/discussed in the session ahead of time
- Confusion with the original proposal
- Maybe the facilitator could write up a very brief report with things that might be very relevant to other groups, and it could be sent out two days later?
- We need more space for listening
- People loved that so many sisters, especially the sisters who are no longer able to attend meetings participated.

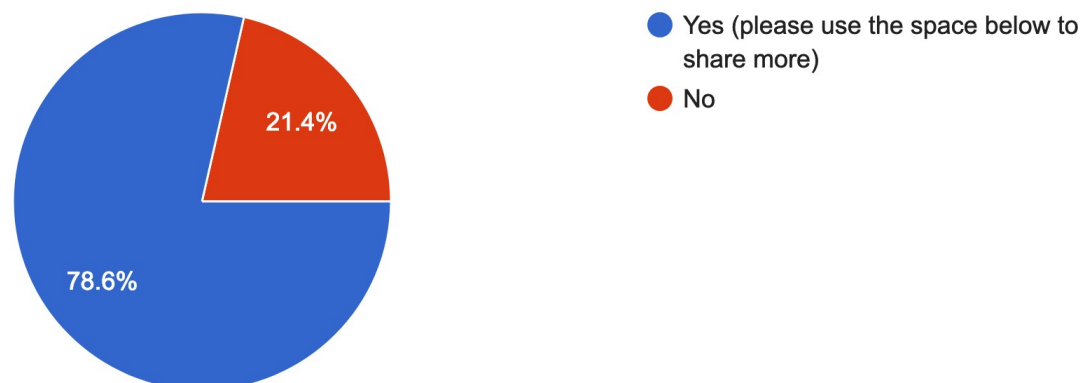
Summary of *Did you gain insights from this session that you would like to explore further?* (33 responses)

- Small groups revealed that people are willing to share and want to be heard, how do we use that enthusiasm to get them excited and involved in CCA?
- Sense that this has to continue
- Desire to go deeper with other interest groups and international groups
- How is “hope” lived in our present circumstances, how is what is essential to Carmel lived now, here?
- Hope that we may be able to form some concrete ways to move forward (sharing information as to what each Community is going through as we walk into the future).
- What does living the Charism of Carmel mean for me, for us, today?
- How do we let go of what was and maintain hope and authenticity as we move into an unseen future?
- I’d like to learn and imagine our invisible future together without boundary to open, new vision.
- See what comes into focus as we hold this mantra: community – CCA – community – CCA – community – CCA
- Being able to share the entire gamut of emotions tied to change
- Adaptation in Carmel and working through indecision
- How we, as one family/Order will face our present challenges and crisis as one?

Session 1 Post-Session Feedback Summary

Have ideas and insights from Session 1, Leading in Times of Change, continued to 'rattle' around inside you?

28 responses



Summary of Sharing on Above Question (22 responses)

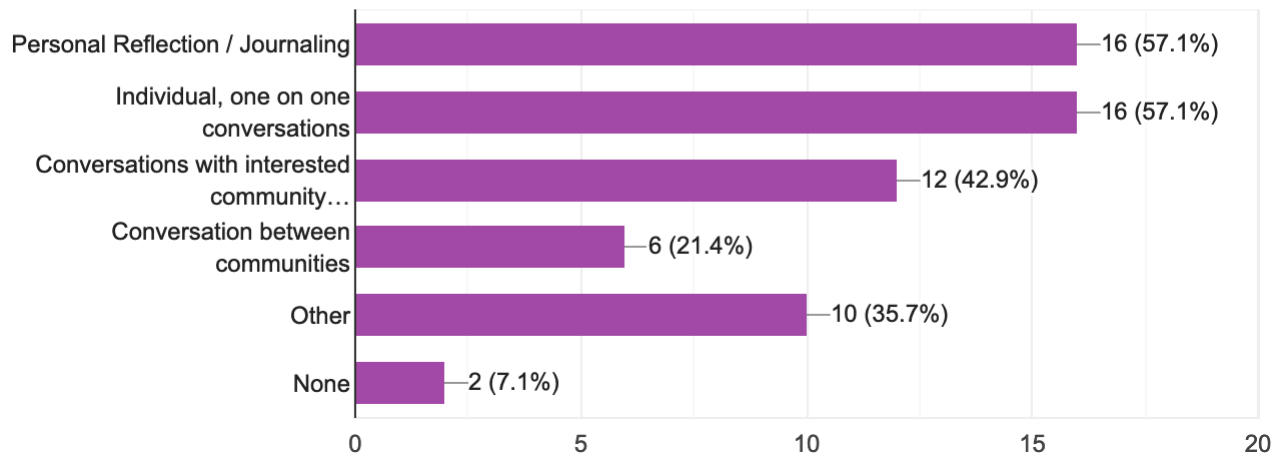
- **Change**
 - always has my attention and pondering
 - Change is constant, and our having to deal with it is constant. I look forward to more sessions that will give us the tools to deal with it.
 - It really feels to me like the right time for CCA to be exploring issues of change together, as if there were spots of light shining through the sisters in our exchanges. It is encouraging.
 - God will prevail in the change. Leaders must continue to remind the community why certain changes are necessary to continue the mission of our Carmelite life.
 - It's difficult to talk about change because it's a very sensitive issue.
- **Community Sharing**
 - on Fr. Daniel Chowning's article "Adaptation in Carmel"
 - we need to concentrate continually on personal and communal vitality and heightened sensitivity to our silence and solitude. Adjustment to continuing changes because of health and energy levels is ongoing. We are very conscious to keep our Sisters who are in skilled nursing care, apart from our Community, feeling that they, too, are a vital part of our Community.
- **Personal Sharing**
 - I have a more positive attitude in terms of accepting and living in times of uncertainty and facing challenges with trust and hope
 - I am grateful for the meeting, for sharing with people I haven't seen in many years, and my hope that it will continue
 - to have seen the 60 or so sisters gather together was very supportive and inspiring. It helps as we try and discern our next steps in religious life as Carmelites. I hope

that our continuing conferences may become places of deeper communication and sharing, and that trust and hope will build up among us. It was a start, but now to get into deeper communication and communion...so on we go.

- The absolute need to live in the present and look to your future. The past is gone and will not return. Every community must be willing to face their realities and decide the way to go that will give life to the sisters and help them live, perhaps even more fully than they are now, their Carmelite life.
- Exploring more deeply the meaning of my vocation. I feel the need to allow God to transform me and to grow in confidence when I want to express my thoughts within my community and CCA.
- My own ongoing interior transformation. "Where there is interior depth, outward changes take place peacefully." "Being unconditionally open to God's future." I've been encouraged to deepen my own commitment and notice the places of resistance within me. I continue to hold fast to the quote, "...go up to the balcony and sit in the place of mystery and grace and see what is transpiring and notice how God is working..."
- I found we are one as a family among diversity. This session gave me the sense of connection and we each of us can bridge for the future of our mission.
- I feel closer to our Sisters, especially those who are facing uncertainty just as we are. We are trying to explore ways that we can be more caring and supportive when opportunities arise. Recently, two of us attended a Jubilee Celebration in Barrington. We found a way to do so, because we WANTED to be present for our Sisters.
- **Questions raised**
 - Is it possible for more extended sharing?
 - Can I figure out what change we need or want?
- **Common themes**
 - many Sisters and communities continued to work with the articles
 - Each time I reflect on the articles, I find insights as well as challenges and affirmation for our own community process of moving forward. I find my ideas of what is essential to our Carmelite charism being refined.
 - The articles we read are all very good. It moved me further to reflect on how we could respond personally, as a community, as member of CCA and of our Carmelite order to the challenges presented to us by our times and reality.
 - the Sisters appreciated exploring these topics together

Following Session 1 what kinds of activities/conversations have you engaged in (or are planning to engage in), if any? Please check all that apply and provide details below.

28 responses



Summary of Details Provided (18 responses)

- Sr. Sue Lumb's (Barrington) group about how to approach the realities facing our communities, is using the articles from Session 1 as part of their conversation.
- Emails sent between the facilitator and participants of some of the small groups.
- Communities who have made changes to their living situations are willing to share with other communities who are interested.
- The Newer Members had a meeting with Sr. Marjorie Robinson (Beacon) facilitating. 10 Sisters participated.
- The Reno community shared the articles with the Kirkintilloch community and had a Zoom to discuss with them.
- Several communities discussed the material as a community.
- Many sisters have re-read the articles.
- Communities shared their experience informally at the meal immediately following Session 1.

Summary of Additional Thoughts (14 responses)

- Suggestion was made to assign the post session work as a requirement.
- Suggestion to have whole communities share together as part of the post-session period.
- Importance of prayer the source of the living water among us, guiding our CCA deliberations.
- There is the acknowledgement that change is hard and there is a need for communities to be able to discuss change and the effects of change in a loving way.
- Suggestion to have more complete written reports of the small group discussions made available after the session.
- Suggestion to eliminate the small group report-outs and spend more time in the small group discussions.
- Several comments about the success of Session 1, the work of the Project Team, and gratitude for Women at the Well Dialogues.