

DISCERNMENT FOR NOMINATION AND ELECTION CHAPTER 2020



Franciscan Sisters of Allegany

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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Dear Sisters,

The Chapter Planning Committee welcomes each of us once again into our Chapter 2020 theme, ***“Behold, I Am Doing Something New...Listen!”*** We invite you to reflect upon and commit to a process of personal and communal discernment of nomination and election for the 2020 – 2024 Congregation Leadership.

We understand that discernment in Franciscan-Clarian Spirituality is to “have the spirit of the Lord and his holy operation”, to follow “the divine inspiration” in order to live constantly “the life of the Holy Gospel,” “following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We, as Franciscans, are at home with Clare of Assisi’s discernment movement of ***Gaze, Consider, Contemplate, and Imitate.*** We have committed to this pathway of personal and communal discernment for all of our Chapter preparation and the Chapter session itself.

This reflection booklet invites each sister to engage in the possibility of her personal call to nomination, and to call forth other sisters to nomination and possible election. It builds upon a Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) resource, *Dimensions of Leadership*, 1997. We are encouraged, in our personal and communal discernment, to consider the essential attributes needed for the ministry of Leadership for the Congregation and the Church at this time in our history.

Jessica Powers has written beautifully about discernment in these words:

To Live the Spirit

To live with the Spirit of God is to be a listener.

It is to keep the vigil of mystery, earthless and still.

One leans to catch the stirring of the Spirit, strange as the wind’s will.

Each of us is invited into the ***vigil of mystery...***

Welcome!

Peace and every good,

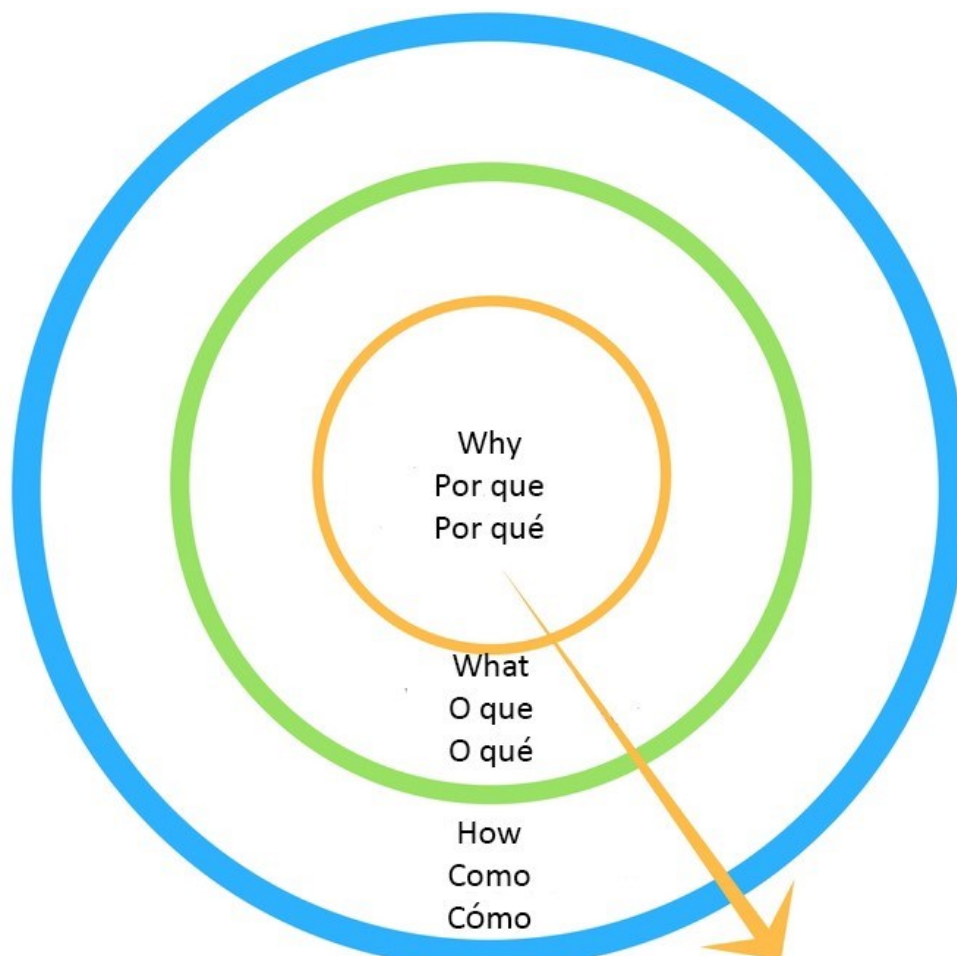
The 2020 Chapter Planning Committee

FOCUS AREAS FOR CHAPTER 2020

The responses from the most recent assemblies have helped to refine the focus areas for Chapter 2020 - “*Behold, I Am Doing Something New...Listen!*” The following articulation of the topics are listed below. We offer these topics for your continued prayer, reflection and sharing as we move toward Chapter 2020.

As a way to continue to explore these topics, we invite you to use the following three questions as a lens.

1. **WHY** is the topic important - for me for us and for the world?
2. **WHAT** may God be inviting me (us) to DO as we embrace the outcomes of these topics?
3. **HOW** may God be compelling me (us) to LIVE DIFFERENTLY as we move into the future embracing these topics?



FOCUS AREAS FOR CHAPTER 2020

The gospel as lived through our Franciscan-Clarian Spirituality: our mission, vision and charism impels us to address:

INTEGRAL ECOLOGY

- By developing a new paradigm for being sister and brother to all creation and not exploiting Earth or its resources
- By growing in our understanding of environmental justice and advocacy through partnership with others and plumbing the resources such as Laudato Sí and the Amazon Synod
- By developing common and concrete actions locally and globally.

INTERCULTURALITY

- By listening to the call to honor the dignity and integrity of all people
- By respecting and embracing all forms of diversity- (ethnicity, generation gender, religion, race etc.)
- By witnessing to hope by being authentic, prophetic, peacemakers.

LEADERSHIP

- By deepening relationships with one another and the quality of life together for mutual empowerment, congregationally and with others
- By nurturing and promoting as a model of servant leadership within the congregation and beyond.

In conclusion, we return to our Franciscan-Clarian sources to explore Integral Ecology, Interculturality and Leadership and to seek a more balanced expression of the feminine and masculine dimensions of our life, our Church and our world.

STEP 1: GAZE

Holy Space, Sacred Space

Create or find a space that holds one in deep embrace, silence, and tender heart. Listen for the presence of the Spirit and the indwelling communion of saints—Francis, Clare, and all holy women and men—be surrounded by enduring grace. Engage one's heart, mind, and imagination while holding the image of ... ***“Behold, I Am Doing Something New...Listen!”***

Pray for an open heart and will:

Most high, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart. Give me true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, sense and knowledge that I may carry out your holy and true command.

- Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi to discern God's will

Gaze with a long loving look at the cry of our world, Church, Earth, and the broader community of life. What stirs within my heart and mind?

Gaze upon the Congregation and the Chapter agenda of **Franciscan–Clarian Spirituality** with its **“Focus Areas”**; **our mission, vision and charism impels us to address: Integral Ecology, Interculturality, Leadership** and ponder...

Gaze upon, taste and see the suffering and the desire, the seed and the harvest, the scarcity and the abundance...

What stirs within my heart and mind?



STEP II: CONSIDER

***Consider* reality from the lens of theological reflection...**

- Experience of the Christian Tradition (movement of Scripture, Franciscan-Clarian charism, and Living Tradition)
- Experience of the believing Church (the signs of these times with all the desire and suffering of the “sensus fidelium”, the believing community)
- Experience of national and global cultural systems (political, faith traditions, economic, social, education, government...).

***Consider* the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany...**

- Chapter Agenda addressing: Integral Ecology, Interculturality, Leadership through the lens of our Franciscan-Clarian charism
- Congregational History and its leadership needs at the present time
- Longing and desire regarding the Congregation’s future.



***Consider* pages 14-17 and ponder:**

- What leadership attributes are most needed at this time in the Congregation?
- What are my particular attributes and competencies?
- Does my personal health and capacity support a call to nomination and possible election?
- Is there any desire in my heart and mind to be called forth at this time?
- Identify others who have these attributes: whom might I call forth?

STEP III: CONTEMPLATE

Contemplate Mystery...gather up my longing, emotion, intuition, imagination
Create sacred space without and within...

Behold Desire...my and our personal desires, hopes and aspirations for the
Congregation...

Contemplate...“*Behold, I Am Doing Something New...Listen!*”

Prayer of Longing

Great Source of Wisdom

Feed me with the fruits of an open mind, an open heart, and open will.

Shed light upon my thoughts.

Lead me along straight paths.

***Crush the attacks of the enemies, my voices of judgment, my voices of cynicism
and my voices of fear.***

Fill me with Your sacred light.

Breathe in me your holy inspiration. Amen.

REFLECTION

- Adaptation of prayer of St. Bonaventure from The Tree of Life

STEP IV: IMITATE

Pray for spiritual freedom so that an open mind, open heart, and open will (p. 7-8) companion oneself during these coming months.

Imitate: Be mindful of the behaviors associated with the impediment to discernment described as “*Heightened Personal*”: (p.18). Honor “*Congregational Good*”. (p. 19)

Imitate: “...perfect charity, sense and knowledge...”

Ponder and be vulnerable to the energy of “I think, I feel, I hope,” shifting to the movement of the “WE”, the emerging desire and will of the Whole.

Imitate: Discern and with an open mind, heart and will respond to the personal call of nomination, as well as calling others forth to nomination and election.

REFLECTION

OUTLINE OF DISCERNMENT AND ELECTION PROCESS

Chapter 2020

The process outlined below was presented and affirmed at our recent Assemblies. This process keeps the reflection and discernment of election within the Communal Discernment Process and provides for honest and respectful dialogue among the vowed members for the Chapter.

STEPS IN THE PROCESS

Calling forth of names to be placed in nomination

1. First calling during March, April, May Assemblies
2. No lists posted until all Assemblies have been completed
3. A compiled list from all assemblies sent to congregation after the last assembly in May 2020
4. Second calling during the Chapter of Affairs
5. Names from second calling added to existing list
6. Those nominated may not withdraw their names at this time.

Nominee Presentations at the beginning of the Chapter of Election

1. Each nominee speaks briefly to the Chapter Body including her availability for leadership and position(s) for which she may be considered
2. A sister may withdraw her name at this time.

Home Table Conversation

1. Home tables discuss the nominees sharing the names of those they would like to consider along with the gifts, competencies and qualities they see in them
2. Each table affirms the names of those they wish to take forward to the Consensus Table
3. After names are affirmed, concerns, if any, may be raised regarding them.

OUTLINE OF DISCERNMENT AND ELECTION PROCESS Chapter 2020

Consensus Table Conversation

1. Each sister at the Consensus Table shares the list of names from her Home Table, together with gifts, competencies, qualities and concerns
2. After all have shared, the Consensus Table develops a list of 5 to 8 names of sisters they wish to be considered for elected leadership
3. Those names receiving total consensus are written individually on a Green Post-it and placed on a public wall
4. Those names receiving a majority are written individually on a Purple Post-it and placed on a public wall
5. Names will remain on the public wall for a short time allowing the Chapter Body to view the names
6. The purpose of the wall posting is to provide a sense of the movement of the Whole—that is, what names seem to be rising from the Whole.
Note – this process does not eliminate anyone on the nominee list.

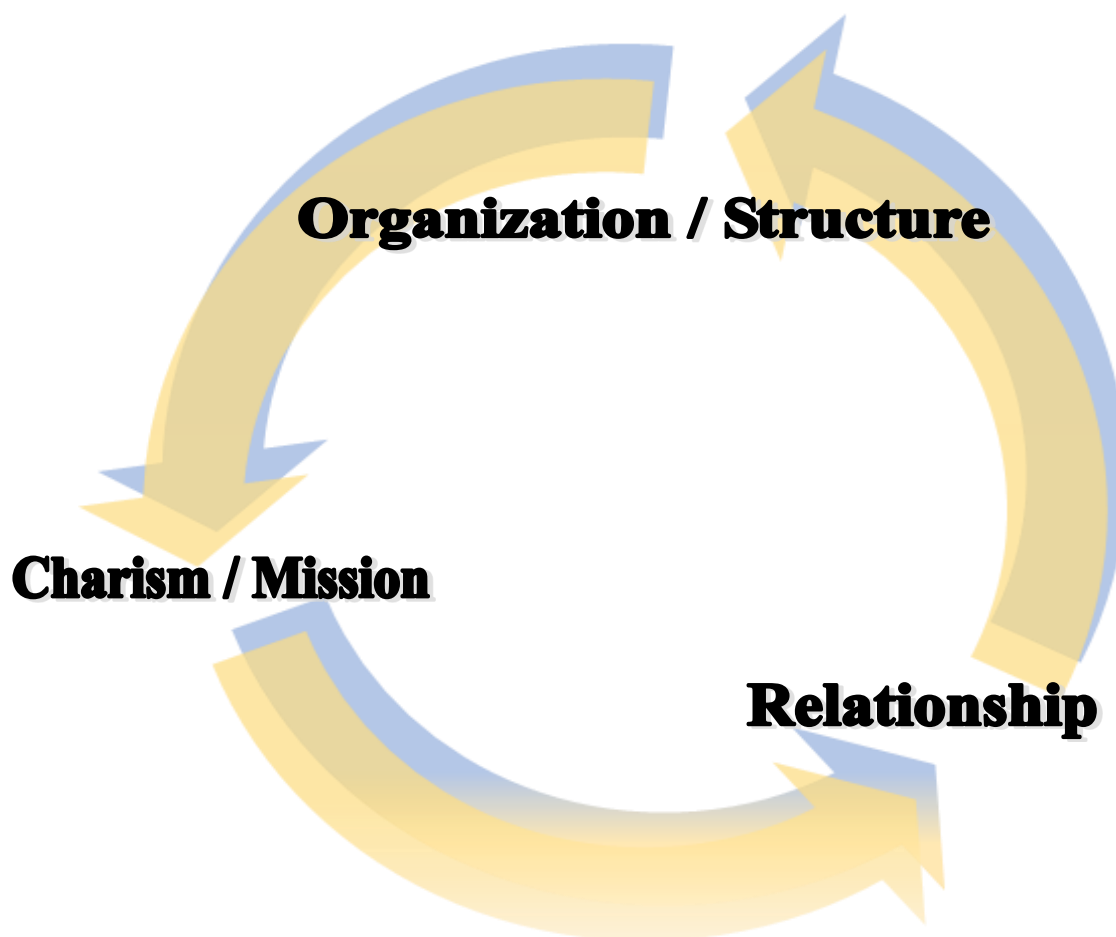
The Election

1. In the event that there is not a sufficient slate to proceed with the election, all those who have been nominated will be asked to reconsider their availability in order to increase the number of nominees
2. Each sister is elected individually by secret ballot beginning with the Congregational Minister
3. The Associate Minister is elected second, followed by each Councilor
4. Those elected are asked if they will accept the election results
5. If a sister elected does not accept the election results, another election will take place.

**PERSONAL
REFLECTION**

ELECTED MINISTRY RESPONSIBILITIES

Three broad areas describe the responsibilities of elected leadership:



Attributes for Discerning Nomination and Election

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) designed an inventory of key attributes that are needed by women called both to election and to work as a team. This edited and developed inventory provides:

- a *common language* for discernment of nomination and election;
- an *educational resource* about the responsibilities of elected office;
- a *context* for personal discernment and for calling others forth to consider nomination;
- the *possibility* of electing a team having both complementary and diverse attributes and competencies.

ATTRIBUTE-BASED DISCERNMENT

Charism and Mission

- Articulates her faith, the Gospel, the Franciscan-Clarian charism and mission
- Connects the Congregation's mission and charism with the global church and world
- Witnesses to "being at home with all people" and all creation
- Lives the Franciscan-Clarian values of contemplation, poverty, minority, and conversion
- Draws on the faith of members and calls them to unity and reconciliation
- Values collaboration with the Franciscan-Clarian family, Ecumenical and Interfaith communities, and others
- Looks reality in the face; communicates hope
- Invites members to live in integrity, in fidelity to Franciscan-Clarian charism and mission
- Works to live more simply at personal and communal levels
- Seeks and promotes the common good of all.

REFLECTION

ATTRIBUTE-BASED DISCERNMENT

Relationship

- Knows and is at home with herself
- Develops healthy relationships and maintains boundaries
- Acts relationally as sister with all creation
- Listens, inspires trust, holds confidences, acknowledges others' gifts
- Works to develop a team spirit
- Values collaboration and acts accordingly
- Communicates the importance of each individual; demonstrates affection and warmth
- Acts from a "we" attitude
- Mobilizes the collective energies and direction of the group
- Draws members into dialogue about issues that matter and decisions to be made.

REFLECTION

ATTRIBUTE-BASED DISCERNMENT

Organization / Structure

- Possesses stamina to function in the midst of multiple realities and events
- Learns or possesses skills for understanding and decision-making in matters of finance, canon and civil law, sponsored ministries
- Coordinates multiple pieces as a cohesive whole and sets priorities
- Leads and administers effectively
- Takes the “long view”, and works diligently each day towards that vision and purpose
- Holds ability to listen, discern, delegate, collaborate, value differences, and make decisions
- Works with diminishment in membership and resources
- Integrates and effectively allocates resources
- Works with the institutional church, understands and builds relationships with it, develops ways to critique it, and to claim our place in it.

The human dynamic...

Personal Capacities

- Sound physical health and able to manage travel
- Values and acts on spiritual, emotional, and physical care of self
- Meets life with some degree of humor
- Willingness to learn new language skills
- At night, turns it all over to God and sleeps!

DISCERNMENT: “HEIGHTENED PERSONAL”

Each of us bears personal responsibility to create and sustain an environment in which personal and communal discernment thrives. Yet the process is fraught with human frailty! Behaviors that tear at the fabric of the common good and ‘wear’ like the **“Heightened Personal”** are:

- Sways via personal bias
- Clings as to a “rock” (with rigidity) to personal perceptions and attitudes
- Influences from feelings of like / dislike
- Inability to express empathy
- Fears the unknown
- Manipulates others’ ways of thinking, feeling, perceiving
- Undermines others by secretive behavior, such as “arranging” the election
- Advocates aggressively.

REFLECTION

DISCERNMENT: “CONGREGATIONAL GOOD”

Each of us, and ultimately Fully Engaged Participants, have a responsibility to discern nomination and election from the lens of the “**Congregational Good**”. Such pursuit of the common good is reflected in the following behaviors and practices:

- Prays for personal and communal freedom
- Remains present to personal and communal discernment
- Nourishes trust of one another
- Speaks truth with responsibility and care
- Reverences the other; upholds “...perfect charity, sense and knowledge”
- Holds the meeting at the “meeting”
- Builds the Fully Engaged Participants’ knowledge base, thereby informing choices for nomination and election
- Cares for common good of those nominated and the Fully Engaged Participants.

REFLECTION

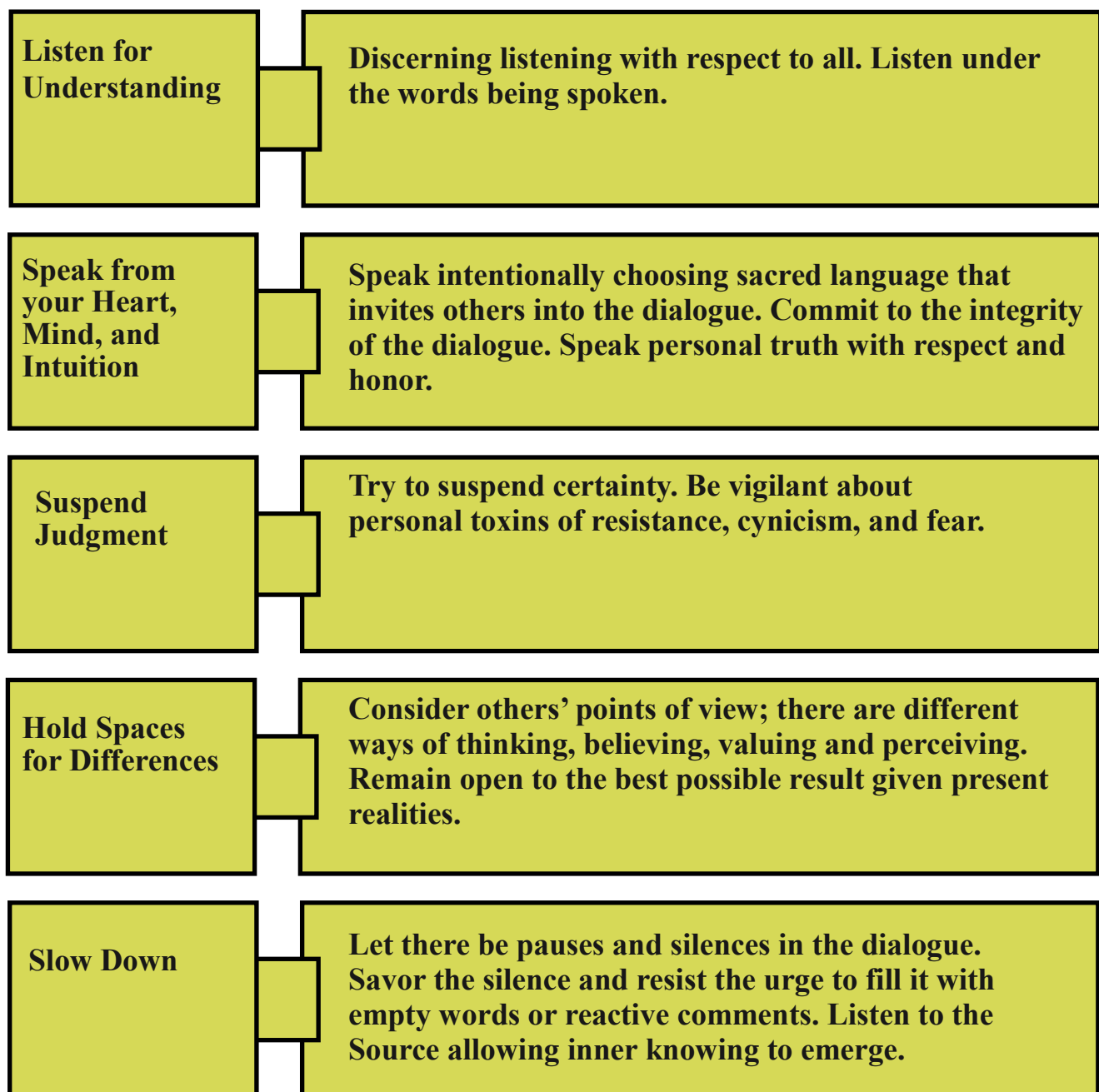
**PERSONAL
REFLECTION**

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CONTEMPLATIVE DIALOGUE MOVEMENT PRACTICES

Contemplative dialogue that supports personal and communal discernment seeks to enlighten and embrace the truth that is within each of us and among all of us.

It occurs if we:



DISCERNMENT QUESTIONS

In light of our Franciscan-Clarian charism, life and mission, the “signs of the times”, and our emerging consciousness regarding the:

- Congregation, Chapter Focus Areas and emerging Chapter direction
- Church, global community, and Earth



?

What attributes are most needed at this time for service as Congregational Leadership?

?

Do I have a number of the attributes needed to serve in Congregational Leadership 2020-2024? Name the attributes.

?

Whom might we call forth to Congregational Leadership in light of the needs of the Congregation, Church, global community, and Earth? Why ?

**PERSONAL
REFLECTION**



*We pray in the words
of St. Clare to imitate
her resolve, "what we
hold, may we
always hold, what we
do, may we always do
and never
abandon.*

*But with swift pace,
light step, unswerving
feet, so that even our
steps stir up no dust,
may we go forward
securely,
joyfully and
swiftly on the path of
prudent happiness."*

*Blessing of
St. Clare
to discern God's will*

**Franciscan Sisters of Allegany
and Associates**
www.alleganyfranciscans.org