

The 4 Cs

Constitutions, Chapter 4, COVID-19, Chapter Call 2018 - and a tree?

Dear Sisters,

We are seven members of the Congregation called the Constitutions Working Group 2020. Yet another group working on the Constitutions? Yes, and now using this letter to alert you to connections between the revision of the Constitutions, Chapter 4, Chapter Call 2018, and promising you, even in COVID-time, that by the time we contemplate the mystery of Christmas (2020) we will be a lot clearer on the use of a tree image in this context.



Somewhere in the deep recesses of our pre-COVID-19 heads and hearts some may dimly recall a letter of [January 23rd 2020](#) signed by all members of the Congregational Leadership Team. That letter may have understandably escaped your attention, caught up as we all were at the time with the fragility of life in Wuhan and the fears of how and where this new virus would spread: it had just then been identified as having landed in Europe/France.

The serious-toned CLT letter provided an update on the November 2019 Plenary's engagement with the call of Chapter 2018 to all of us regarding our Constitutions. It would be well worth locating it if you are not familiar with it. The revision of the Constitutions is going on for some time now: long before we heard of COVID-19 we have all been engaged in one way or another with Chapter 4, considering and shaping various drafts, engaging in Lenten processes – not really penitential exercises but exacting nonetheless - following Jesus to the refrain, “I go before you into Galilee, I will see you there”. That was in 2018. Behind the scenes, as always, there were various working groups.

Early 2018, March, was when we, the members, each received a copy of the revised Constitutions (Draft 3 March 2018) Chapter 4 included, in booklet form, and some of us may still have it, despite having shred a lot of superfluties in cocooning time!

March 2018 looks like a long time ago – and it is – long before COVID-19 and what we know as the new normal, with our heightened sense of how small our Earth has become, how close and interrelated we all are with one another in the Common Home.

Q. Where are we at now with Chapter 4 and the revision of the Constitutions - in our micro world of the Congregation?

The short answer is we are a lot farther on than we were in 2012 when the Harvest Documents called for restructuring.



Our Chapters as we know are one of our chief ways of ever-calling ourselves to go deeper and beyond ourselves... “beyond our wildest imaginings” and Chapter 2018 is no different: it invites us to push the boat out a bit further.

Faithful to that Chapter Call our group, one Sister from each of the Provinces and U.S. Region, was set up in March 2020 to design a reflective educational process for members for October to December 2020.

COVID-19 had arrived in Ireland by the time CLT gave us our brief and subsequent restrictions on travel and meetings forced us to learn to rely on Zoom and telecommunications, with their potential and limitations, to advance our preparatory work, so who knows what shapes the processes will have to assume in a few months' time!

Q. What changes are entailed by this revision of the Constitutions – in a nutshell?

A. Big organizational change with major consequences for the governance of our Congregation.



What information have we already that relates to this?

- ✓ Chapter Call 2018
- ✓ Constitutions (2018) Draft 3 March 2018
- ✓ CLT Letter (January 23rd 2020)

What about a tree?

At the November 2019 Plenary another Working Group on the revision of the Constitutions



used an image of a tree as an analogy to illustrate how the parts of the new structure might relate to one another. Suffice it for now to indicate the following, which may be helpful for some:

The tree as a whole -one living entity/organism/various parts in relationship with all around it: air/water/the rest of the community of

life: The Congregation – likewise one living entity, many parts/part of a larger world/in relationship

Branches and leaves: the new Branches/communities/members in mission

Root system: Charism/vision, Governance, CLT, Constitutions etc. (see Chapter 4, 84-88)

Tree trunk: connecting branches and leaves to roots: the “centralised/external administrative services” available to all, set up by CLT.

So what is the plan for October – December 2020?

- ✓ October 1st: a small number of Sisters from all Provinces and U.S. “meet” (by e.g. Zoom)
- ✓ Mercy website <http://www.sistersofmercy.ie> will have key resources
- ✓ A “pack” will be prepared for local level – materials can be reproduced as necessary
- ✓ Opportunities for all to participate in meetings locally - depending on COVID-19

Diary 2020 – dates for meetings

(1.5 hours depending on group size - and depending on COVID-19) to be arranged around the following dates:

- ✓ **October 18th/19th**
...Mission Sunday... recalling the steps to now/the journey ahead.. for the sake of the mission
- ✓ **November 9th/10th /11th**
... Catherine's anniversary time...imagining “Diverse Geographical Branches”
- ✓ **November 30th**
...Advent... imagining centralised administrative services
- ✓ **December 12th**
...Foundation Day...focus on Congregational Governance/role of Congregational Leadership



Look forward to the journey; meanwhile stay safe.

Coirle McCarthy, Elizabeth Manning, Maria Ngui, Catherine Ryan, Kathy Rule, Lily Sexton, Alyce Waters.

Constitutions Working Group 2020