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JOURNEY OF ONEINESS UPDATE: Communications and Advancement

Two functions discuss collaboration and integration

Communications and advancement staff from across the Institute met for three days in Belmont, North Carolina, last month to look at shared ways of doing work and to begin to take next steps in the implementation process of their respective designs for the Journey of Oneness.

The gathering began with a Journey of Oneness discussion with Sister Judith Frikker, the Institute’s communications leadership liaison, and Institute COO, Ruth Thomas. Ruth noted that Cathleen Farrell, the new Institute communications officer, and Colleen Maher, the new Institute advancement officer, still need to complete their orientations, visit local leaders and staff, delve into their understanding of the recommendations of the development teams, and evaluate priorities and next steps.

“Communications and advancement will move into the implementation phase this year. Plans will be developed for each function based on the design and development teamwork,” says Ruth. “We expect to utilize teams in both communications and advancement during the implementation phase, with opportunities for leadership liaisons and staff from both functions to participate and give input.”

Local leadership liaisons and community operating officers participated in the first day of the communications/advancement meeting. Together with communications and advancement staff, they evaluated joint projects during the past year, acknowledging challenges, successes and possible improvements. They also brainstormed ideas for Mercy Day 2020 to create a comprehensive communications/advancement response. The day ended with reflections on times of transition guided by the facilitator, Sister Deb Troillet.

“Everything is fluid now, but we are grateful to have a voice with communications,” says Colleen. “We are operating in an unknown time that is emerging and evolving. In this time of not knowing, Mercy leads the way.”
“Investing in people and relationships is integral during times of transition,” says Cathleen. “Everyone has been welcoming, collegial, comforting and super supportive as I learn how we work together as a communications team and integrate with other functions.”

Advancement staff participated in a technology training for TEAMS, a collaboration software that allows users to chat, have meetings and share notes and attachments. Both groups participated in an introductory anti-racism training facilitated by Sister Rose Marie Tresp and Tylia (Ty) Barnes, South Central staff members who were on the former Institute Anti-Racism Transformation Team.

“I feel a spirit of renewal and hope,” says Gary Loncki, the director of communications for New York, Pennsylvania West. “In the new emerging model, we will use our skills and expertise for the good of the Institute.”

“We came with doubts and questions, wondering how this was really going to work,” says Sister Irene Nerney, who handles special gifts for the Northeast. “We have lots of work ahead of us, but we see many parts clearer and are willing to live with unanswered questions for the greater glory of mercy.”

Elizabeth MacNeal, the communications manager for Mercy Volunteer Corps, agrees: “We need to lean into the uncertainty to see what the future holds.”

Photo: Sister Rose Marie Tresp (right) talks about anti-racism during lunch with communications staff Sister Leonor Franco (center), from Belize, and advancement staff Tina Betlejewski (left), from South Central.