July 9, 2020

JOURNEY OF ONENESS UPDATE: Administration

Reaching a significant milestone on the Journey of Oneness

As of July 1, 2020, eight of the Institute’s 11 key administrative functions are accountable to the Institute rather than to the former Communities.

First among those making that transition were the “pioneers”: archives, new membership, justice. Following in those footsteps this month were advancement, association, communications, information technology and ministry. Still on the road, as it were, are health and wellness, human resources and stewardship.

One notable aspect of these transitions is that, with rare exceptions, organizational moves have not involved geographical moves. Generally, staff members now serving the Institute continue to be located where they were, building on past Institute-wide collaborations to realize greater teamwork and create more unified policies and procedures.

This is not to say that there haven’t been occasional “speed bumps,” as well as “speed zones,” along the way. At a June meeting of the project coordinators for all of the functions and the Institute Coordinating Committee, the pioneers shared some of their transition experiences with those just moving to Institute accountability. Among the words of wisdom:

- Give substantial time and attention to building the team that’s carrying your function. Meet in person if possible; get trained in Microsoft Teams; cultivate mutual trust. Relationships are key to a smooth future.
- Creating a first-ever, Institute-wide budget for our function and learning/following Institute financial policies were a challenge. Some staff were accustomed to more budget autonomy. The members of the Institute stewardship staff were great to work with on parameters appropriate for our function and for the Institute.
- Regional cultures differ from one another and from the Institute, so communication is critical, as is reassurance that needs will be met, even if differently from the past.
- Previous collaborations across the Institute created a readiness for closer working relationships, less duplication and greater effectiveness—and we’re beginning to see those goals being realized. Folks were willing to try to take things forward.
- Being Institute and living/working locally make it natural to slip into familiar ways of doing things—so, patience. Many of our functions are still sorting what’s local and
what’s Institute, who needs to be kept in the communications loop and so on. If Leadership Teams and staff are still sorting, so are the sisters when it comes to their expectations of LTs and staff members.

This exchange of advice and encouragement also brought mention and endorsement of an earlier commitment to create an ongoing, Institute-wide staff formation program. The potential benefit would be an ability to ground new staff members and seasoned colleagues in a common understanding of Mercy identity/mission/values even as these evolve in response to the needs of the time. Noted one participant: Such a program could be foundational for Institute unity.