

Collaborating for Change

Small group processes for Mercy staff, boards, students and groups of sisters and associates

Mercy life is conducted through countless small group gatherings. These gatherings provide wonderful opportunities to further and deepen the goals of Awakening the Dreamer to create a more environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling and socially just human presence on Earth.

This document is designed to help you and your group discover and easily access some of the powerful resources currently available for changing the way we see and live our lives.

Groups that might want to use these processes and resources include:

- Employees, co-workers of Mercy ministries – work groups, employee orientation
- Faculties
- Boards
- Classrooms
- Sisters, Associates, and Companions
- Mercy Challenge
- Your ideas?

Some preliminary considerations:

Mercy Taking Action is geared to support change. This outline identifies some important elements for facilitating change in a small group format. These small group processes are only effective if they meet the members of your group where they are, help them widen their vision, and further their goals. You want your choice of processes to be a good fit for your group. In planning, ask yourself:

Who is your group?

Do they work together? Live together? Come together for inspiration/reflection?

Where are group members in consciousness and understanding of the issues that constitute Mercy's Critical Concerns? Where are they in integration and application of these values?

How much time do you have in this session? How many sessions do you have?

Your choice of processes and use of videos, etc. depends in part on how much time you have. There are resources that are very brief if your time is short.

Use of technology for audio/visual support

What kind of technology is available in the space where the meeting(s) will be held?

– screens, video players, access to internet...

What is your or your group's comfort with technology tools?

Elements of a Transformative Small Group Process

- 1) Bring the group's heart and mind together**
- 2) Find out where the group is in terms of the challenges they are seeing and experiencing in our world at this time. Consider "The Great Turning" as a framework through which to look at this question**
- 3) Assess the group's current state: Where are we now?
What are we already doing to respond? Acknowledge & celebrate**
- 4) Identify next steps**
- 5) Move into action**
- 6) Follow up**

You might be planning a single session experience or the first of a series. Choose which of these resources will help you to incorporate the elements.

1) Some Ways to Bring the Group's Heart and Mind Together - Presence and Intention

- Breath and body
 - [Preparation for Presence](#), 3 or 4-minute guided meditation
 - Opening Sacred Space
 - Chant of your choice. Chanting brings our minds and hearts together in a unique way
- We are called by Mercy
 - [Introduction to Mercy Taking Action](#) (Powerpoint presentation with [facilitators' guide](#))
 - [Critical Concerns flyer](#)

- Attune to the Mercy charism through simple prayer of your choice
- Recognize being a part of a wider movement on the planet
- Establish an attitude of Deep Listening

"...it is not by our hand but by earth and spirit and grace that all things are done...We are not so important; we are...at best loving midwives, participants in a process much larger than we. If we are quite and listen and feel how things move, perhaps we will be wise enough to put our hands on what waits to be born, and bless it with kindness and care."

--Wayne Muller, Sabbath, pp 175-6

- [Inquiry Process](#)

2) **Where Are We Now? What Is the Group Seeing and Experiencing in the World?**

- Ask the group members to share what their concerns are – locally as well as globally
- Invite group members to share what they see happening that is addressing these concerns – locally as well as globally
- Offer a framework through which to look at what's happening to address the challenges
One helpful framework, developed by eco-philosopher Joanna Macy, is The Great Turning, about the shift from an industrial growth society to a life-sustaining society. You may find [here](#) a handout that connects this framework to scripture and to Mercy's critical concerns.

Three lenses through which we can look to see the Great Turning

- **Holding actions** – what we are doing to slow down the harm to Earth and to vulnerable people, communities and cultures
[Acting in Harmony with all Creation](#) (Powerpoint presentation)
Cost of Convenience ([video](#) and [facilitator's guide](#))
- **New ways/structures** – how we are creating a life-supporting society
[A Mercy Ecological Learning Community](#) (5-minute video)
[Visualizing a Plenitude Economy](#) (5-minute video)
- **Shift in consciousness** – deepening our realization of our complete interconnectedness
[Think of yourself as...](#) (5½-minute video)
[Dancing around the world](#) (5-minute video)
[Journey of the Universe](#) (2½-minute video)
[Earth is Alive, Breathing](#) (5-minute video)
[Interconnection Consciousness](#) (reading)
[Monet Refuses the Operation](#) (poem)

3) **Assessment – How Are We Addressing These Concerns Here in our Local Setting**

Listen to each other with open mind and heart as you explore questions such as:

What do we have to celebrate? Acknowledge and celebrate changes you've already made, how far you've come in becoming more environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilled and socially just

4) **Next Steps - Planning For Action**

- *What is offering itself for our attention and response right here and now?*
- *Where's the energy in the group for deepening or furthering our work?*
- *What do we know about it now? What do we need to learn to make decisions?*
- *What alternatives do we see? What do we need to learn to implement an action?*

5) **Moving Into Action**

"You never think yourself into a new way of living. You invariably live yourself into a new way of thinking." --Richard Rohr

Let group choose one focus for action, e.g., single-use products, water, recycling/composting, or a topic related to another critical concern. Focus topic may be decided ahead of time or may be chosen at first session from among a number of choices.

If this is a group that works or lives together, actions might include

- a project;
- evaluation of organizational policies for possible revision;
- aligning employee job descriptions, orientation and evaluations with Mercy's Critical Concerns

If this is a group that doesn't work or live together, how might participants support each other as each seeks to live more fully in a sustainable, just, and spiritually fulfilling way in her/his own life circumstances, workplace, etc.?

Consider resources available for pursuing action – where to go for "How To"

- [Signup to become a Mercy email advocate](#)
- [Justice pages of Institute website](#)
- [Moving into Action](#)
- [Active Hope](#) reflection and discussion guide
- [Be the Change](#) video for inspiration

6) **Committing to an Action Step – Identify a Project and Project Team (i.e. a green project, or one that addresses another critical concern)**

- Who will do what?
- What is the time frame?
- When will we meet again?
- Depending on the nature of the group, how many times will this group meet? If this is an ongoing work group, will part of future meetings be dedicated to *Mercy Taking Action*?

Closing Prayer

[Prophets of a Future Not Our Own](#)

[Vows](#)

FOLLOW UP SESSIONS – using elements and resources listed above

- **Bring the group's heart and mind together**
- **Report on progress**
- **Problem solve and plan next steps**
- **Close with something that sets the tone for ongoing work**