

GENERAL CHAPTERS & GENERAL LEADERSHIP

1990-2021

The purpose of this document is to explore the development of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur from 1990-2014 by looking at the decisions made by General Chapters, the leadership elected by each Chapter, and programs/strategies used by leadership to implement the Chapter decisions.

This document shows a development of thought and/or movement of the Holy Spirit. The following colors highlight one person's interpretation of how different themes develop during this 24 year period.

Relationships internally & externally

Organization for Mission

Sharing Resources

Relationship with Church/Prophetic Vocation

Interdependence/Stand with the Poor/Critical Social Analysis

Diversity/Multi-culturalism/Internationality

Sr. Kim Dalgarn SNDdeN

Archivist, Ohio Unit, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

February, 2020 (Revised October 2023)

Chapter of 1990

Vision Statement:

- Acknowledges that which is gift; names calls to conversion (interdependence, option for the poor, sharing resources); acknowledges differences
- This is the challenge of this graced moment, this KAIROS: to seek to live our common values in faithful diversity and to re-express our charism in ways appropriate to our culture

Statement on Authority & 1989 Constitutions

Call for Review of Life in Mission following Reflection-Action-Reflection Process (evaluation, recommendations, decisions, actions, evaluation)

Mandates Ecclesiology Study & Theological Study (including of the Vows)

Mandates use of Critical Social Analysis in Formation Plans & Cross-cultural experience in formation

Continuation of Julie Renewal Program & Final Vow Program

Set up an International Office to assist funding of ND in Africa & Latin America (INTOFALA)

Greater sharing of resources: Personnel & Financial

Mandates the sale of the Casa property in Rome

Mandates an international communication system, greater collaboration between Generalate Staff

Mandates greater Continental collaboration

Mandates studies of culture/multi-cultural reality

Creates Congregational Mediation Policy

Recommends Nicaragua move from Congregational Project to other Reality

1990-1996 General Government Team

Sisters Ellen Gielty (Britain), Jan Bohn (Ohio), Emily Mullen (Maryland/Congo), Marna Rogers (Boston), Keiko Suzuki (Japan)

Chapter held at Ipswich (1st time outside of Europe)

Chapter Delegates & Staff came to MND following the Chapter to help celebrate the 150th anniversary of SNDdeN arriving in US

INTOFALA opened

Notre Dame Mission Volunteers (later partners with AmeriCorps) begins

GGT moves to smaller house in Rome

Movement toward National Novitiate in United States, collaborative Formation Experiences

Widening the Space of Our Tents – getting in touch with multi-cultural reality

Close MEEC in Washington DC and move communications efforts and Finance Offices to Ipswich

Ecclesiology Study and Study of Association done internationally

Mid-Chapter Meeting: Pitso held in South Africa

A lot of time spent on the issues regarding property/sharing of resources between Maryland and Chesapeake

Sisters in Nicaragua become the responsibility of their sending Units (Ohio & California – later Britain)

1994: Women & Friends – 200th anniversary of Julie & Françoise meeting

Re-introduced Congregation to Mother St Joseph

Chapter of 1996

We desire a gospel spirituality that expresses the goodness of God in: contemplation & deep union with God, warmth of relationships, compassion for the poor; that is marked by joy and simplicity, beauty & friendship; in which one finds life amidst death, the divine in all of creation

We commit ourselves to develop a contemplative attitude toward the whole of life

We commit ourselves to focusing our corporate mission on materially poor women and children

We commit ourselves to deepen the quality of all our relationships; make real in our relationships the beauty of the Gospel, ever old, ever new; be in communion with each other as sisters who embrace the diversity of age, race, culture, language & beliefs; re-affirm that community is at the heart of religious life and is a witness for our contemporary world

We commit ourselves to deepen our understanding of our identity as permanently vowed members living community in mission

We commit ourselves to a spirit of hospitality which invites & welcomes women & men to relationships rooted in the charism of Notre Dame

We commit ourselves, as women of the Church, to continue to lead radical gospel lives. The essence of our charism as women religious compels us to a loyalty which is both creative and critical. Strengthened by the example of Julie & Françoise, we will embrace the discipline of dialogue with the institutional Church.

We commit ourselves to a more radical sharing of resources to support the life & mission of the entire Congregation

We commit ourselves to review, evaluate & reorganize our congregational structures at the international, unit & local community levels in order to ensure that they will: be more effective for our mission wherever we are w/the poor in the most abandoned places; create a new spirit of interdependence and friendship among us; be inspired by a deeper understanding of the values expressed in C.97-104 & D. 57 of our Constitutions

1996-2002 General Government Team

Sisters Ellen Gielty (Britain), Terry Davis (California), Marie Kelly (Maryland), Mary McClure (Britain), Honorine Yamba (Congo)

Chapter held at Padgate, Warrington, England

1st chapter where there are e-bulletins

Created the Congregational Mission Office (including policies and procedures) and formalized Congregational Finance Office at Ipswich

Started the Journey into the Hill Country Process

Initiated the 1st L&P Study & Report/Viability Studies

Proposed the Jubilee Fund

Until All Have Enough presentation by Ellen

Established the SNDdeN as an NGO of the UN in 2001

Implemented the mandate to continue the Julie Renewal Program and Final Vow Program

Anti-Racism training

Challenging the Church on unjust structures

Inculturation

Encuentro Mid-Chapter meeting in Peru

GGT moves into space rented from the Good Shepherd Sisters

Clergy Abuse Scandal

ND Mission Statement & Logo

Congregational Website created

Initiated the Jubilee (to celebrate the 250th birth of Julie in 2001 and the 200th anniversary of Notre Dame in 2004)

- Encouraged Jubilee Ministry Projects
- Encouraged each Unit to set aside funds for Jubilee projects to promote Julie and the Congregation
- Encouraged Pilgrimages to Julie Land
- Encouraged refurbishing of cemeteries

South Africa and Zimbabwe form ZimSA in 2002

Chapter of 2002

1. We commit ourselves to strengthen our identity as an international Congregation of many cultures united in charism and mission.

- Encourage cross-cultural gatherings and an openness to cross-cultural service.
- Promote the study of the languages of the Congregation.
- Cross-cultural sharing to strengthen relationships & understand the implications of the multicultural and international character of our Congregation.
- Implement the goals of the Congregational Mission Office in a way that will involve and animate all Units.
- Address, as far as possible, issues of translation and equal access to technology and information.

2. We commit ourselves to deepen our own understanding of our relationships with God, one another, the poor and with the whole of creation.

- Reflect, as a congregation, on a contemporary understanding of the vows according to each culture.
- Explore the many dimensions of our charism to uncover its relevance to the issues of today's world.
- Establish a heritage and spirituality centre in order to preserve the richness of our traditions in Cuvilly, Namur and Ghent.

3. We commit ourselves to help to create a more just and loving world.

4. We commit ourselves to help to create a Church which is a true communion.

- Exercise our prophetic role as ecclesial women by working for dialogue and the inclusion of the laity, especially women, in decision-making in the Church.
- Establish a policy and process to enable the Congregation to engage in open dialogue with Sisters in actual or potential conflict with ecclesiastical authorities.

5. We commit ourselves to invite women to journey with us as vowed members and to sustain one another in our life in mission.

6. We commit ourselves to explore with others new ways of living our charism.

7. We commit ourselves to create a model for right relationships within the global society.

Recommendations:

- use the title "Congregational Leadership Team"
- develop a common symbol for affiliates/postulants and a different symbol for novices
- continue the Final Vow Programme, include formators and newer members in its design.
- Redistribution of Resources

New Cosmology: expansion of God's Goodness

2002-2008 Congregational Leadership Team

Sisters Camilla Burns (Ohio), Rachel Harrington (Britain), Maria Delaney (Boston), Marie-Angèle Kitewo (Congo), Nancy Wellmeier (Ohio)

Chapter held at Amiens, France – day in the middle where Sisters gathered in local areas to reflect on questions and provide feedback

Sister Dorothy Stang assassinated in 2005

Studied the possibility of a mission in Haiti

Implemented the Jubilee Fund

Established the Ministry Fund to support Sisters in direct ministry to the poor

200th anniversary of the Congregation was celebrated in 2004

The Heritage Centre was established in three sites: Cuvilly, Ghent and Namur (training of guides but no programming)

Education Liaison (Sr. Margaret Mulholland) and adoption of use of Hallmarks for use with sponsored institutions

First photovoltaic units was installed in Nigeria and Congo

First Class adopted as internal communication mechanism with attention to equal access to new forms of technology for all the sisters in the Congregation

Kairos and Charism program for Sisters with 15 or more years in the Congregation

Final Vow Program lengthened, planned by formators from around the ND world

Restructuring efforts in the United States

Tried to get Belgium North to join Belgium South

2007 formation of Peru-Nicaragua

2007 International Leadership meeting at Ipswich

Mid-Chapter meeting held in Kenya – US efforts for Zimbabwe Air Lift as a result

Chapter of 2008 Calls

1. We, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur from across the world, rejoice in the richness of our diversity. We are called to be one.
2. Sustained by the Goodness of God and cherishing our internationality, we are inspired as a congregation to renew our prophetic vocation.
3. We are women called, personally and collectively to deepen our relationship with God, and to grow in a community that chooses Gospel imperatives as a way of life.
4. We are called to listen to the mourning of our fragmented world, of those impoverished by the growing divide between rich and poor and of the sexually exploited, trafficked, marginalized and abused women and children – especially girls. We yearn to deepen our fundamental commitment to stand with our sisters and brothers who live in poverty and accompany them in their struggle. We hear the groaning of Earth mistreated and endangered by our human activity. All these cries compel us to personal, corporate and collaborative action.
5. Education liberates, empowers and enables choices. We recommit enthusiastically to Julie's call to educate for life in all our ministries and in the professional development of all our sisters.
6. We pledge ourselves to address the inequality among us by a radical sharing of human, material and financial resources so that every member has what she needs and is able to contribute to our common mission.
7. The witness of each Sister's life and of our life together in community, filled with passion, joy and total giving, is a compelling force for attracting women who will be drawn by the fire of our charism.
8. We pray our individual and corporate actions will be a source of hope for our world.
 - Jubilee Fund: extend/grow it
 - Unit Canonical Treasurer Addendum to D85
 - Continue Final Vow & Kairos & Charism
 - Accountability D65 - for living the Calls
 - Associates D52 – special but distinct – deal with at local/continental level
 - Appoint a coordinator for the Heritage Centre
 - Secular Branch Experiment not approved
 - Strengthen relationships with groups while maintaining appropriate boundaries
 - French & English are official languages

2008-2014 Congregational Leadership Team

Sisters Teresita Weind (Ohio), Maria Delaney (Boston), Jeanne Mac Donald (Boston), Nancy O'Shea (California), Liliane Sweko (Congo/ZimSA)

Chapter held at Belmont, California

2009: October 31 – Maryland Unit becomes part of Ohio

Sister Marie Kelly named Heritage Centre Coordinator and Heritage Centre at Namur built (2012 blessing)

Strengthening of collaboration between Generalate Staff

Increased growth of Jubilee Fund & continued Ministry Fund

Continued Final Vow and Kairos & Charism, started Jubilee retreats at Heritage Centre

Every Sisters involved in Mid-Chapter Evaluation

Work in Haiti & South Sudan

Continental Leadership Meetings; orientation for new Teams; work on Team model of leadership

Multiple photovoltaic units installed in Congo

Sister interns from Africa & Latin America serve in Congregational Offices

Apostolic Visitation of Sisters in United States

Chapter of 2014 Calls

As Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, we rejoice in and accept the challenge of being an international Congregation.

Rooted in the prophetic witness of St. Julie's charism, we are called to be women of justice and peace in the midst of the inequality and violence of our world.

This moment in our history calls us to contemplative listening, ongoing dialogue and critical social analysis that move us to action.

We choose to stand with people made poor in a world marked by increasing divisions and inequalities. We see the value of human life diminished, the destruction of Earth, and intolerance towards people perceived to be different. Yet we also see new signs of hope in a growing awareness of personal and collective responsibility and a thirst for spirituality.

We reaffirm the Calls of the 2008 General Chapter and set our 2014 Calls in the context of today's world.

Conscious of current and emerging hopes and challenges, our Journey of Fidelity calls us to recommit to actions that lead to transformation within ourselves, society, Church and our Notre Dame Congregation.

We pray that as women in relationship across borders, cultures and generations, like Julie and Françoise, we will be faithful to our call to be a prophetic witness of justice and peace in our fragmented world.

How do we respond?

Aware of the oneness of all peoples, we are led to deepen and incarnate our internationality in ministries, communities and governance.

As a concrete expression of justice, unity and internationality, we commit ourselves to new strategies to provide equitable access to all resources, financial and human, for mission.

Impelled by the ecological crisis, we examine every facet of our relationship with the community of creation. All members and units of the Congregation commit to take action on this defining issue of our time.

At this critical time in Church and society, we recognize our unique role as women religious. Therefore, we commit ourselves to expand our study of contemporary theology, to deepen our spirituality, and to address the inequitable roles of women and men.

With whom do we journey?

Collaboration makes us aware of the needs of the world, and calls us to work with all people to transform oppressive behaviors and systems. We commit ourselves to: strengthen the bonds among us

and within the diverse communities where we live and minister. Our Notre Dame Spirituality compels us to invite others to discern the signs of God's goodness in their lives and in service to those living in poverty; walk with women discerning a call to live gospel values as vowed members; build relationships with our associates, co-workers, and volunteers that deepen and strengthen the living of our charism and the mission of Jesus.

Changed 2008 decision on Unit Treasurer

2014-2020 Congregational Leadership Team

Sisters Teresita Weind (Ohio), Patricia O'Brien (England), Liliane Sweko (Congo), Masheti Wangoyi (Kenya), Maureen White (SND Base Communities)

Chapter at Trinity-Washington University

International Leadership Meeting at Ipswich followed by International Finance Meeting

Deepening sharing of resources (personnel & finance), focus on Jubilee Fund and continuation of Ministry Fund – involved all units in strategic resource planning

Decision to keep Cuvilly

Contemplative Listening and Critical Social Analysis that lead to action emphasized – communal discernment

Study of contemporary theology

2019: 50th anniversary of Canonization

2014: suppression of Chesapeake Unit

2014: formation of US East – West

Continued work to deepen internationality and right relationships

Conversation around idea of international novitiate

Continued Final Vow Program

Language study emphasized

Care of creation emphasized

SNDdeN Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy mandated (every unit)

Chapter 2021 Calls:

Our 18th general chapter calls us to deepen our commitment and act with reverence for God's creation.

Responding to the signs of our times, we are called to commit ourselves to renew and transform the Congregation and its structures.

We are called to respond within our local and global realities to those who suffer, and to pray and work for the transformation of the attitudes, structures and systems that caused profound suffering.

We are called to implement the Congregational Strategic Resource Plan and review our Constitutions.

We are called to continue to till the ground of the liberating mission of education in all its forms.

We are called to sow across the world new seeds of hope and unity; of inclusion and belonging; of invitation, welcome and dialogue; of collaboration for mission.

We are called to continue to cultivate the rich soil of our heritage, and the friendship of Julie and Françoise, which embraces every Sister and models the reverence we are to have for one another.

We are called to prepare the ground again and again by inviting and sustaining new generations of vowed members.

We are called to share our charism and mission as they energize collaborators and friends, and inspire new forms of association.

We are called to water, with care and loving challenge, the new growth and deep roots among us, in every season of our lives.

We are called to care for those to whom and with whom we minister across five continents, as we are sustained by Sisters, whose prayer, wisdom, and experience of the Cross is at the heart of our ministries. We are called to attend the gardens of diverse ministries and inter-cultural communities, and nurture, an ecclesial life that holds the hope of producing a harvest of communion and synodality.

2021-2027 Congregational Leadership Team:

Sisters Mary Johnson (US E-W), Evalyne Aseyo (Kenya), Amarachi Grace Ezeonu (Nigeria), Lorraine Connell (US E-W) and Miriam Montero Bereche (Peru)

This Chapter was postponed from 2020 and held electronically because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sisters stayed in their local communities throughout the Chapter which was divided into sections over a number of months. The election of the CLT was done on 12/8 on one ballot.

Zoom & Hybrid used extensively for meetings

Since March 25, 2022:

- International Treasurers (xxx)
- Southern Leadership (xxx)
- Northern Leadership (xx)
- All Leadership Teams (x)
- Vocation/Formation (x)
- Unit Secretaries

Appointed: General Secretary + 2 Sisters in Training, General Treasurer + 1 in training, UN NGO, Assistant to Heritage Centre

- Pilgrimages for Sisters who did not do a final vow program in Namur
- Continuing the final vow program
- Ongoing Formation: At least 3 presentations Zoomed to the whole Congregation
- Unifying web presence
- Closing Paccioti