



## Coordinating Council Journal

November 4 – 8, 2021

Nov. 4, 2021, dawned crisp and cold – 28 degrees in Monroe, Michigan, as the Coordinating Council made its way to the IHM Motherhouse. Their anticipation was high – the meeting would start in the afternoon with a “**stretching exercise**,” designed to move the members and observers to new understandings about how white dominant culture perpetuates systemic racism. Margaret Alandt, IHM, Alice Baker, IHM, Barbara Beesley, IHM and Sarah Nash, IHM Associate, led the group through a series of readings, videos, and discussions to break open this facet of white supremacy. These resources are available on the private side of the website. The session opened with an acknowledgment of the original stewards of the land and a reflection on that meaning. In the videos, the idea of co-liberation captured the group’s imagination. Of particular note in the work completed together was a two-part exercise which first identified the characteristics of white dominant culture, then provided antidotes to those characteristics. This exercise provided a valuable lens through which to see the remainder of our meetings.

Marianne Gaynor, IHM and Margaret Chapman, IHM crafted **prayers** for Friday through Sunday which used growing bamboo, the Sankofa bird, and the reflective poem of Kathy Onderbeke, IHM, which she wrote for the 2021 Assembly as touchstones. It was this continuity of reflective prayer which set the tone for each day.

Members knew from the very beginning that there were two questions to answer, with some wondering if there would be enough time to do so:

- “**What will be the focus of the 2022 Assembly?**”
- “**What are the focus questions for the work of the Coordinating Council for the next three years?**”

In her **opening remarks** Jane Herb, IHM invited us to enter this new moment together. She used the image of imaginal cells, creative ideas that will come together to create something new like the development of the butterfly. In his introduction to the meeting, Mark Clarke helped members understand that this time is a time of significant transition. There is a deep need to balance the past and the present while remaining open to the emerging future. Of course, there was some business to attend to – the **general procedures** for the Coordinating Council were reviewed, section by section, discussed and voted upon. This was the new council’s first try at reaching consensus and the experience went smoothly. That task accomplished; the real work of the group began.

A review of the **finances** provided another piece of the lens through which to view the congregation. Sharon Abela, CFO, joined us for this portion of the meeting. Groups jotted challenges and opportunities onto colored post-it notes which were placed on the wall to spark conversation. This work continued at a later session when assumptions were discussed and added to the wall. The group was then invited to use the North Star as a metaphor along with a cycle of envisioning, exploring and discovering. Friday's meeting ended with integration, reflection, and prayer.

On Saturday members began to share their narratives of the **175<sup>th</sup> and the 2021 Assembly**. Individual responses were shared at tables, then each group developed the title of an article and three highlights about the 175<sup>th</sup> and the title of a book and three chapter titles for the 2021 Assembly. Large group sharing revealed what was most significant for each event, ideas ranging from grief and loss to recognition of the central role of deconstructing racism.

In the afternoon, the progress of the **Process and Oversight Committee** was provided. There are deeply reflective, careful considerations of what could and should happen with our Motherhouse building and the land. Some decisions have been made but there are still some unknowns. The congregation engaged Lynn Daly from HJ Sims to seek out those who will steward the buildings and land in the future. Sisters and Associates are encouraged to review the documents posted on the private side of the website.

Next, it was important to turn to emotional well-being. Each group drew a heart in the center of their paper and then created a mind map that mapped the emotional process of letting go of our Motherhouse building and the land. As this work grew to completion, each group was invited to add an image of the community in the future to the center of their heart. These mind maps and images were shared and posted on the wall. By now, the walls were a living record of the group's thinking, but, frankly, that thinking was still headed in a multitude of directions. Saturday's meeting again ended with reflection, integration and prayer.

Following the opening prayer on Sunday, the members spent a few minutes quietly reviewing the images and information on the walls. The goal was to find answers to the original questions: "What will be the focus of the 2022 Assembly?"

From reflection emerged:

- two images:
  - the heart
  - the Sankofa bird
  
- four ideas:
  - collaboration/co-liberation
  - the intersectionality of racism and the pain of the world
  - letting go/remembering/touching back/going forward
  - the value of spending time together

These are the central ideas for the 2022 Assembly and will be given to the 2022 Assembly Committee.

“What are the focus questions for the work of the Coordinating Council for the next three years?” The CC Agenda Committee will synthesize the identified themes, challenges, and focus questions, which will be shared with the Governance Circles.

Members left energized and challenged by the work of the Coordinating Council. The ending song, “Woyaya, We are going,” spoke to our time together and our commitment to walking the journey before us.