

CONGREGATIONAL STATISTICS

May 2022

| | TOTAL | U.S. PROVINCE | EUROPE PROVINCE | S. INDIA PROVINCE | N. INDIA PROVINCE | ULAF REGION | GENERALATE TEAM |
|------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| TOTAL MEMBERSHIP | 577 | 280 | 63 | 86 | 110 | 34 | 4 |
| Final Vows | 541 | 280 | 63 | 83 | 81 | 30 | 4 |
| Temporary Vows | 23 | | | 3 | 20 | | |
| Novices | 9 | | | | 9 | | |
| Exclaustation/Dispensation Pending | 4 | | | | | 4 | |
| WOMEN IN FORMATION | | | | | | | |
| Affiliates/Postulants | 6 | | | 3 | 3 | | |
| Aspirants | 17 | | | 8 | 9 | | |
| Women in Contact/Candidates | 30 | | | 14 | 16 | | |
| ASSOCIATES | | | | | | | |
| Associates | 164 | 157 | 6 | | | 1 | |

Please put this with your Province/Region Reports, replacing the November 2021 statistics.

Assisi Province Report, 2022 General Assembly.

What are the urgent needs of the context? What your Province has done towards these urgent needs last four years. What is your plan for the future regarding these needs?

The urgent need of our context now is to witness prophetic hope as we work for peace, joy, love and integrity of creation.

For the past 4 years especially the last two years we have been facing life threatening experiences due to COVID 19. Many of our loved ones have been affected by this deadly virus. We became handicapped and locked in while helping others. We become panicked not knowing how to help! Our ministry activities seem not as fruitful as before. It is a time that we focus on mostly online activities and prayer for our day-to-day life and mission. Flood is another threat we faced during these years. Twice one of our convents was badly affected by it. Many of our sisters' and students' houses were affected by flood. ***We have been responding to the context in the following ways:***

1. By sustaining and strengthening our own hope through prayer, reflection and other spiritual exercises like reading which is very important at this time.
2. Though the spread and threat of pandemic were around us, we tried our best in so many ways for promoting peace, joy and love. We are conscious that our presence in a locality is to be of hope, joy, peace and love.
3. Some of our Sisters particularly the nurse Sisters directly and indirectly serve the people who are affected by COVID 19 risking their own lives.
4. Sisters make phone calls to the sick people whom they know and make sure that they are supplied with necessary things for living during their illness. Special counseling services rendered to students and parents who detected with Covid positive and also to who lost their loved ones.
5. Sisters stayed with the local people for 15days without any basic facilities and gave mental, moral support for them. They became role models for the people and were with them at the time of their miserable conditions.
6. As much as possible we extend our helping hands more systematically and tangibly to the people in need. Reach out to the poor and needy.
7. The extreme and changing weather conditions make us aware that the ecosystem is endangered, and we need to restore the harmony of the ecosystem in whatever ways we can. During these past years, particularly during these pandemic years, our Province has made efforts to plant trees, cultivate vegetables and fruits, and lead an earth rooted life. We tap the natural resources like solar energy, rain water harvesting tanks. rain water pit etc... Working in the garden with our own hands makes our lives more meaningful especially when we share the fruits our labor with our neighbors.

What 1-2 of the greatest need of the Province? What the Province has done the past 4 years towards these needs? What is your plan for the future regarding these needs?

We need to revitalize the formation ministry and community life. For the past 4 years our efforts for vocation promotion were fruitless in South India. In Tanzania, though, the efforts for vocation promotion bring fruits but not in abundance.

1. According to Response In Faith and our own experiences, ***it is our love for Jesus Christ that draws us together in community. Jesus is our bond as we strive for union with God, with each other and with all that surrounds us and awaits transformation; RIF 17.*** Our recent experiences with the formation ministry are that we miss that deep love and attraction towards Jesus Christ and his mission. Mostly current women come from a culture of receiving than giving and also from a culture of comfortable living. Shrinking family sizes and expanding career opportunities for women are posing a problem for vocations. A negative portrayal of religious life by media and anti-church groups also are playing a vital role. Attacks on Catholic religious' women from within the community and outside seem to dissuade young women from dedicating their lives to serve God and society. Constant negative media coverage has damaged our public image. It is part of a larger conspiracy to undermine Catholic values by atheists and fundamentalists masquerading as human rights activists. Anti-Christian forces are deliberately spreading calumnies to defame Christian asceticism in society. So our image has been undermined by a media.

The value of sacrifices for the sake of Christ's redemptive mission and sacrifices involved in the vowed consecrated life are not so meaningful for them. Without having this basic love for Jesus Christ, formation for mission and religious life is not so attractive. Our Province is really struggling to find genuine vocations to religious life particularly for the past 4 years.

What the Province has been doing to address the vocation and formation issues?

1. The Province has been praying intensely everyday for getting genuine vocations.
2. A Formation Team was created with a focus to make vocation promotion and formation fruitful.
3. Each local community was encouraged to be in touch with the young women of their parish, school and promote vocations.
4. Formation plan was updated and appointed Sisters who have training and aptitude for formation.
5. Programs like retreats and workshops were arranged for ongoing formation to create life giving communities.
6. Study and reflection on RIF is has been intensified to renew and reignite our life and mission with the spirit of our Foundresses and charism.
7. Our new venture in Assam Thezpur is one of the new steps for vocation promotion.

What is your plan for the future regarding these needs?

1. According to our 2020 Provincial Assembly Direction, a team of trained and skilled Sisters will be assigned for vocation promotion and formation ministry.
2. Proper planning, timely evaluation and constant accompaniment (long and short term) for vocation promotion and formation
3. The province will create a “Sacred Space” for the growth of the formees by providing a conducive environment.
4. Efforts will be made for personal transformation by contemplation, Eucharistic centered life, RIF study and reflection
5. Efforts will be made to create dynamic, joyful and participatory communities.

What have been the greatest blessings for your province and for your sisters last four years.

1. Most of our Sisters are very happy, content and grateful for their vocations and are very committed in the service of the Lord and in the service of the people. They have a thirst to grow spiritually and respond to the situations more creatively and compassionately.
2. Many of the Sisters showed willingness to move from their comfort zones and work in remote missions like Tanzania, Punjab, Assam where we see a future for our presence and mission.
3. We were able to strengthen our bonds with our sisters in all provinces and explored together ways and means to become more deeply united, and more intercultural, in our congregation and in mission, as peacemakers.
4. Our province experienced the care and support of the Generalate Team in times of our trials and difficulties. Especially when we are hit by the natural disaster Tsunami and also during the pandemic time our leadership helped us to alleviate a little pain of the people. And we are extremely grateful for this support.

What are the greatest challenges that your Province and your Sisters have been facing?

1. “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” (Mt: 9: 37). Truly we experience the lack of enough members to continue the good work we started in different parts of the country and abroad. In many missions the responsibilities that were shared by many Sisters at one time fell on the shoulders of a few sisters and at times they are overburdened.
2. For many years, our vocation promotion and formation efforts didn’t bring out the expected fruits and so the province is dwindling now.
3. Due to COVID 19 and the above-mentioned problems the financial resources are diminishing. Many of the missions are running without having any income. The number of Sisters working in the U.S and Europe are coming back and that will also affect our Province adversely.
4. Most of the Sisters are getting into an age where they need more medical care and support.

Sisters are encouraged to hold the light of hope even when the dark clouds are seen above our heads. We continue to support each other showing and telling that we are all together in it! We love and support each other as much as possible.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2022 ULAF REGION REPORT

Urgent Needs of the Context: 1. The Socio-political Crisis, 2. The Pandemic Reality

1. Need for job creation. - The corruption of our governments has reached the extreme. The powerful are the ones who take into their hands the destinies and the reality of our countries, and not for the common good but for economic purposes. This results in lack of education, lack of health care, and premature death, among other problems.

The lack of interest on the part of government authorities to solve environmental problems results in an environmental crisis. These issues are taken up by NGOs and other groups that do not have the support of governments. These climate crises affect life, health, economy, and cause the loss of human lives and nature. As a consequence, we are experiencing tropical storms, hurricanes, earthquakes. Mining and forest exploitation continue to be conducted for economic purposes without considering what harms the population.

2. Another issue is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been affecting us at different levels, from personal and social relationships, to not being able to relate in person at work, school and with family; all these have been reduced to the virtual setting. What has affected us most is the loss of many lives, jobs, and being afraid and uncertain about the future.

What the Region has done to respond to these needs: From our missions and within our capabilities, we have given support and shared our few resources. Specific needs have been met for some families. We have been a moral and spiritual support for the people affected.

The plan for the future.

With regard to the issue of jobs at this time, it is beyond our reach to be a source of employment, however, we can encourage and connect with job providers so that work alternatives are found.

First, we must heal and prepare ourselves to help others heal. From our reality we can continue to be a support for the people most affected by the pandemic. As missions, we must find concrete actions to help especially regarding moral concerns and with material resources when possible.

We need to dialogue about these issues as a Region, and find possible ideas and solutions together.

B. What are 1-2 of the greatest needs of your province/region?

1. To have Sisters educated and prepared to assume a position in formation.
2. To be communities of life and hope, evangelizing from our witness.

What have we done to address those needs:

Formation. We have felt the need to have a formation program during all these years, but due to the departure of many sisters and the lack of vocations, the formation of a team did not materialize.

Looking to the future priorities of the Region, we are contemplating the preparation of two sisters for formation.

Communities of life and hope. The sisters of our Region have been motivated in different ways. Different means have been sought such as: workshops, retreats and communication. We raised awareness of the need of community life. Efforts have focused heavily on strengthening the life in our communities.

What we would have liked has not been achieved, and there is still much work to be done. In the future we see the need to continue strengthening the community experience. At this time we do it virtually, searching for what the Religious Conferences have to offer. We will also continue with our regional meetings on formation topics. Once the pandemic is under control, we will hold our face-to-face meetings.

What have been the greatest blessings of the past four years for your sisters and for your province/region?

The closeness of the Generalate Team and their attentiveness to the needs of the Region. The moral and spiritual support, and the respect from the Generalate Team.

The opportunity to deepen *Response in Faith*, to be able to share that reflection as a Region, and the fruits it is giving in the lives of many sisters.

The sisters' participation in the Regional meetings to share the reflection has been very positive.

The prayer for the Region and the positive energy that we feel as a result of this prayer.

The years prior to the COVID pandemic, we had the opportunity to meet for formation and share life together as a Region.

The life and good health of all the sisters in the midst of the pandemic.

In the midst of the pandemic, virtual meetings encourage us and bring us closer despite not being face-to-face.

We have had financial support from our benefactors who trust in our work.

What are the greatest challenges facing the sisters and your province/region? How do you plan to respond to those challenges?

One of the challenges is to comply with assembly agreements regarding missions and properties. Sisters leaving the congregation.

Lack of vocations.

To maintain hope and reaffirm our vocation in the midst of everything we are living through.

The self-sustainability of our missions.

With regard to the challenge of closing missions, we have started the processes, and we hope to concretize some actions during our term.

For the other challenges, we hope to continue the formation we have had in the region on different topics; this will strengthen us to respond to these challenges.

Province Report of the Delegates of the European Province to the 2022 General Assembly

What are the two most urgent external needs?

Our Catholic Church in Germany is in a great crisis; some speak of the greatest crisis since the Reformation. The abuse scandal and the delay in coming to terms with it, a reform backlog that has lasted for decades, the Mary 2.0 movement with its demand that women be admitted to ordained ministry, the papal ban on the blessing of homosexual couples – these are the issues that keep the church in the headlines. This is accompanied by a great loss of trust, which is reflected in a frightening number of people leaving the church.

Our journey is to maintain the hope that under the guidance of God's Spirit transformation and something new can arise, to perceive and protect and encourage the little plants of hope; for example, perceiving how significant it is that there are young people who are willing to reform outdated structures that are out of touch with reality, instead of turning away from the institution as such; that there are women who fight for a fraternal and sisterly church, and do not leave silently.

We are challenged to offer in our living groups places of living the Gospel, of open hearts and listening ears to those who are seeking and those who are disappointed, those struggling for reform and those suffering in the Church.

"Go and rebuild my Church, which, as you see, is falling down" this is the call Francis heard back then, and the same call goes out to us today. It took Francis a long time to fully understand it – to understand that it was not about the institution, but about the people of God; then he brought the poor, the lepers back into the Church, and it became a fraternal Church, a Church of the Spirit. The Franciscan way of reforming from within – the way into the depth – this is our mission and commitment.

We are aware of the climate and environmental crisis as the greatest, existential challenge facing all of humanity, but we do not want to address it in this report; rather, we want to focus on another urgent and threatening challenge: the upheaval in our country. The world is changing at a rapid pace, as never before, in all areas – social, political, economic, technological. This is unsettling and frightening for broad sections of the population, who do not really feel able to cope with the changes. There is a growing distrust in the problem-solving ability of politics, the fairness of business and the independence of science. Many no longer see their interests and concerns in good hands with the decision-makers in politics, business, and society. This situation makes people susceptible to populist slogans and extremist views. The Covid-19 crisis has reinforced this, and the contrarian movement has become a rallying point for a variety of currents from the right and left, a breeding ground for extremist ideologies and behavior. Extremist acts of violence – from the right, from the left and Islamist-motivated – have increased significantly in recent years. On an unprecedented scale, there are riots with injuries and property damage, confrontations and violence against state officials and police as representatives of the democratic order, interference by the judiciary in legislation. Politicians are insulted and threatened, and hate slogans are posted on the Internet. Anti-Semitic crimes are on the rise and Jewish compatriots feel threatened and are once again afraid in our country. Exclusion of and even physical attacks against strangers and foreigners can also be observed

in all areas of everyday life. What is frightening is that what is described as hostility towards foreigners or xenophobia is actually veiled racism.

What we can do: Basically use all our resources to positively influence public opinion and to spread confidence in times of crisis. Show civil courage and, for example, call racism by its name, firmly contradict hostile statements in conversations, take a clear position.

An important step is to reflect on our own behavior, to recognize our own prejudices and to promote this reflection in others as well; to be vigilant where people are treated differently, disadvantaged, excluded, and discriminated against because of their origin or religious affiliation. It is also necessary to keep reminding ourselves of our history in order to keep in mind where such hostility can lead. It is also important that we take the concerns and fears of those affected seriously, deal with their experiences and views, and show solidarity.

What are the greatest, internal needs of our Province?

A) Our aging is more and more noticeable. The more our physical and mental strength declines, the more clearly we experience our insecurities, sometimes even great fears, but also trust that God guides us and is with us all the days.

Our sisters can no longer take on many ministries and responsibilities. Organizing community life is increasingly challenging in some areas due to age and the pandemic. Spiritual life, prayer and retreats also require new, age-appropriate content according to the stage of life.

The sale of the Motherhouse is a stressful reality for the sisters; it means letting go of much that is familiar and finding new ways. These new beginnings bring curiosity, hope, and joy. At the same time, they also bring skepticism and uncertainty.

The decreasing financial resources require extensive planning and many considerations for the future with regard to the living and personnel situation of the sisters. In many important areas we have to rely on the help of lay employees.

B) What have we done so far?

We sold our shares in the Erlenbad Nursing Home in 2019 which was a great relief for the provincial leadership and the whole province.

The Hochfelden Retreat House was closed at the end of 2018 and sold in 2019 to a local businessman who wants to build a training center for his global company, with a focus on social and community aspects in the future. At the same time, the new owner is converting the bedroom wing for age-appropriate living options. The more able-bodied sisters will be able to move into Hochfelden starting late summer 2022. We can live there in rented accommodation for the next ten years. If necessary, we can cancel or extend our lease at any time.

C) Indian sister-nurses have been working in the infirmary in the Motherhouse for several years together with lay nurses, geriatric nurses, and assistants.

Since 2017, the Indian sisters have been contributing as **supervisors in various areas of responsibility**.

- Sister Ann Mary Konengaden has been serving as councilor on the Provincial Team since 2019

- Sister Jessy Thanikkal works in the infirmary as a nurse and animator, and Sister Ann Mary Konengaden works as her assistant in nursing
- Sister Teresitta Kuttikattil is a councilor of the St. Joseph living group
- Sister Anice Kedangeth is being trained as the Treasurer of the European Province

D) Plans for the future:

At the Extraordinary Provincial Assembly in May 2021, we made a unanimous motion to form a Region under the leadership of the Generalate. We have submitted a proposal to the General Assembly to become a Region.

The proposal to become a Region is based on our age structure and the lack of new members; as a result, in the future we will no longer be able to fulfill the essential rights and responsibilities of a Province according to Response in Faith, as well as the criteria for a Province as developed at the 2018 General Assembly. In particular, we will no longer be able to elect a Provincial Leadership, provide a Provincial Treasurer, and fulfill active ministries.

What have been our greatest blessings and gifts?

Since the 2015 Provincial Assembly we have been working on an overall concept regarding the housing for the ever fewer and aging Sisters, as well as the use of the Motherhouse and House Hochfelden.

Included in these considerations is the Erlenbad Nursing Home which our Community built together with the municipalities of Lauf and Sasbach, allowing us to take 1/3 of the places and accommodate 20 sisters in need of care. Even though the three founders sold their shares to a new owner, we retained the right to occupy 20 places in the home.

The Joseph Foundation, our consultants, suggested that we construct a new building, a so-called "Small Convent", as a place of residence for the "last" sisters. The building is being constructed by the new owner of the Erlenbad Nursing Home. Initially it will serve as the home for 10 sisters in need of care with two nursing staff. It will also house the offices of the Provincial Leadership and Administration. It will be ready to move in starting September 2021.

We were able to sell Haus Hochfelden to a local businessman after it closed at the end of 2018. This is a blessing for our community.

So far, we have been spared from war, terror, accidents and, above all, the pandemic. The timely vaccination of all nurses and many employees on a voluntary basis has contributed to this.

We were able to hold an Extraordinary Provincial Assembly, elect delegates to the General Chapter, decide on becoming a Region, submit the corresponding proposal and the accompanying Bylaws to the General Assembly.

During the pandemic, we were able to celebrate our jubilarians internally, and that includes the sisters living in the Erlenbad Nursing Home.

Since February of last year we have had an Indian chaplain who is a priest and a religious.

We are grateful to have good staff members as well as good resource persons, internal and external, and good facilitator.

We live in a beautiful area with blessed, fertile Mother Earth. Here it would have been easy for St. Francis to write the Canticle of the Sun. And we live in a country with a still relatively stable and value-oriented government.

What are the biggest challenges?

A) Moving and relocating all Sisters from the Motherhouse to the "Small Convent", to the rebuilt House Hochfelden and to the Erlenbad Nursing Home.

It is not easy for the sisters to leave the Motherhouse. It requires accompaniment and a lot of empathy.

B) Selling the Motherhouse.

This requires letting go of this home of ours, letting go of our Motherhouse Church, and praying for finding the right buyer.

C) Forming new living groups.

The sisters need to engage with the new way of living and the new shape of community life. This requires, among other things, rethinking or reassessing the previous lifestyle. Here, too, good accompaniment and close contact with leadership are needed.

D) Maintaining/strengthening our interactions.

How can we maintain the flow of information among each other? How can strengthen the interactions between the living groups? We need to look for new ways of staying stay in close contact with each other.

E) Becoming a Region.

For this we need to cooperate closely with the International Leadership Team.

F) Not losing sight of the "younger" sisters!

G) Enduring the brokenness of the Church or helping to shape the Church.

Being involved in the parish, maintaining a place of prayer, inviting people for silence or conversation, remaining open to the needs of the Church and the world.

July 2021

Delegates: S. Anna Maria Weinmann, S. Jutta Endriß (Provincial Team), S. Rosmarie Gschlößl

Provincial Team: S. Rita Eble, S. Margita Reuther, S. Ann-Mary Konengaden

ST. FRANCIS PROVINCE, NORTH INDIA

Report to General Assembly-2022

We are people consecrated, set apart for God, nevertheless this life cannot be lived being aloof from this world. We march forward weaving our life together in our context and its needs. Our being as OSF sisters in north-northeast India, rests on our willingness to respond to the challenges of this present time with deep faith like our founding mothers. Certainly, in this world of uncertainties and sufferings, we cannot just be looking at our needs and challenges; rather the blessings of the Almighty impel us to be “smart tech” for Jesus through our contemplation and service.

1. Two most urgent needs of our context

One of the most urgent needs of our context is to cope with the changing political scenario, i.e., mingling politics with religion. Consequently, when the fanatic Hindu aligned parties rule the state, other minority religions are treated as enemies. Because of this mind set, our ministries are curbed especially the education ministry (NEP) and the ministry of evangelization (Conversion Bill) by imposing unnecessary rules and regulations.

Second most urgent need is to deal with the disoriented youth of our society. We witness an explicit value transmission in them which in turn impinges on their moral/spiritual/relational life. These phenomena have also influenced our life in community as these young members enter into religious life with the same mind set:-

1.1. Our Response

In order to deal with first depicted need, we have equipped our members through various seminars and input sessions by experts. Also, we have encouraged our members to undertake secular learning which will widen their horizons of thinking.

By availing ourselves as teachers, counselors and mentors we try to enter into the lives of the present youth and children. Through catechism and accompaniment, we try to motivate the Catholic youth and instill a value system in them and promote vocations from all ethnic groups.

1.2 Plan for the future regarding these needs

We will enhance the members to address the political scenario through education and assessments. We pledge to prepare more members to be involved in counseling and accompaniment for the young.

2. Two greatest needs of our province

Our Province, being one of the growing provinces, having majority of members below 50 years of age, need to learn the governance of mental health. It would imply that today more than ever dealing with individual members is more difficult due to differences in family up-bringing. Therefore, conflicts in communities are on an increase because a healthy mind set is not grown in many members.

As we receive new vocations from different cultures, we need to enlarge the minds and hearts of every member to accommodate them. The cultural differences and differences in value system have

an effect on our traditional way of living religious life. Thus, we also need formators who can accept the differences and form the young to value the religious life.

2.1 Description of what the province has done to address these needs

To create a healthy mind in our members, we have given opportunities for participating in inner healing retreats. We also encouraged sisters to learn Word of God, Encyclicals and Catechism of the Church. To deepen their love for Congregation, we conducted exams on RIF and history of our founding mothers.

We have organized seminars on intercultural living. We also encourage sisters to live in a different culture other than their own. We also set apart days to share about the cultural upbringing of each member. We celebrate the festivals of all cultures and include food habits of all cultures in our daily living.

2.2 Our plan for the future regarding these needs

Though we have to address many needs that arise due to vocations from different cultures, we still encourage young people of all ethnic cultures to enter into our communities. We will also encourage and prepare young sisters for formation and vocation promotion.

3. The greatest blessings

The greatest blessing we have is the young and vibrant members who are committed and capable. We were fortunate to have profession of new members in every year. And the beauty of our communities now is that they are intercultural. Thus, many of our members could broaden the horizons of their mind and heart.

During the second wave of pandemic, though many of our members were affected with Corona virus, we witnessed the miracle of God's protection. We could experience this blessing because of the prayers and dedicated nursing care of all our sisters even at the risk of their own life. These experiences have enlightened us with the conviction that every suffering is a blessing.

4. The greatest challenges

We live in a culture that is commitment averse. This is the greatest challenge that we and many other growing congregations face. The present young generation is more of comfort seeking than risk taking.

We also witness confusion among members about what is the authentic religious life. As a consequence, many are suffering from an inner conflict about the ideas and praxis.

The gap between generations in thinking, doing, and even in value system is becoming wide as a consequence of influence of social communication.

4.1 Our response to these challenges

We do strategic planning to cope with these challenges from the initial formation onwards. From the formation itself, we give opportunities for the young members to be occupied in risk taking

ministries. We also give them opportunities to see the plight of suffering of people outside by sending them for frontier ministries.

We also provide the formation of different stages in different cultures and with members of different age groups. Hence, the generation and cultural gap between them may be reduced to a minimum.

Conclusion

As *School Sisters of St. Francis*, we are a visible and living sign of God's love relationship in our intercultural communities; are best able to foster a climate in which we address the questions of our context. Thus we, discover our existence for the past 25 years in North-northeast India as a blessing from God and as an opportunity to witness God's love in this present time. We are indebted to all the sisters of our Congregation both the living and the dead for their support and encouragement. We owe a special note of gratitude to Sr. Mary, Sr. Tresa, Sr. Barbara and Sr. Lucy for their availability, prayers and guidance for the past four years. Kudos to you sisters!

The United States Province Report 2022 General Assembly

The most urgent need of our context is our inability to understand, appreciate and acknowledge that we are one body in Christ. This failure is expressed as racism, forced migration, and climate change. We provide resources, education, and encourage advocacy on these issues through the Justice and Peace Coordinator in collaboration with local, regional, and national efforts.

- 1) We recognize racism as the systemic, structural cause underlying and contributing to the multiple situations of injustice. We issued a public letter with the International Leadership Team in response to the murder by police of George Floyd in May 2020. Racism resources for reflection were provided for the July 2021 Spirituality Conference, "Peacemaking through Bridgebuilding." Members were invited to reflect on their own white privilege, unconscious bias, and complicity in perpetuating systemic racism by silence and inaction. The goal is to reflect on one's own part in the sin of racism and to respond with a personal transformation plan and toward restoration. We continue our long commitment of service to the Black community. Sisters and Associates from the Midwest traveled to Mississippi to join with local members in numerous mission projects and deepen their understanding of racial issues and personal beliefs.
- 2) The U.S. Province has taken public stances on both the climate crisis and its effect on forced migration. A major response to the climate crisis is the installation of 1,086 solar panels at Sacred Heart six years ago. These continue to save on the use of water and trees and reduce our carbon footprint. Sisters and Associates participate in life-style changes in collaboration with others, to keep the planet more self-sustainable and safe for future generations by lessening destruction brought about by harmful consumerism and individualistic attitudes and practices. Each day Sisters and Associates are reminded in our province communication to pray for increased attentiveness to reducing the impact of climate change, especially as it affects the poor and vulnerable.
- 3) The province provides two International Refugee Houses for families in collaboration with Lutheran Social Services who offer social support to learn English, find employment, and become acculturated. Also, the Casa Alexia project on the border with Mexico is a Bi-national joint project with ULAF. It provides services and accompaniment to immigrants as well as awareness raising to membership. We plan to continue these efforts and recognize where racism, forced migration, and climate crisis intersect and be proactive in meeting those needs in collaboration with other groups/entities.

The most urgent needs of the province include:

- 1) *Caring for the needs of all sisters in the province.* The province has provided for the health and well-being of sisters in our central houses (Alexia Tower, Maria Linden, Clara Court, Our Lady of the Angels) and through services and interactions offered by our Life and Ministry Office and Area Communities. We continue to be challenged to provide for the spiritual and emotional support in this isolating era of COVID-19. We are also working to ensure that our financial resources will be sufficient in the next 10-20 years to sustain our aging community.

- 2) *Developing and sustaining a conversation on the future of the province and of religious life.* Our province is facing the same issues as other U.S. religious institutions: few new members and an aging community. We need to support an on-going dialogue across the province on our future individually, as a province, and as a congregation. Our province needs to grapple with the question of how to invite others to join us or whether we should invite. Do we have enough resources both in membership and financially to have a robust presence among women who are discerning our life path? Can we continue walking with them if they feel called to explore our community? We have begun listening sessions and other means to spur this dialogue and link us to other women religious who face the same challenges. We also plan to invite others (our Associates, board members, donors, and many other friends of the SSSF) who also believe that some version of religious life is worth continuing in a dialog about new forms of religious life. We believe that God is NOT done with us yet.
- 3) *Facing a shortage of leadership and service to the province.* Because we have an aging community, we find it more and more difficult to find sisters to take on some of the provincial responsibilities: assisting in our central houses, volunteering for province-wide committees, seeing themselves as provincial leaders. This situation is not due to any lack of care or willingness to serve but simply that there are fewer of us and a growing number of needs. This will require us to consider changes to our governance structures.
- 4) *Transitioning some of our sponsored ministries to others.* Again, there are fewer sisters able to ensure that the SSSF charism flourishes in our sponsored ministries. In some cases, these ministries have evolved and matured in marvelous ways and no longer need the hands-on connection with the province.

The greatest blessings of the past four years have been many. Among them are:

- 1) The good will, adaptability, and flexibility of our members in this time of change and Covid challenges. These qualities have facilitated the health and wellbeing of all the members.
- 2) Associates who extend the charism, participate actively in numerous ways, and live out our Mission throughout the United States
- 3) Our dedicated Province lay staff members who daily witness to our Mission in their service and in their personal lives.
- 4) Sisters in the Province who continue to provide their time and talent to work in the Province as they do in their Ministries
- 5) Sisters, Associates, and staff who showed their care for the common good by complying with Covid regulations and who were willing to learn new ways to communicate using technologies.

The greatest challenges facing the sisters and our province include:

- 1) An aging membership that tests our ability to support sisters in learning to face personal limitations, let go of responsibilities, focus more on “being” rather than “doing,” and accept appropriate housing and medical services. We recently formed a new Philosophy of Care Committee that has begun meeting with groups of sisters to deal with these issues.
- 2) Planning for the future of our Sponsored Ministries without us. We need to gradually alter relationships so that the Ministries are living our values while growing in their unique ways independent of our support. To date we have sold one housing program that was a

collaboration with another community of sisters and a Native American group. Also, we are in negotiations for the sale of government-sponsored housing projects that we have managed.

- 3) Financially providing for the care of our sisters today and in 5, 10, 15 years from now. We have recently reassessed how we calculate the Cost of Care of Sisters, rewritten our Investment Policy Statement, and researched and changed our fiduciary management company which reduced our investment fee structure significantly. We continue to manage costs and take advantage of government stimulus programs during Covid. This is an ongoing process.
- 4) Supporting the ministries across the international congregation while balancing our support with what we can do in our own country, and what we need to do individually in reflection, in prayer, and in action to support the good work of sisters and associates across the congregation.
- 5) Proactively planning for structural changes that will support our mission of influence, protect our assets, take into account our smaller membership, and be flexible enough to accommodate the religious life of the future.