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Description automatically generated*Preachers of Hope - For Times Such as These***

Guidelines for Conducting a Local Community Process

**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this document is to outline a series of reflections and gatherings for use by leaders within their local community. The process offered to leaders has three distinct movements:

1. Personal Reflection or Sister-to-Sister Reflection
2. Congregational Gathering with a Focus on the Congregation’s Changing Reality
3. Congregational Gathering with a Focus on Potential Possibilities Going Forward

The information provided within this document is complemented by regular Zoom gatherings conducted by the Visioning & Planning Committee (VPC) with leaders as well as one-on-one coaching provided by a facilitator as requested by the local leaders. The process is sequential and designed to mirror the process used at the October Leadership 2024 meeting.

The Visioning & Planning Committee will send a letter to all leaders announcing the availability of a process and other resources to use locally with their members. The process is designed to enable a local community to discern its future path and to prepare for the Encuentro gathering in October 2025. The letter should include the following elements:

* Walk through of the overall local process
* Prayer resources from October 2024
* A survey to schedule a Zoom meeting to introduce the overall local process, answer questions, and remind the leaders of other resources available to them (i.e., Anne Lythgoe’s video, other data, and information compiled by other work groups in 2024).

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**LOCAL PROCESS**

***Introduction***

This process is for the use of leaders with their local communities. It is a modified version used at the October 2024 gathering. Leaders are encouraged to adjust or modify this process as they see necessary in order to fit their local context, culture, and reality.

The process has three distinct movements and is designed to be contemplative in nature to enable a congregation to fully discern together its emerging future. The three movements are:

* individual reflection on charism and mission,
* congregational reflection on its current reality, and
* congregational discernment on its emerging future.

Leaders are encouraged to read the November 8, 2024, letter sent by DSC Executive Director, Sr. Xiomara Méndez Hernández, OP, that summarized the spirit and movements of the October 2024 gathering. They are encouraged to remind their congregation of the overall framing question that guided October 2024:

***What will it take to open ourselves to a new and deeper communion that God is calling us to co-create resulting in a flourishing Dominican Life and Mission?***

**Movement 1: Individual Reflection *or* Sister-to-Sister Reflection**

PURPOSE: *Reflecting on charism and mission*

*Resources Needed: Letter from Vision & Planning Committee*

*Reflection Worksheet*

*Timeline for Completion (provided by local Leadership)*

***PROCESS:***

1. **Preparation:** Communicate with the Congregation about the process and the three distinct movements as described above. Invite Sisters to engage in the first movement of individual reflection or Sister-to-Sister reflection. Encourage the Congregation to be mindful of its own current capacity and reality as they engage in the personal reflection offered below.
2. **Personal Reflection or Sister-to-Sister Reflection**. Distribute the letter from the Visioning & Planning Committee providing the account of the October 2024 gathering. Using the attached worksheet, sisters are invited to reflect on the following question:

Recall a time when the congregation was indeed *Preachers for Times Such as These*. Tell the story.

* + **What was going on in the world that compelled the congregation to respond and be *Preachers for Times Such as These*?**
  + **What does the experience tell you about today and our own reality? *How is our current reality as a congregation impacting our mission to be “Preachers for Times Such as These?”***

**NOTE:** Sisters are invited to seek out another sister to engage in this reflection. This process is conducive to both in-person refection or using Zoom with break out rooms. Individual personal reflection is an option as well.

1. **Creation of a Community Bulletin Board of Graced Comments** – The Congregation may wish to create a Community Board to post random thoughts on the experience of reflecting on the framing question, *Preachers for Times . . .* The Community Board could be labeled: *What are we learning together about how we have been Preachers for Times Such as These?* This board may beplaced at a Motherhouse or administration building. Sisters nearby may add written notes to the board, while those living away would send their contributions via email to be placed on the board. Periodically a picture of the Community Board would be sent via email to those living in other locations.

**Movement 2: Congregational Gathering (First or second quarter 2025)**

PURPOSE: Understanding our changing reality/context

Resources Available: DSC Video, information, statistics, etc.

V & P Zoom gathering to walk through process

Definition of Terms by Sr. Peggy Martin, OP (Canonist)

**PROCESS:**

This is a community-wide meeting. The purpose is to reflect together on the history of the congregation and how it has been “*Preachers for Times Such as These. . .”* The conversation should focus on the congregation’s changing reality and its individual and collective capacity to be *“Preachers* . . . This gathering could include small group sharing, prayer, and contemplative listening, etc.

*Suggested Agenda: (using Contemplative Listening and Dialogue)*

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer (offer resources used at October 2024 gathering)
2. Context Setting (purpose of the gathering) - Leaders
3. Presentation on Congregation Reality (using DSC information or local information)
4. Small group sharing (response to the presentation)
   * ***What are we learning from the data and information and the Emerging Movements?***
   * ***What emerged for you that was new?***
5. Congregation’s Insights
   * ***What key insights or patterns are emerging from the information we have heard?***
   * ***What do we need, as a Congregation, to pay attention to?***
   * ***What do we still not know?***
6. Next Steps and Focus on Next Gathering
7. Closing Prayer (Prayer resources used at October 2024 gathering)

**Movement 3:** **Second Congregational Gathering: Identification of Congregational Possibilities (early summer- based on community schedules)**

PURPOSE: Identifying the way forward with possibilities that hold the most potential (collective preference and inclusive of other congregations)

Resources: V & P Zoom meeting for Leaders

This second community meeting is a way to identify the possibilities for the congregation. Information on the wider context of the Dominican family would be offered using Anne Lythgoe’s video. From this reflection and conversation, the community is encouraged to identify the possibilities that hold the most potential for the Dominican mission and charism.

Suggested Agenda:

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer
2. Context Setting – Purpose of gathering (Identification of Possibilities for the Future)
3. Opening – Leaders will recap the first two movements (individual reflection on *Preachers for* …, and the first community gathering on the Congregation’s reality.

Today’s gathering will focus on the identification of possibilities for the future. Remind the sisters of the framing question for this overall process:

***What will it take to open ourselves to a new and deeper communion that God is calling us to co-create resulting in a flourishing Dominican Life and Mission?***

1. Small Group Conversation:
   * ***What are the movements of the Spirit we are witnessing at this time? What are the subtle traces of God’s communication to us?***
   * ***What possibilities hold the most potential for us at this time?***
2. Plenary Conversation – Sharing of highlights of small groups and posting of possibilities and group reflection:
   * ***How will this/these possibilities amplify our capacity for mission and charism?***
   * ***What do we need from the Dominican family relative to support going forward?***
3. Next Steps
4. Closing prayer

**Additional Possibilities:**

Months between the 3rd Movement and the Encuentro:

The DSC Communicator, with the assistance from a few members of the Visioning Planning Team, would coordinate the technology for two to three opportunities for sisters from all the congregations to participate in a Zoom. The format for all three Zooms would be the same:

Purpose:

* To provide an opportunity for sisters to meet and greet.
* To allow cross-fertilization of thoughts, feelings and ideas.
* To keep the momentum going previous to the Encuentro.
* To practice such a format for future engagements among congregational members.

Registration Required: A letter would go out from the DSC and Visioning Committee inviting sisters to participate. Only those who register will receive the link for the Zoom. This will assist in breaking persons into groups.

Suggested Agenda

* Prayer
* Purpose
* Question for conversation in small groups
* Break into groups of five – try to mix congregations for 20 minutes
* Bring them back to the large group for a short time of silence
* Break into another small group with different configurations – try to mix congregations for 20 minutes
* Bring them back to the large group for a closing prayer

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Description automatically generatedWorksheet for Movement 1: Personal or Sister-to-Sister Reflection**

1. Find a quiet reflective space. Allow for about one hour if conducting this with another sister. Use the following sequence:
   * 1. Begin with a time of quiet allowing the Spirit to come into the space with you.
     2. Begin with prayer (prayer resources from October 2024)
     3. Recall a time when the congregation was indeed *Preachers for Times Such as These*. Tell the story to your sister companion.
2. **What was going on in the world that compelled the congregation to respond and be *Preachers for Times Such as These*?**
3. **What does the experience tell you about today and our own reality?**
4. Repeat the process allowing your sister companion to tell her story.
5. Conclude the time together by responding: *What was it like to tell this story?* *How is our current reality as a congregation impacting our mission to be “preachers for times such as these?”*
6. Conclude with prayer

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**RESOURCES**

* Here is the link to a Google folder containing all the prayer resources and presentations shared during the October 2024 DSC Leaders Meeting:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Wm8_-RZdghWLhsG7AfOXTIeaOFDkWJ0J?usp=share_link>

**Please note, the music is for private use only. If you would like to share it you will need copyright permission.**

* DSC Emerging Movements in the U.S

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfFOmD9KwZI>

* DSC Emerging Movements video with subtitles in Spanish

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| --- |
| <https://youtu.be/PbrpQTU-vj8> |
| * DSC 2024 Leaders meeting - Final Document Report with Appendix:   <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1z1-WMlZQsX_Hwb6sy6tf28sm0lV1r95OV1N2_2U8u8w/edit?tab=t.0> |