

The Ursulines of Bruno Share their Story Opting for a New Governance Structure

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In her final legacy to the congregation she founded in 1535, St. Angela Merici offered this advice: "If, according to times and circumstances, the need arises to make new rules or do something differently, do it prudently and with good advice."

This directive from our foundress made it easier for the Ursulines of Bruno to change their governance structure from a leadership team to a volunteer committee format.

Discerning Governance Options

At a community gathering in preparation for the 2016 assembly, each of the sisters said she would be willing to help in leadership according to her abilities, but no one expressed a willingness to accept the position of designated leader.

As a result, the leadership team and two other sisters formed a Futures Committee to discern possible governance options for an aging community declining in numbers.

Main Issue

The committee worked closely with a canon lawyer who advised that the community avoid developing a tight and burdensome structure for our "twilight years". The main issue, she said, is that the sisters be assured that they can live fruitful and happy lives in their twilight years.

Further discussion clarified the reality that governance needs to fit our energies; we need to distribute responsibilities rather than centralize them with a few people. We could go to a simpler format without putting more pressure/burdens on an individual.

Key Areas

In studying options for a new form of governance, the committee noted four areas needing continued attention: Business Affairs, Community Archives, Community Enhancement (celebrations, gatherings, retreats, etc.) and Community Sustainment (health, dying and death issues). Members were invited to volunteer for participation in these committees.

Constitutional Changes

A subsequent community gathering studied constitutional changes in governance:

- The life of the Ursuline community is led by means of a committee structure. Rooted in St. Angela's vision of dividing her sisters into four areas of the city of Brescia, committees are developed to direct the enhancement of community life, the sustainment of community life, the community archives and the business affairs.
- Committees are formed, according to the needs of the community, for a two-year period during a biennial assembly which will also receive and review financial

statements and other necessary reports. The assembly will include all the sisters who are able to attend.

- The role and responsibility of each committee will be according to established guidelines. Committees will each select a key person to serve as a connection to the general membership. One of the selected key persons will be the contact person to any level of the church and to civil authorities.
- The key persons will serve together in guiding the life of the community. It will be their responsibility to gather the entire community from time to time to further the spirit of unity and cooperation among the members. If it becomes necessary, a member from another religious institute may be invited to assist.

These constitutions (accepted with a two-thirds majority) were sent to CICLSAL for acceptance *ad experimentum* for two years.

Moving Forward with Hope and Trust

The first Biennial Assembly of the Ursulines of Bruno was held September 16, 2016 and, saw the directives accepted with a two-thirds majority. Each of the four committees selected a key person, and the four key persons chose from among themselves a sister to serve as the contact person for any level of church and civil society.

A final show of hands revealed a unanimous acceptance of this new two-year governance format.

With hope and trust in the Spirit, we begin this way of shared responsibility in community governance.