Responses to ILC Letter in Mercy Now re: 2023  
(as of Jan. 12, 2015)  
Comments (23)
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Barbara Riley RSM said:

I, too, would suggest the earlier date of 2017. I appreciate much needs to be accomplished if we set an earlier date but we must also look at our energy level and the voices of our wise women that might not be heard if we wait too long.
January 12, 2015

LuAnn Hannasch said:

Thank you for the invitation to engage in a conversation about our future. A group of us reflected on the questions the ILC used in the visioning process. A profound time with heartfelt sharing. I too would encourage a shorter time frame. There are sisters among us who have energy and passion to assist with the work of becoming one before the 2023 Chapter.
December 14, 2014

Marilyn King, RSM said:

I remember discussions at the time of the formation of the Institute that favored that we all be one Institute rather than various communities, so the idea is not new. Therefore, I am grateful for the realistic assessment being proposed now. The personnel reduction and financial savings are big motivation for the move. There is, of course, the challenge of finding ways of supporting a sense of community if all the regional borders vanish.

My greatest hope, however, is that as we continue to find ways of governing ourselves we listen even more intently for the ways God is calling us to be prophetic witness to the gospel by the way we live.
December 06, 2014

Mary Haddad said:

Thank you for inviting the conversation on our future. The call of Pope Francis taken from "The Joy of the Gospel", section 26 and 27, is in need of our attention and consideration. He speaks of ecclesial structures..."good structures are only helpful when there is a life constantly driving, sustaining and assessing them. Without new life and an authentic evangelical spirit, without the Church's fidelity to her own calling, any new structure will soon prove ineffective." He continues..."I dream of a "missionary option", that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation."

From this perspective, we need to be mission-oriented in our planning, and it seems to me that
our ability to do that will be greatly diminished by 2023.
December 01, 2014

Katie Mindling said:

What a joy to see in print and on the visible horizon what have been our spoken hopes and
dreams for further oneness and the consolidation of leadership. Would that there might be a
way/process to flesh this out sooner than 2023 and maximize our focus on ministry and chapter
mandate to flesh out our response to the expressed critical concerns of our times. Thank you to
our CLT/ILT!
November 30, 2014

Joy Clough said:

I'm happy to see we're moving beyond timeline considerations in this discussion, so I'd like to
say that I think you pose an interesting question when you ask "What decisions had we made at
our Chapter of 2023 that felt like 'good news'"? Three ideas came to mind:

We commissioned PREPARED laypersons to take over our sponsorship responsibilities for
many/most/all of our sponsored ministries. (I know some work is afoot in this regard and can
only encourage focused, vigorous attention to this effort.)

We launched a Refounding Sisters of Mercy (RSM) community composed of Institute
members, associates, and companions (each maintaining their particular call/form) under 65
years of age...not separating this group canonically from the Institute, but empowering them by
delegation of authority and provision of financial resources to conduct their own affairs
/community life, ministry, new member development) in ways that made sense to them for
their future as the enduring Institute in the Church and world.

To balance the move toward centralization, we contemplatively revisited the early history of
Mercy foundations, endorsed the concept, and launched or confirmed small clusters of Mercy
folk grounded in mission and responsive to local needs in their living arrangements and
ministries.
November 28, 2014

Kathy Thornton, RSM said:

Thank you for bringing this forward. It promises to be a major task, but it has the potential for
deepening the unity that is already among us.
November 25, 2014

Linda said:

Thank you for your clear and thoughtful letter. I support one center of authority and one
leadership team for the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. I think we already have a vision
articulated in our Constitutions, Chapter enactments and the Institute Leadership Conference
Leadership Perspective document. Some of my initial hopes are:

that by the actual Chapter decision we have done the work for the canonical and legal framework and administrative structure to facilitate being one so that we can elect the leadership for this new reality. I would prefer a decision much earlier than a 2023 Chapter. All the harmonizing of by-laws and the work of collaborating and integrating the functions among the seven centers of authority for new membership, finance, communication, justice, higher education, and secondary/elementary education could shorten the time.

that the Institute Leadership Conference as the current elected leadership of all seven centers of authority and responsibility continue their collaboration and decision-making to enhance effectiveness by reducing current administrative redundancy in light of the journey toward one center for the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, and

that the animation of the life and mission of the members, associates and Companions in Mercy in their daily lives and geographic locations not be lost in the movement forward.

November 24, 2014

Joy Clough said:

I believe the timeframe suggested by the ILC is realistic, perhaps ambitious. This is only 9 years hence, only 2 Institute Chapters. The complexities concern not only our own structures but those of all our sponsored works. A great concern of mine is that we not incur again the tremendous financial cost of reconfiguration - costs that the ILT has since acknowledged ran far beyond expectations and that were felt not only by us as Institute and Communities but also imposed on our sponsored works who had to engage lawyers etc. to change corporate documents and deal with local government requirements, which for several entities meant multiple states.

November 23, 2014

Martha Milner, RSM said:

While I would prefer a shorter time frame, I do understand the complexity of civil and canon law involved. Providing just compensation for hundreds of Mecy employees, developing participative structures, and dealing with corporate entities will take time. We will need to be patient and resolve to assist the effort with our best wisdom and thought. Blessings to all of us.

See more at:

Amy Hoey said:

Thanks to the ILT/ILC for the nudge to something I've dreamed about. I'm confident we can work out the details and rejoicing that (with apologies to Christopher Fry) we are about to take
"the longest stride of soul we ever took." Who could dispute that "affairs are now soul size./The enterprise/is exploration into God."
November 22, 2014

mary kilgerriff said:

This vision of oneness is exciting, realistic, all inclusive and life-giving. Our past experiences with the formation of the Institute and regional communities has fostered much experiential learnings that have helped pave the way towards further transformation into one governance structure. I too would encourage and support a shorter timeframe. 😊
November 21, 2014

Charlene Dazols, RSM said:

Rather than repeat I completely agree with Mary W. I say go for it in 2017. More sisters would be alive to celebrate the event. We are more than ready. I was delighted to read your letter.
Charlene Dazols
November 21, 2014

Doris Gottemoeller, RSM said:

This strikes me as a bold but reasonable plan, just what we have come to expect. The incredible work that went into forming the six Communities will not be lost, since it has brought us--and is still bringing us--to an appreciation of the value of an up-to-date infrastructure in supporting our life and mission.
Doris Gottemoeller, RSM
November 21, 2014

Mary Waskowiak, RSM said:

We are already one in so many ways of spirit and relationships. I strongly support, even urge, the ILT/ILC to consider a shorter timeframe. How about the next Institute Chapter in 2017? I support a shorter timeframe only because I believe we are ready for it. Blessings!
November 21, 2014

Nancy Hoff said:

I fully support this vision and am excited about it but, like others, wonder about the reasons for choosing 2023 and whether this time frame could be shorter. Why wait until we are 1500 sisters with most over 70 unless there is a very good reason to do so? Thanks to the ILC for initiating this conversation.
November 21, 2014

Edwardine Weaver said:

It is necessary to move the vision forward. it would be helpful to know how the year 2023
became the target date. Is it possible to shorten a viable timeline?
November 20, 2014

Patricia Oliver said:

A very Spirit-filled step toward a viable Mercy Future. It speaks well of following the charism of Catherine.
November 20, 2014

Mary Anita Iddings, RSM said:

A dream coming true. However adding 10yr to 90yr takes me out of enjoying the outcome but my prayers will be with you from wherever I am.
November 20, 2014

Judy Morasci, RSM said:

Very great vision for the future. I only wish this timeframe could be shorter. So many of us will. Be older and many not able to participate as we would now. Blessings
November 20, 2014

Mary Aquin O'Neill, RSM said:

I would hope that this move could be accomplished in a shorter time-frame. It seems to me that many of the sisters who are good at such large-scale thinking and organization will be very old by 2023.

Respectfully,

Mary Aquin
November 20, 2014

Beverly Palumbo, RSM said:

Large super human strides have been taken these many years...let us go forward as you suggest....we are Institute.
Thank you.
November 20, 2014

Phyllis Doyle, RSM said:

A realistic look towards the future of our Institute! The step by step "short strides" of the process will get us there.
- See more at:
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http://www.mercys.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4781&Itemid=181&lang=en&cpage=20#sthash.wiXrLLGg.dpuf
**WMW Responses to ILC Letter in Mercy Now RE: 2023**

**From:** Rachelle Harper  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 16, 2014 1:51 PM  
**To:** WMW Communications  
**Subject:** RE: Letter from ILC in Mercy Now

I want to respond to the ILT’s letter about 2023. I cannot find where to do that. Please forward this. I do not understand why it would take us 9+ years to get ready to become ‘one.’ Please move things forward much more quickly. Thank you. Rachelle Harper, RSM

**From:** Jane Fox  
**Sent:** Saturday, December 13, 2014 3:01 PM  
**To:** WMW Communications  
**Subject:** Re: Letter from ILC in Mercy Now

I am replying about the 2023 chapter decision to become one Institute. I do not think we can wait until 2023. I and others believe that we should start now to become one community as the Institute. Much energy will be less or gone by 2023. I am 76 now and will be 85 then.

Thanks. Jane Fox

**From:** Margaret Brennan  
**Sent:** Sunday, November 30, 2014 7:37 AM  
**To:** WMW Communications  
**Subject:** Re: Letter from ILC in Mercy Now

I WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUPPORT THE DIRECTION THE ILC IS MOVING IN REGARD TO GOVERNANCE. HOWEVER, I DO BELIEVE THE TIMEFRAME COULD BE CONSIDERABLY EXCELLED, WE APPEAR TO HAVE HAD THE FRAMEWORK FOR THIS IN PLACE. MAY I SUGGEST THAT THE I LT APPOINT AT LEAST FOUR ADDITIONAL MEMBERS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDED SKILLS, THUS ELIMINATING THE CURRENT FIVE ADMINISTRATIVE CENTERS. I WILL SUPPORT THE OUTCOME TRUSTING OUR COLLECTIVE WISDOM.

Gratefully,
Margaret Brennan, RSM

**From:** Carol Mucha  
**Sent:** Friday, November 28, 2014 3:23 PM  
**To:** WMW Communications  
**Subject:** Re: Letter from ILC in Mercy Now

Dear Sister Laura and CLT Members,
I read with great interest the letter from the ILC and commend the sister leaders who have "dared" to approach this topic that is truly controversial. So I have listened to some sisters and have taken the matter to my personal prayer. Having done that, I would suggest moving ahead on again "downsizing" to use a secular term. By increasing the number on the ILT while looking for a variety of skillsets including primarily spiritual leadership, a first step could be taken toward the goal of decreasing the number of CLT leaders and administrative centers.

Although some feel that reducing the number of CLT’s across the Institute, would make for a severing of local control and accessibility to leaders, I do not feel this way. I am well aware of many congregations who have but one center of administrative control and have had so for many years. Somehow it worked for them and I believe it could for us as well. Of course that will mean that we would need to dispose of or lease many of our current properties. I do not want to have an "edifice complex" and fully understand the implications of this decision. Yet I strongly feel that some things must be done, and in the time period suggested, so our younger and remaining Sisters are not left with decisions that should have been made now.

I want you and the ILT to understand that I fully support whatever decisions must be made and will be made as we move toward 2023 ... just nine years away and all of which will be needed to undertake yet another mammoth endeavor, so that Mercy will endure in the anawhim. I will do what I can but by that year, I will be 84 years old and have no idea what God's intention is for me.

Blessings on the decision makers!

Sister Carol Mucha

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From: Joy Clough [mailto:joyrsm@comcast.net]
Sent: Sunday, November 23, 2014 11:06 AM
To: WMW Communications
Subject: Re: Letter from ILC in Mercy Now

Laura, Judith, Sue, Margaret Mary, Maria, Anne Marie -

I truly appreciate this invitation to respond to the ILC letter and the assurance that you will take our responses into further ILC conversations. The ILC letter grabbed me, and even before this invitation from you, I wrote out my main thoughts. (I am a writer!) They are attached (see below), because they're rather long. I'm posting other comments on the Institute page, but these seemed too long for that format. (Advise me otherwise, if you think I'm wrong on that point.)

Blessings on all of you - I really mean what I say in the last point of the attached response.

Joy Clough
This letter stirred me deeply and prompted thoughts in several directions:

…the memory of a recent conversation with a young professed sister of another congregation whose vision of the future was “like the beginnings – small groups of sisters responding to the needs of their place and time.” I resonate with that and hope that, however we’re organized, we will be locally communal and responsive, and that any centralized governance will have a light touch.

…the distancing between leaders and members and its accompanying sense of loss (on both sides) with which I think we are still struggling – at least in our geographically larger Communities. I hope the lived experience of those Communities’ leaders and members will be honored as a source of wisdom for future planning. Further, I hope we’ll explore the strategies for community, ministry, and governance employed by women’s congregations that have a long history of being organized nationally rather than regionally.

…the complexity of large institutions (like the Institute) and the enormous cost – financial and psychological – of our reconfiguring, costs borne not only by us but also by our sponsored ministries. I pray we will find a way to be and act as one without incurring again (and imposing on our ministries) all the legal and organizational costs of our recent experience. We (and they) simply can’t afford it.

…the role of our “younger” members – most of whom are not really young – and the importance of their having a preponderant voice in the vision and organization of the future which they, more than most of us, will live. I want us to be sure that among these “younger” members there are some who have the vision and commitment, practical skills and experience (no doubt still developing), appetite and willingness to lead the organization we may be designing.

…the reality of nine years: that we will be half the number we are now, that there will be only about 150 sisters under 70 years of age (and most of them nearing 70), the storm of deaths we will be enduring and the psychological toll that will take. How quickly nine years pass; I think the proposed timeline is realistic, perhaps ambitious.

…the burden of leaders and the engagement of members: that ILC members are wrestling with these issues of our communal life and death, and now want to engage all of us since it is our personal, as well as our communal, lives and deaths that are unfolding here. I am very grateful to our leaders and newly aware that much work lies before us as members.

Joy Clough, RSM

From: Rene Bourque [mailto:rbourque@mercywmw.org]
Sent: Sunday, November 23, 2014 11:04 AM
To: WMW Communications  
Subject: RE: Letter from ILC in Mercy Now

Dear CLT Members,
Thank you for sending the ILT letter. I couldn't open it from Mercy Now because my password apparently no longer works. I certainly agree that discussions need to begin as to when and how we can be under one government structure by 2023. I probably won't be around but sure want to be sure my Mercy Family is alive and well,
Thank you also for the Advent book and the Racism book. Both will be used and appreciated.
Happy Thanksgiving
Rene Bourque

From: Terese Marie Perry  
Sent: Saturday, November 22, 2014 11:41 AM
To: WMW Communications  
Subject: RE: Letter from ILC in Mercy Now

In response to the letter from the ILC regarding the movement toward unification of the Institute, let me just say AT LAST!!! I was elected to leadership in 1981, and just about two weeks into my term I attended a Federation meeting in Omaha, NE. The agenda included a discussion of the Australian Mercy Federation model. We were to look at ways we might adapt some of the Australian ideas in order to strengthen our own US Mercy Federation. I recall that our discussion was a bit straggling without much energy. Not far into the discussion Sister Teresa Kane, in her inimitable way said “we should form an Institute”. That was the beginning. I was privileged to serve as Federation President (I think I was elected as the token West Coast independent congregation leader). I have always reacted strongly to the notion that Catherine McAuley meant for us to be independent, because that is the way we were structured from the beginning. Catherine was a faithful daughter of the Church, and it was the structure of the Church, not Catherine, that kept us independent. For my 8 years in leadership I worked toward formation of the Institute, and thanked God when it was finalized. My one disappointment has been the lack of understanding in the membership regarding Institute. Because there was not a real impact on the personal lives of the Sisters in the Regional Communities, we remained very much embedded in our independent areas. The struggles began when we merged to form the 6 Communities (Canonical Provinces). While I would have preferred to take the leap of faith and begin life as one Institute without Provinces from the beginning, I do agree that this interim step was a necessary phase in order to facilitate governance. Now I am ready to let go of the divisions, and grow into unity. One thing I ask, is it necessary to wait until 2023. Let us get started now. It is not necessary to wait. Perhaps it may take until 2023, but hopefully it will come sooner. Thank you. Terese Marie Perry, RSM
We were happy to see that at the very end there is mention of mission and ministry. Unless our governance and the community building we do is for the purpose of reaching of to those who need our Mercy we would ask - why do we exist. Just know you are all in our thoughts and prayers in this crucial moment in the Mercy community.

Blessings!

Pat M. Murphy and JoAnn Persch

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Dear Sisters,
Do count on my prayers and support in this endeavor. Let us begin, Sister M. Lorraine Mullins

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Dear Sisters,
Thank you for putting this letter in our email so that no Sister misses it. I responded to the ILT. It is very exciting for me and like the Sisters who have responded thus far, I wish it could be sooner. I don’t think I will make 2023 but I will be celebrating with our heavenly Sisters of Mercy. (I hope!)
Love and prayers,
Mary Anita Iddings RSM

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It is my experience over the last six years that causes me to have reservations about adopting this form of governance structure. I believe we are still in the process of becoming six Communities and living through that experience has raised issues with me. Going through this process is the most difficult experience I have ever had as a
religious. I feel as if I am living on quick sand. Because I am the archivist for the Detroit
collection, I have felt the growing pains of the governance organization over the last six
years. All the structures, policies and procedures that supported me prior to 2008, fell
away and no new ones were in place. Broad strokes had been decided but how to do
what was needed to bring into reality these broad strokes was and still is, in a lot of
ways, a moving target.

I find it very difficult that in my Mercy family, decisions that affect every aspect of my
daily life are made by people (who I believe are doing the best they can and mean only
the best for me) who don’t know me and I certainly don’t know them. And I am one who
has made an effort to get to know people. The high turnover in personnel thwarts that
effort. And I am aware that this is also felt by our lay colleagues who were with us
before the formation of Communities. It is felt that there is little subsidiarity in the new
structures. There seems to be little authority to make decisions at the local sites.
Maureen McGarrigle, RSM