

## CLC ATLANTIC REGION: COMPLETING OUR COMMON MISSION DISCERNMENT PROCESS

*“Try to discover what the Lord wants of you ...” Eph. 5:10*



John English often said that the discerned decision a person or a group makes is very important, but just as important is what happens to us in the process. I think we, in the Atlantic Region, can say “amen” to that.

During our October 2014 Regional Council Meeting we reached a significant step in our ongoing journey of becoming an Atlantic CLC apostolic community. Through much prayer, listening, and dialogue, we discovered the ‘*statement*’ of common mission which best expresses - at this time in our history - our desire and commitment to be on mission with Christ as a Regional Community:

We arrived here after a long four year journey. Peter Chouinard, in his article, gives a brief overview of what happened to us along the way – the various stages of preparation, the ‘hiatus’ year after our unfinished 2013 Regional Assembly process, the deeper formation we needed around spiritual freedom and consensus, and the final event this Fall that drew everything together. I have been invited to describe the four hour process we used on Saturday, October 25, 2014 to reach consensus for our Regional common mission. Let me begin with how we prepared to “re-enter” our unfinished 2013 Assembly process.

### **THE IMMEDIATE PREPARATION: September – October 2014**

1. Each of our 13 Regional CLCs was invited to choose a ‘delegate’ to re-enter and engage the common mission discernment process during our October Regional Council meeting.
2. Guided prayer and reflection material was sent to each community to help everyone reconnect with where we were since our 2013 Regional Assembly and how to prepare for the next step. (*This material is available for anyone interested in our approach – daigleyp@rogers.com.*)
3. One regular CLC meeting was set aside to engage the preparatory material and assist the delegate prepare to re-enter our Regional discernment process.

### **THE PROCESS TEAM: For Saturday, October 25, 2014**

- Pam Daigle was invited to ‘set up’ the process for the delegates (20 minutes)
- Julia Donahoe-Macdougal, our Regional Formation Coordinator, would facilitate the process
- Trevor Scott SJ (our Ecclesiastical Assistant) would be the Process Guide

The consensus building approach was determined ahead of time based on our Atlantic Region’s working document on consensus. (Document available upon request – daigleyp@rogers.com) If a unanimous decision was not reached after two prayer and sharing rounds, we would seek a negotiated consensus. If a negotiated consensus could not be reached within our scheduled 4 hour time line, we would adopt CLC Canada’s S.O. P. #15 and seek a 2/3 majority.

## **THE VENUE and EVENT:**

The process took place during our Fall Atlantic Regional Council Meeting in Summerside, PEI

## **THE SET UP AND ORIENTATION:**

**The Environment:** The room was set up to visually reflect two circles of participants. The 10 *delegates* present sat in an inner circle around a table of symbols; the remaining Council participants sat in an outer circle – as *observers* but also as *intercessors*.

**The Input:** Pam welcomed the delegates and invited them to 'enter through a common door.' Through a series of flip chart images and comments, the delegates reviewed their preparatory journey. An outline of the Confirmation phase to be followed (once a tentative decision was reached) was also presented at this time. We then looked at possible consensus scenarios that could unfold. The time lines for each were noted and they ranged from 1 ¼ hours (for a unanimous consensus) to 4 hours (for a negotiated consensus.)

## **THE DISCERNMENT AND CONSENSUS BUILDING PROCESS:**

Julia welcomed the delegates to the beginning of the process. She reminded us that all our preparation was very important (our own prayer and the conversation in our local CLC). However, once the first round of sharing was complete, a shift would occur. We would now become the 'discerning body' for this remaining phase of the Regional process. All were invited to continue seeking spiritual freedom to allow the Spirit to lead. After a moment to get in touch with the grace of freedom present within each heart, we began by praying our common mission discernment history. As our observer-intercessors reverently spoke each phrase into our delegate circle, "*We thank You O God, for all Your works are wonderful*" resounded as our praise response. After an initial need for further clarification on some points, our process began. The process outline and steps are described below.

### **Round 1:**

Each delegate named the one choice with which he/she came into the process (CLC Development or Poverty): 5 for each option were noted.

### **Round 2:**

Reasons were given

### **Prayer:**

Delegates were given 30 minutes for personal prayer including a silent break

### **Round 3:**

Each delegate again named one of the options. Though two changed their choice, this round produced the same results: 5 for each option.

### **Round 4:**

Reasons were given.

**THE SHIFT:**

At this point it seemed that some level of consensus was at work in Round 4. Both options were emerging as *integrally connected*. Our facilitator kept us focused on the step by step process but soon moved us towards a negotiated consensus process. She invited us to release the 'either/or' option and work towards whatever might allow us to find the one decision all could freely support.

**Communal Exchange:**

A 30 minute 'give and take' conversation followed with Julia, guiding us skillfully through further sharing and cross-talk discussion in an atmosphere of respectful listening. She included a time to pause and 'be with' what we were hearing before we resumed our give and take discussions. Trevor, our process guide, offered helpful interventions and insightful feedback during this time.

**Prayer:**

Having reached this stage in our process, we broke for lunch. Delegates were asked to give 20 minutes for personal prayer before returning.

**Round 5:**

Delegates shared the fruit of their personal prayer period.

**Communal Exchange:**

Conversation continued. Within a short period of time one delegate offered the group a statement of common mission that seemed to capture the sense of consensus emerging. Responses to this statement were invited. Clarification and a bit of wordsmithing moved us forward until all were satisfied they had been heard.

**Common Mission Articulated:** At this point, our statement of common mission was written on newsprint. *"As the CLC Atlantic Region, we are called to place our gifts at the service of the poor, assisted by ongoing CLC development for this mission."*

**Dwelling:**

Julia invited us to dwell prayerfully with our statement for 10 minutes, in silence

**Round 6: Acceptance:**

A sharing round of 'yes' or 'no' to the articulated common mission brought forth a unanimous acceptance.

**Seeking Confirmation:**

The statement of common mission (our tentative decision) was then offered to God for confirmation. Julia led the delegates through the 45 minute step by step confirmation phase of communal decision-making which Pam had presented in outline form before the morning's process began. (See insert below for basic steps):

**CONFIRMATION PHASE (45 MIN.)**

1. Personal Prayer with the tentative decision (20 min.) Delegates 'attend to' to their personal inner movements of consolation and desolation
2. Communal Sharing Round (10 min.) Sharing focus: What happened interiorly as I prayed with the decision?
3. Communal Listening including a contemplative pause (10 Min.) Focus: What movements are happening now in the delegate community?

4. Communal Sharing - Delegates (not necessarily all) name the felt sense of communal consolation or desolation
5. If consolation is experienced *as a group*, the Regional Community, is *confirmed with the choice offered (with further confirmation to be experienced in the living out of the mission)*.
6. The confirmation phase is concluded with a prayer of gratitude. (5 min.)

(Note: If the delegate group experiences communal desolation in step 5, the facilitator will need to adapt the ensuing process)

**Confirmation - Final Acceptance:**

Julia helped us hear and name the **communal** movement of consolation: *joy, gratitude, peace, a sense of rightness, and energy for the mission*. Our process guide reflected back to us aspects of our communal growth and helped us 'hear' the signs of God-with-us during our process .

**Appropriation:**

The delegates then joined with the observer-intercessors in one large circle for an appropriation of the graces that had been received during our four hour experience.

**Celebration:**

Our Regional statement of Common Mission was joyfully celebrated as our most authentic mission response at this stage of our growth as the Atlantic Region. Committed to evaluating our common mission as our journey continues, our statement of common mission was 'walked' to the altar by Julia and Pam during our closing Liturgy and received by Fr. Trevor.

And God smiled.

Submitted by Pam Daigle (delegate for River of Life CLC)