



Risk
Boldly
the Future

FSPA General Assembly Case Story

Background

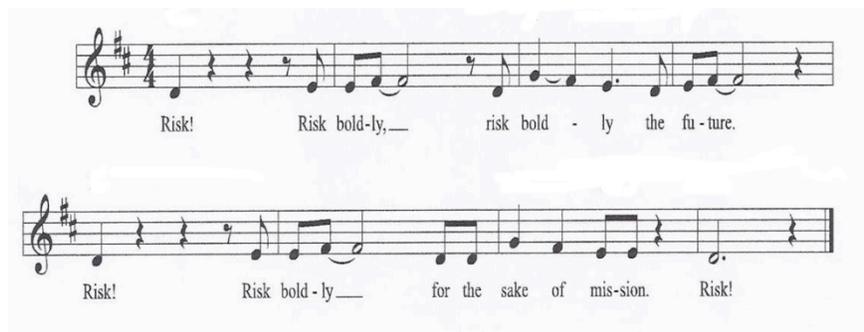
Every five years, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) enter into a long term planning process whereby they set the priorities and direction for their community, update their governance, and elected a leadership team for the next five years.

The community is known for teachings in spirituality (new cosmology, care of creation, meditation, simple living, Franciscan values, interfaith dialog), sponsoring a university and hospital, and social justice leadership in the region (earth stewardship,

homelessness, food access, human trafficking, etc).

FSPA faces issues of declining and aging membership of vowed religious sisters, and a quickly growing lay affiliate community. Also, challenges of leadership transition in their sponsored institutions and how to develop a “leader in every chair” – a self organizing model of leadership and change.

The Assembly Planning Team in partnership with the community embarked on the journey, “Risk Boldly – the Future” – and even wrote a theme song:



Year of Discernment

The year of discernment began with Circle Dialogues in local communities -- telling stories of risk, leaps of the past, and what risking boldly could look like NOW. Mark Nepo’s book, “Authentic Risk” was read by many in the community and part of their weekly prayer preparations.

Next in the year were Regional Meetings with focusing on spiritual inspiration, core challenges, and opportunities facing the community.

The year culminated with a General Assembly for 250 participants, using participative processes that got everyone talking and moving! It was described this way in the FSPA Assembly Review: “As a community, we named the movements underway and the risks we can actually see ourselves taking. We organized around our passion for mission and the key questions which will help us move boldly forward in service to that mission. We reflected on what is emerging among us, where the Spirit is inviting us. We looked at what we will need to let go.”

One highlight during General Assembly was a section on Moving To Action. We used the “Two Loops” model and process to help name specific changes underway, and, the leadership needed in six key areas of FSPA community life: Social Justice, Care of Creation, Spirituality Centers, Religious Life, Affiliation, and Sponsorship.

Harvests to keep the Assembly alive included a document that detailed the Assembly spirit and the Community Agenda for the coming years (see Assembly in Review handout), video of key speakers, poetry, daily news, art, and photography.

Leadership Elections Process

The Leadership Elections Process began three months after the assembly, in preparation for what would be a three day Elections Assembly nine months after the General Assembly.



Local Community Circles met to look at the "Assembly in Review," name what was needed from the next leadership team, and to bring forward nominations.

Each nominee convened a Clarity Council to discern if they are called to leadership at this time. Not just obligated -- these are women for whom service is an operating system -- but called.

All nominees gathered for a Communal Discernment Day to consider their own leadership strengths, gifts, the needs of the community, and what would make a strong team.

All vowed FSPA Sisters gathered for a three day Elections Assembly for continued individual and collective

discernment.

- What are the big shifts and major decisions we are asking this team to steward over the next four years?
- What is the essential future that makes your heart sing? What questions move us in that direction? (Questions were asked of the candidates, and some for the community).
- What qualities are essential for a team? What are possible team constellations?
- How do we embody a "leader in every chair?"

Now

The elected team is forming now, making plans for their "re-branding" opportunity. They are clarifying, from all of the voices and discernment in the processes above, who they are and what they stand for. They recognize that they have been commissioned by their community to lead, to do so in participative and collaborative leadership processes, to support wise decisions and change.