THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Crafting Authentic Community

A TREATISE

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By
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Crafting Authentic Community

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The treatise *Crafting Authentic Community* seeks to empower women religious with the knowledge and skills necessary to rediscover the true meaning of living authentic community, which is defined as the integration of effective communication, interdependence, and mutual commitment. Beginning with an examination of the scriptural and theological foundations which lie at the core of community, the writer also uses the basic principles of family systems theory to provide a backdrop for an understanding of the human tension between individuality and togetherness. Relying on a number of experts from the fields of behavioral science, psychology and business management, the treatise also addresses the areas of effective communication skills, conflict management techniques, and the concepts of mutuality and accountability.

In order to facilitate the overall goals of the project, the writer designed and implemented a one day workshop in which sisters who participated were provided with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills vital for living community. The treatise presents an in-depth analysis of participants’ responses to both pre and post surveys, as well as a summary of the evaluations completed by each participant. Among the most significant findings were: a desire for a revitalization of participants’ present community life; an intellectual understanding of the meaning of authentic community from Scripture and post Vatican II Church documents; a limited knowledge of the impact of family systems theory on community as an emotional
system; an increased awareness of the importance of practicing effective communication skills in community; a realization that a proficiency level in conflict management techniques is presently lacking; an acknowledgement that the concepts of accountability and mutuality pose new and sometimes disconcerting challenges to religious community life.

In conclusion, the most profound contribution which the treatise *Crafting Authentic Community* makes to women religious is that authentic community is a lifelong, organic process in which members intentionally commit to the hard work of becoming their best selves together. This provides them with practical tools for the journey, while reaffirming the ongoing need for deeper exploration into the rich dimensions which lie at the heart of community.
This treatise by Ruth Anne Harkins fulfills the dissertation requirement for the Doctoral degree in Adult Spiritual Formation approved by Reverend Raymond Studzinski, O.S.B., Ph.D., as Director, Reverend Monsignor Stephen Rossetti, Ph.D., D.Min., Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, and by Sister Ann Patrick Conrad, Ph.D. and Sister Margaret Schreiber, O.P., S.T.D. Readers.

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INTRODUCTION

Overview
Introduction

Religious life, as a vocation in the church, is a call to live authentic community that is both counter-cultural and gospel-centered, thus closely resembling the early Christian community that was of one heart, one mind and one spirit (Acts 4:32, NAB). While the Second Vatican Council contributed to a renewed vision of religious life, the current crisis in vocations challenges both women and men religious today as never before to re-evaluate the meaning of living authentic community. In the preface of her book *Where Two or Three are Gathered: Community Life for the Contemporary Religious*, Barbara Fiand poses two important compelling questions: “Why is it that what ought to empower us and give us strength for the mission of Jesus so frequently deprives us of even our basic adult necessities? What has happened to community life that for so many of us it has come to be seen as something that must be endured, rather than as an essential part of our life, as something that empowers us, as something we can truly enjoy?”¹ These sentiments are echoed by Mary Jo Leddy, who wrote “once we begin to ask WHY, what is the point of all this, we will find ourselves – back to the wall, ear to the ground, every hair on our head counting on LOVE. And we may find ourselves becoming what we probably wanted to become when we first entered religious life – believers, women of God.”²


The concept of community is fundamental to human nature and deeply embedded in one’s Christian tradition. Human persons yearn to be in relationship with others; they long for a deep connection with self, others and God. As members of the human race they strive to create an experience of community in family, school, church, neighborhood, workplace, and country. As members of the family of God, despite this human longing, a sense of community tends to elude their grasp. This is not the direct result of a lack of resources, or even a lack of desire, but rather of a lack of the deeper understanding of the personal and communal transformation necessary to bring about a genuine renewal of community life. They desire, they believe and so they seek for a genuine experience of authentic community. They will know it inside when they find it - a oneness, a unity, a feeling of being at home within one’s heart. The story continues to unfold.

As Doris Gottemoeller, RSM, asserted in an article published in *Review for Religious*, “Community Living: Beginning the Conversation” in 1999, “community is the Achilles heel of contemporary religious life.” In addition, sociologist Mary Johnson, SNDdeN, strongly believes that “the work of sharply declining and rebuilding community is essential to the mission and future of apostolic religious life in the United States and in other nations where religious life struggles to free itself from the hegemonic hold of middle class values.” Therefore, the challenge in ministry this project seeks to address is how to inspire women religious to

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rediscover the true meaning of authentic community, defined as the integration of effective communication skills, interdependence, and mutual commitment.

DEFINITIONS

The title “Crafting Authentic Community” contains three rather familiar and simple individual words which, when combined, represent a rather complex phenomenon. Therefore, it is extremely important to establish a definition for each word that will guide the discussion throughout this project.

First, the word craft implies a skill, art or imaginative ability. The verb crafting was deliberately chosen over the verb creating because it expresses a different reality. The action of crafting requires the time necessary to hone skills, while the verb creating means to bring something into existence. It is God who is the true author of community; therefore, one cannot create community; one can only patiently acquire the skills necessary for the art of communal living. Just as the craftsmen refine their skills with practice, authentic communities refine their skills in a lifelong process of transformation, by living together in a very intentional manner.

The second word authentic means something that is real, genuine, honest, accurate and true. Someone who is authentic reflects transparency and consistency in all life situations; it is a person who is without guile, and who inspires others to live with integrity. For example, in the marketplace, consumers look for signs of “authentication” to prove an article is genuine. The ultimate model of an authentic life is the life of Jesus.

Finally, the word community probably has as many varied definitions as there are people. In this context, community will be defined as a group of people who share common interests,
common values, common goals and deep relational bonds. Community is formed when individuals are able to both accept and transcend their differences through honest and effective communication. Community members commit to make choices for the common good that will foster both a sense of belonging and interdependence.

**Study on Religious Life – Background**

In 1992, Miriam Ukeritis, CSJ and David Nygren published the findings of a three-year comprehensive study entitled “The Future of Religious Orders in the United States.” The study concluded that for religious orders to continue as a vital force into the future, they must change in dramatic and significant ways over the next ten years. Ukeritis proposed three very significant recommendations from the study vital for the future charism of religious life in the church and society. First, religious congregations need to be clear about the purpose of religious life, remembering that religious are called to be prophets who point to the gap between the Gospel and the culture. The second recommendation stressed the critical need for good leaders who will honor the privilege and responsibility for decision-making in light of the mission of their congregations. The third finding named as an imperative an option for the poor, which has become a part of the fabric of religious life over the years.

In 2009, the National Religious Vocation Conference published a “Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life in the United States,” which was designed to identify and understand the characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of the men and women who are coming to religious life today. This study identified three characteristics of religious institutes necessary for attracting and retaining new members: one, those that follow a more traditional style of religious
life; two, those whose members live together in community, participate in daily Eucharist, pray the Divine Office, and engage in devotional practices; and three, those whose members wear a religious habit, work together in a common apostolate, and are explicit about their identity to the Church and the teachings of the Magisterium.

One finding common to both studies is the importance of clarity of identity and purpose. Those religious institutes which took to heart the recommendations of the 1992 study have maintained their ability to attract and retain new members today and into the future. These groups deliberately made significant changes that intentionally reflected their clarity of purpose.

**Overview of the Ministry Project**

This project will explore the current reality of communal living in religious life and will demonstrate the potential for transforming its future. First, the project will examine those church documents which address the scriptural and theological foundations for rediscovering the meaning of authentic community. Second, the project will identify the key concepts of family systems theory relevant for communal living. This new understanding will empower the members of a religious congregation to both think and act differently as they strive to craft healthy community. Third, this project will describe the effective communication and conflict management skills necessary for “crafting” authentic religious community for the third millennium. The final section of the project will draw on the basic principles of small Christian communities and business management to integrate the components of accountability, interdependence and mutual commitment, which are essential to nurture and sustain authentic community life.
In order to facilitate the overall goals of the project, the writer seeks to design, implement and evaluate a full-day workshop that would provide participants with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and necessary skills vital for crafting authentic community. The participants for this project will include thirty-two members of the writer’s own religious congregation, representing diverse communal settings, who live in the Washington, D.C. and Maryland areas of the United States. The ultimate hope and goal is to actively begin to engage participants in the lifelong process of transformation necessary for the overall improvement in the quality of community living within the charism of religious life.

The project “Crafting Authentic Community” consists of three major components: pre-survey, online PowerPoint and article; a full-day workshop with an evaluation; and a post-survey. Prior to the workshop, the participants will be required to complete an online survey that would assess their current understanding of the following items: pertinent church documents, dynamics of family systems, effective communication and conflict management skills, and interdependence, accountability and mutual commitment (Appendix A.5). Participants will also be required to read an article and review an online PowerPoint presentation on the four key concepts of trust, boundaries, triangles and differentiation from family systems theory (Appendix A.7).

The full day workshop will consist of three sessions that include: a short prayer, a PowerPoint presentation, brief reflection time, small group discussion and interactive activities. The goal for the first session is to address the scriptural and theological foundations for rediscovering the meaning of authentic community. Building upon the relational dynamics from family systems theory, the second session seeks to identify effective communication and conflict
management skills vital for the practical living of authentic community. By integrating the learnings from the first two sessions, participants in the third session will then be able to explore the role of accountability in facilitating the interdependence and mutual commitment vital for living their religious charism. At the conclusion of the workshop, the participants will submit an evaluation and also complete a questionnaire six weeks after the workshop.

**Evaluation**

The project includes three levels of assessment. Two weeks prior to the January 26\textsuperscript{th} workshop, participants will complete a pre-survey. The questions are divided into seven categories to reflect the various topics that would be covered in either pre-workshop material or within the three workshop sessions. In addition, sisters in attendance will complete an evaluation form before leaving the workshop to assess the effectiveness of the candidate and workshop format. Six weeks following the workshop, participants will respond to a post-survey. Results of these two surveys will be compared and analyzed according to the seven categories of questions. Based on the outcome of this analysis, the writer hopes to draw conclusions which will have relevance to the overall treatise. Thus, *Crafting Authentic Community* will become an ongoing and life-long process that will require time, hard work, practicing new skills, and learning new attitudes and behavior.
CHAPTER 1

Scriptural and Theological Foundations
They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers... All who believed were together and held all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes.  

(Acts 2:42, 44, NAB)

Introduction

In the beginning was the early Christian community described in the Acts of the Apostles. What initially brought them together was a common call to follow Jesus and obviously, the gift of the Holy Spirit. What formed this community in the first place was a desire to share their faith, but also to live differently because they had been transformed by the paschal mystery. What sustained this diverse group of disciples over time was their faithfulness to God, their bond of love for each other, and their common mission. What further empowered this fragile community of faith was their openness to the constant grace of God. Authentic community in the early church was comprised of those who seek to be faithful to the teachings of scripture, prayer, communal life and breaking of bread.

Yes, in the beginning was the early Christian community. It is this community the Church offers as a model and ideal for communal living in religious life, as illustrated in the various Church documents specifically written to guide the formation of religious life. Grounded in scripture and tradition, these documents constantly serve to remind and challenge religious congregations to faithfully witness to their call to live authentic community, not only within their respective congregations, but for the larger church and world community. All human beings are
by nature communitarian. Specifically, those called to religious life are intrinsically “true experts in communion”\textsuperscript{5} whose whole lives reflect the mystery and divine reality of the Trinity.

**Church Documents**

Church documents written both during and after Vatican II have contributed significantly to the renewal of religious life, especially for community life. The Vatican Council’s impact on the theology of religious life can be found in the explicit teaching in *Lumen Gentium* entitled “The Call to Holiness.” The theology of religious life is a revalidation of the universal call to holiness in which the teaching and example of Christ provide the foundation for the consecration of one’s self wholly to God. The Council Fathers reserved Chapter VI for a doctrinal synthesis that specifically attempts to shed light on the purpose of community life. The document states that members of the religious community “are bound together in brotherly communion.”\textsuperscript{6} The image used in this chapter is that one’s pursuit of perfect charity requires training in knowledge and skill, with the ultimate goal of attaining “brotherly communion.” This was certainly intended to counter the attitude and values prior to Vatican II, in which there was little emphasis on the relational dynamic of community living. For example, Sandra Schneiders, IHM, a well-known theologian and biblical scholar, confirms this reality in her book *New Wineskins: Re-imaging Religious Life Today*, when she writes that “the ideal of community for this period was one of charity, but never intimate, equal relationships among the members…Mutual support,

\textsuperscript{5} John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to the Bishops and Clergy, Religious Orders and Congregations, Societies of Apostolic Life, Secular Institute, and all the Faithful on the Consecrated Life and Its Mission in the Church and in the World. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1996). #46, 26.

understanding, forbearance, and tolerance were expected of the members. But at the same time, one was expected to avoid all emotional involvement or attachment.”

A second document from Vatican II, written one year later in 1965, *Perfectae Caritatis* addressed the practicalities of the life as well as the discipline for religious consecration. However, the Vatican Council left to each individual community the authority to determine what needed to change in accord with the spirit of their founders, their customs, traditions, missions, and the needs of modern life where they lived and worked. Consequently, in the name of renewal and adaptation, this was a time of experimentation.

Specifically, *Perfectae Caritatis*, describes communal life through scripture in the following way:

Common life, in prayer and the sharing of the same spirit (Act 2:42), should be constant, after the examples of the early Church, in which the company of believers were of one heart and soul…Religious, as members of Christ, should live together as brothers and should give pride of place to one another in esteem (Rom. 12:10), carrying one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:12).

Religious community is formed by the love of God through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, religious community is called to witness in a unique way to the Trinitarian reality of union in God through love of one another.

Another document on community, *Fraternal Life in Community*, published in 1994 by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, offers an insightful perspective on the prophetic rule of community in personal development. The entire document is filled with a strong and vital message for strengthening community life; for

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example, it says “the highest ideal of community necessarily brings with it conversion from every attitude contrary to communion.” However, long after Vatican II, this document was not readily embraced by the religious communities of women because of its masculine language. Nonetheless, the content as a whole cannot be readily dismissed since through Baptism we are welcomed into a community of brotherhood and sisterhood, which is a familial relationship.

The heart of Christian community is “communion,” a grace given to all by the Holy Spirit. The essential elements for nurturing a healthy community include: support, encouragement, care, concern, acceptance, accountability and mutual love. In this way community, becomes a relational dynamic in which the individual is challenged to be open to the larger reality of human life, where that community becomes a way to live, a mission to continue and a message to preach for the unity of which Jesus prayed: “May they be one as we are one.” (John 17:22). Religious community thus exemplifies the richness of a Christian life by creating a unity through commitment and active participation in the mission of Jesus Christ. The fraternal life is further described as a sign of ecclesiastical communion, which gives witness through the shared experience of unconditional love and a willingness to share everything in common.

In 1996, Pope John Paul II wrote an Apostolic Exhortation on Consecrated Life entitled *Vita Consecrata*. Nourished by the Word and the Sacraments, “In community life, fraternal communion is a God-enlightened space in which to experience the Risen Lord.” Sandra Schneiders has written extensively on the evolution of religious life over the years. In her book, *Selling All*, she emphasizes that *Vita Consecrata* clearly and profoundly expressed the

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Christological and ecclesial dimensions of consecrated life in a Trinitarian theological perspective, shedding new light on the theology of the following of Christ and of consecration, of communion in community and of mission.\textsuperscript{11} Thus, community becomes the daily sharing with others of one’s life in Christ.

Community is both reality and mystery; it is grace. It is Jesus Christ who forms individuals into a community of believers. Baptized Christians have all received the gift of the Holy Spirit, called to be holy and to live in the unity of the Trinity. \textit{Vita Consecrata} places a high and clear expectation upon consecrated persons when it states that they are to become true experts of communion.\textsuperscript{12} Communities of consecrated life witness to hope and harmony because of their willingness to dialogue amidst the vast differences within and among them.

The religious is further challenged to commit to always working toward strengthening the communal life in imitation of the first Christian community in Jerusalem. This solidarity is expressed more vividly in \textit{Vita Consecrata} when it states that the Church formally entrusts to the communities of consecrated life the particular task of spreading this spirituality of communion beyond their specific lifestyle into the ecclesial community.\textsuperscript{13}

The most recent document, \textit{Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium}, written in 2002, was an invitation by Pope John Paul II for religious men and women “to cast out into the deep.”(Lk 5:4). This document presented more specific pastoral guidelines for consecrated life to focus primarily on spirituality. Part I was


\textsuperscript{12} John Paul II, \textit{Vita Consecrata}, No. 46, 26.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., No. 51, 28.
written to express gratitude and wholehearted esteem for what consecrated life is and for what it does while also acknowledging the current challenges consecrated persons face today. Part II implores these men and women to rediscover more profoundly the meaning and quality of their lives for a “new and special consecration.” The Gospel imperative to live the spirituality of communion in a renewed and unique way comprises Part III. The document concludes in Part IV with the church accompanying consecrated persons on the streets of the world, spreading communion in a renewed mission.

*Starting Afresh from Christ* means proclaiming that consecrated life is a special following of Christ, “a living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren.” This document strives to reinforce the imperative of *Vita Consecrata* and the necessity to listen more deeply to the Word of God in Scripture as the source of nourishment and inspiration for the faith journey. This renewed invitation to meditate on the Word also shapes and forms the quality of the communal life as the Word becomes imprinted upon one’s heart. Community life also fosters the rediscovery of the ecclesial dimension of the Word: receive it, meditate upon it, live it together, communicate the experiences which blossom from it and thus submit yourself to an authentic spirituality of communion.15

John Paul II teaches that “a spirituality of communion” indicates above all the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling within and whose light must be seen shining in the faces of all brothers and sisters. Religious life continues the mission of Christ with

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a feature specifically its own: fraternal life in community for the sake of the mission. Therefore, women religious will exhibit a passion for the mission and communal life in direct proportion to their intimacy with the Lord Jesus in prayer.

**Contemporary Authors**

Having taken the opportunity to review the diversity of church documents that support crafting authentic community, the focus shifts to the contributions of a few contemporary authors whose writings strengthens the foundation for a renewal of community life. Doris Gottemoeller has been writing about the changing face of community for many years. A review of two separate articles written for *Review for Religious*, entitled “Community Living: Beginning the Conversation” and “Living in Community: Continuing the Conversation”, highlights a contemporary definition for community living that reflects significant changes since Vatican II.

“What are we talking about when we talk about community living? I would suggest that, put as simply as possible, community living is what happens when two or more people relate to one another in a significant, mutually beneficial, and ongoing way.”

“The presence of adults living together in simplicity and harmony, sharing prayer, hospitality, and the duties and struggles of daily living, is an uncommon and striking witness to the power of the gospel and the dynamism of a congregation’s charism, so much so that it deserves to be called a prophetic stance.”

Both of these brief excerpts present a vision and an ideal for living community in religious life today within the context of a contemporary setting. Yes, to live authentic community today is indeed a prophetic stance in a world where there is little tolerance for

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differences and in an atmosphere of fear toward the stranger and immigrant. How can this vision and ideal for living authentic community become a reality for today and into the future? This is the core question for all those who desire to craft authentic community wherever they live or work.

In 1954, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a renowned Christian minister and seminary professor, wrote *Life Together*, a classic work on the exploration of Christian community. According to Bonheoffer, community is profound grace and blessing; thus, “Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.” Therefore, it is pure grace and the spiritual bond of faith that allows persons to live in community. Community is not an ideal that Christians must realize by their own efforts, but rather a reality that is created by God in Christ in which all participate. The truth that no human effort can create or build community compels the Christian to embrace a poverty of spirit in which one surrenders all to this power of grace.

“Because God has already laid the only foundation of our fellowship, because God has bound us together in one body with other Christians in Jesus Christ, long before we entered into common life with them, we enter into that common life not as demanders but as thankful recipients.”

In Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, he speaks of the Body of Christ as consisting of many parts; but each part is interdependent and necessary for wholeness (1Corinthians 12:12-26). This image reflects Bonheoffer’s concept of the Christian community, in which each member becomes an indispensable link in a chain. Therefore, community becomes unified

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19 Bonhoeffer, 28.
through service to one another in which the weak not only need the strong, but also the strong cannot exist without the weak.

Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, developmental psychologist, and James D. Whitehead, pastoral theologian, both world-renowned authors and consultants in education and ministry, have devoted their lives to the field of contemporary Christian life and spirituality. Their passion for nurturing healthy, mature Christian adulthood is reflected in the quote by Saint Irenaeus which they use as the motto on their website: “The glory of God is a human person fully alive.”

The work of this couple has profoundly shaped the renewed understanding of mission and ministry in the Church. Specifically, the Whiteheads have been able to uncover the fundamental structures of God’s loving call and provide a comprehensive blueprint for Crafting Christian Communities Today.

The Whiteheads affirm in their writings the human hunger for community. Baptized Christians, hunger for community because they are made to be in relationship with God, themselves and others. They hunger to be with others in such a way that their faith is nourished, their gifts welcomed and their wounds respected. The early Christian community models a true and authentic image of community. “Community is a gathering that enlarges and challenges and completes our personal vision, a place where both our strengths and hungers are welcomed.”

Therefore, community is a way to BE together. An authentic community of faith stands at the intersection of three dreams: personal dreams, the dreams of the community and the dream of the kingdom of God. However, there exists a creative tension between the religious ideal for a

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20 [www.jamesevelynwhitehead.com](http://www.jamesevelynwhitehead.com)

genuine interdependent community and the practicalities involved with living a style of group life. Thus, those actively engaged in the creative process of crafting a community that is bound together by trust, cooperation, love, solidarity, and care, must possess resources of both mind and heart. In reality, community becomes the place where there is an experience of confirmation, change and challenge.

The Whiteheads’ greatest contribution to the crafting of a “Small Christian Community” is their ability to provide the tools necessary for forming, shaping and living authentic community. Specifically, they describe the five characteristics that identify a “community:”

1. common orientation toward some significant aspect of life
2. agreement about core values
3. a commitment to common goals
4. opportunities for personal exchange
5. agreed-upon definitions of what membership entails

They implore groups of people to ask the hard and deep questions and to develop the wisdom and skills required for living within an intentional community setting. In the formation of community, groups discover there is a direct correlation between the characteristics that identify a community and the questions which strive to clarify the experiences and expectations of the members. These six questions are:

1. What is the major focus of this group?
2. How fully are members involved?
3. Is emotional sharing encouraged?
4. How is group behavior regulated?
5. How obligated are members to each other and the group?
6. How are group members evaluated?

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22 Whitehead, 42-46.

23 Whitehead, 28.
Sandra Schneiders has written extensively on the evolution of religious life over the years. In her book entitled *New Wineskins: Re-imaging Religious Life Today*, she introduces new terminology to describe the changing reality of community. According to Schneiders, the model of group living that best defined the community experience pre-Vatican II was that of the primary family. The primary family model creates a parent-child dynamic in which members of the religious community were expected to be subservient to the role of the “superior.” Over time, evidence has shown this model to be both spiritually and psychologically counterproductive for the mature development of the adult members. Therefore, Schneiders seeks to describe a new model for community living in which the members of a religious community must be empowered to relate as adult to adult. Thus, the primary model becomes one of a community of friends who are co-disciples in ministry. Schneiders defines the distinctive type of community relationships among religious as “evangelical friendship.”

This ideal is first exemplified in the gospels by Jesus, who created the first community of friends from his immediate followers. “Thus, the ideal of these relationships is Gospel friendship, that love of one another as Jesus has loved us that is the sign of discipleship.” The relational life that Jesus inaugurates with and among his disciples has three interrelated phases or moments: filiation, sorority and friendship. In this way, religious life gives witness to the character of Christianity as an ‘eschatological community’ – a community of friends, bonded together by their shared love of Christ, whose lives explicitly bear witness to the Trinitarian life of God, and who work together to bring forth the reign of God. Today more than ever before in

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24 Schneiders, *New Wine-Skins*, 263.


26 Schneiders, *Selling All*, 290.
the history of our Church and world, religious are called forth to become such an evangelical community for the life of the world; this is both a gift and a responsibility.

In her book *Finding The Treasure*, Schneiders identifies community as the third constitutive coordinate of the religious life to which someone makes a lifelong commitment within a particular congregation. In this context, community as a life form within religious life includes the interplay of three important dynamics. The first of these dynamics encompasses the complete and unreserved economic interdependence of the members expressed in a variety of ways through the vow of poverty. Secondly, the full and unreserved participation of the members in the congregation’s governmental structures and procedures is uniquely expressed through the vow of obedience. This contemporary understanding of obedience integrates the role of leadership, corporate discernment and full personal accountability. The area of personal accountability has been very slow to evolve over the years, but will become increasingly necessary for the survival of religious congregations who strive to ensure the responsible interdependence of the diverse members. Lastly, “the community coordinate of Religious Life involves the permanent acceptance of the community itself as the primary and determining relational context of one’s life.”

Therefore, each member’s relationship with the community itself becomes the focus of her life, while still maintaining relationships with family, friends and colleagues outside the congregation. This renewed commitment to one another as members of the religious community strengthens the bonds of friendship first with Christ and then with one another, thus reflecting a contemporary expression of the vow of chastity.

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Throughout her writings, Sandra Schneiders consistently builds a strong theological and scriptural foundation for community in religious life as grounded in the Christian life – “the entire Christian tradition, grounded in Scripture and lived throughout history, testifies to the fact that as humans and as believers we are called to community.”\textsuperscript{28} She concludes that community is both essential and necessary to religious life; in other words, community is nonnegotiable.

**Summary**

Despite the fact that earlier Church documents painted a portrait of community that focused primarily on the external characteristics, they nonetheless were human attempts to provide some guidance and direction for religious congregations. This chapter began by demonstrating that the Church has since provided women religious with very strong scripturally and theologically grounded documents to shape and form authentic community. Each of these documents provides religious congregations with an invitation and a challenge to enter fully into the transformation necessary to achieve the “highest ideal of community,” in which members are called to bear witness to the Trinitarian reality of union with God. Though communion is both mystery and grace, religious are to become “true experts of communion” through their prayer, community living and ministry.

Vatican II documents called for a renewal in religious life with very broad strokes. In reality, the years that followed were filled with exploration and experimentation for religious congregations as they sought to respond seriously and methodically to the call for change, renewal, refounding and restructuring. Over the years, religious congregations have remained

\textsuperscript{28} Schneiders, *Selling All*, 279.
faithful to the Gospel while working tirelessly to explore various models for communal living. Yes, they dared to dream and had the courage to risk becoming “a new and special consecration.”

But religious congregations were not alone on the road to Emmaus, because there were several companions and guides along the journey who sought to explain the scriptures to them. For example, Doris Gottemoeller strives to incarnate a vision and ideal with a new and contemporary definition for community living. Sandra Schneiders stretches the imagination and heart with the creation of a new paradigm, that of evangelical friendship. Both authors, whose lives witness to their original vowed commitment, tell a compelling new story that invites women religious to “get out of the boat” – the current structures and mindsets that kept the original disciples stuck in the past. They also have the audacity to demand that religious be willing to get out of the boat if they are to walk on the water with new courage and faith.

Theologian and mystic Dietrich Bonhoeffer becomes another companion on the journey to crafting the authentic community. His message reminds all Christians of the profound reality that community is pure grace, and it is the spiritual bond of faith that allows persons to live in community. Christians dare to enter into the experience of the common life simply as thankful recipients through service to one another. Therefore, Bonhoeffer validates that the essence of community is a paradox and mystery of faith.

Lastly, the contributions of Evelyn and James Whitehead provide the practical skills necessary for forming, shaping and living authentic community. Their work empowers Christians with the resources to meet the real life demands for crafting authentic community. Thus, grounded in scripture and theology, and equipped with newly acquired skills, religious
have reason for hope. Rooted in their unique charisms, and bonded by “evangelical friendship,”
they will become impassioned witnesses to genuine communion for the life of the world.
CHAPTER 2

Family Systems Theory
The Relationship between Family Systems and Community Life

The scripture passage from 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 is a reminder of the complexity and diversity of humanity. The body of Christ, though it has many parts, is made whole and holy through the Spirit. Current scholarships of religious congregations and faith communities have consulted Bowen Family Systems Theory to grasp a deeper understanding of the emotional dynamics that shape a faith community. Therefore, the following discussion will explore the unique contributions of family systems for community life.

Brian J. Kelly’s article in *Human Development*, “A Theory About Families Can Benefit Communities,” explores the relevance of Bowen’s family systems theory for communities. He purports that religious communities are constantly engaged in the struggle between togetherness and individuality as they strive to create a nurturing environment for healthy spiritual, emotional and intellectual development. He also identifies the five relationship patterns – conflict, distancing, cutoff, reciprocal overfunctioning or underfunctioning, and triangles – that point the way toward increased self-development while contributing to the entire community’s overall level of functioning.29

Ronald W. Richardson, in his book *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership and Congregational Life*, describes the close correlation between family

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systems theory and the emotional systems that exert a powerful force in any church or religious
group. He suggests that the struggle between individuality and togetherness exists within the
church at various levels: first, the close/distant relationship to a specific church; second, the
relationship between members; and third, the relationship of the community to the larger church
and world. Gaining an understanding into these relationships is key to bringing about change in
the community. Richardson asserts that the primary skill necessary for dealing with the
congregational emotional system is to be a good observer, so that one becomes a resource for the
system instead of a contributing factor in the system.

Richardson identifies four ways in which people react to the pressure for sameness:
compliance, rebellion, power struggle and emotional distancing. These are all strategies for
distancing and do not deal directly with the perceived threat to one’s sense of self. A compliant
person agrees to make a change, but the change either never happens, or is done incorrectly or
poorly. The rebellious person deliberately acts in a way that is opposite of whatever was
originally requested. In a power struggle, persons take sides, actively pursue each other, then
evaluate the other as wrong and tell the other what to do; this results in both anger and
frustration. The person who exhibits emotional distancing refuses to engage with another, either
by not attending, becoming unavailable or simply not being actively involved. This information
can be very helpful in understanding how individuals react differently when they feel threatened
in various community situations.

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Family Systems Theory

The scripture passage from 1Corinthians 12:12-13 NAB, cited earlier in the chapter, clearly illustrates the concept of a system. Systems thinking considers how the parts of something interact and relate to produce something new. A systems approach gazes at the whole picture to determine how the parts are arranged, how the information is exchanged and how the parts influence each other. A religious community is a system – an emotional system to be specific. A community is defined as an emotional system because the group of individuals, simply by virtue of the time spent together, is involved in meaningful relationships. Therefore, one’s understanding of religious community can benefit from a systems thinking approach, in which the whole is best understood by observing the interactions that take place among the parts, because they mutually influence one another. When a problem arises in the system, it belongs to the entire system, because of multiple causations. In a system, all the parts are interdependent and thus exert a force according to their unique position in the network. In order to create change within a system, one needs to modify something in the structure. For Christians, the ultimate example of systems thinking is the concept of a Trinitarian God whose very life is relationship and love both between and among the three persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

One of the early pioneers in family therapy was Murray Bowen, M.D., a psychiatrist and professor of psychiatry. He conducted research at the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda, Maryland, where he hospitalized entire families with a schizophrenic member. His observations led him to formulate a new theory of human functioning, now called Bowen Family Systems Theory. The hallmark of this theory describes the family as a single emotional unit,
defined as “a group of individuals who, by virtue of time spent together, are involved in meaningful relationships.”

Family systems theory has been considered a very comprehensive view of human behavior and therefore quite relevant when discussing religious communities or faith congregations. For Bowen, emotional systems such as families, religious communities, groups of co-workers or other groups function as a single emotional unit. This perspective brings to the foreground the various ways in which people mutually influence and shape the interaction that takes place within a group. For example, a religious community may be viewed as a single emotional unit in which emotions or feelings pass circuitously from individual to individual by means of patterned reactions, such as distance, conflict, overfunctioning/underfunctioning, or triangling. Thus, the powerful force of religious community as an emotional system must be recognized and respected.

According to Bowenian theory, there are two basic and deep life forces that form the core of each human emotional system or community: togetherness and individuality. These two counterbalancing life forces form the basic driving power of what makes life and relationships work. They create a constant struggle and tension between individual rights and the rights of the community. This reality is practically lived out in the daily choices that men and women in religious life make between “what I want” and “what is for the greater good of the community.”

31 Kelly, 23.
The Role of Anxiety

What is it that creates an imbalance in the emotional system? In family systems theory the sense of threat that a person often experiences is referred to as “anxiety.” Anxiety is the uncomfortable feeling a person experiences when there is a lack of control, or a threat arises that can either be real or imagined. At its most basic level, anxiety is about the threat to the loss of who one is – the “self.”\textsuperscript{33} For adults, anxiety may be associated with feelings of abandonment, not being cared for, not respected, not listened to, not accepted or taken seriously. While anxiety is a powerful force in any emotional relationship, the more one experiences “a sense of self” the more one feels emotionally competent, safe, secure, in control and less threatened. For example, whenever men or women religious gather for an assembly, or chapter meeting, the anxiety becomes palpable as they become engaged in a process of decision-making that will directly impact their lives. Today anxiety becomes intensified as religious congregations face the new realities of mergers, declining financial resources, the need to sell institutions and properties, choices to leave various missions, and growing needs of aging members.

There are four common patterns that occur when people try to find ways to reduce or deal with the level of anxiety which is created as they strive to become differentiated. These four patterns have a tendency to produce the polarized emotional reactions of pursuer/distance, over functioning/under functioning.\textsuperscript{34} When conflict occurs in any relationship, often times one party seeks to keep the relationship intact (the pursuer), while the other may choose to create space

\textsuperscript{33} Richardson, 48.

\textsuperscript{34} Roberta Gilbert, \textit{The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory: A New Way of Thinking About the Individual and the Group} (Falls Church, VA: Leading Systems Press, 2006), 11-12.
(the distancer). Another possible reaction to anxiety within a relationship is for one party to become the more dominant decision-maker (the overfunctioner), while the other becomes passive and adapts to the situation (the underfunctioner).

**Differentiation of Self**

Bowen’s theory on family systems consists of eight interlocking concepts: differentiation of self, triangles, nuclear family emotional process, family projection process, multigenerational transmission process, sibling position, emotional cutoff, and societal emotional process. For purposes of this project, the focus is placed on the first two of these concepts, differentiation and triangles, and will explore the relationship dynamics of trust and boundaries as essential components for living authentic community.

The first concept and also the cornerstone for Bowen’s theory is differentiation of self, because the self must learn to balance the tension between togetherness and individuality. The basic building blocks of the self are inborn; however, an individual’s family relationships shape how the self develops. The undifferentiated person, who has little autonomous identity, tends to be fused with others both emotionally and intellectually by seeking to be a “pleaser.” Religious communities of women frequently are comprised of many individuals who are “pleasers.” A “pleaser” is vulnerable to conforming to another’s dogmatic ways of thinking and being; and thus has the same tendency to exert similar pressure on others.

The concept of differentiation of self impacts a person’s capacity to navigate through the other seven family dynamics described in Bowenian theory. Differentiation of self is also the process in which an individual learns to negotiate trust in others and oneself and establishes
personal boundaries, while maintaining a balance between the two forces of individuality and togetherness. Self-differentiation means “being separate together” or “being connected selves.”

This is a lifelong process that requires a depth of being in which an individual strives to differentiate self from his or her emotional relationships – this never happens in isolation.

According to Bowen’s theory, the differentiated self is also referred to as the “solid self.” “The solid self is made up of clearly defined beliefs, opinions, convictions and life principles.” Such a person is able to effectively integrate the emotional and intellectual dimensions of the self and make choices even in times of anxiety. The self-differentiated person has clearly established boundaries both within the self and toward others. In addition, such persons are willing to change, adapt and remain flexible as they grow in self-awareness. This “solid self” accepts challenge as an opportunity for growth and has a capacity to be compassionate with others.

In contrast, the undifferentiated person often presents what is referred to as the “pseudo self.” The undifferentiated person is vulnerable to the emotional and intellectual pressure from others. Thus fused, these individuals are unable to manage the tension between self and others. Such a person often possesses the following characteristics: opts for certainty in life, avoids self through resistance to self-awareness, looks outside of oneself for definition, has a tendency to force others to adapt, and is often described as a clinger, victim or blamer.

The “pseudo self” is one who becomes an actor with many selves, one who pretends, is compliant, engages in regular power struggles, becomes the conforming disciple or is involved in open rebellion. These persons have an extremely low tolerance for pain and thus are motivated

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36 Bowen, 365.
by their feelings in any given moment. They tend to create emotional distance, standing aloof and becoming physically or emotionally cut off in a relationship. For example, the primary goals for the “pseudo self” are oriented toward love, happiness, comfort and security; thus seeking the love, attention and approval of others. The undifferentiated self lacks all boundaries with self and others and thus acts from a comfort zone as one who rescues, or who becomes helpless or woeful. Bowen contends, that based on his own experience, “the solid self is lower, and the pseudo-self is much higher in all of us than most are aware. It is the pseudo-self that is involved in fusion and the many ways of giving, receiving, lending, borrowing, trading and exchanging of self.”

Prior to Vatican II, the structure of community life often resembled the patriarchal family structure present in the families of origin of the members. Therefore, the force exerting most of the pressure upon the individual was for togetherness, as exemplified in both uniformity and conformity. Therefore, it was the structure of religious life prior to Vatican II that reinforced varying levels of immaturity and lack of differentiation, a systemic dysfunction. Edwin Friedman repeatedly makes the following indictment in his lectures:

Actually, religious institutions are the worst offenders at encouraging immaturity and irresponsibility. In church after church, some member is passively-aggressively holding the whole system hostage, and no one wants to fire him or force her to leave because it wouldn’t be “the Christian thing to do.”

The mosaic created by community life reflects the diverse levels of differentiation from the multigenerational transmission of the individual members. In general, men and women who

37 Bowen, 366.

38 Cited in Steinke, How Your Church Family Works, 64.
entered religious community following Vatican II exhibited higher levels of differentiation, thus reflecting the changes in both cultural and family life values. As members became more self-differentiated, religious communities struggled with the powerful influence of individuality. However, the pendulum is now beginning to swing back to the center, as religious congregations are striving to create deeper experiences of community through togetherness and making choices for the common good. Some of the unhealthy patterns of behavior that have been transmitted for generations, both before and after Vatican II, include: not being risk-takers, choosing the safe path, avoiding conflict, being critical of one another, to name a few. New government structures in the post-Vatican era have been designed in the hope of nurturing the qualities of collegiality, co-responsibility and accountability. Even today women religious still grapple with the meaning of mutual relationships in forming authentic community.

**Triangles**

The second important concept addressed in this paper is that of triangles, which exert a powerful force that shapes and influences community life. According to Bowen, “triangles are the molecules of interpersonal systems.” Triangles develop because a significant relationship between two persons is unstable and thus goes through cycles of closeness and distance. In family systems, triangulation is considered to be a natural way of handling the anxiety created in a relationship. When emotional tension in a two-person system exceeds a certain level, a third person becomes triangulated into the relationship; this new reality either cools off the tension or

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freezes the conflict in place. Triangles serve two purposes: first, to absorb the anxiety in the relationship and second, to cover over the basic differences or conflicts in the emotional system.\(^{40}\) Therefore, triangles have a tendency to make the issues and responsibilities unclear and confusing. Peter Steinke in *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*, warns that there is the potential for the development of four viruses created from anxiety in a human community – secrets, accusations, lies and triangulation – all of which deny the truth that both the problem and solution can be found within the system.\(^{41}\) Steinke’s warning is worth heeding.

A religious community as an emotional system is composed of a series of interlocking triangles. These triangles are formed in direct response to the level of differentiation of self and emotional tension that exists within and among the individuals. The number of potential triangles will be determined by the discomfort that exists among relationships within a community, as they attempt to stabilize interactions around the issues of separate and together. Movement to identify who is close and who is distant occurs frequently within the triangles. Thus, change in any one triangle creates change in all the interlocking triangles. Although triangulation is considered to be a natural way of handling anxiety, if anxiety in one relationship is not resolved it will be played out in another relationship. It is also important to note that the most triangled position in any set of relationships is always the most vulnerable. This person has the tendency to become the most powerful person in the triangle.\(^{42}\) For example, within a convent or local

\(^{40}\) Richardson, 116.


residence individuals form a community of equals, however, sometimes the roles of individuals have a tendency to overflow into communal living. Occasionally, a conflict may arise between the coordinator/superior of the house and the principal of the school. In an attempt to relieve this tension, one or the other or both individuals may attempt to ally with the sister in the house who is the treasurer because she is perceived as also having power, creating a triangle.

Triangles exist in all human relationships. There is really no such thing as “detriangling.” Therefore, it is always important to ask the question “Where is the triangle?” in any given human interaction. Triangles have the potential to build on themselves, interlock and then polarize so much so that an entire family, group, community or organization can become involved in taking sides over any issue.\(^{43}\)

The key for managing any triangle to which a person belongs is to manage self. The more a person works on becoming and being that calming, thinking, self-defining presence, connected with others; the more he or she becomes self-differentiated and has the ability to bring others along on the path to health. For example, when a conflict arises between two sisters within a local community, an attempt may be made by one person to reduce her level of stress by bringing a third person into the relationship. However, the third person, after listening to the situation, encourages the sister to lovingly address the issue within the relationship. In truth, “real community is not based on homogeneity. It is the discipline and devotion of disparate people bearing with one another – the hard tasks of love.”\(^{44}\)

\(^{43}\)Gilbert, 50-52.

\(^{44}\)Steinke, \textit{Healthy Congregations}, 88.
Summary

What initially brought the early Christian community together was a common call to follow Jesus. What formed this community in the first place was a desire to share faith and to live differently because they had been transformed by the paschal mystery. What later sustained this diverse group of disciples was their faithfulness to God, their bond of love for each other and their common mission. And what further empowered this newly formed community of faith was their openness to the constant grace of God.

In truth, forming community cannot be solely dependent on family systems theory; a Christian community must leave room for the Trinity. The eight concepts of family systems theory by Murray Bowen, however, are essential tools for the human journey toward community because they guide one’s understanding of human behavior that was first instilled by one’s family of origin. As members share in their daily communal experience, they become not only engaged in the powerful dynamics of human relationships, but also empowered by a faith which frees them to believe in the dream of authentic community. As theologian Walter Brueggemann enthusiastically proclaims: “What God does first and best and most is to trust His people with this moment in history. He trusts them to do what must be done for the sake of the whole community.”

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Steinke, Healthy Congregations, 107.
CHAPTER 3

Communication Skills and Conflict Management
If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vain glory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for one’s own interest, but everyone for those of others. Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.  

(Phil 2:1-11; NAB)

Communication Skills – Introduction

A person must “put on the mind of Christ” to communicate effectively with others. Such a person must not only listen to the words, pay attention to the facial expressions and body language, observe the vocal tone and rhythm of the speaker but, more importantly, the receiver must also hear with the ears of the heart for understanding and meaning. This last part requires the quality of emptiness on the part of the receiver, a willingness to be open to the other. Genuine communication always invites individuals into a state of emptiness to make room for the other. “Most important, for community, the Other is the Stranger, the other person…The purpose of emptying ourselves is therefore to make room for the new. The only reason to give up something is to gain something better.”

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Communication is defined as the exchange of information between people. There are three components for effective communication – a sender, a message and a receiver. The sender engages in a process of speaking, writing, using signs and symbols to convey thoughts, opinions, feelings, concerns, questions, ideas or messages to the receiver. The communication process is considered complete when the receiver has understood the message of the sender. While it may sound simple, communication is a very complex phenomenon especially today with text, twitter, Facebook, email and smart phones. Individuals have so many technological devices accessible to improve their communication; but that is not the whole story. Research shows that about 75% of oral communication is ignored; when listening to someone an individual pays close attention to the following: 8% verbal, 32% vocal, volume, pitch and rhythm, and 60% body language (mostly facial cues).\(^\text{47}\) However, the communication process is considered complete only when the receiver has understood the message of the sender. In a speech on communication, psychologist Carl Rogers stated that “the major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is our very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove the statement of the other person, or the other group. Real communication means to see the expressed idea and attitude from the other person’s point of view, to sense how it feels to him/her, to achieve his/her frame of reference in regard to the thing he/she is talking about.”\(^\text{48}\) Therefore, effective communication becomes an acquired skill; an art which must continually be practiced and refined.


Scott Peck, American psychiatrist and best-selling author, combined his experiences from his private psychiatry practice with a distinctly religious point of view. In his book *The Different Drum, Community Making and Peace*, he strongly contends that “the principles of good communication are the basic principles of community-building.” The true meaning of community is experienced when individuals have learned to communicate honestly with each other, grow deeper in their relationships and develop a significant commitment to one another. Communication is the bedrock of all human relationships. Ultimately genuine community depends upon the willingness of individuals to practice the love, discipline, and sacrifice necessary to respect each other’s gifts, accept each other’s limitations, celebrate differences, and bind each other’s wounds. In addition, individuals must be willing to commit themselves to struggle together for authentic community, such that no one attempts to heal, convert, fix or change another person.

Evelyn Whitehead defines “community as a way to BE together.” Community becomes an interdependent style of group life as individuals acquire the resources of both mind and heart necessary to become transformed into love. Whitehead firmly contends that “we need communication skills: the ability to disclose information about ourselves, our needs and expectations, our images and definitions of community.” She further identifies the three interpersonal skills essential for community living as empathy, personal disclosure and confrontation. In reality, most religious congregations of men and women are rich in empathy.

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49 Peck, 83.

50 Whitehead, 15.

51 Whitehead, 147.
but lacking in personal disclosure and confrontation. Therefore, individuals must become empowered to identify those behaviors for effective communication and conflict management so they can learn these graceful ways to give and receive the gift of themselves that is the core of community.  

Peck and Whitehead methodically explain the correlation between communication and community. Both provide very practical guidelines, rules and tools for learning effective communication skills that will strengthen genuine community. In addition, these experts emphasize the vital role of conflict for the growth of the individuals and the overall health of the community. Thus, the design of this chapter on effective communication and conflict management skills will include the contributions of many experts in the following areas: barriers to communication, dialogue, active listening skills, three approaches to relationships, and conflict management styles and tools.

**Barriers to Communication**

This section will explore the contributions of three areas of study that have researched and identified various barriers to communication: theology, interpersonal communication and the field of behavioral science.

According to Reuel Howe, theologian and educator, “a barrier to communication is something that keeps meanings from meeting. Meaning barriers exist between all people, making

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52 Whitehead, 140.
Barriers to communication are used over 90 percent of the time in normal conversations, especially when one or both persons have a problem or a strong need. Interpersonal communication expert Thomas Gordan has devised a comprehensive list of conversation responses, referred to as the “dirty dozen,” that create roadblocks in communication interactions.\footnote{Reuel Howe cited in Bolton, 15.}

The twelve ways of responding include: criticizing, name-calling, diagnosing, praising evaluative, ordering, threatening, moralizing, excessive/inappropriate questioning, advising, diverting, logical argument and reassuring. Often times these responses are considered high-risk responses and usually occur when either one or both persons experience some level of stress. Behavioral scientists further concur that these twelve responses, or the “dirty dozen,” have the potential to damage interpersonal communication because they tend to block conversation, increase the emotional distance between people and interfere with the other person’s problem-solving efficiency.

Thomas Gordan has further divided the twelve barriers (the “dirty dozen”) to communication into three major categories: judging, sending solutions and avoiding the other’s concerns. In addition, there are several conversational habits, which seem normal and natural in most situations that directly correlate with these major roadblocks. For example, the roadblocks that fall under the first category of judging include: criticizing, name-calling, diagnosing, and praising evaulatively. These habitual behaviors are the result of the natural tendency of humans

to judge one another – to approve or disapprove of their statements. This happens because the brain functions faster than a computer, and thus, individuals are always engaged in a process of making sense of information it receives.

The second sub-category, sending solutions, include those behaviors that create a barrier to communication such as, ordering, threatening, moralizing, excessive or inappropriate questioning, being right, sparring, identifying and advising. However, sending solutions often compounds a problem, creates a new problem or thwarts another person’s growth. For example, ordinarily, men are very good at trying to problem-solve or find a quick solution; whereas, women often respond by trying to be helpful or easing another’s pain.

The third sub-category is avoiding the other’s concern. Most notable for getting conversations off the track include diverting, rehearsing, filtering, dreaming, placating, logical argument and reassurance. In a society that prides itself on the art of multi-tasking, it is no wonder that conversations get side-tracked, because all individuals are concerned about meeting their own needs or goals. For example, often times, in an effort to reduce anxiety in a relationship, individuals will rehearse a speech in their mind that includes a clear message that they hope to convey in a conversation. Although roadblocks are common and prevalent in all cultures, behavioral scientists contend that these communication responses are detrimental to relationships because they diminish self-esteem and undermine motivation by triggering feelings of inadequacy, dependency, and anger.\(^{55}\)

These twelve responses create not only barriers to communication, but also roadblocks for authentic community. Many of these responses have become bad habits that have been

\(^{55}\) Thomas Gordon cited in Bolton, 17.
learned over time, either from one’s family of origin or daily unhealthy interactions. All of these twelve responses, and there are many more, are considered external barriers to communication because they are initiated from someone else in the relationship. However, there are also internal factors that cause communication to break down in a relationship.

Sometimes the barriers to communication that become most troublesome are personal – that is, they originate from within. The seven most common internal problems that inhibit a person’s ability to communicate his or her best self in a relationship are: fear, assumption, insensitivity, labeling, uncertainty, resentment, and egotism. Each of these problems often cause failure in interpersonal conversations because they form a barrier and contribute to an individual’s inability to engage in empathy, self-disclosure and active listening. For example, if a woman religious was requested by a sister in leadership to change her ministry and mission several years ago and left “kicking and screaming,” she may be unable to listen actively to that sister even if she is living now with her in community. Or a middle age sister may feel threatened by the “aggressive style” of a younger sister from a Hispanic culture. Some healthy characteristics that a person can develop to overcome these internal problems include: self-awareness, understanding, care for others, control of emotions, positive self-esteem, self-confidence and self-disclosure.  

Dialogue: A Different Kind of Communication

“Dialogue is a communication process that aims to build relationships between people

56 Sweets, 14-23.
as they share experiences, ideas, and information about a common concern.” A specific goal of dialogue is to broaden an individual’s understanding of a particular issue through shared wisdom in order to arrive at a new collective understanding. Therefore, dialogue is a unique communication process that focuses an individual’s attention on listening for understanding.

The three-fold essence of dialogue involves respectful listening, learning, and sharing experiences that shape our beliefs. Those who actively engage in dialogue remain open to learning with a willingness to change and thus produce the hallmark qualities for effective dialogue: curiosity, wonder and humility. Individuals come to understand that beliefs are shaped by life experiences, age, class, ethnicity, religion, education, gender, and geography. The benefits of dialogue are two-fold. First, the individual gains greater insight into his or her own perspectives, values, patterns of thinking and biases. Second, dialogue shapes a person’s capacity for empathy as he or she comes to appreciate and celebrate the diversity within a group.

In order to build relationships among people through dialogue, it is essential for individuals to acquire new skills that will improve their communication patterns. These skills include: active listening, speaking honestly and assertively about experiences and opinions while remaining empathetic toward others, following group ground rules for communicating effectively and identifying common ground.59


58 Campt, 8.

59 Campt, 19.
Active Listening Skills

Theologian John Powell contends: “listening in dialogue is listening more to meaning than to words…In true listening, we reach behind the words, see through them, to find the person who is being revealed. Listening is a search to find the treasure of the true person as revealed both verbally and nonverbally.” Everyday listening takes up more of a person’s waking hours than any other activity – usually 45 percent. Unfortunately, however, people in general are very poor listeners especially in a world that values multi-tasking.

Listening requires an active participation on the part of the receiver – it is a “combination of hearing what the other person says and a suspenseful waiting, an intense psychological involvement with the other.” For example, in passive listening the mind is only partially engaged in the communication process, but in active listening the mind is fully involved. Dynamics that become barriers to active listening include: stress, self-centered concerns, and brain speed.

The four steps for effective listening are: listening actively, listening with empathy, listening with openness, and listening with awareness. Active listening involves utilizing the reflecting skills of paraphrasing, clarifying, and giving feedback. In this way, the listener becomes an active participant and collaborator in the communication process as one listens for ideas, thoughts and feelings. Empathetic listening requires asking “How would I feel if I were in the other person’s situation?” Empathy enables one to listen with the ear of one’s heart in an

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60 John Powell, as cited in Bolton, 49.
61 Bolton, 32.
62 McKay, 17-22.
effort to see the world through the eyes of another. Listening with openness requires listening to the person’s whole story while suspending judgment, maintaining eye contact, creating a presence of acceptance, and observing nonverbal cues. Listening with awareness has two dimensions: first, listening to oneself for congruence by comparing what is being said with one’s own knowledge of history, people and life experiences; and second, knowing when to keep silent to allow the other to share their whole story. Dr. Elton Mayo, Australian psychologist, sociologist and organization theorist, summarizes the power of genuine listening when he says “one friend, one person who is truly understanding, who takes the trouble to listen to us as we consider our problems, can change our whole outlook on the world.”

Three Approaches to Relationships

Generally there are three styles that individuals utilize to defend their personal space and to make a psychological impact on others and the world in which they live; namely, an interaction can be passive, assertive or aggressive. Whatever a person’s style of relating, there are payoffs and penalties for each of these ways of relating to others. Most individuals usually have a dominant style of responding in relationship, but they may also have occasions when they use the other two styles. The phrase “SAY IT! SHOUT IT! SKIP IT!” is an easy way to remember these three styles.

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63 Dr. Elton Mayo as cited in Bolton, 27.

64 McKay, 128-131.

The assertive individual is someone who is self-differentiated and exhibits a “SAY IT” approach to his/her relationships. Such a person makes clear and direct statements regarding feelings, thoughts and wishes, and thus, is willing to stand up for his/her own rights while also considering the rights and feelings of others. The assertive person is able to state clearly his/her perspective, feelings and needs in a given situation in very specific terms. Such a person is also an empathetic person who is open to compromise and negotiation. In addition, he/she is able to maintain self-respect, pursue happiness, satisfy needs, and defend rights and personal space without abusing, or dominating others. “True assertiveness is a way of being in the world which confirms one’s own individual worth and dignity while simultaneously confirming and maintaining the worth of others.” 66 Jesus was an assertive person, throughout his life conveying confidence in the power of God within. Individuals who grew up in a large city and are often thought of as “street smart” can be considered assertive because of their clear and direct manner of speaking.

The aggressive style of communication is often characterized by the phrase “SHOUT IT.” The person who frequently relates aggressively in conversation exhibits the following characteristics: selfishly lobbies for ideas, wants or desires; has an attitude of “my way or the highway”; often belittles others while expressing self; clearly expresses how one feels, thinks or what he or she wants often at the expense of others’ rights or feelings. Other tactics included in the aggressive style are: the person may be deadly quiet, use sarcasm or humorous put-downs when communicating, or go on the attack by pointing the finger of blame in a situation. This person often uses terms like “you,” “always,” and “never.” Aggressive communication can be

66 Bolton, 125.
malicious and often demeaning to the other person. It is a hostile approach to communicating that attempts to bully or belittle others into seeing things a person’s way. Sometimes this person seems to “carry a chip on his or her shoulder.”

The third and most popular approach to communication is the passive style, the “SKIP IT” style, often described as simply being nice. Passive communication is the complete opposite of the assertive style. People who use this approach have been unable to find their voice because they hide and do not directly express their honest feelings or needs. Such persons choose to express feelings and thoughts indirectly by frowning, crying, whispering, or totally withholding. Such people avoid, postpone or hide conflict while masking their own needs and feelings with frustration and anger. “Submissive behavior seems to have become a way of life for the majority of the population”67 because individuals prefer to be thought of as “nice” rather than aggressive. One possible advantage of passive communication is that a person does not take responsibility for his or her own feelings and needs, and thus is often protected. Such a position has the power to exert control over others. The major cost associated with this form of response is an unlived life; that is, giving up being oneself for the sake of being loved. Thus, relationships are less satisfying and intimate desires are unmet.

Causes of Conflict

Conflict is actually an outgrowth of diversity and differences. Diversity is a very healthy aspect of human interaction because it can open up new possibilities and challenge individuals to think differently. Dudley Weeks Ph.D., Crisis Resolution Consultant and Trainer, in his book

67 Bolton, 124.
The Eight Essential Steps to Conflict Resolution: Preserving Relationships at Work, at Home and in the Community, identifies seven basic elements that characterize most conflicts – perceptions, needs, values, power, desires, goals and opinions. He also states that individuals must begin to consider the differences in any of these areas to clarify a mutual understanding of a relationship, to consider new ideas and possibilities, and to determine if there are aspects of the relationships in which the individuals can build effectively to improve the relationship.68

Conflicts will happen when individuals experience the gift and challenge of diversity. Perception is the way an individual interprets reality. Conflicts often arise as the direct result of perception and misperception. Perceptual conflicts usually arise from differences in self-perception, perceptions of the other person, perceptions of the issue or situation, and perceptions of threat. Needs are the conditions that a person perceives one cannot do without, or believes are critical for his or her well-being and growth of the relationship. Conflict usually results when one ignores the needs of the other person, one’s own needs, or the needs of the relationship. For example, according to family systems theory, each person must balance the need for individuality and togetherness. Another essential ingredient of conflict is power, defined as the capacity of a person to act effectively and to have the ability to influence another. Therefore, the way a person uses power determines the number and nature of conflicts within relationships and the way one chooses to address conflict. It is important to consider the balance of power in the relationship.

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68 Dudley Weeks, The Eight Essential Steps to Conflict Resolution: Preserving Relationships at Work, at Home, and in the Community (New York; Penguin Putnam, Inc. 1992), 33-34. Dr. Dudley Weeks is widely known throughout the U.S. and the world for his contributions to many fields, including, conflict resolution, education, project planning, organizational development and social change.
A value is something one considers to be of significant importance. This can involve a belief, principle, or even pattern of behavior that one highly regards. Conflict occurs when individuals jump to the conclusion that the issue is a value when it, in fact, is simply a preference, when individuals hold incompatible values or if one or both individuals is unclear about owned values. For example, conflict happens when one person in community values living simply and another values convenience or comfort.

A very powerful source of conflict also is found within a person. Internal conflict can be caused when individuals do not know what their values are or who and what they want to be; when individuals are ambiguous about what they want in a relationship; and when individuals have not become grounded in their own authority but rather listen to the various external voices of others.

**Responses to Conflict**

There are several possible responses to conflict that a person learns from others in their relationships. Healthy and mature people often engage in the following responses to conflict:

- ignore the conflict and refuse to acknowledge it exists;
- pursue/flight response in order to create distance from the conflict;
- shift the focus onto others rather than one’s self;
- blame, criticize, project their problems on others;
- fight and become abusive;
- refuse to take personal responsibility for the problem;
- trivialize or minimize the conflict through humor;
- face it honestly and deal with it courageously, trusting in the Spirit.\(^6^9\)

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\(^6^9\) Sofield, 82.
Peck contends that “the essential dynamic of pseudo-community is conflict avoidance.”\textsuperscript{70} Individuals avoid conflict in a community by telling little white lies and withholding the truth about their values, beliefs and feelings. Therefore, the basic pretense of pseudo-community is the denial of individual differences. Genuine community, according to Peck, is a group that can fight gracefully. Members of a community have learned to become skilled at listening and understanding, respecting each other’s gifts, accepting each other’s’ limitations, celebrating their differences, binding each other’s’ wounds, and struggling together rather than against one another.\textsuperscript{71} Such individuals have embraced the reality that, although conflict is a difficult and painful process, they can learn the skills necessary to engage in creative and energizing ways to resolve their conflicts.

**Conflict Management Results**

There are five outcomes that an individual can expect from engaging in a conflict management process. First, one of the most dramatic outcomes is the ability to address and process the emotions of the individuals throughout the interaction. This method encourages the genuine and direct expression of feelings, one person at a time. Second, the capacity to grow and change in one’s understanding as a person who strives to integrate new insights and ideas. Third, the possibility that the other person may also change. Fourth, the two individuals involved may be ready to develop together a creative solution regarding the issue of conflict. Fifth, this interaction may gradually empower the individuals to communicate effectively until each accepts

\textsuperscript{70} Peck, 88.

\textsuperscript{71} Peck, 71.
the right to differ and agree to disagree. Thus, handling conflict in this way has the potential to deepen and enrich one’s relationships as the individuals learn true empathy and non-possessive love.  

The way to resolve conflict and build relationships is through effective communication. One’s ability to discover new possibilities within relationships and within conflict situations is often impaired by the “packaged” truths and limited vision one holds onto in times of stress, insecurity and conflict. Real dialogue is effective for conflict management because it nurtures the attitudes of abundance, learning and genuine listening. Believing in the attitude of abundance leaves room for a creative process with unlimited possibilities. Someone who is willing to learn is also willing to approach a relationship with an emptiness – getting rid of the ego-based ideas for winning, being right, fixing, blaming and doing it the “right” way. A disposition of openness enables individuals to actively engage in a process of discovery and exploration as together they seek the best solution. “Listening to others, and paying attention to your sensing systems, enables you to “learn your way through” without knowing what the outcome will be.” The hallmark of collaboration occurs when everyone is inside the same circle, standing together, shoulder to shoulder, wondering how best to take care of the shared concerns while envisioning and creating a future together.

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72 Bolton, 229-230.
73 Weeks, 183.
74 Levine, 98.
75 Levine, 67.
I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:1-6 NAB

Summary

Peck describes community as “a group of individuals who have learned to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitments to rejoice together, mourn together, and to delight in each other, make each other’s conditions their own.” This ideal will only become incarnated in the practical reality of life together through hard work. Peck strongly contends that effective communication skills are the building blocks for authentic community.

Dialogue is a form of effective communication that has the potential to transform human relationships and create a new type of solidarity and union. Active listening with empathy and genuine concern is vital for crafting authentic community. Other interpersonal skills also important for genuine community include personal disclosure and confrontation. Evelyn Whitehead also affirms the importance of acquiring effective communication skills (empathy, personal disclosure and confrontation) that will empower individuals to learn how to respectfully and gracefully give and receive the gift of themselves that is at the core of community.

Conflict is a word that creates feelings of anxiety for most individuals; yet conflict is inevitable in any human interaction and a normal aspect of genuine relationships. Conflict has

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76 Peck, 59.

77 Whitehead, 140.
the capacity to be either destructive or constructive in a relationship and is often a difficult dynamic to acknowledge because of fear. In reality, however, the avoidance of conflict is the direct result of an individual lacking the learnable skills for handling conflict. Conflict management is best summarized in *The Four Fold Way* described by Angelis Arrien: “Show Up. Pay Attention. Tell Your Truth. Don’t Be Attached to the Outcome.”

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CHAPTER 4

Mutuality and Accountability
Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. Colossians 3:12-15NAB

Introduction

Every Christian is baptized into a four-pronged call: to holiness, to community, to mission and to Christian maturity. Thus, by virtue of baptism every person is called to become an active and contributing member of the body of Christ, and community is the milieu where the individual Christian is nurtured, supported and challenged to live the fullness of his/her vocation. Accountability and mutuality are two important components necessary for community that, in general, both religious congregations and church groups have struggled to embrace with some regularity. Therefore, it is vital that every community be an intentional community; one that is willing to hold members accountable for mutually agreed upon minimal standards and expectations.

The Concept of Mutuality

In the book Community of Faith by the Whiteheads, Michael A. Cowan wrote a chapter entitled “Recognizing Different Levels of Mutuality” in which he defines mutuality as “the ability of persons to engage in direct and non-manipulative dialogue, each understanding and respecting the other’s frame of reference.” Cowan describes the various levels of mutuality with the corresponding interpersonal skills required for each level. The level of mutuality present

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within a community is shaped by the goals and values of the group, personal sharing and the rules that guide members’ behavior toward one another.

Cowan identifies three levels of mutuality. The first level embraces the two basic patterns of communication behavior, self-disclosure and empathy, which are concrete ways people offer one another support. Mutuality in the first level encompasses minimal requirements for basic human decency in relationships. The intermediate level actively engages in the dynamic interplay of support and challenge. The possibility for direct and responsible challenge is the hallmark for the second level; it requires an individual’s capacity for self-examination. The direct and responsible challenge or confrontation needs to be understood and experienced by people as an invitation to examine some aspect of their behavior. The personal and social development of a group is greatly enhanced when individuals are actively engaged in direct and responsible challenge, because of the potential for growth and change. The third level of mutuality focuses on the relationship itself. “Immediacy is the ability of individuals to share directly with one another information about ways their behavior injures the relationship or gets in the way of collaboration.”

These immediacy issues are powerful sources of change because they raise core concerns of how a person is experienced in relationship. Mutuality in interpersonal relationships is critical for the growth and development of the person, especially since individuals are formed in the diverse contexts of their lives.

Cowan also identifies five interrelated qualities that shape and influence a person’s capacity for mutuality in interpersonal relationships: self-esteem, working knowledge, skills, values and rules. The level of a person’s self-esteem will determine one’s ability to risk the

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vulnerability necessary for mutuality. A person with a low self-esteem is unable to engage in self-disclosure because the primary focus of one with low self-esteem is self-protection. Working knowledge is information that empowers a person to pursue his or her goals, such as the attitudes and behavior required to work in business, become an engineer, or live in community. In addition, mutuality also requires the effective use of communication skills – listening, personal disclosure and conflict management. Empathy is another vitally important skill. An empathetic person is able to accurately perceive what other people are saying and feeling; thus communicating to the other person a level of understanding. In order for mutuality to become a lived reality, it is imperative that individuals consider it a value and be willing to invest the time and energy necessary for growth. Finally, a community that desires to practice mutuality at a deeper level must also establish norms and rules that will guide the interpersonal relationships.

“Taking joint responsibility and holding one another accountable for that creative work is precisely what community membership entails.”

Some of the practical ways that individuals may engage in mutuality are honest dialogue, communal examen, theological reflection, goal-setting, retreat days and faith-sharing. In order to fully incarnate the spirit of mutuality, community members must be willing to embrace the struggle necessary to develop the tenderness, discipline and resilience of spirit required for giving and receiving in interpersonal relationships. “To care for one another and to accept one

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81 Lee and Cowan, 114,
another’s care in this spirit of deep mutuality is to place our ordinary acts of face-to-face interaction within the ultimate context of love.”

Dynamics of Accountability

The concept of intentional communities must also encompass an understanding of accountability. Brother Loughlan Sofield, ST, a leading consultant on ministry and personal development, defines accountability saying “every community should be an intentional community, i.e., one in which the expectations for membership are clearly expressed and in which members are held accountable for those agreed upon expectations.”

Sofield describes three conditions vital for the growth of any community. First, there is the establishing of minimum expectations with a process of accountability; second, there is a willingness to unearth and discuss commonly held myths about membership; and third, there must be honest evaluation of the commitment and capacity of its members. Sofield identifies three major reasons why communities often fail. First, a mutual, common purpose is absent. Second, many members do not possess the capacity, ability or maturity to achieve the common purpose. Third, the community has failed to develop appropriate and effective structures and processes for accountability.

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82 Cowan cited in Whitehead, 138.
83 Sofield, 61.
84 Sofield, 63-64.
85 Sofield, 117.
Sofield further identifies and describes four arbitrary and artificial categories of community membership. The first category includes individuals who are gifted, called and remains committed to fostering the growth of the community. The second category includes those members who are gifted and called but have stopped contributing to the community. The third category is composed of members who are gifted and called but live only a superficial level of community, because they lack psycho-social development. The fourth category of members is neither gifted nor capable of living even the most minimal expectations for community.\textsuperscript{86}

While the ideal community would be one whose members come from Sofield’s first category, the current reality of communal living in religious life has been shaped by the influences of Vatican II and other eventual circumstances, such as aging members. Changes in ministerial needs, as well as the birth and death of religious communities over time, complacency of the members, and diminished accountability resulting from more collegiality in governance, have all unintentionally created these four categories of membership in community. Sofield clearly expresses this natural progression in the following way:

There comes a time in the life of every community when members will begin to lose sight of the mission and instead make choices that opt for nesting, valuing affiliation, relationships and closeness. In addition, there comes a point in the life of every community when weary and disillusioned members surrender to the temptation to opt for security over prophecy, affiliation over mission, peace over conflict and confrontation.\textsuperscript{87}

Models of Mutuality and Accountability

There is much to be learned about the principles of mutuality and accountability by examining the components of small Christian communities. In the book \textit{Gathered and Sent: The}

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{86} Sofield, 62-63

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 103.
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Mission of Small Christian Communities Today, Bernard J. Lee, a Marianist priest and professor of theology, joins with Michael A. Cowan in describing the hallmark qualities for creating a small Christian community that reflects the experience of full and active participation. A small Christian community is considered intentional community if one consciously and deliberately chooses it. Small Christian communities make a conscious commitment; one, for engaging in genuine conversations that hold the possibility for conversion, and two, for sharing specific actions along four dimensions - a high degree of mutuality in their relationships, an informed critical awareness of and active engagement within society, a willingness to cultivate and sustain a network of empowering connections, and attending faithfully to the Christian character of their community life.\(^{88}\)

James O’Halloran, a Salesian priest, has worked with small Christian communities for over thirty years in various capacities as member, coordinator, lecturer and promoter. In his book, Small Christian Communities; Vision and Practicalities, he shares a vision and offers practical suggestions that specifically help small Christian communities find their own path. Though his work focuses primarily on small Christian communities, the five essential elements he identifies also have the capacity to enrich and re-energize the dynamics of community within the context of religious life.\(^{89}\)

The five essential elements O’Halloran envisions for small Christian communities are: bonding, spirituality, reality, commitment and communication. All of these elements, when


integrated, have the potential to empower any Christian to grow in holiness, community, mission and maturity – required by one’s baptism. For example, all baptized Christians are called to be community because God is community in the Trinity and they are created in God’s image. The Trinity is a community where intimate loving and sharing, full participation of the three persons, absolute equality of persons, and outreach to the other are revealed.  

Mutuality is obviously vital for the life of any community: it involves participation in all aspects of a person’s faith life. Community means we are willing to share with others spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, intuitively and practically. It becomes imperative for individuals to actively engage in self-disclosure that is vulnerable and grace-filled. For this reason, commitment becomes the heart and soul of community. Each member and the community as a whole must be totally committed to Christ and living out the gospel values.

The small Christian community is called to witness to the church as communion. Similarly, community living in religious life is also called to be a prophetic witness to the kingdom of God reflected in justice and a preferential option for the poor. Both communities, therefore, become powerful expressions of the kingdom of God on earth and effective instruments for spreading the good news. For this to become a living reality, O’Halloran contends that both “community and kingdom begin in my own heart.”

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90 James O’Halloran 14.
91 O’Halloran, 19.
92 O’Halloran, 34.
Peter Block, author and consultant, in his book *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, talks about the power of “restorative community.” He defines “restorative” as the possibility for aliveness and wholeness within a community when individuals choose to use the language of healing, relatedness and belonging. It is true that individuals must have the courage to take responsibility for the present situation, and to be accountable in creating an alternative future. “Accountability is the willingness to care for the whole, and it flows out of the kind of conversations we have about the new story we want to take our identity from.” Individuals begin to ask the question, “What can we create together?” Block believes that this question is at the intersection of possibility and accountability. He contends that possibility without accountability results in wishful thinking and accountability without possibility creates despair. Therefore, commitment and accountability really cannot exist without each other. Commitment is a willingness to make a promise with no expectation of return. The key here is that individuals choose deliberately to make a commitment. They choose to be accountable rather than entitled. Block contends that to create a community of accountability and belonging, individuals must be engaged in the six conversations that have the potential to create an accountable and hospitable community that possesses the qualities of invitation, possibility, ownership, dissent, commitment and gifts.

Often times, accountability and commitment evolve as individuals within a community embrace the powerful questions that both engage and empower the members to co-create the

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93 Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2009), 48. Block is an author and consultant for Designed Learning that provides training for empowerment, stewardship, chosen accountability and the reconciliation of community.
world. For example, the questions, “How do we choose to be together? What promise am I willing to make?” and “What is the price I am willing to pay for the success of the whole?” will become transformational because they lead to requests, offers, declarations, forgiveness, confession, gratitude and welcome. Although these questions are being asked in the business arena, they also seem extremely appropriate and easily applied to a religious congregation. Members in community are also beginning to ask those same questions in their efforts to become renewed and grow deeper. In this way, Block demonstrates that the field of organizational management in business can provide religious communities with some practical tools for implementing both accountability and mutuality.\textsuperscript{94}

Peter Senge is an American scientist, professor, author and director of the Center for Organizational Learning at the MIT Sloan School of Management. Senge’s work contends that human values form the cornerstone of any workplace; therefore, an organization will only realize its full potential by becoming a learning organization made up of individuals who focus time and energy on vision, purpose, reflectiveness and systems thinking.

According to Senge, the future vitality of any organization depends on its capacity for learning. Developing the human resources for learning must become an organization’s highest priority. Every effort must be directed to build such a “learning organization where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are

\textsuperscript{94} Block, 106.
continually learning how to learn together.”\textsuperscript{95} A religious congregation can be considered such a learning organization because of the high priority placed upon the education of its membership, dedication to the field of education, and the value for becoming life-long learners. Religious men and women commit a great deal of both human and financial resources to provide continuing education for the membership. What Senge brings to the table is a theory and methodology for integrating new learnings into the organizational system of religious life.

Senge also introduces another process, gleaned from the field of leadership and management, “the U process,” as a framework for practically organizing the five disciplines. This unique process was originally developed by C. Otto Scharmaer, Joseph Jaworksi, Adam Kahane, and many of their colleagues as a way to design and lead deep collective learning processes. \textsuperscript{96} Specifically, the U process helps a group to collaboratively engage in the three dynamics of sensing, presencing and realizing. \textsuperscript{97}

The sensing state of being invites individuals to utilize systems thinking and dialogue to become deeply grounded not only in their own perception of reality, but also in the diverse realities that exist among others in the group.\textsuperscript{98} The presencing state of being encourages individuals to move into a deep process of connecting with both purpose and visioning,

\textsuperscript{95} Senge, \textit{The Fifth Discipline}, 3.


\textsuperscript{97} Senge, \textit{Presence}, 88.

\textsuperscript{98} Senge, \textit{Presence}, 88.
individually and collectively.\textsuperscript{99} The third state of being, realizing, naturally flows into swift action as visions become clarified and individuals share a deeper understanding of their desire to create something new together. The “U” process, when integrated, could become a very powerful tool for religious congregations because it speaks the language of learning, reflection, depth, common ground and transformation.\textsuperscript{100}

**Summary**

Mutuality and accountability are two very important characteristics necessary for both personal and professional healthy relationships. Often times, these two qualities seem ambiguous and elusive in most relationships. However, mutuality and accountability are two qualities vital for religious community, small Christian community and the business community.

Michael Cowan, in his work with small Christian communities, defines mutuality as “the ability of persons to engage in direct and non-manipulative dialogue, each understanding and respecting the other’s frame of reference.”\textsuperscript{101} Peter Block defines accountability as “the willingness to care for the whole, and it flows out of the kind of conversations we have about the new story we want to take our identity from.”\textsuperscript{102} These definitions seem similar and yet they are written from a different perspective. While Michael Cowan and James O’Halloran approach the qualities of mutuality and accountability from the theological and scriptural perspective for

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 91-92.
\textsuperscript{101} Michael Cowan cited in Whiteheads, 132.
\textsuperscript{102} Block, 48.
ministry, Peter Block and Peter Senge approach mutuality and accountability from the unique perspective of learning, leadership and management. These different threads are able to be woven into one tapestry by affirming that the power to co-create dwells deep within each person. The task of creating authentic community can only be accomplished when members are committed to the work of weaving this tapestry into a colorful and vibrant masterpiece.
CHAPTER 5

The Workshop
For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self; and that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:14-21 NAB

Identification and Background of the Problem

In 2009, the National Religious Vocation Conference published a “Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life in the United States,” designed to identify and understand the characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of the men and women who were entering religious life today, as well as the characteristics and practices of the religious institutes that are successfully attracting new candidates and retaining new members. In this study, new members cite community life as the most influential factor in their decision to enter a particular institute. They express a desire to live, share meals, minister, socialize, and pray with other members in their religious institute, with communal prayer being most important. This desire for genuine community has become a catalyst for religious congregations to take a closer look at their current quality of communal living.

Religious life, as a vocation in the church, is a call to live authentic community that is both counter-cultural and gospel-centered, thus closely resembling the early Christian communities that were of one heart, one mind and one spirit. The problem in ministry that this project seeks to address is how to empower women religious to rediscover the true meaning of authentic community, defined as the integration of effective communication, interdependence
and mutual commitment. Therefore, the ultimate goal for this ministry project is to actively engage participants in the lifelong process of transformation necessary for the overall improvement in the quality of community life.

**Project Design and Implementation**

This Doctor of Ministry project, “Crafting Authentic Community,” provides women religious with the tools necessary to live meaningful authentic community, shaped by the unique charism of their individual religious congregation. This project explores the current reality of communal living in religious life and demonstrates the potential for transforming its future. First, the project describes those church documents which address the scriptural and theological foundations for rediscovering the meaning of authentic community. Second, the project identifies the key concepts of family systems theory relevant for communal living. This new understanding has the potential to empower the members of religious congregations to both think and act differently as they strive to live healthy community. Third, this project describes the effective communication and conflict management skills necessary for “crafting” authentic religious community for the third millennium. The final section of the project draws on the basic principles of small Christian communities and business management to integrate the components of accountability, interdependence and mutual commitment, which are essential to nurture and sustain community.
Preparation and Invitation

On October 1, 2012, (Appendix A1) the candidate invited forty-three religious from the same congregation, representing diverse communal settings, to participate in a one day workshop on the topic of Crafting Authentic Community. These invitations were sent through the postal mail and included a self-addressed stamped envelope requesting a response from each sister. There were six steps that sisters would be expected to fulfill if they accepted the invitation. These included: completion of an online survey prior to the workshop; review a Power Point on family systems theory prior to the workshop; read a short article also on family systems theory prior to the workshop; attend the full day workshop; complete an evaluation form for the workshop and complete an online survey six weeks following the workshop.

Originally, the candidate chose to include those sisters living in the Washington, DC and Maryland areas because they were a reliable representative sample of the larger congregation regarding a variety of communal settings, ministries and ages. However, this sample diminished significantly one year prior to the workshop because of illness, death or other ministry changes; therefore, the five members of the current leadership team and nine members of the Community Life Committee, a standing committee of the congregation, were also invited to participate in the full day workshop. Twenty-eight sisters actually registered for the workshop, which included three from leadership and five from the Community Life Committee.

The Workshop

The Crafting Authentic Community was presented on Saturday, January 26, 2013 at the parish of Saint John the Evangelist in Silver Spring, MD, where the IHM Sisters have ministered
since 1950. Two weeks prior to the workshop, participants completed an online questionnaire which was designed using Survey Monkey. This questionnaire was compromised of 25 closed-ended statements and five open-ended statements. Twenty-four sisters completed the survey online while eleven sisters chose to complete and return the questionnaire through the postal mail for a total of thirty-five completed surveys. The pre-survey was created to assess participants’ current understanding of relevant church documents, the dynamics of family systems theory, effective communication and conflict management skills, and the concepts of interdependence, accountability and mutuality as they pertain to community life.

In addition, participants were also required to read an article entitled “A Theory About Families Can Benefit Communities” written by Brian J. Kelly, Eddy. and review a twelve slide Power Point on family systems theory. The participants were introduced to the key concepts of individuality, togetherness, anxiety, triangles, and differentiation from family systems theory that impact the emotional system of community.

The full-day workshop was comprised of three sessions (Appendix B1). Each session included a short prayer, a PowerPoint presentation, brief reflection time, individual exercises, small group discussion, and interactive exercises. Although twenty-eight sisters originally registered for the workshop, there were twenty-one sisters present on the day of the workshop because of weather related issues and illness. This number included two sisters from the Community Life Committee, no one from the leadership team and nineteen sisters from the DC/MD area. The workshop began with a continental breakfast as the sisters arrived from various places. This aspect was very significant because hospitality is an important part of the

103 Publication information on this article can be found on page 26.
IHM charism. Following some time for coffee and conversation, the workshop started with a welcome by the principal of Saint John’s School and appreciation expressed by the candidate for the presence of the participants. This day definitely became a community project as sisters volunteered to set up the hall, order the food, get the equipment and take care of many other details. The room was arranged such that there were five sisters at each of four round tables. Following the introductory remarks, the candidate gave a brief overview of the five components of the Ministry Project.

The workshop formally began with a prayer service entitled “Community of Disciples” (Appendix B2). The prayer included time for personal reflection and then an opportunity for those sisters present to share in either dyads or triads. Immediately following the prayer, the candidate introduced the participants to the ground rules of the dialogue model for conversation, with special emphasis on the components of creating a safe space for sacred conversation and confidentiality (Appendix B3). Next, the candidate used PowerPoint to present various definitions of community (Appendix B4). Participants then received a handout entitled “Community Reflection Questions” (Appendix B5) requesting them to spend quiet reflection time on the various definitions and then to complete the sentence, “For me, community is...” Time was provided for small group sharing at the tables. This was followed by a short break period.

The first session continued with a PowerPoint presentation that briefly reviewed the Post-Vatican II Church documents that specifically addressed the topics of community or communal living in religious life (Appendix B7). In addition, the candidate periodically integrated some pertinent results from the pre-survey that related to the material under discussion (Appendix A5).
The first session ended with a poem on community and time for personal reflection to allow the morning material to resonate. Participants then enjoyed lunch together.

The second session identified effective communication skills vital for the practical living of authentic community. Participants were invited to complete a handout entitled “How Good Are Your Communication Skills?” (Appendix B8) This handout was created for personal reflection as a tool to increase one’s self-awareness of her unique communication style. A PowerPoint presentation on vital communication skills for community, the role of empathy, the importance of self-disclosure, barriers to communication, the influence of body language, elements for reflective listening, and the benefits of dialogue, took place (Appendix B10). Participants received a handout summarizing the key components for “Effective Communication Techniques” and were invited to share in dyads or triads, using “I” statements to dialogue on how one can improve a specific communication skill (Appendix B9). The first part of session two ended with the following quote by Margaret Wheatley: “It takes courage to start a conversation. But if we don’t start talking to one another, nothing will change. Conversation is the way we discover how to transform our world together.”  

A second vital component addressed in session two was the dynamics for conflict management. All participants received a handout entitled “How Do I Manage Differences?” a self-assessment tool created by Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann that is used to identify a person’s conflict mode (Appendix B11). The instrument describes the five modes for handling conflict: accommodate, avoid, collaborate, compete or compromise. Considerable time was spent

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self-scoring it, discussing the results in small groups and examining the characteristics for each conflict mode. In addition, a PowerPoint presentation provided further information regarding sources of conflict, common responses to conflict, and conflict management steps (Appendix B15). Participants also received several handouts that included: “Conflict Management Styles”\(^\text{106}\) (Appendix B12) identifying specific animals with characteristics for each style, “Rules for Fighting Fair,”\(^\text{107}\) (Appendix B14) and “Conflict Management Steps” (Appendix B13). This session concluded with time for personal reflection and a quote by Sister Donna Markham, OP: “What if we participated in the creation of new modes of conflict management, through which power and domination were replaced by reverent celebration of differences and faithful commitment to the process, wonder, and creativity of the chaotic moment? What might we model?”\(^\text{108}\)

Integrating the learnings from the previous two sessions, as the goal for the third session, participants explored the role of accountability in facilitating interdependence and mutual commitment necessary for communal living. This session began with a PowerPoint presentation comparing and contrasting the qualities of mutuality according to Loughlan Sofield and Michael Cowan. Several PowerPoint slides also focused on the vital components of accountability according to authors Peter Block\(^\text{109}\) and James O’Hallaron\(^\text{110}\) (Appendix B16). At the conclusion

\(^{106}\) Sofield, 88.

\(^{107}\) Adapted from Arthur Pressley, Drew Theological School.


\(^{109}\) Information on Peter Block can be found on page 65.

\(^{110}\) Information on James O’Hallaron can be found on page 64.
of the third session participants viewed a film clip from “The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel.” This film clip focused on the importance of being open to new ideas and being willing to learn new ways of living together at any age.

The workshop concluded with participants gathering in a circle for a short prayer on community (Appendix B17). Participants also received a commemorative prayer card with the following quote by theologian Walter Brueggemann, “What God does first and best and most is to trust His people with this moment in history. He trusts them to do what must be done for the sake of the whole community“ (Appendix B18). At the conclusion of the workshop, participants received a resource packet with a complete bibliography, additional handouts that could be used for either personal or communal reflection, an article entitled “Community – Healthy or Dysfunctional” written by Joel Giallanza, and a Workshop Evaluation Form. This evaluation tool included both closed and open-ended questions (Appendix C1-4). All participants completed the workshop evaluation before leaving. Two weeks following the workshop participants were emailed an article, entitled “Embracing Discord: Preparing Ministers for Healthy Conflict” written by Ann Garrido, D.Min.. This article was a direct response to requests for additional information on conflict management. Six weeks following the workshop,

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111 “The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel.” Seven cash-strapped seniors decide to “outsource” their retirement and search for a way to live out the rest of their lives. They discover friendship, romance and that it is never too late to find love and a fresh beginning. One decides to return to England but the others decide to make a conscious choice to stay and learn, to appreciate the giftedness of each person and the blessing they bring to the group even with their quirkiness and idiosyncrasies. They also learn that old habits don’t take long to die. 2012

112 Steinke, Healthy Congregations, 107.


participants completed a post-survey on Survey Monkey that included 36 closed-ended questions and two open-ended questions (Appendix C7). Five post-surveys were sent through the postal mail to those sisters who specifically requested a hard copy because of their level of discomfort in using the computer.

**Pre-Survey / Post-Survey Comparison**

Thirty-five sisters completed a pre-survey and twenty-five sisters responded to the post-survey. Twenty-one sisters attended the workshop; however, the results of Survey Monkey indicated twenty-five responses. Feedback from a few sisters indicated they had accidentally exited the survey prior to completing it; therefore, they reentered the survey skipping what they previously answered and completing the remaining questions. This human error explains the discrepancy between the number of workshop attendees and the number responding to the post-survey. However, in order to increase both the validity and reliability of the comparative data the candidate made a few adjustments. First, data gathered from ten respondents who completed the pre-survey, was excluded if they did not originally plan to attend the workshop or if for weather related reasons they were unable to attend the actual workshop. Second, data gathered from respondents for the post-survey was adjusted to include only those who specifically completed the two open-ended questions that referred to the workshop.

The candidate analyzed these responses from the post-survey for evidence of the following: a renewed understanding of authentic community from Church documents, an ability to identify the impact of family systems dynamics on community, the use of effective communication skills, proficiency in using conflict management techniques, and a deepened
commitment to living religious community grounded in accountability, interdependence, and mutuality. Finally, the candidate compared and contrasted the responses with those of the pre-survey.

**Demographics**

The questions in both the pre and post survey were divided into seven categories to encompass the various topics that would be covered in the workshop. Survey questions related to demographics closely reflected the current statistics for the IHM religious congregation. For example, the total number of religious is 422 and the total number over the age of seventy is 287 (68%) with the median age seventy-five. Additional demographic information regarding the ministry of respondents was also included in the post-survey. The breakdown of ministries specifically for those living within the MD/DC area compared with statistics for the entire congregation as shared in a 2012 Ministry Report: 37% in education (33% congregation), 42% pastoral or spiritual ministries (12% congregation), 21% other ministries (4% congregation).

The demographics for both the pre- and post-survey are a representative sample of the larger congregation, with 32 of 422 total members living in the MD/DC area. There was only one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Ministry</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>37% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastoral or Spiritual Ministry</td>
<td>42% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>21% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Categories of Ministry & Service**

- **Education (145)**: 4%
- **Pastoral (49)**: 12%
- **Social Service (24)**: 6%
- **Health Service (21)**: 9%
- **OLP/HM Support (42)**: 5%
- **Cong. Service (24)**: 6%
- **Prayer Ministry (102)**: 25%
- **Other (15)**: 33%

**2012 Age Distribution**

- **30-39**: 34%
- **40-49**: 23%
- **50-59**: 7%
- **60-69**: 7%
- **70-79**: 1%
- **90-101**: 2%

**Where Do We Live?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>3 Sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Carolina</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Pre-Survey (25) (1 skipped ?)</th>
<th>Post-Survey (19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25-40</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-55</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>5% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-70</td>
<td>46% (11)</td>
<td>26% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71-85</td>
<td>50% (12)</td>
<td>68% (13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

sister between the ages of 41-55 in both the pre and post survey. The increase in age directly correlates with an increase in the proportion of sisters representing those ages with an average of 36% of the sisters in the 56-70 age group (30% of the actual congregation in 2012) and 59% of the sisters between the ages of 71-85 (60% is the current reality). In addition, about 69% of the sisters have lived religious life between 46-60 years. The information about the length of time a sister has lived in her current community includes an average of 38% of the sisters have lived in their community for less than five years; 19% have lived in their current community between 6-10 years and only about 19% of the sisters have lived in their current community between 11-15 years. The number of sisters living in community also closely resembles the current reality within the congregation with about 35% living with 1-3 sisters, 27% living with 4-6 sisters, 37% living with 7-10 sisters. within the congregation with about 35% living with 1-3 sisters, 27% living with 4-6 sisters, 37% living with 7-10 sisters.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years in Religious Life</th>
<th>(one skipped?)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-15</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-30</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>5% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-45</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
<td>11% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-60</td>
<td>75% (18)</td>
<td>63% (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
<td>13% (3)</td>
<td>21% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sisters in community</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(one sister skipped the ?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>25% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>33% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-10</td>
<td>41% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in local community</td>
<td>1 skipped?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>29% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>21% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>21% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>13% (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre-Survey ONLY # Times Attended Annual Assembly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Times</th>
<th>% Attended</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8% (2)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>38% (9)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>42% (10)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first session of the workshop focused on the definition of community and the scriptural and theological foundations for living authentic community. The educational background statement from the pre-survey indicated that the majority, over 73%, read several of the Post-Vatican II documents and the two CARA studies from 1992 and 2009. This is significant because these documents create the groundwork for the scriptural and theological foundation for community living. In another statement asking if the church documents invited religious women to become “true experts of communion,” 82% of respondents strongly/agree in the pre-survey and 100% strongly/agree in the post-survey. In addition, sisters also responded similarly to the statement that the Acts of the Apostles provides the model and example for authentic community with 86% strongly agree/agree in the pre-survey, and 100% strongly agree/agree in the post-survey. Therefore, these results indicate an increased awareness for a renewed understanding of authentic community from Church documents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theological Foundations</th>
<th>Pre-Survey (25)</th>
<th>Post-Survey (19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Acts of the Apostles is a model and ideal for community</td>
<td>24% (5) Strongly Agree&lt;br&gt;62% (13) Agree&lt;br&gt;14% (3) neutral&lt;br&gt;4 skipped ?</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. IHM Constitution reflects the model and ideal for community</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>26% (5) Strongly Agree&lt;br&gt;74% (14) Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Religious are called to be “true experts of communion”</td>
<td>18% (4) Strongly Agree&lt;br&gt;67% (14) Agree&lt;br&gt;9% (2) neutral&lt;br&gt;3 skipped ?</td>
<td>53% (10) Strongly Agree&lt;br&gt;47% (9) Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Communal living will become primary relational context</td>
<td>29% (6) Strongly Agree&lt;br&gt;43% (9) Agree&lt;br&gt;19% (4) neutral&lt;br&gt;10% (2) disagree&lt;br&gt;4 skipped ?</td>
<td>21% (4) Strongly Agree&lt;br&gt;63% (12) Agree&lt;br&gt;16% (3) neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Spirituality is considered to be an essential quality for attracting new members</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>79% (15) Strongly Agree&lt;br&gt;21% (4) Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The visibility of sisters is essential for attracting future vocations</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>84% (16) Strongly Agree&lt;br&gt;16% (3) Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family Systems Perspective

Various aspects of family systems theory were incorporated throughout the workshop sessions. A comparison of the pre- and post-survey results indicated an increased awareness of the tension between individuality and togetherness, an essential component of differentiation, with 76% (16) sisters strongly agree/agree with the statement in the pre-survey compared to 100% (19) strongly agree/agree in the post-survey. Those surveyed also indicated a substantial change in their openness to the influence of the emotional system present in community for meaningful relationships with 52% (11) strongly agree/agree in the pre-survey to 90% (17) strongly agree/agree for the post-survey. A third area surveyed involved practices required for authentic community. When the practices of discipline, sacrifice and charity were included in the same statement in the pre-survey, 95% (20) strongly agree/agree. However, when these practices were listed separately in the post-survey, all three rated higher: 100% strongly agree/agree for sacrifice, 100% for charity, and 100% for discipline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Systems Perspective</th>
<th>Pre-Survey (25)</th>
<th>Post-Survey (19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Struggle between the two forces of individuality and togetherness</td>
<td>48% (10) Strongly Agree 29% (6) Agree 10% (2) Neutral 14% (3) Disagree 4 skipped ?</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative tension between the two forces of individuality and togetherness</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>58% (11) Strongly Agree 42% (8) Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Family Systems Perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Pre-Survey (25)</th>
<th>Post-Survey (19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. A religious community is an emotional system simply by virtue of time</td>
<td>14% (3) Strongly Agree 38% (8) Agree 19% (4) neutral 29% (6) disagree 4 skipped ?</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spent together</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. A religious community is an emotional system in which individuals</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>26% (5) Strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strive for meaningful relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 63% (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 10% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Authentic community is made possible through the practices of</td>
<td>33% (7) Strongly Agree 62% (13) Agree 5% (1) Disagree 4 skipped ?</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discipline, sacrifice and charity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Authentic community is made possible through sacrifice.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>58% (11) Strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 42% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Charity is at the core of authentic community</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>74% (14) Strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 26% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Self-discipline is essential for crafting authentic community.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>47% (9) Strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agree 53% (10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effective Communication Skills

The second part of the workshop addressed communication skills and conflict management. Those sisters who chose to take the pre-survey on hard copy and mail it back also included some vitally important comments. They identified some “hot button” words that created discomfort or strong reactions, such as “confrontation” and “fighting gracefully.” Therefore, the candidate chose softer words with similar meaning when constructing the post-survey. Results from both the pre and post survey indicate a change in attitude and understanding of some key concepts.

For example, the first statement emphasized the importance of effective communication as essential for genuine community with 100% (25) strongly agree/agree in the pre-survey and 95% (18) strongly agree/agree in the post-survey. The second comment identified the three qualities of empathy, personal disclosure and confrontation as crucial for effective communication - 70% (14) strongly agree/agree in the pre-survey. However, when separated in the post-survey, 94% (17) strongly agree/agree regarding empathy and 74% (14) strongly agree/agree regarding personal disclosure. The third concept stated the essential components of dialogue build a sense of community by creating common ground – in the pre-survey 85% (17) strongly agree/agree and 100% strongly agree/agree in the post-survey. Finally, the major barrier to communication is the natural tendency to want to fix, heal, change or judge with 90% (17) strongly agree/agree in the pre-survey. In the post-survey, when judging was singled out as the major barrier to communication, 100% (19) strongly agree/agree.

In the open-ended section of the post-survey, sisters gave examples of how they have applied the workshop material on communication skills. For example, being more attentive to
listening skills, trying hard to communicate with the sisters currently in their community, taking more responsibility for forming community, more accepting of individual differences, speaking more honestly, and being more conscious of how they deal with others.

### Effective Communication Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective Communication Skills</th>
<th>Pre-Survey (25)</th>
<th>Post-Survey (19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The principles for effective communication are basic for building authentic community.</td>
<td>58% (11) Strongly Agree 42% (8) Agree 6 skipped ?</td>
<td>95% (18) Strongly Agree / Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The major barrier for mutual interpersonal communication is the human tendency to want to judge, to evaluate, to fix, to heal, or to change another person.</td>
<td>42% (8) Strongly Agree 47% (9) Agree 10% (2) neutral</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. The major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is the human tendency to judge another person.</td>
<td></td>
<td>42% (8) Strongly Agree 58% (11) Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Three interpersonal skills essential for communal living are empathy, personal disclosure and confrontation.</td>
<td>25% (5) Strongly Agree 45% (9) Agree 20% (4) neutral 10% (2) Disagree</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Empathy is essential for a mutual relationship in community.</td>
<td></td>
<td>50% (9) Strongly Agree 50% (9) Agree 1 skipped?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Personal disclosure is an important component for crafting authentic community.</td>
<td></td>
<td>16% (3) Strongly Agree 58% (11) Agree 26% (5) Neutral 1 skipped?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effective Communication Skills

Dialogue is a communication process that intentionally works at building a sense of community and creating common ground.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Survey (25)</th>
<th>Post-Survey (19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40% (8) Strongly Agree</td>
<td>53% (10) Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45% (9) Agree</td>
<td>47% (9) Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15% (3) neutral</td>
<td>5 skipped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conflict Management

In the post-survey, participants were also asked to indicate the results of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode inventory that was completed at the workshop. The conflict management style of those sisters present included, 37% (7) accommodate, 16% (3) avoid, 42% (8) collaborate, 5% (1) compete and 0% compromise. A comparison of the pre- and post-survey provide evidence of significant change in their understanding of conflict. For example, in the statement conflict is a normal aspect of genuine relationships 85% (18) strongly agree/agree, in the pre-survey to 90% (17) strongly agree/agree in the post-survey. Another indicator in perception includes the response to the remark, genuine community will happen when individuals learn to fight gracefully 45% (9) strongly agree/agree in the pre-survey, whereas in the post-survey to speak the truth in love rated 90% (17) strongly agree/agree and honest communication rated 100% (19) strongly agree/agree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Mode</th>
<th>Post-Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodate</td>
<td>37% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid</td>
<td>16% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborate</td>
<td>42% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compete</td>
<td>5% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromise</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Conflict Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Pre-Survey</strong></th>
<th><strong>Post-Survey</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>(25)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(19)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Conflict is a normal aspect of genuine relationships and an outgrowth of individual differences.</td>
<td>30% (6) Strongly Agree 55% (11) Agree 15% (3) Disagree</td>
<td>32% (6) Strongly Agree 58% (11) Agree 10% (2) disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 skipped the ?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Genuine community is only possible when the individual members have learned the art of fighting gracefully.</td>
<td>20% (4) Strongly Agree 25% (5) Agree 30% (6) neutral 25% (5) disagree 5 skipped?</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5 skipped ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Genuine community becomes a reality when individuals are willing to speak the truth with love.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>58% (11) Strongly Agree 32% (6) Agree 10% (2) neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Accountability and Commitment

The last section of both the pre- and post-survey was created to identify and refine those characteristics that have historically become stumbling blocks for calling one another to accountability within the context of religious life. A comparison of the pre- and post-survey reveals some important beliefs and attitudes that will impact communal living. First, individuals must have the courage and humility to take responsibility for creating their present community: 95% (19) strongly/agreed in the pre-survey to 89% (17) in the post-survey. Second, the future of religious life will require making communal living primary - 72% (15) strongly agree/agree in
the pre-survey. In the post-survey, the future of religious life will require individual members to make an intentional commitment for community 94% (16) strongly agree/agree and community living will become the primary relational context in the future 94% (17). Third, mutuality critical for the growth and development of the person requires support, challenge and confrontation 70% (14) strongly agree/agree in the pre-survey. In the post-survey, mutuality requires a willingness to challenge and be challenged by another 84% (16) strongly agree/agree. Fourth, it is imperative that every community become an intentional community that holds members accountable: 75% (15) strongly agree/agree in the pre-survey. The ability to craft authentic community depends on the ability of the members to call one another to accountability: 79% (15) strongly agree/agree in the post-survey. Fifth, the ability to craft authentic community depends directly on the issues of commitment and accountability: 90% (18) strongly agree/agree in the pre-survey. Sixth, deterioration in the quality of communal living is directly related to a lack of accountability 74% (14) strongly agree/agree in the post-survey. Seventh, there comes a time in the life of every community when members begin to lose sight of the mission and instead make choices that opt for nesting, valuing affiliation, relationships and closeness 55% (11) strongly agree/agree in the pre-survey. There comes a time in the life of every community when members make choices that opt for security: 84% (16) strongly agree/agree in the post-survey.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accountability and Commitment</th>
<th>Pre-Survey (25)</th>
<th>Post-Survey (19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It is imperative that every community become an intentional community that is willing to hold members accountable.</td>
<td>25% (5) Strongly Agree 50% (10) Agree 25% (5) neutral 5 skipped?</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Individuals must have the courage and humility to take responsibility for creating their present community.</td>
<td>50% (10) Strongly Agree 50% (10) Agree 5 skipped?</td>
<td>53% (10) Strongly Agree 37% (7) Agree 11% (2) neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Deterioration in the quality of community living is the direct result of a lack of accountability.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>16% (3) Strongly Agree 58% (11) Agree 26% (5) neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Deterioration in the quality of community life is the direct result of the aging process.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>22% (4) Strongly Agree 78% (14) Disagree 1 skipped?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. There comes a time in the life of every community when members begin to lose sight of the mission and instead make choices that opt for nesting, valuing affiliation, relationships and closeness.</td>
<td>14% (3) Strongly Agree 40% (8) Agree 15% (3) neutral 30% (6) disagree 5 skipped?</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. There comes a time in the life of every community when members make choices that opt for security.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>16% (3) Strongly Agree 68% (13) Agree 15% (3) Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The ability to craft authentic community for the future of religious life depends directly on the issues of commitment and accountability.</td>
<td>30% (6) Strongly Agree 60% (12) Agree 10% (2) neutral 5 skipped?</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The ability to craft authentic community depends on the ability of the members to call one another to accountability.</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>32% (6) S Agree 47% (9) Agree 21% (4) neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation Results – Workshop

The twenty-one sisters who attended the January 26th workshop completed an evaluation form at the end of the day to assess the effectiveness of the candidate, the material presented and workshop format. The workshop evaluation form consisted of ten closed-ended questions that requested participants to rate ten areas – 1 unsatisfactory, 2 satisfactory, 3 good, 4 very good and 5 excellent. The average ratings for each of category are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Systems Theory Power Point and Article</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer / Ritual</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological &amp; Scriptural Background</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Management</td>
<td>4.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Exercises</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group Discussion</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Schedule</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Point Presentations</td>
<td>4.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part 2 of the workshop evaluation form included seven open-ended questions for participants to complete. A sampling of responses to each question is listed below:

**What was most helpful for you about the workshop?**
- Communication Skills
- Conflict Management Skills – self-assessment tool on Five Conflict Modes
- Relevant Topics
- Passion of the Presenter Multi-media Approach
- Mixture of theory, practical suggestions, group discussion

**What did you find most challenging about the time?**
- Material on conflict management
- The accountability part
- Time for self-reflection
- The need to resolve conflict in community
- Absorbing so much good material in a limited time
- Living out the challenge of information imparted today
What would you like to know more about?
Specific ways to handle/ approach confrontational situations
The material on accountability
Meaning of community
How we can collaborate in calling each other to accountability?
More time to practice communication skills and conflict management
The material from Bowen on triangles and relationship patterns

What information surprised you about the workshop material?
All the ways so many different authors treat community
How “I” manage differences
Questioning myself on my own level of participation in forming community
How much work is involved in real honest communication?
The dangers in the motivation to fix, heal, change or convert
We should only confront someone if we love and care about them

Identify at least one new thing you learned from the workshop topic.
How freeing “positive” confrontation could be
Importance of nonverbal communication
Conflict management styles
The ingredients for authentic community
Ideas for how to communicate effectively
There is still a lot to learn about myself and others in forming community

Do you have any ideas or suggestions to improve the workshop?
Maybe role playing would provide practice on the theory
You did a great job, very organized
Present this workshop to the larger IHM Congregation
Spread the workshop over two days
You alerted me to what way I need to open my heart
This was wonderful and I never felt threatened

Other comments:
Excellent Presentation! Thank You.
Materials, handouts, bibliography, flow of workshops and planning – all were excellent
Others in the community should have this opportunity – I hope it goes on and on.
I found the workshop informative, interesting and challenging.
Wonderful – thank you for all of your many hours of reflection, preparation and deep
love and hope for community.
Summary

An analysis of the three levels assessment - pre-survey, workshop evaluation and post-survey - provides evidence for the following conclusions. First, participants acquired an increased awareness of the meaning of authentic community from Church documents. Second, in order to adequately assess the fuller influence of family systems theory on community, this aspect of the project would need to be reworked to include either some discussion time online regarding the PowerPoint and article, or time built into the workshop that clearly focuses on the topic. Results show that the material on family systems theory revealed a minimal understanding of the concept of differentiation and the impact of community as an emotional system. Third, participants indicated an increased awareness of effective communication skills and further indicated various attempts to put the skills into practice following the workshop. However, the assessment results indicate that participants exhibited a limited understanding of the importance of empathy, self-disclosure and confrontation as essential components for effective communication. In addition, there was little change in either attitude or behavior regarding an awareness of the major barriers for effective communication and the interdependence between effective communication skills and authentic community. The workshop increased the knowledge and information of effective communication skills for the participants; however, more practice would be needed both during and after the workshop to increase their capacity to use communication skills effectively. Fourth, despite the fact that the participants did not become proficient in using conflict management techniques, results from the various assessments indicate growth and change in levels of knowledge, self-awareness, attitudes and behavior. Fifth, realizing that learning is an ongoing process, the areas that presented the greatest challenge
included mutuality, accountability and commitment. These concepts are new and uncharted territory within the context of religious life.

There are two external factors which may have influenced the various outcomes especially for the post-survey. One, prior to the workshop, members of the IHM congregation received three articles on the topic of dialogue in preparation for an upcoming chapter weekend in March. These articles reinforced the information presented at the workshop, in the Power Point and on a handout. Second, some of the results from the post-survey may also have been influenced by a workshop given in the MD/DC area entitled “Keys to the Future” one week following the workshop on Crafting Authentic Community. This workshop, which was attended by some of the same participants, stressed the importance of spirituality, visibility and community for attracting new members.

Two unanticipated outcomes resulting from the ministry project were the use of resource material from the workshop by the Community Life Committee for ongoing continuing education of congregation members at large, as well as an invitation to present the workshop to the entire congregation in the fall of 2014. Another unanticipated outcome is the level of curiosity and interest generated by word of mouth. Many people have requested more information about the candidate’s Doctor of Ministry treatise topic in general, and the workshop material in particular. Raising the level of awareness of the difficult work of community-building has been one of the primary goals of the candidate from the outset of the project.
CHAPTER 6

Conclusion
Then, the Lord answered me and said: Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; If it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.

Habakkuk 2:2-3 (NAB)

**Final Summary**

Timothy Radcliffe states in his book *What Is The Point of Being Christian?* that “Our human vocation is to go on searching for newer and deeper ways of belonging together, new ways of speaking, which realize our capacity for communion more profoundly.” He also states that “we are called to a communion in which we can share all that we are, indeed become all that we are meant to be.” Thus, human beings are made to be in relationship with others and to experience meaningful community.

Human persons yearn to be in relationship and to experience a sense of community. Human persons hunger for community in family, school, church, workplace and neighborhood. Community is one of the foundational components for the Christian because of the Trinitarian nature of God. Thus, community links us to the Trinity, the primary community of loving equals in a dynamic relationship. According to Evelyn Whitehead, community stands at the intersection of three dreams – personal hopes, the community’s faith vision and the dream for the kingdom of God. The Acts of the Apostles models a vision for all Christians – the community where believers were of one heart and mind (Acts 4:32, NAB).

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116 Ibid., 159.
Community does not just happen; it is a lifelong, ongoing organic process. Amidst a fragmented world “people are crying out for authentic communities where they can share their lives in a common vision, where they can find support and mutual encouragement, where they can give witness to their beliefs and work for greater peace and justice in the world – even if they are also frightened of the demands of community.”¹¹⁷ Men and women religious share the yearning for meaningful community, because rapid societal changes have created a tension within community life between individuality and togetherness. Thus, it is a question of finding a meaningful way of living together.

The Doctor of Ministry project "Crafting Authentic Community" was designed to provide women religious with the contemporary tools necessary to live meaningful authentic community. Women religious who actively engaged the material included in this ministry project increased their knowledge, awareness and understanding of those issues in community that effect their capacity for greater communion with God, others and creation. The ministerial challenge that this project sought to address was how to empower women religious to rediscover the true meaning of community, and to learn the skills necessary to craft authentic community that is both counter-cultural and Gospel-centered. As this treatise has demonstrated, the formation of authentic community is built upon many interdependent aspects – it is grounded in scripture and theology, rooted in family systems theory, engaged in effective communication skills, equipped with conflict management, and revitalized for mutuality and accountability within communal relationships. Each of these components is vital to the full development emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically of the mature adult.

¹¹⁷ Vanier, 3.
Chapter One of this treatise addressed the scriptural and theological foundations for the imperative of authentic communal living. Religious life, as a vocation in the church, is called to live authentic community that closely resembles the early Christian communities that were of one heart, one mind and one spirit. Despite the fact that various Church documents, as well as well any other articles and books, have been written since Vatican II, religious life has struggled in its efforts to renew communal life. These documents were written to help religious congregations address these challenges by providing them with specific guidelines for maintaining authenticity. Documents such as *Perfectae Caritatis, Lumen Gentium, Fraternal Life in Community, Vita Consecrata,* and *Starting Afresh* specifically focused on strengthening the vitality and viability of community in the following areas: the dynamics of relationships, the unique characteristics for communal life, and the essential role of community for the church.

In addition, several authors and theologians have sought to empower women religious with the necessary tools to discover the deeper commitment required for living authentic community as “true experts of communion.” For example, Sandra Schneiders identifies the multi-faceted complexities of this reality in the following way:

> The effort of Religious to live the mystery of celibate community, the life of evangelical friendship, with all its implications of equality, mutuality, service, ecological commitment, non-imperialistic mission, ministry to the most abandoned, and inclusive love is not some human ideal invented by utopian visionaries. It is the Christian life itself, undertaken in the Spirit of Jesus and embodied in a particular life form within the church.\(^{118}\)

In Chapter Two, Murray Bowen’s family systems theory contributed to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of community as an emotional system. The concepts of family

\(^{118}\) Schneiders, *Selling All,* 305.
systems theory are essential tools for the human journey because they guide one’s understanding of human behavior that was first formed in the family of origin. Authors Kelly, Richardson, and Friedman have provided important practical and persuasive evidence to support how the components of family systems can effectively improve the quality and vitality of church and religious congregations. By sharing in common human experiences, persons become not only enlightened about the creative tension between individuality and togetherness, but also empowered by a faith which frees them to believe in the dream of authentic community. In truth, family systems theory makes a significant contribution to “creating a healthier church community that can support growth and healing in each individual member and better accomplish its mission in the world.”\textsuperscript{119}

As outlined in Chapter Three, each person has a need to be loved, to be affirmed, to be understood and to belong. Community is the sacred space where the individual is nurtured, supported and challenged to live the fullness of one’s Christian vocation. In order to create authentic community, both Scott Peck and Evelyn Whitehead emphasize the importance of effective communication skills and conflict management. Three essential components necessary for authentic community are empathy, personal disclosure and confrontation within the context of genuine dialogue. Dialogue is a process which demands that individuals embrace a state of emptiness. This state of empathetic emptiness has the capacity to increase a person’s understanding of the other by suspending the human tendency to want to fix, heal, convert or change.

\textsuperscript{119} Richardson, 21.
Another dimension of dialogue includes a willingness to engage in honest communication, a desire to speak the truth with love, and a willingness to fight gracefully. As also explored in Chapter Three, conflict is a normal aspect of genuine and healthy relationships that result when individuals experience differences in perceptions, needs, values, power, desires, goals and opinions. Often, “our ability to discover new possibilities within relationships and within conflict resolution is impaired by the ‘packaged’ truths and limited vision we hold on to in times of stress, insecurity and conflict.”

Therefore, conflict management provides an opportunity for individuals to think differently, imagine alternatives, and learn more about themselves and others, thus creating a new vision for the future.

What does the current vision for living authentic community within the context of religious life look like? The vision dwells in the heart of each member of the community as they strive to answer the three important questions: What brings us together? What keeps us together? What flows from our being together? In addition, these answers also demand that members mutually respond by making promises to one another and by demonstrating a willingness to pay a price for the common good. As illustrated in Chapter Four, authentic community is crafted as members make intentional choices to renew their commitment for mutual relationships that will hold each member accountable for the vision.

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120 Weeks, 183.
Final Conclusion

Today, more than ever before, the church and world look to religious life to provide a prophetic example for living authentic Christian community. In her article entitled, “The Next Frontier: Religious Life at the Edge of Tomorrow,” Marilyn Marie Ellerbrock, SND, says it profoundly:

A treasured gift of our call to consecrated life has been and continues to be our relationships in community. We are the beneficiaries of a rich spiritual patrimony of the sisters who have gone before us and we chart the way for those who will follow. Our witness to Jesus is embedded in the global community and in the neighborhood communities where we live. We throw in our lot with other women whose hearts also have been won over by Jesus’ love. We are not called to travel this journey alone, and our future as women religious is rooted in our common life and mission…Our church and our world today need us to stand before them as a proclamation of clarity, commitment and community. The reality of radical discipleship is ours to share in the spirit of Mary and with the support of our sisters.121

Yes, to live authentic community today is indeed a prophetic stance in a world where there is little tolerance for differences; in a world in which an atmosphere of fear toward the stranger and immigrant is pervasive. What responsibility must women religious embrace so that this vision and ideal for living authentic community becomes reality in the not so distant future? This is the core question for all those who desire to create and build community wherever they live or work. Impelled by the love of God, women religious are challenged to become rooted and grounded in a “spirituality of communion” whose highest ideal is conversion of anything contrary to union. Community is one of the foundational components of the Christian faith; therefore, it becomes imperative that those in religious life continue to work diligently for the fulfillment of its original vision as expressed in the early Christian community.

Another perspective on forming authentic communities comes from Joel Giallanza’s article “Expert Practitioners of Union in Community:” “Good communities are not simply the product of carefully following some predetermined strategy. They come from sincere efforts to live and sustain community.” He further writes that it is imperative that religious focus their time, energy and passion on three elements vital for good community. The foundation for building authentic community must first include a willingness to actively live and share one’s faith. The second element necessary for shaping community is to make deliberate and intentional choices that will both establish and maintain bonds of faith, hope and love among the diverse members. The third element further strengthens bonds as members participate together in a common mission. Therefore, to be and form community demands that individuals share faith and hope, are sustained by bonds of love and live a passionate commitment to boldly follow the example of Jesus within the graced heritage of their religious institutes.

So many voices today wonder, is there a future for religious life? Is authentic community simply a dream? This Doctor of Ministry treatise was first conceived as a dream, or was it really an illusion? Upon further reflection, it was originally an effort to fix, to heal, to change or to convert others. In reality, the workshop was designed to provide participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to explore, rediscover and craft authentic community; one that will respond to both the individual need to belong and the universal need for a community whose focus is the

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123 Ibid., 399.
common good. Self-righteously, the workshop was viewed as “the” solution that would fix all problems in living community. What actually resulted is much more profound.

In the process of research and study, the workshop evolved and the candidate became transformed. What was discovered is a missing piece for community that became lost, tarnished or buried. What was affirmed is the need for a deeper conversation about community, a desire for uncovering the treasure of community, and the necessity to practice effective communication skills through experience. Everywhere the topic of “crafting authentic community” surfaced, came the resounding response “this is what we need, what we are thirsting for and what will make a difference.” Instead of being an ending, the workshop has become simply the beginning of the journey to rediscover the deeper and richer meaning of community within religious life. Community has become the buried treasure found in the field of dreams that will demand nothing more than a total commitment to follow Jesus. Yes, God does continue to pour forth His spirit on all humankind; this spirit is alive and well in the daughters who prophesy, the young women who see visions and the old women who dream dreams of authentic community for the future. Will women religious have the courage to move beyond their fears and risk moving into a new place, with a new way of being and relating? Yes, the vision still has its time and will not disappoint, if they are willing to go deeper into the paschal mystery.

What will it require? A willingness to learn new ways of thinking and being, practice effective skills of communicating, embrace conflict as an opportunity for growth, and enter into a mutual commitment that holds members accountable for the sake of mission. This new adventure will require nothing more than everything – a total and complete surrender into the emptiness and darkness of the unknown, to begin anew the journey for spiritual communion.
Thus it becomes clear that the value of the project *Crafting Authentic Community* lies in the journey, in the exploration, in the discovery, or as expressed so profoundly by T.S. Eliot: “We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know that place for the first time.”¹²⁴

APPENDIX A

Correspondence / Pre-Workshop Material
A.1

Sister Ruth A. Harkins, IHM
Catholic University of America
Campus Ministry
620 Michigan Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20064

October 1, 2012

Dear

Happy Feast Day! Today we gather to celebrate the feast of Saint Therese of Lisieux, a saint and doctor of the Church, who teaches us to seek “the little way” through our commitment to the routine and ordinary daily tasks and to the people we meet in our everyday lives. In all things, Therese tried to show love for all the sisters in her community. Her little way was simple and direct, yet calling for amazing fortitude and commitment.

In the past four years I have sought to carve out my own “little way” by pursuing a doctorate of ministry in adult faith formation from Catholic University of America. Walking the journey these past several years has not only renewed and strengthened my own religious vocation, but also nurtured a deep passion for the future of religious life. In that light, in order to fulfill the requirements of my dissertation, I have chosen to design a project entitled “Crafting Authentic Community.”

Fr. José Maria Arnaiz, SM, in a talk at the UISG in 2011, emphatically affirmed that: “Communion is everything!” He also stated that in this precise moment of history we need communion more than we need mission, because where there is communion there is life. In fact, we are called to make communion the very heart of our mission. Therefore, I have designed a full day workshop that strives to nurture this communion.

As we are summoned to “Open the Doors” of Faith this year, I would like to take this opportunity to invite you, along with all IHM Sisters in the MD/DC area, to participate in a full day workshop on the topic of “Crafting Authentic Community.” This workshop will take place on Saturday, January 26, 2013 at Saint John the Evangelist Hall in Silver Spring, MD. The day will include: prayer, Power Point presentations, reflection time, small group discussion and interactive activities. Prior to the workshop, participants will be required to complete a survey,
view an online power point presentation and read a short article. At the completion of the workshop they will also be required to complete an evaluation and an online survey six weeks following the workshop.

My hope is that this workshop will provide you with the practical tools necessary to enrich your community life. The major components for this workshop will focus on: a renewed understanding of Church documents; an ability to identify the impact of family systems on community; the use of effective communication skills; proficiency in using conflict management techniques; a deepened commitment to living religious community grounded in accountability, interdependence and mutuality. The whole project is designed to increase the participants’ capacity to understand those issues that lie at the heart of authentic community in religious life and further empower them with the skills required to be both counter-cultural and gospel-centered.

Sisters, I would be honored to have your presence and participation in this workshop as a catalyst for change in the spirit of “communion of life.” In addition, I will need to use the empirical data collected before, during and after the workshop in order to complete the requirements for my dissertation.

Please take time to pray and reflect on this invitation. I realize that it will require a commitment of time, energy and active participation. Hopefully, in return you will be transformed by the experience and re-energized in your everyday living of authentic community.

We are all part of the Body of Christ. We are all part of the IHM Congregation. *How good, how delightful it is for all to live together in unity.* Psalm 133:1 Please complete the attached form and return it to me no later than October 20, 2012. I appreciate your prayerful consideration for this important invitation.

May this season of autumn fill you with a harvest of blessings as together we daily walk the “little way.”

In Mary’s Immaculate Heart,

Sister Ruth A. Harkins, IHM
A.2 RESPONSE SHEET

Who? Every IHM Sister in the MD/DC area, IHM Leadership Team, Community Life Committee

What “Crafting Authentic Community” workshop.

- Completion of an online survey prior to the workshop.
- Review of a Power Point on Family Systems prior to the workshop.
- Read a short article prior on Family Systems prior to the workshop.
- Attend the full day workshop.
- Complete a workshop evaluation that day.
- Complete an online survey six weeks following the workshop

When? Saturday, January 26, 2013
10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Where? Saint John the Evangelist Hall
10201 Woodland Drive
Silver Spring, MD

Why? Doctoral Requirements for Ruth Harkins
Name

_____ I accept the invitation to participate in the workshop process.
_____ I am unable to attend the workshop.

Please return the RESPONSE SHEET

no later than October 20, 2012 in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you for taking the time to pray and reflect on this important invitation.
January 6, 2013

Dear

Happy New Year and Happy Feast of the Epiphany! Each day we follow a Star! Each day we bring our gifts to the altar. Each day we are invited to shine bright with the love of God’s unconditional love in the spirit of Saint Alphonsus.

In preparation for the workshop I have enclosed both a PowerPoint and article on Family Systems Theory for your reading and review prior to the workshop. I am also asking you to complete the enclosed survey either on the hard copy or online. The survey is being sent to you electronically. Please return the completed survey no later than January 20, 2013 in the enclosed envelope.

Thank you for accepting my invitation to participate in the workshop “Crafting Authentic Community” scheduled for January 26, 2013 in Silver Spring. I am deeply grateful for your willingness to share the gift of time and presence. You are a STAR and a blessing!

The schedule for the day is printed on the reverse side of this letter.

If you have any questions or concerns as you review the enclosed material please do not hesitate to call me at 570-362-1958. I look forward to sharing the day with you.

In Mary’s Immaculate Heart,

Sister Ruth A. Harkins, IHM
## Crafting Authentic Community

**Saturday, January 26, 2013**

Saint John the Evangelist Parish Hall  
10201 Woodland Drive  
Silver Spring, MD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30 am</td>
<td><strong>Arrival</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td><strong>Continental Breakfast</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td><strong>Opening</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td><strong>Prayer</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td><strong>Session I</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45 am</td>
<td><strong>Scriptural and Theological</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45 am</td>
<td><strong>Foundation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30 pm</td>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30 pm</td>
<td><strong>Session II</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1:30 pm</td>
<td><strong>Communication Skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45 pm</td>
<td><strong>Session III</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Session IV</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mutuality / Accountability</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Closing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3:30 pm</td>
<td><strong>Prayer / Evaluation</strong></td>
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### On Being A Star

I hope a star comes out for you today,  
A new one that you’ve never seen before.  
I hope it’s bright and bold, a prophetic star,  
piercing your darkness, and helping you to see  
the things you really need to see.  
I hope it touches you with fire,  
and runs along beside you all year long.  
And when the year is through,  
I hope this star keeps shining on in you,  
for without a doubt,  
You are a Star!  
--by Macrina Wiederkehr

114
### A.5

#### Crafting Authentic Community  Pre-Survey

**1. Which category below includes your age?**

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answered question 24
skipped question 1

**2. How many years have you been in religious life?**

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answered question 24
skipped question 1

**3. How many sisters currently live in community with you?**

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<td>7-10</td>
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answered question 24
skipped question 1
4. How many years have you lived in your current community?

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<td>31-35</td>
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**answered question** 24  
**skipped question** 1

5. How many times have you attended the annual IHM Assembly in the past five years?

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<td>5</td>
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**answered question** 24  
**skipped question** 1

6. List three topics/issues that your local community usually discusses at its regular meetings.

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**answered question** 20  
**skipped question** 5
7. Please indicate if you have read or attended a workshop on the following Church Documents.

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<td>Vita Consecrata 1996</td>
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<td>CARA 1992 Study on &quot;Future of Religious Orders in the U.S.&quot; by Miriam Ukeritis, CSJ and David Nygren</td>
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answered question 21

skipped question 4

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</tr>
<tr>
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Answered question: 21
Skipped question: 4

9. Men and women religious are being invited to "cast out into the deep" by becoming "true experts of communion" not only for religious life but for the life of the world.

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<tr>
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Answered question: 22
Skipped question: 3

10. The future of religious life will require individual members to make communal living the primary and determining relational context of their lives.

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<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>2</td>
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Answered question: 21
Skipped question: 4
11. What words or images would you use to describe authentic community?

<table>
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<th>Answer Options</th>
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<tr>
<td>skipped question</td>
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12. Religious men and women are constantly engaged in the struggle between the two forces of individuality and togetherness in living community.

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<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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</table>

13. A religious community is an emotional system in which the group of individuals, simply by virtue of the time spent together, are involved in meaningful relationships.

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<tr>
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119
14. A common pattern which is present in religious community is the concept of triangles within relationships.

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answered question 20
skipped question 5

15. Authentic community is made possible through the practices of discipline, sacrifice and charity.

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<th>Response Percent</th>
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answered question 21
skipped question 4

16. The principles for effective communication are basic for building authentic community.

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answered question 19
skipped question 6
17. The major barrier for mutual interpersonal communication is the human tendency to want to judge, to evaluate, to fix, to heal, or to change another person.

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18. Dialogue is a communication process that intentionally works at building a sense of community and creating common ground.

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19. Three interpersonal skills essential for communal living are empathy, personal disclosure and confrontation.

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20. Conflict is a normal aspect of genuine relationships and often an outgrowth of individual differences.

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21. Genuine community is only possible when the individual members have learned the art of fighting gracefully.

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22. Mutuality in interpersonal relationships, critical for the growth and development of the person, requires support, challenge and confrontation.

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23. Real dialogue is effective for conflict management because it nurtures the attitudes of abundance, learning and genuine listening.

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Answered question 20
Skipped question 5

24. List those skills that would improve your confidence for handling conflict in your relationships.

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<tr>
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25. List those skills that will empower you to communicate more effectively with the members of your community.

<table>
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26. It is imperative that every community become an intentional community - one that is willing to hold members accountable for previously agreed upon minimal standards and expectations.

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27. There comes a time in the life of every community when members will begin to lose sight of the mission and instead make choices that opt for nesting, valuing affiliation, relationships and closeness.

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answered question

skipped question

28. Individuals must have the courage and humility to take responsibility for creating their present community situation.

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answered question

skipped question
29. The ability to craft authentic community for the future of religious life depends directly on the issues of commitment and accountability.

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Answered question: 20
Skipped question: 5

30. Identify the ways in which your present local community holds members accountable.

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Answered question: 17
Skipped question: 8
A.6 Pre-Survey Open Ended Questions

Page 1 --- Question 1
List three topics/issues that your local community usually discusses at its regular meetings.

1. Prayer selection of dates to share celebrations
2. Planning schedules Meal arrangements Workplace issues
3. Schedule, upcoming events, needs,
4. We discuss plans for community retreat, Dec 8th, community celebrations, Holidays, feast days, birthdays. various functions that the community is invited to prayer and mass; celebrations; finance
5. Work, esp. the parish health Any IHM news
6. We don't have regular meetings but we do regularly communicate about upcoming dates, issues affecting us and our residence, local church issues, etc.
7. Special events / needs connections to Parishes / Congregation Simplifying Our Life / Things Past and Present
8. Finances, coming scheduled dates, agenda
9. Contact person, charges, Christmas
10. Horarium, meal times, meetings to attend
11. Goals for the year issues for assemble
12. Prayer times, house duties, house celebration
13. Agenda, house situations, celebrations
14. Meeting monthly - calendar commitments; Issues and
15. Concerns of Mission Groups Peace and Justice on local& govt. happenings Mission needs at local ministry
16. Celebrations of holidays/birthdays meal schedule finances
17. Happenings $$$ things to be done
18. Prayer; Days of Recollection; Spiritual Reading
19. Any issues the contact person for the month brings to our
20. attention Spiritual issues Household and finance issues Hospitality Issues Celebrations for coming
21. Community Elections Mission Board Topics sent from Mission Groups
22. Community Happenings Ex: American Nuns being questioned
Page 3 --- Question 1

What words or images would you use to describe authentic community?

1. Love, charity, gentleness, patience, kindness, acceptance, respect
2. Consideration, prayerfulness, empathy, understanding
3. When the members are united in Spirit.
4. A willingness to connect because of membership; may not live together but willing to be together; interdependence;
5. Aware caring mutual support present physically present-at least at times compassionate
6. Sharing daily life praying with each other supporting one another in joy and sorrow
7. Authentic presence with present realities staying with the process reverence respect
8. Love, understanding, generosity
9. Caring, praying together, sharing
10. Loving, self-emptying, generous
11. Trust, prayerful, caring supportive
12. Charity, love, imitation of Christ
13. Christ likeness
14. Prayerful - individual and communal honest communication care and concern for one another support each other's concerns or issues -- social justice, presence in ministry (parish or other)
15. Strong atmosphere of prayer; mutual respect; shared interests
16. Focused on their own calling Focused on building up each other in their calling, Openness to the Spirit's movement
17. Supportive, caring, very prayerful, inclusive courageous
List those skills that would improve your confidence for handling conflict in your relationships.

1. Confrontation skills
2. Being able to assert my position without judging the other. Being able to
3. Voice my concerns in a timely manner. Being able to judge when I must confront, may confront, should not confront.
4. Good communication skills, respectful listening, accept others opinions
5. Silence, think before speaking, hold emotions in check
6. If it is minor conflicts, I overlook them.
7. Explaining better Asking questions- and gently not judging, but still presenting my values –
8. Gently
9. Being less defensive listening better
10. Awareness of personal history and patterns self-inventing for the day/circumstance ownership, personal responsibility for creating and sustaining community
11. Good listener, understanding heart
12. Listening, openness, caring understanding
13. A listening heart a non-judgmental spirit willingness to change
14. Acceptance and awareness of one another’s experiences which would balance healthier exchanges of ideas, suggestions or handling crisis.
15. Avoid "one-sided" dialogues of one’s points!
16. I find that some Sisters that do the wrong thing turn it around that it was your fault when it definitely was theirs and don't care if someone may fall as a consequence of their action or be very inconvenienced. Many times confrontation makes it much worse and they never change.
17. Having the stance of an active listener Not to personalize situations Realize I cannot solve all problems
List those skills that will empower you to communicate more effectively with the members of your community.

1. Self-confidence
2. Being able to share without expecting agreement. Being able to listen with a "third ear" to what the person really needs to communicate.
3. Good communication skills, self confidence, being true to self, respect for one another, accept each other as we
4. Listen, openess, consideration of feelings
5. I don't know - just being myself.
7. Being less defensive noticing common ground listening better
8. Awareness of personal patterns of defensiveness and intensity understanding the healing power of challenge inviting the questions and listening rather than criticizing or supplying the answer
9. Remain calm when confronted, dialogue, understanding, patience, understanding, not judging,
10. Having achieved a level of trust with the others sharing the same ideals of life together openness to another's viewpoint
11. Balance good listening skills and make suggestions with parties involved to project a healthy growth in community life.
12. Openness, non-judging, caring about the greater good.
13. "Pick my fights" Be an active listener Speak objectively and not from emotions.
Page 7 --- Question 1

Identify the ways in which your present local community holds members accountable.

1. Household responsibilities
2. Honest sharing, especially asking questions when unsure if something does, or potentially could, bother the other person.
3. Each sister in our community demonstrates accountability by their prayer life, community living, and their commitment to their ministries.
4. Prayer, presence
5. We're individuals and we accept one another and we trust one another.
6. We approach individual members gently
7. Not sure: by reminding gently...... I need an example.
8. Gentle ways: Checking if the person missed prayer if she's okay checking if the person missed dinner, if she is okay talking with one another about one's plans that might take her away from the community for a day or longer
9. How we are present to others in local community and larger community Talks on daily living and responsibility What we are spending and why
10. Finances issues, house meetings
11. They don't
12. I do not believe we hold others accountable. It is desired, but we do not question another.
13. Monthly meetings, bulletin board announcements, individual contacts with reminders, community sharing at dinner table and evening gatherings with some or all, who are present.
14. We could do better with this.
15. Not applicable for me
16. Sometimes people are confronted (maybe to no avail) or most times people just complain behind their backs.
17. Regular meetings to check on how everything is running Setting up a
Family Systems Theory

**1 Corinthians 12:12-13**

As the body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body. So also Christ. For in one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body...Now the body is not a single part, but many. 

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

Family Systems Theory

- A systems approach gazes at the whole picture to determine how the parts are arranged, how the information is exchanged and how the parts influence one another.
- A religious community is a system – an emotional system to be specific.
- A group of individuals, simply by virtue of the time they spend together, are involved in meaningful relationships.

Family Systems Theory

Murray Bowen, MD
- Early pioneer in family therapy
- Psychiatrist and professor of psychiatry
- Bowen Family Systems theory
- Most comprehensive view of human behavior

Hallmark
- Families, religious communities, co-workers or other groups function as a single emotional unit.

Family Systems Theory

Two basic and deep life forces that form the core of every human emotional system
- Togetherness
- Individuality

Anxiety - the uncomfortable feeling a person experiences when there is a lack of control, or a threat that can be either real or imagined.

Family Systems Theory

The goal in any relationship is to decrease anxiety.

**Differentiation** is the capacity of an individual to function autonomously by effectively balancing the tension between individuality and togetherness. An individual learns to trust oneself and establish boundaries. Also known as the “solid self.”

Family Systems Theory

Ronald Richardson identifies four ways in which people react to the pressure for sameness:
1. Compliance
2. Rebellion
3. Power struggle
4. Emotional distancing
Family Systems Theory

The “solid self” is made up of clearly defined beliefs, opinions, convictions and life principles. This person is able to integrate the emotional and intellectual dimensions of the self.

Family Systems Theory

The “Pseudo self” is one who becomes an actor with many selves, one who pretends, is compliant, engages in regular power struggles, becomes the conforming disciple or is involved in open rebellion. This undifferentiated person is vulnerable to the emotional and intellectual pressure from others.

Family Systems Theory

Triangles
- are the molecules of interpersonal systems
- is a natural way of handling anxiety in a relationship
- develop because a significant relationship between two persons is unstable
- Serve two purposes
  - To absorb the anxiety in the relationship
  - To cover over the basic differences or conflicts

Family Systems Theory

Five Relationship Patterns:
1. Conflict – criticism, blame, defensive
2. Distancing – workaholism, substance abuse, noncommunicative
3. Cutoff – physically, emotionally, psychologically
4. Overfunctioning – advice giving, doing for others, worrying about others, feeling responsible for others, knowing what is best for others.
5. Underfunctioning – asking advice, getting help, acting irresponsibly, aimlessness, illness.

Family Systems Theory

Five Relationship Patterns (continued)
5. Triangles – a pattern that either unites a community or binds it together. Introduces a third person into a relationship without resolving the relationship issues between the two individuals. Triangles are a mechanism for transmitting anxiety throughout the community.

“What God does first and best and most is to trust His people with this moment in history. He trusts them to do what must be done for the sake of the whole community.”

Theologian Walter Brueggemann
APPENDIX B

Workshop Material
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<td>Welcome / Introduction / Overview</td>
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<td>10:15 am</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:35 am</td>
<td>Dialogue Model</td>
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<td>Definition of Community / Hopes for the Workshop</td>
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<td>BREAK</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Scriptural &amp; Theological Overview</td>
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<td>LUNCH</td>
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<td>Communication Skills</td>
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<td>How Do I Manage Differences?</td>
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B.2 Community of Disciples

OPENING PRAYER:

Gentle, foot-washing God, by the waters of Baptism you remind us that we are all called to serve the needs of others. Open our eyes to recognize the many ways in which you come to us, and touch us with your love. Open our minds and our hearts so that we are able to recognize you in so many people who also hold out the basin of water to refresh and renew us each day. May we always be a clear and understandable witness to your presence and unconditional love in our world. And may we always be willing to welcome others with a basin full of water and a heart full of grace, asking with a deep humility, hospitality and healing: “Would you mind if I wash your feet?”

GATHERING SONG: The Basin and the Towel

In an upstairs room, a parable is just about to come alive. And while they bicker about who’s best with a painful glance He’ll silently rise. Their Savior Servant must show them how through the will of the water and the tenderness of the towel.

And the call is to community, the impoverished power that sets the soul free. In humility to make the vow that day after day we must take up the basin and the towel.

In an ordinary place, on any ordinary day, the parable can live again. When one will kneel and one will yield, Our Savior Servant must show us how through the will of the water and the tenderness of the towel.

And the space between ourselves sometimes is more than the distance between the stars. By the fragile bridge of the servant’s bow, we take up the basin and the towel.

And the call is to community, The impoverished power that sets the soul free. In humility to make the vow that day after day we must take up the basin and the towel.
Community Can't Be Taken For Granted

Community is a matter of the heart and the mind.

It cannot be created by place alone, and it cannot be destroyed by distance alone. It is of the essence of the soul.

What we identify with, what gives us a sense of purpose, of belonging, of support is our community.

Community building does not just happen. It cannot be taken for granted. It requires both great faith and great trust that is generated by a continuing display of great human care that begins with me, and then comes back to me.

The kind of community for which our Alphonsian charism is written, is based on a great deal of unconditional love. But as the world enlarges, The physical is still important.

It takes a great deal of energy to create community. And in today's world, community takes many shapes.
but differently.
Now community is often virtual, but just as real in many dimensions as sitting next to the same person in chapel our entire lives.

In “Let Your Heart Be Bold”, what is important is that we each be an extension of the Gospel, and an extension of each other, and an extension of Alphonsian spirituality at the same time.

What is imperative is that the sharing of the common mind be just as important as once was the sharing of a common schedule, or a common dormitory, or a common work.

What is central is that together we use our goods for something greater than ourselves, that we “do not store up grain in barns,” as the scriptures say, for our own security alone, but use the profits of our labor for the good of others, as well.

It is a process of making all of human community real, and of doing it out of a common vision and one heart, in whatever form is available--so that the spirit of community that is IHM to its core may spread like a holy plague throughout the world.

_Excerpt adapted from Sr. Joan Chittister’s book_ The Monastery of the Heart: An Invitation to a Meaningful Life._

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READING:  The Season of Love  

Macrina Wiederkehr

The symbolic image of washing feet refers to the ministry that flows out of love. There comes a moment in our lives when some kind of conversion touches us and we know we are free to change. Changing may involve rearranging some areas of our lives. It is part of the necessary preparation for a deeper journey within. Personal renewal, including a new and radical kind of commitment, usually accompanies conversion. The sleeping ministers in our hearts are awakened and we know that part of our vocation is to wash feet.

CLOSING PRAYER:
Jesus, by our baptism you call us forth to love and to serve you, to continue your ministry in our broken world. Open our eyes to see the needs of those around us in our homes and in our local communities. Open our hearts so that we may become humble enough to respond with compassion to serve people who may seem too difficult to be with or whose needs seem beyond our capabilities. Jesus you call us as communities of faith, to welcome all in our midst and you send us to be your presence in our everyday lives, in our homes, in our workplaces, in our churches and in our communities. May we respond generously to those many opportunities to serve you with love. Amen.
Dialogue: A Different Kind of Communication

*Dialogue is a communication process that aims to build relationships between people as they share experiences, ideas, and information about a common concern.*

Lisa Schirch & David Campt

**DIALOGUE**

1. The goal is to understand different perspectives and learn about other views.
2. People listen to others to understand how their experiences shape their beliefs.
3. People accept the experiences of others as real and valid.
4. People appear to be somewhat open to expanding their understanding of the issue.
5. People speak primarily from their own understanding and experience.
6. People work together toward common understanding.

**BASIC GROUND RULES**

1. Recognize the power of deep listening.
2. Respect others.
3. Speak about personal experiences using “I” statements.
4. Minimize interruptions and distractions.
5. Maintain confidentiality.

**GROUND RULES FOR GOING DEEPER**

1. Ask questions.
2. Stay through the hard times.
3. Aim to understand and learn.
4. Recognize common ground.
5. “Ouch,” then educate.
Session 1A - Definitions of Community - PowerPoint

CRAFTING AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

WELCOME
Sisters of IHM
January 26, 2013
Saint John the Evangelist
Kennedy Hall
Silver Spring, MD

AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

Why is it that what ought to empower us and give us strength for the mission of Jesus so frequently deprives us of even our basic adult necessities? What has happened to community life that for so many of us it has come to be seen as something that must be endured, rather than as an essential part of our life, as something that empowers us, as something we can truly enjoy?

Barbara Fiand.
Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Community Life for the Contemporary Religio
Crafting Authentic Community

AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

"Because God has already laid the only foundation of our fellowship, because God has bound us together in one body with other Christians in Jesus Christ, long before we entered into common life with them, we enter into that common life not as demanders but as thankful recipients."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

"What are we talking about when we talk about community living? I would suggest that, put as simply as possible, community living is what happens when two or more people relate to one another in a significant, mutually beneficial, and ongoing way."

Doris Gottemoeller, “Community Living: Beginning the Conversation.” Review for Religious, 58, no. 2 (March-April 1999), 139.

AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

The True Meaning of Community
A group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together, delight together, and make others’ conditions their own.

M. Scott Peck, M.D. The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace

AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

• Community is a gathering that enlarges and challenges and completes our personal vision, a place where both our strengths and hungers are welcomed.

• Therefore, community is a way to BE together. An authentic community of faith stands at the intersection of three dreams: personal dreams, the dreams of the community and the dream of the kingdom of God.

Evelyn Eaton Whitehead and James Whitehead. Community of Faith: Crafting Christian Communities Today
Please complete the following sentence.

1. For me, community is ... (in dyads)

Of all the quotations and reflections on community, which one do you resonate with most and why? (w/ the table)
Community Reflection Questions

For me, community is... what words or images would you use to describe community.

The closest I have come to belonging to a community who really loved each other was when I...

What scares me about belonging to the kind of Christian community described in the scriptures (Acts 2:42-47) is...

What I need more than anything else from the Christian community at this moment is...

Of all the quotations and reflections on community, the one I like the best and why...

What particular gifts has God given you which could be shared with a community?
I choose to live in this community because...

My favorite part of living in this community is...

When it comes to prayer, I wish the community would...

I get most annoyed in community when...

For me, the most pleasant way of spending social time together is when we...

As a group, we need everyone to...

One important topic we need to discuss as a community is...

I believe our focus for this year might be...

Three strengths of this community are...

Three opportunities for growth include...

One important value for community is...

One essential goal for community is...
Theological and Scriptural Foundations

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers... All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes.

(Acts 2:42, 44, NAB)

Fraternal Life in Community

- "May they be one as we are one." (John 17:22) Our highest vocation is to enter into communion with God and with our brothers and sisters.
- As experts of communion, religious are communally a prophetic sign of intimate union with God, who first loved us.

Article #46, Vita Consecrata, Consecrated persons are asked to be true experts of communion and to practice the spirituality of communion as witnesses and architects of the plan for unity which is the crowning point of human history in God's design.

There can be no true unity without that unconditional mutual love - evangelical friendship.

The community coordinate of Religious Life involves the permanent acceptance of the community itself as the primary and determining relational context of one's life. Therefore, each member's relationship with the community itself becomes the focus of her life, while still maintaining relationships with family, friends and colleagues outside the congregation.

Sandra Schneiders, Finding the Treasure: Locating Catholic Religious Life in a New Ecological and Cultural Context
Theological and Scriptural Foundations

The love of Jesus Christ forms us into a community, diverse as we are as individuals. In response to the divine call to discipleship and apostolic service, we live together in community with the Eucharistic Christ as the center of our life. Joined in a conscious and intense sharing of his life and mission, we search out together the Father’s will and offer one another support and encouragement in seeking to fulfill it. The thrust is twofold: the building of authentic community within the Congregation, and the extension and strengthening of the wider community of all who belong to Christ.

(IHM Constitutions, #29)
How Good Are Your Communication Skills?

Place a number before each statement using the following scale:

<table>
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<th>0 – Not at All</th>
<th>1 – Rarely</th>
<th>2 – Sometimes</th>
<th>3 – Often</th>
<th>4 – Very Often</th>
</tr>
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_____ I try to anticipate and predict possible causes of confusion, and I deal with them up front.

_____ When I write a memo, email, or other document, I give all of the background information and detail I can to make sure that my message is understood.

_____ If I don’t understand something, I tend to keep this to myself and figure it out later.

_____ I’m sometimes surprised to find that people haven’t understood what I’ve said.

_____ I can tend to say what I think, without worrying about how the other person perceives it. I assume that we’ll be able to work it out later.

_____ When people talk to me, I try to see their perspectives.

_____ I use email to communicate complex issues with people. It’s quick and efficient.

_____ When I finish writing a report, memo, or email, I scan it quickly for typos and so forth, and then send it off right away.

_____ When talking to people, I pay attention to their body language.

_____ I use diagrams and charts to help express my ideas.

_____ Before I communicate, I think about what the person needs to know, and how best to convey it.

_____ When someone’s talking to me, I think about what I’m going to say next to make sure I get my point across correctly.

_____ Before I send a message, I think about the best way to communicate it (in person, over the phone, in a newsletter, via memo, and so on).

_____ I try to help people understand the underlying concepts behind the point I am discussing. This reduces misconceptions and increases understanding.

_____ I consider cultural barriers when planning my communications.
B.9 EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

ACTIVE LISTENING

• Be attentive – concentrate on what is being said; look at the person; avoid distractions.
• Be impartial – don’t form an opinion; don’t interrupt; just listen.
• Reflect back – restating what has been said helps the speaker know that you understand.
• Summarize – pull together the important messages so that you and the speaker recognize what was important during the conversation.

NONVERBAL LISTENING

• Be quiet – allowing several seconds to pass before you begin to talk gives the speaker time to catch his/her breath or to gather his/her thoughts.
• Maintain eye contact – Look at the other person when he/she speaks. Doing so demonstrates your attentiveness and helps keep your mind from wandering.
• Posture – Let your body show that you are interested by sitting up and leaning toward the speaker; pay attention to the speaker’s body language.
• Equal positioning – If the speaker is standing, you stand. If the speaker is sitting, you sit as well.
• Facial expression – Remember that feelings are reflected in one’s facial expressions.
• Gestures – Your body language reveals a lot about how you interpret a message, so be aware of when you send signals that might cause the speaker to believe that you are angry, in a hurry, bored, etc.

SENDING YOUR MESSAGE

• Express concerns non-judgmentally. Talk about your questions or concerns without blaming other people.
• Use “I” messages. Rather than say “You didn’t explain that very well,” say “I didn’t understand what you just said. Please explain it again.”

Notice nonverbal messages. How you say something can be more important than what you say. Your tone of voice and your gestures can support, modify, weaken, or contradict your words.
COMMUNICATION SKILLS

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vain glory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for one's own interest, but everyone for those of others.

Philippians 2:1

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Research shows that

• about 75% of oral communication is ignored:
  • 8% verbal;
  • 32% vocal, volume, pitch and rhythm;
  • 60% body language (mostly facial cues).

Robert Bolton. PEOPLE SKILLS: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Scott Peck, in his book The Different Drum, Community Making and Peace, strongly contends that “the principles of good communication are the basic principles of community-building.”

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

We need communication skills: the ability to disclose information about ourselves, our needs and expectations, our images and definitions of community.

Three interpersonal skills essential for community living are empathy, personal disclosure and confrontation.

Interpersonal communication expert Thomas Gordan has devised a comprehensive list of conversation responses that create roadblocks in communication interactions. These communication responses are detrimental to relationships because they diminish self-esteem and undermine motivation by triggering feelings of inadequacy, dependency, and anger.
COMMUNICATION SKILLS

• Judging - criticizing, name-calling, diagnosing, comparing, mind reading, and praising evaluatively.
• Sending Solutions - ordering, threatening, moralizing, excessive or inappropriate questioning, being right, sparring, identifying and advising.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Avoiding the other's concerns - diverting, logical argument, rehearsing, filtering, dreaming, and placating

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

"Dialogue is a communication process that aims to build relationships between people as they share experiences, ideas, and information about a common concern."

The three-fold essence of dialogue is: (1) respectful listening, (2) learning, and (3) sharing experiences that shape our beliefs.

Theologian John Powell contends, “listening in dialogue is listening more to meaning than to words...In true listening, we reach behind the words, see through them, to find the person who is being revealed. Listening is a search to find the treasure of the true person as revealed both verbally and nonverbally.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The four steps for effective listening are:

- listening actively
- listening with empathy
- listening with openness
- listening with awareness

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

When using spoken language, remember these \textit{V A L U E} tips:

- Verify what is being said
- Acknowledge feelings
- Listen "actively"
- Use simple language
- Eliminate negative words

Effective Communication Skills – New York LTAP Center
COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Barriers to Effective Listening
• We can think faster than a speaker can talk, and jump to conclusions
• We are distracted and allow our minds to wander
• We lose patience, and decide we are not interested
• We overreact to what is said and respond emotionally
• We interrupt

Effective Communication Skills – New York LTAP Center

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

How to Be a Better Listener
• Be patient for the entire message
• Be aware of speech cues (who, what, where, when, why, how)
• Listen for ideas, not just facts (stories, reasons, goals help us remember facts)

Effective Communication Skills – New York LTAP Center

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Effective Communication Skills – New York LTAP Center

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Good communicators use the KISS ("Keep It Simple and Straightforward") principle.

To communicate more effectively:
• Understand what you truly need and want to say.
• Anticipate the other person’s reaction to your message.
• Choose words and body language that allow the other person to really hear what you’re saying.

Effective Communication Skills – New York LTAP Center

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Effective Communication Skills – New York LTAP Center

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Here are three tips to help you increase your ability to listen by 50 percent:
• Look at the speaker (benefit = 15 percent)
• Ask questions (benefit = 15 percent)
• Take notes (benefit = 20 percent)

Effective Communication Skills – New York LTAP Center

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Body language is perhaps the most important source of clues to the effectiveness of your communication.
• Confidence levels.
• Defensiveness.
• Agreement.
• Comprehension (or lack of understanding).
• Level of interest.
• Level of engagement with the message.
• Truthfulness (or lying/dishonesty).
• Time constraints.
• The need to ask and answer questions.

Effective Communication Skills – New York LTAP Center

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Three Approaches to Relationships
The phrase "SAY IT! SHOUT IT! SKIP IT!" is an easy way to remember the three styles.

SAY IT! – assertive
SHOUT IT! – aggressive
SKIP IT! – passive

Bill Withers & Keami D. Lewis, The Conflict and Communication Activity Book.
COMMUNICATION SKILLS

It takes courage to start a conversation. But if we don’t start talking to one another, nothing will change. Conversation is the way we discover how to transform our world, together.

Margaret Wheatly
B.11 HOW DO I MANAGE DIFFERENCES?

A Self-Assessment Exercise (Thomas-Kilman)

Picture yourself in a situation where your wishes differ from another person’s. For each of the following pairs of statements, circle the one (A or B) that best describes how you would respond. Sometimes neither statement will be very typical for you, but try to choose the one that seems more accurate of the two. Only YOU will see the finished exercise!

1. A. There are times when I let others take the responsibility for solving the problem.
   B. Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, I try to stress those things upon which we both agree.

2. A. I try to find a compromise solution.
   B. I attempt to deal with all of the other’s and my own concerns.

3. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.
   B. I might try to soothe the other’s feelings and preserve our relationship.

4. A. I try to find a compromise solution.
   B. I sometimes sacrifice my own wishes for the wishes of the other person.

5. A. I consistently seek the other’s help in working out a solution.
   B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.

6. A. I try to avoid creating unpleasantness for myself.
   B. I try to win my position.

7. A. I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.
   B. I give up some points in exchange for others.

8. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.
   B. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.

9. A. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.
   B. I make some effort to get my way.

10. A. I am firm in pursuing my goals.
    B. I try to find a compromise solution.
11. A. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.  
   B. I might try to soothe the other’s feelings and preserve our relationship.

12. A. I sometimes avoid taking positions which would create controversy.  
   B. I will let the other person have some of her positions if she lets me have some of mine.

13. A. I propose a middle ground.  
   B. I press to get my points made.

14. A. I tell the other person my ideas and ask her for hers.  
   B. I try to show her the logic and benefits of my position.

15. A. I might try to soothe the other’s feelings and preserve our relationship.  
   B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid tensions.

16. A. I try not to hurt the other’s feelings.  
   B. I try to convince the other person of the merits of my position.

17. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
   B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.

18. A. If it makes the other person happy, I might let her maintain her views.  
   B. I will let her have some of her positions, if she lets me have some of mine.

19. A. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.  
   B. I try to postpone the issue until I had had time to think it over.

20. A. I attempt to immediately work through our differences.  
   B. I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us.

21. A. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person’s wishes.  
   B. I always lean toward a direct discussion of the problem.

22. A. I try to find a position that is intermediate between the other person’s and mine.  
   B. I assert my wishes.

23. A. I am very often concerned with satisfying all of our wishes.  
   B. There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.
24. A. If the other’s position seems very important to her, I would try to meet her wishes.
   B. I try to get the other person to settle for a compromise.

25. A. I try to show the other person the logic and benefits of my position.
   B. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person’s wishes.

26. A. I propose a middle ground.
   B. I am nearly always concerned with satisfying all of our wishes.

27. A. I sometimes avoid taking positions which would create controversy.
   B. If it makes the other person happy, I might let him maintain her views.

28. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.
   B. I usually seek the other’s help in working out a solution.

29. A. I propose a middle ground.
   B. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.

30. A. I try not to hurt the other’s feelings.
   B. I always share the problem with the other person so that we can work it out.
Collaborating
I win, you win

Symbol: Owl

Fundamental premise: Teamwork and cooperation help everyone achieve their goals while also maintaining relationships

Strategic philosophy: The process of working through differences will lead to creative solutions that will satisfy both parties' concerns

When to use:

- When there is a high level of trust
- When you don't want to have full responsibility
- When you want others to also have "ownership" of solutions
- When the people involved are willing to change their thinking as more information is found and new options are suggested
- When you need to work through animosity and hard feelings

Drawbacks:

- The process takes lots of time and energy
- Some may take advantage of other people's trust and openness

Compromising
You bend, I bend

Symbol: Fox
**Fundamental premise:** Winning something while losing a little is OK

**Strategic philosophy:** Both ends are placed against the middle in an attempt to serve the "common good" while ensuring each person can maintain something of their original position

**When to use:**
- When people of equal status are equally committed to goals
- When time can be saved by reaching intermediate settlements on individual parts of complex issues
- When goals are moderately important

**Drawbacks:**
- Important values and long-term objectives can be derailed in the process
- May not work if initial demands are too great
- Can spawn cynicism, especially if there's no commitment to honor the compromise solution

---

**Accommodating**

**Symbol:** Teddy Bear

**Fundamental premise:** Working toward a common purpose is more important than any of the peripheral concerns; the trauma of confronting differences may damage fragile relationships

**Strategic philosophy:** Appease others by downplaying conflict, thus protecting the relationship

**When to use:**

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• When an issue is not as important to you as it is to the other person
• When you realize you are wrong
• When you are willing to let others learn by mistake
• When you know you cannot win
• When it is not the right time and you would prefer to simply build credit for the future
• When harmony is extremely important
• When what the parties have in common is a good deal more important than their differences

Drawbacks:

• One's own ideas don't get attention
• Credibility and influence can be lost

Competing

I win, you lose

Symbol: Shark

Fundamental premise: Associates “winning” a conflict with competition

Strategic philosophy: When goals are extremely important, one must sometimes use power to win

When to use:

• When you know you are right
• When time is short and a quick decision is needed
• When a strong personality is trying to steamroller you and you don't want to be taken advantage of
• When you need to stand up for your rights

Drawbacks:

• Can escalate conflict
• Losers may retaliate
Avoiding
No winners, no losers

Symbol: Turtle

Fundamental premise: This isn't the right time or place to address this issue

Strategic philosophy: Avoids conflict by withdrawing, sidestepping, or postponing

When to use:
- When the conflict is small and relationships are at stake
- When you're counting to ten to cool off
- When more important issues are pressing and you feel you don't have time to deal with this particular one
- When you have no power and you see no chance of getting your concerns met
- When you are too emotionally involved and others around you can solve the conflict more successfully
- When more information is needed

Drawbacks:
- Important decisions may be made by default
- Postponing may make matters worse
B.13 Conflict Management Steps

Step One: Create an Effective Atmosphere
Choose a time and neutral space that is free of distractions. It is also very important to allow enough time for each person to maximize their concentration, utilize effective communication skills and express the positive skills of each person. Remember to treat the other person with respect for the sacred process. Sit down and talk, be willing to laugh at yourself.

Step Two: Tell Your Stories
It is very important for each individual to tell their story – the whole story- without interruption. This honors the authenticity and truth for each person. Perceptions are the lenses through which we see ourselves, others and relationships. Carefully speak to be understood and listen until you “experience the other side.” This step enables everyone to focus on the person and not the problem.

Step Three: Focus on Individual and Shared needs
Speak about yourself and not about them, using “I” statements. Think before you speak – what do you want to communicate? Speak with a purpose by providing specific and concrete examples. Briefly state your own needs, feelings, perceptions, values, hopes, and dreams. Self-disclosure builds trust in the relationship – a willingness to say the often difficult and gut wrenching things. What seems to be producing the strong emotions?

Step Four: Look to the Future, Learn from the Past
The need to focus time and energy on what one can do now and tomorrow. Reflect on the part that past events played in creating a particular conflict. Create a vision for the future that will maximize the potential for everyone to achieve their desired outcome. Let go of the need to be right and be willing to accept was is most effective for the future. Be flexible. Be willing to ask questions, why or why not?

Step Five: Becoming ResponseAble
The ability to effectively address conflict within a relationship empowers one to discover his/her own internal values, beliefs, boundaries and confirms who one is becoming. Be willing to learn, have the courage to change and the compassion to forgive. Make a commitment to creating healthy relationships that let go of blame, punishment and guilt. Learn to trust one’s feelings and intuition.

Two essential questions:
1. What do you need our relationship to provide?
2. What do you need as an outcome of our dealing with this conflict that will make you feel strengthened as a person and that will help you feel our relationship has improved?
RULES FOR FIGHTING FAIR

1. Teach people how to keep talking amidst fighting.

2. Give people rules to fight by.
   - Make an appointment for the fight.
   - No mind reading. (Eg. “You did that because…” No interpreting or guessing what was in the other person’s mind.)
   - You can’t bring up anything more than 60 days old. Can’t keep bringing it back.
   - No expert witnesses. (eg. Can’t say “Not only do I feel this way about you, but so-and-so does too.” or “I heard somebody else say…”)
   - No guerilla warfare. (”Because I am hurting, I want you to hurt.”)
   - No threats. (Can’t say “If you do that again,…”)
   - No name-calling.

REMEMBER: The purpose of fighting is to be heard and to be in better relationship.

   We must find constructive ways to fight.

   We must get people out of the cycle of simply reacting to each other when something happens.

WARNING: Fighting fair feels really awkward at the start,

   but becomes more natural over time.

--Adapted from Dr. Arthur Pressley, Drew Theological School
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

COLLABORATING
Problems are solved in such a way that an optimum result is provided for all involved.
Both sides get what they want and negative feelings are minimized.
PROS: Creates mutual trust, maintains positive relationships; builds commitments;
CONS: time and energy consuming

COMPETING
Authoritarian approach.
PROS: Goal oriented; quick.
CONS: May breed hostility.

AVOIDING
The non-confrontational approach.
PROS: Does not escalate conflict; postpones difficulty.
CONS: Unaddressed and unresolved problems.

ACCOMMODATING
Giving in to maintain relationships.
PROS: Minimize injury when we are outmatched; relationships are maintained.
CONS: Breeds resentment; exploits the weak.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
Conflict is a word that creates feelings of anxiety for most individuals; yet conflict is inevitable in any human interaction and a normal aspect of genuine relationships. Conflict has the capacity to be either destructive or constructive in a relationship.
Dudley Weeks, in his book *The Eight Essential Steps to Conflict Resolution: Preserving Relationships at Work, at Home and in the Community*, identifies seven basic elements that characterize most conflicts – perceptions, needs, values, power, desires, goals and opinions.

**Tips for Resolving Conflict**

- Seek agreement or common ground
- Refuse to argue
- Seek commitment and action to change
- Plot the follow up
- Deliver on promises

**Responses to Conflict**

Healthy and mature people often engage in the following responses to conflict:
- Ignore the conflict and refuse to acknowledge it exists;
- Flight response by creating distance from the conflict;
- Shift the focus onto others rather than one's self;
- Blame, criticize, project their problems on others;
- Fight and become abusive;
- Refuse to take personal responsibility for the problem;
- Trivialize or minimize the conflict through humor;
- Face it honestly and deal with it courageously, trusting in the Spirit.

Conflict management is best summarized in *The Four Fold Way* described by Angelis Arrien:

- Show Up
- Pay Attention
- Tell Your Truth
- Don't Be Attached to the Outcome

Angelis Arrien, *The Four Fold Way*

The hallmark of collaboration occurs when everyone is inside the same circle, standing together, shoulder to shoulder, wondering how best to take care of the shared concerns while envisioning and creating a future together.

Stewart Levine, *Getting to Resolution: Turning Conflict into Collaboration*

**Conflict Management Steps**

- **Step One**: Create an Effective Atmosphere
- **Step Two**: Tell Your Stories
- **Step Three**: Focus on Individual and Shared needs
- **Step Four**: Look to the Future, Learn from the Past
- **Step Five**: Becoming Responsible

Stewart Levine, *Getting to Resolution: Turning Conflict into Collaboration*
Real dialogue is effective for conflict management because it nurtures the attitudes of abundance, learning and genuine listening.

Conflict management has the potential to deepen and enrich one’s relationships as the individuals learn true empathy and nonpossessive love.
Mutuality and Accountability

Every Christian is baptized into a four-pronged call:

• to holiness
• to community
• to mission
• to Christian maturity.

1/13/2013 Crafting Authentic Community

Loughlan Sofield further describes three conditions vital for the growth of any community.

1. one that establishes minimum expectations with a process of accountability
2. one that is willing to unearth and discuss commonly held myths about membership
3. one that honestly evaluates the commitment and capacity of its members

Commitment and accountability are forever paired.

• Accountability is the willingness to care for the well-being of the whole.
• Commitment is the willingness to make a promise with no expectation in return.

Robert Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging*

Loughlan Sofield identifies three major reasons why communities often fail.

First, a mutual, common purpose is absent.
Second, many members do not possess the capacity, ability or maturity to achieve the common purpose.
Third, the community has failed to develop appropriate and effective structures and processes for accountability.

Michael A. Cowan defines mutuality as “the ability of persons to engage in direct and non-manipulative dialogue, each understanding and respecting the other’s frame of reference.”

Three levels of Mutuality:
1. Self-disclosure and empathy for support
2. Direct and responsible challenge
3. Focus on the relationship

Michael A. Cowan
Mutuality and Accountability

Categories of Membership
1. Gifted, called, and committed
2. Gifted, called, and stopped contributing
3. Gifted, called, and superficial community
4. Neither called nor gifted – incapable of community

Accountability is the willingness to care for the whole, and it flows out of the kind of conversations we have about the new story we want to take our identity from. What can we create together?

Mutuality and Accountability

The essential elements of small Christian communities are:
- Bonding
- Spirituality
- Reality
- Commitment
- Communication

Mutuality and Accountability

Small Christian communities as a group:
- take people where they are
- challenge them to grow
- strive to create the environment of love and acceptance that alone makes personal and community growth possible

Mutuality and Accountability

Community is built when we sit in circles, where there are windows and the walls have signs of life, when every voice can be equally heard and amplified, when we are all on one level—and the chairs have wheels and swivel.
Opening Prayer: Pat Cane

We are community-discerning, empowering, and compassionate, interconnected with all beings.
We are change, encouraging inner and outer healing, willing to be the cauldron of transformation.
We are willing to recognize our wholeness and holiness, willing to grow in peace, power, and love.
We are witness to the pain and injustice around us, willing to be companions in the struggle.
We believe in equality and diversity, respecting differences.
We believe that giving is the act of receiving, that in healing ourselves we heal our world.
We believe that we are interconnected, part of ancestors and children to come, part of soil, earth and stars. Amen.

Gathering Song: ONE LORD by Lori True

One Lord, one faith, One call to serve each other;
One heart, one mind, One common ground,
We stand, all as one.

Give us new hands, open and free, Give us new hearts, humble yet
strong, to love like you our whole life long.
to serve with grace and dignity.
May we be worthy of our call. We have but…
May we be worthy of our call. We have.

Give us new eyes, loving and wise, Breathe out your spirit upon the land,
to seek the good we all have inside. in hope and peace we’ll firmly stand,
May we be worthy of our call. We have but…
to live lives worthy of our call. We
**Reflective Readings:**

What God does first and best and most is to trust His people with this moment in history. He trusts them to do what must be done for the sake of the whole community. W. Brueggemann

To care for one another and to accept one another’s care in this spirit of deep mutuality is to place our ordinary acts of face-to-face interaction within the ultimate context of love.

When a community of people discovers that they share a concern, change begins. There is no power equal to a community discovering what it cares about. M. Wheatley

It takes courage to start a conversation. But if we don’t start talking to one another, nothing will change. Conversation is the way we discover how to transform our world together. M. Wheatley

The love of Jesus Christ forms us into a community, diverse as we are as individuals. IHM Const.

Sisters, as a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. 1Cor 12:12
Closing Prayer: Prayer for Community

Blessed are you, God who have created us and given us life.
Blessed are you who have shed light on our visions and aspirations,
and given us the means to find sustenance and to survive.
Blessed are you, who have given us marvelous ways to work and also the
challenge and ability to overcome obstacles.
Blessed are you, God of the Universe; you guide and unite us,
and make it possible for us to live and work together.

Be merciful, with those you created;
give us peace, harmony and love in this life.

Be merciful and benevolent with all who need your guidance and love.

Be merciful in your infinite understanding,
so that we may be united in our shared hopes.

Be merciful, so that all communities may live in hope in your light
and under your infinite blessings.
What God does first and best and most is to trust His people with this moment in history. He trusts them to do what must be done for the sake of the whole community.

Theologian Walter Brueggemann
APPENDIX C:

Post-Workshop Assessment
Crafting Authentic Community
Workshop Evaluation
January 26, 2013

1. What was most helpful for you about the workshop?

2. What did you find most challenging about this time?

3. What would you like to know more about?

4. What information surprised you about the workshop material?

5. Identify at least one new thing that you learned from the workshop topic.

6. Do you have any ideas or suggestions to improve the workshop?

7. Other comments:
Kindly rate the workshop’s program according to the following scale:

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<th>3-Good</th>
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C.3

Crafting Authentic Community
Workshop Evaluations (21)
January 26, 2013

1. What was most helpful for you about the workshop?
   - The various aspects of community treated.
   - The atmosphere Ruth created.
   - Discussing the communication skills.*
   - To experience a wealth of knowledge from Sr. Ruth’s research.
   - You gave a nice mix of theory and good practical suggestions to implement.
   - Conflict Management Skills.
   - Relevant Topics. Passion of the Presenter.
   - It helped me understand how we struggle with me and others.
   - The development from topic to topic.
   - Learning more about each topic. All of it is hard for us to do but it brings a life of growth vs. complacency and death.
   - To hear was is happening or not happening in community verbalized.
   - Everything – all was very practical.
   - Being exposed to asking the questions again – What is community?
   - Interaction and information sharing. Organization of presentation.
   - Multi-media approach / survey / info before and during / opportunity for sharing
   - Presentation on various definitions of community and reminder that our own IHM statement is right on target.
   - It was informative. Lots of things to consider.
   - To be present and open to what you gave deeper life to me.
   - That we are not at the end as the years go by but it is continual.
   - Information from the whole day was most interesting.
   - The most helpful was the self-assessment exercise and the Five Conflict Modes.

2. What did you find most challenging about this time?
   - Seeing myself from other perspectives.
   - The material on conflict management.**
   - Seeing I really had to stand back and observe myself.*
   - thought provoking.
   - Collecting discussions and instructions to different stages.
   - It was hard sometimes to be focused on the presentation when the material led me to think about community situations.
   - How to dialogue.
   - The need we have to resolve conflict in community.
   - The long hours – right now I am brain dead.
   - Finding myself on the different levels of community.
   - Not necessarily challenging but affirming and hopeful.
- Probably the accountability part of the workshop.
- Absorbing so much good material in a limited time. It was packed.
- Answering the questions.
- Taking the time lesson and reviewing the year.
- As always with workshops – sitting so long but wouldn’t have missed the day.
- Eye opening surveys.
- Living out the challenge of information imparted today.
- Needing to live out what I heard in my heart.

3. **What would you like to know more about?**
   - Specific instances of ways to handle/approach specific confrontation.
   - The material from Bowen about triangles and other relationship patterns.
   - The material on accountability.
   - Maybe we could get a list of articles to read on all these topics.
   - How one confronts another with gentleness.
   - Challenging myself and others to true community.
   - I would like to read some of the books the quotes were from.
   - Meaning of community.
   - How we can collaborate in calling each other to accountability?
   - What do you do when we’ve invited/invited and community just isn’t important to someone?
   - There were many facets that I need to pay attention to – by doing what I heard.
   - I would love to do more and to hear more about the conflict modes and communication skills particularly in reference to community living.

4. **What information surprised you about the workshop material?**
   - All the ways so many different authors treat community.
   - The dangers in the motivation to heal, fix, change or convert.
   - No surprise. Every item was most interesting.
   - The self-assessment.
   - Resolving conflict.
   - The struggle with being an individual and the challenge of living with others.
   - Questioning myself on the level of my participation in forming community.
   - Affirmation of what I am trying to do but not really surprising.
   - I was happy to hear about “confrontation should be only if we love and care about the person. I’ve experienced too many disasters.”
   - How “I” manage differences.
   - Listening over and over again how important in every aspect
   - How much is involved in real honest community – work.
   - Never knew what depth of knowledge could flood my soul.
   - I had no idea this would be discussed.
5. **Identify at least one new thing that you learned from the workshop topic.**
   - How freeing “positive” confrontation could be.
   - Importance of nonverbal communication.
   - The conflict management skills. I saw a little of myself in each area.
   - Ideas on how to communicate effectively.
   - Expansive knowledge on Crafting Authentic Community.
   - It was interesting to learn about my style of managing differences.*
   - The ingredients for Authentic Community.
   - That I am a Teddy Bear.
   - There is still a lot to learn about myself and others in forming community.
   - Conflict management styles. ***
   - How community may possibly be improved.
   - I loved all the quotes – they were all very meaningful.
   - I am more accommodating than I thought.
   - I need to “listen” to what others are saying – verbally or by their stance.
   - The hand-outs on the explanation on the self-assessment, communication skills and conflict styles.

6. **Do you have any ideas or suggestions to improve the workshop?**
   - Maybe role playing would provide practice on the theory.*
   - None. Happy with everything!
   - Don’t try to do too much.
   - You did a great job, very organized. *
   - Maybe longer breaks to visit with one another.
   - Very well done. Congratulations!*
   - Great as is.
   - Time permitting – personal experiences in community (good and bad)
   - Present it to the larger IHM Congregation.*
   - Spread over more time – possibly 2 days.
   - This was wonderful and I never felt threatened.
   - You alerted me to what way I need to open my heart – continue to discuss what or find out how to do or continue.
   - Several components – self-assessment or conflict management could be an all day workshop in themselves.

7. **Other comments:**
   - I am so glad this workshop is being done! I hope it goes on and on.
   - Most interesting. Thank You.*
   - Excellent Presentation!
   - Materials, handouts, bibliography, flow of workshops and planning.
   - All well done! Day well spent.
   - Others in the community should have this opportunity.
   - It was a very profitable day. Thank You!
- Thank you so much. I know God will bless you and I hope with more vocations.
- Many hours have gone into this workshop – it was well prepared and presented.”
- Wonderful Presentation! Greatly Needed.
- Am most grateful for time and effort to do this.
- Wonderful – thank you for all your many hours of reflection, preparation and deep love and hope for community.
- I found the workshop informative, interesting and challenging.
- Thanks Ruth, for this great opportunity.
- The entire day witnessed to your tremendous preparation. You are very at home are presenting. God bless.
C.4  Kindly rate the workshop’s program according to the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1-Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>2-Satisfactory</td>
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**Family Systems Theory PowerPoint / Article**  
Rating: 4.25  
Comments: has no concrete illustrations or examples; well-done.

**Prayer / Ritual**  
Rating: 4.5  
Comments: Especially beautiful and meaningful; inspiring will use it for mission group prayer.

**Theological & Scriptural Background:**  
Rating: 4.5  
Comments: Information helped me greatly. Always the “icing on the cake” of a talk.

**Communication Skills Topic:**  
Rating: 4.8  

**Conflict Management Topic:**  
Rating: 4.85  
Comments: Really interesting and self-revealing.

**Mutuality & Accountability**  
Rating: 4.6  
Comments:

**Individual Exercises:**  
Rating: 4.55  
Comments: This I found to be very helpful.

**Small Group Discussion:**  
Rating: 4.5  
Comments: Maybe we could have had more. Needed more time. Never my favorite part.

**Overall Schedule:**  
Rating: 4.65  
Comments: A little too long in the afternoon. A little more pause to absorb the material. Tiring but excellent. Action packed.

**PowerPoint Presentations:**  
Rating: 4.75  
Comments: So glad to have copies to make notes on.

**Handouts:**  
Rating: 4.85  
Comments: Nice to have handouts to take notes. Thanks for all your hard work and sharing. You should get an A+. Excellent! Great job! Great for further reflection. Very Good! You made us work. Lots of work! Good luck as you move forward. * Thank you for gifting us with who you truly are. Well done – excellent material

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Hello Everyone,

Blessings during this holy season of Lent. I have attached an article on the topic of conflict. In the workshop evaluations, many of you requested additional information on the topic.

I am also writing to inform you that you will be receiving a post workshop survey to complete in three weeks. This post survey will complete the requirements for the Crafting Authentic Community Workshop for my dissertation.

I am deeply grateful for your presence and participation in this ministry project and I treasure the wisdom gleaned from the experience with all of you throughout the process. I have gained new insights that will only enrich the ministry project and the dissertation.

May you each experience the graces of new life throughout this sacred season.

With gratitude and prayers,

Sister Ruth A. Harkins, IHM
Dear Sisters,

Although it may seem hard to believe, it has been six weeks since that wonderful Saturday in January when we gathered as IHM Sisters to explore together the deeper meaning of our lives in community. Since that time you have each received an article that focused on an aspect of conflict management. Now it is time to discover how your perceptions may have changed as a result of our shared learnings.

I am including a link to the post survey that will complete your commitment to my Doctor of Ministry Project. Many of the questions are similar to those in the pre-survey; however, your responses may reflect a deeper level of understanding on the various topics. Please complete the post survey no later than March 20, 2013.

I appreciate your honest feedback throughout this entire process and especially invite you to be as specific and detailed as possible in the two open-ended questions at the end of the survey. Your truthful feedback will provide invaluable evidence in support of the need for a revitalization of communal living. Your responses will also enable the critical analysis necessary to draw valid conclusions for the project.

I deeply appreciate your support, encouragement and participation throughout this process. When the entire dissertation is submitted in May, I will send you the results of both the pre and post surveys.

May these Lenten days be filled with new life and energy for each of you.

Gratefully with prayers,

Sister Ruth A. Harkins, IHM
Crafting Authentic Community - Post Workshop Survey

1. Which category below includes your age?

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answered question 19
skipped question 0

2. How many years have you been in religious life?

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answered question 19
skipped question 0

3. How many sisters currently life in your community?

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answered question 18
skipped question 1
4. How many years have you lived in your current community?

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5. Based on the workshop you attended on January 26th, what was your dominant style for handling differences according to the Thomas-Kilman Assessment?

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answered question: 19
skipped question: 0

6. What is your current ministry?

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answered question 19
skipped question 0

8. The Church Documents invite religious to become "true experts of communion" not only for religious life but for the life of the world.

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answered question 19
skipped question 0

9. The future of religious life will require individual members to make an intentional commitment to craft authentic community.

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answered question 18
skipped question 1
### 10. The greatest gift an IHM sister offers to the congregation is a life of holiness rooted in prayer.

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**Answered question:** 19

**Skipped question:** 0

### 11. Community living will become the primary relational context in the future of religious life.

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**Answered question:** 19

**Skipped question:** 0

### 12. Spirituality is considered to be an essential quality for attracting new members.

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**Answered question:** 19

**Skipped question:** 0
13. The visibility of sisters is essential for attracting future vocations.

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14. The quality of community life is vitally important for attracting vocations to religious life.

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15. Religious women are constantly engaged in the creative tension between the forces of individuality and togetherness in community.

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16. A religious community is an emotional system in which individuals strive for meaningful relationships.

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Answered question 19, skipped question 0

17. Authentic community is made possible through sacrifice.

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Answered question 19, skipped question 0

18. Charity is at the core of authentic community.

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Answered question 19, skipped question 0
19. Self-discipline is essential for crafting authentic community.

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answered question 19
skipped question 0

20. The major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is the human tendency to judge another person.

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answered question 19
skipped question 0

21. Effective communication techniques are the basic building blocks for authentic community.

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answered question 19
skipped question 0

186
22. Empathy is essential for a mutual relationship in community.

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answered question 18
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23. Personal disclosure is an important component for crafting authentic community.

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answered question 19
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24. Active and respectful listening increases a person's capacity for empathy, openness and awareness.

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answered question 19
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25. Dialogue is a communication process that intentionally works to build community by focusing on creating understanding for the common good.

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answered question 19
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26. Conflict is a normal aspect of genuine relationships and a natural result of individual differences.

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answered question 19
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27. Genuine community becomes a reality when individuals are willing to speak the truth with love.

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answered question 19
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188
28. Real dialogue is effective in conflict management because it nurtures the attributes of equality, unlimited possibilities, and transformation.

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29. Honest communication fosters mutuality in interpersonal relationships.

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30. Mutuality in interpersonal relationships requires a willingness to challenge and be challenged by one another.

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31. Individuals must have the courage and humility to take responsibility for creating their present community situations.

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Answered question: 19
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32. The ability to craft authentic community depends on the ability of the members to call one another to accountability.

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Answered question: 19
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33. Deterioration in the quality of communal living is the direct result of a lack of accountability.

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Answered question: 19
Skipped question: 0
34. Deterioration in the quality of community life is the direct result of the aging process.

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35. The mission of a congregation has the capacity to empower individuals to craft authentic community.

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36. There comes a time in the life of every community when members make choices that opt for security.

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| answered question | 19 |
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37. It has been six weeks since you participated in the workshop "Crafting Authentic Community." Please share an experience or insight in which you have applied something from the workshop.

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38. Has your understanding of community, as an essential component of religious life, changed since attending the workshop in January? If so, describe how.

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37. It has been six weeks since you participated in the workshop "Crafting Authentic Community." Please share an experience or insight in which you have applied something from the workshop.

1. Ruth, came home from your gifted an excellent workshop. Felt an excitement and spiritual flow of energy from all the sisters. Communication an attempt to put forth energy of how we were gifted - did not happen. Maybe I missed it.
2. At my age and family situation at this time. I can’t. sorry.
3. Although we are community, we need to accept one another's individuality with charity.
4. More attentive listening to others
5. I’m trying to be a better listener when someone is speaking. My mind tends to be thinking of related things to what is being said or perhaps my experience.
6. Also, to express thanks for whatever a sister does - fixing dinner, or dessert, bringing home items for the sisters. Also, to ask a sister how the day was for her in her ministry, since we all have a different one.
7. The workshop reminded me of our human frailty and the need to give one another the benefit of the doubt unless it is clear that correction is in order.
8. That it is my responsibility also to form community not just the leadership team
9. The interest of those present inspired me and made me want to be more open to material.
10. I find myself more conscious of how I deal with others since I am a take charge person and totter between collaborative and accommodating.
11. I shared my experience of the workshop with several people and distributed the article on "community healthy or dysfunctional."
13. To prayerfully and honestly begin to move from silence and accommodation to speak the truth that emerges from frustration and desire make the best use of our time "together".
14. Listening skills have been sharpened for allowing more patience and helpful comments.
15. Trying harder to communicate with present community
16. I see "less pointing a finger at" and criticizing, and more understanding and acceptance. Life is hard enough without others bullying or putting people down.
17. I often find that the criticizer does worse than the one they are criticizing. The acceptance of the individual traits of others.
18. Greater attention to listening styles and how people challenge one another/encourage or thwart collaboration
19. I tried to be more directly honest with the people I live with. tried not to hide A situation came up with a sister I live with where I believed that I needed to speak with her with honesty and love. It was difficult but the results was very The human tendency to heal, fix, convert or change gets in the way of interpersonal communication.

38. **Has your understanding of community, as an essential component of religious life, changed since attending the workshop in January? If so, describe how.**

1. The need to pray for each sister personally. When I meet a sister to greet her using her name. When critical - to chase the ant or ants and pray for both of us. I don’t know her past or pain nor her present fit of need at the moment. So it is.
2. Community has changed over the years. We are all individuals on the same level striving for the same spiritual goals.
3. The sisters seem more attentive to others questions and respect for the other’s ministry.
4. A healthy community celebrates the members’ giftedness. Getting to know the gifts of the members in my community and rejoicing over them. Not only that, but I should promote one another’s gifts.
5. Yes. It is the ingredient that will make our lives joy filled or difficult to bear. It is the component that requires the greatest attention in our present reality.
6. Yes, That to be honest in sharing not to offer it up
7. I think I was affirmed in a few ways, but to truly change would require practice over time, review of the material, more discussion with others..esp. my house.
8. Not sure my understanding of community has changed as much as I have a more heightened awareness of what it could be. Past experience has convinced me that a genuine spiritual life trumps community (with community coming in second) as it is the pre-requisite for true and good community living.
Past experiences have also taught me that we dwell far too much on the petty and not enough on the beautiful aspect of others.

9. The workshop helped me to see the importance of community in attracting vocations. I hope that more of our sisters can experience this workshop and that more can be accomplished in conflict management. Thanks for all the work you have done and know that you are in my thought and prayers as you complete your education.

10. It has - the challenge is moving from knowledge to implementation. I think the workshop provided us with a lot of information that we need to put into practice in our community living situations. Thank You!

11. The workshop refreshed the reality, that religious life throughout the missions, struggles with the human element and daily needs prayer and adjustments to each situation in encountered relationships.

12. Community has always been very important to me. Living with various personalities and backgrounds have always been a challenge. Even in our own families things have to be worked through by all.

13. No, it has clarified my own personal thoughts of community. Although we are one in spirit, we have our own individual traits that make us unique.

14. I have a much greater understanding of the need for accountability, working through conflicts, and collaboration rather than accommodation. Also, concerning the last article you sent...by Ann Garrido...I wish this had been in print and a "must read" years and years ago...could this be sent out to all the community? One of the best articles I've seen in a long time...in such a few pages, she really "nails it"...(can't think of a better metaphor, sorry).

15. It has be reinforced

16. I believe that I understand better how important it is for each of us to call myself and others to be more accountable to each other and to our local community

17. Deeper meaning for community as "true experts of communion."


_____. *Supplement to the Constitutions*. Revisions approved by the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Scranton, PA (March 2006).


Fleming SJ, David L. “Individualism in Community Life.” *Human Development* 21, no.3 (Fall 2000): 5-12.


_____. “Community—Healthy or Dysfunctional?” *Review for Religious,* 56, no. 6 (November-December 1997): 587-598.


Markham, OP, Ph.D., Donna “Religious Life Tomorrow,” in *Human Development*, 18, no.2 (Summer 1997): 5-9.


“The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel.” Is a 2012 British comedy-drama film, directed by John Madden. The screenplay, written by Ol Parker, was based on the 2004 novel *These Foolish Things* by Deborah Moggach.


