



MERCY
GLOBAL
PRESENCE

Facilitators Guide: New Foundations in Mercy

Guiding Group

The role of the Facilitator will necessarily include organising the group's access at the session to the resources on screen or in print.

A suggested structure for each Session is:

1. Preparation of the Focus Space
2. Prayer
3. Introduction
4. Content Explored
5. Reflection and Discussion
6. Closing

As this is the final theme of the second Segment, most groups will have already met for one or more sessions and so will be familiar with the process and [the microsite](#).

Whichever presentation you, the Facilitator, or group first choose to engage with, commence your work using the introduction by Elizabeth Davis rsm. In it, *'to give us energy and to serve as a catalyst to our moving forward'*, Sr Elizabeth reviews the key voices from last month's theme.

Then Elizabeth invites us to respond *'with new foundations in this troubling and tumultuous time'* to the challenges of our contemporary world: *'Four negative forces are visibly intersecting in our world today: an intensifying climate emergency; a resulting global COVID-19 pandemic; a resulting visibility of inequalities relating to systemic racism, sexism, ageism and homelessness; and a resulting increase globally in poverty and hunger.'* She addresses the **Energy** needed to respond, **Readiness** to respond and **Confidence** to respond.

Once again, we offer three of many possible approaches to using resources from the theme New Foundations in Mercy, implementing the suggested structure (nos. 1-6). The approach used will depend on the needs, interests, abilities and situations of the group members. **At this present time, groups that are able to meet are using video conferencing. Our suggested approaches take account of this and of face-to-face-meetings becoming possible again in the future.**

Facilitators may, of course, use their own approach with the resources, or choose elements from these three suggested approaches to create a different approach. At the conclusion of the Session the Facilitator or another group member is encouraged to send on 'what is too good for the group to keep to themselves' to mgpfeedback@mercyinternational.ie

Example One: Theological Imaginings

The Facilitator organises an online meeting room such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. If using Zoom, the article could be shared using the 'Share screen' function and the 'breakout rooms' used for small group discussion. When face to face meetings are possible again, the Facilitator arranges for each participant to receive a copy of the presentation.

Create a focus space with a candle, some soil and water to represent land and ocean, a Mercy cross and a copy of the bible.

Commence the Session with the Centering Prayer from the Reflective Prayer

Ask a participant to read aloud the first three paragraphs of the presentation which describe the new reality of COVID-19. Dennis Horton claims that 'Covid-19 has taught us, like nothing else in human experience, that we are all vulnerable'. Invite participants to share in the large group what this time of the pandemic has taught them – what vulnerabilities, injustices, strengths?

Invite participants in small groups to discuss one or more of the three questions Dennis poses:

- What does it mean for us to be a source of strength and healing in our communion with all creation?
- Committed as we are to care for our common home, how should we stand with the displaced and model a world of welcome and inclusion?
- How will our Mercy charism and our global presence give us the energy for an earth that is in such need of God's compassion and mercy?

When small groups come together, share with the large group 'what is too good to keep to yourself'.

Invite readers to read aloud the rest of the presentation which, in telling the story of the arrival and ongoing presence of the Sisters of Mercy in Aotearoa New Zealand and their growth in relationship with both the Māori people and their lay partners in mission, traces their history of new ways of living God's mercy.

Invite participants to share with the large group the resonances with their own congregation or institute story.

Conclude the session with the Closing Prayer from the Reflective Prayer.

Example Two: Distinct Voice

The Facilitator organises an online meeting room such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. If using Zoom, the video and prayer could be shared using the 'Share screen' function. When face to face meetings are possible again, the Facilitator arranges for a smart television, or a data projector and laptop for the meeting place in order to screen (on a blank wall or screen) the Distinct Voice video and prayer.

Create a focus space with a candle, images that depict Haiti (google this on the internet), a copy of the articles, the equivalent of \$1.25 in coins, flowers or greenery to represent flourishing.

Commence the Session with the Reading from Tender Courage from the Reflective Prayer.

It would be beneficial for the participants if the Facilitator could introduce the Session by giving some context on the situation in Haiti to highlight the significance of this ministry.

The article by Kathy Thornton rsm under the heading 'About Mercy Focus on Haiti' summarises the situation: 'Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere and the second poorest country in the world. In rural Haiti, where Mercy Focus on Haiti works, the population lives in extreme poverty, many living on \$1.25 per day or less. The women and families MFOH has chosen to work with are truly among the ultra-poor'.

Invite participants to reflect on the content of these three sentences. Alternatively, invite participants to share what they know about Haiti prior to sharing this summary.

Invite participants to read the article, either silently or with different voices taking turns.

The article emphasises two key characteristics of MFOH: collaboration and consensus.

Invite responses to one or more of the following questions in the large group:

- Are you surprised by this approach?
- How is collaboration different from teamwork?
- Why is collaborative decision making important?
- Why does building consensus in a group enable project success?
- What in this article about MFOH that makes it a 'New Foundation'?

Screen the Video

Invite participants to share with the group a word or phrase summing up its impact on them.

Read aloud the postscript.

Conclude the gathering with 'Song of Mercy' from the Reflective Prayer.

To learn more about MFOH and to stay in contact, visit the website www.mercyfocusonhaiti, or follow the facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MercyFocusOnHaiti/>

Example Three: Mercy Global Action

The Facilitator organises an online meeting room such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. If using Zoom, the article could be shared using the 'Share screen' function and the 'breakout rooms' used for small group discussion. When face to face meetings are possible again, the Facilitator arranges for each participant to receive a copy of the presentation.

Create a focus space with a candle, some soil and water to represent land and ocean, images of need (google for these on the internet), a Mercy cross and a copy of the bible open at Matthew 25.

Commence the Session with the Reading from Tender Courage from the Reflective Prayer, followed by time for silent reflection.

Invite participants when ready to share aloud the word, phrase or sentence from the passage that speaks to them.

Invite two readers to alternate reading the article aloud ; alternatively, participants could read the article silently to themselves.

Following the reading, in groups of 2 or 3, share your response to the article. The following quotes from the article may be helpful discussion starting points:

-'Today's invitation to new foundations in a post-pandemic world likely requires no long-distance passage. The journey begins with opening our eyes, minds and hearts to what is happening around us.'

-'We can hear voices inviting us to something new beyond this present moment... Voices that insist we push forward to shape a more just and environmentally sustainable world.'

-'Action that addresses the root causes of the crises... requires imagination and relationships.'

Marianne shares four examples of responses to the challenges and opportunities of the pandemic. Further information about each one can be found at the relevant link:

[MGA COVID-19 Task Force](#), [the Vatican's COVID-19 Commission](#), [350.org's Principles for a Just Recovery](#), [Letter to US Congress](#)

The presentation concludes with a Statement from the Prophetic Voice Commission of the Sisters and Associates of the Caribbean, Central and South America within the Institute of the Americas. The Commission is the Grassroots Ministry featured in Theme One of this Segment, 'Faith Traditions and Mercy'. More about the work of the Commission can be found [here](#)

Invite participants to respond to the Statement and to share what they feel called to do in response.

Conclude the session with the Closing Prayer from the Reflective Prayer.