

The Call of the 25th General Chapter

Our charism, gift of the Spirit, was embodied in Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, who, longing for the oneness of all in God... seeking God's will, struggled for unity in our international community and responded to urgent needs, preferring the poor and educating with a world vision. In these gifts of the Spirit to our foundress, Mother Theresa, we recognize the evolving charism of our congregation (YAS, Prologue).

Compelled by the urgent crises of our times, we, School Sisters of Notre Dame, “longing for the oneness of all in God,” commit to actions that deepen our relationships of communion, wherever we are.

We strive to be credible witnesses of universal communion through deepening our efforts to live as an intercultural faith community of one mind and one heart.

- ~ We examine our personal and communal lifestyles in the collaborative spirit of synodality, listening, discerning, and missioning. We co-create structures and practices that challenge, free, and unite us.
- ~ We embrace our vulnerability as individuals, community, congregation, church, and world, and with total trust in God, accept our interdependence with one another and the whole of creation.
- ~ We heal divisions and fractured relationships through forgiveness, reconciliation, dialogue, compassion, peacemaking, and bridge-building within our congregation and beyond.

We are committed to sustaining our charism and life in mission as a faith-filled, welcoming, and inclusive community.

- ~ We come before God willing to be changed, to accept our mission more intensely, and to respond to God's continuing call to mission.
- ~ We invite new members, associates, and colleagues to join us in proclaiming the good news in the spirit of our charism.

We acknowledge our own complicity in the social sin of our global community, and we commit ourselves to further systemic change.

- ~ We are educators in all that we are and do, exploring concrete avenues to eliminate root causes of injustice.
- ~ We are present with people at the peripheries and collaborate together to end all forms of discrimination, inequity, and violence.
- ~ We, as a *Laudato Si'* congregation, unite with the church's movement to address the environmental and humanitarian crisis within the framework of an integral ecology.

We are called and sent to deepen communion with God and among people wherever we are... As the desire of Jesus that all be one becomes more fully our own, our striving for unity embraces all humanity and the whole of creation (YAS, C 9).

Acts of the 25th General Chapter

We Are Educators in All We Are and Do

Education in the spirit of Blessed Theresa, focused on human development and environmental sustainability, is critical for the transformation of our world.

We, the members of the 25th General Chapter, authorize the general council to establish a global education commission that will give life to our educational vision for these times. This multicultural commission will, as possible,

- ~ create a document grounded in *You Are Sent* that outlines the educational vision of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and articulates a contemporary approach to education for transformation.
- ~ suggest methods and practices by which to share our educational vision with our associates, colleagues, and co-workers preparing them for leadership in our educational ministries.
- ~ plan for educational conferences that ignite our passion, provide formation in our educational vision, and suggest strategies for transformative education that address the cries of God's people and Earth.
- ~ develop an SSND global education network that links our educational ministries, fosters shared vision, and builds community across the congregation and beyond.

It is through our ministry directed toward education that we build communion. What we did in the past as provinces and regions, we must now do as one intercultural faith community.

Personal Development in Community

God's continual call and our continual response to him are the essence of our personal development in community... Directed by God and supported by the community, we repeatedly refocus our gaze on Jesus Christ, who enables us to integrate the many facets of our lives (YAS, GD 113).

We, the members of the 25th General Chapter, call each sister of the congregation to commit herself to

- ~ engaging in opportunities that foster growth in intercultural awareness and living mission to develop cross-cultural and intercultural living skills.
- ~ growing her intercultural awareness to recognize and respect the background and culture of each woman called to our congregation, from the beginning of the vocational discernment through all stages of initial and ongoing formation.
- ~ participating in educational opportunities that promote a mindset of peacemaking and justice.
- ~ developing skills and engaging in experiences that foster healing and reconciliation in personal and communal relationships within the congregation and the wider society.

We, the members of the 25th General Chapter, recommend that the general council:

- ~ continue to evaluate all PDIC guidelines and programs, including the congregational novitiate, in terms of structure, location, program, etc.
- ~ implement programs for short-term intercultural experiences to deepen our relationships as an international congregation.
- ~ create a committee to study the vocation programs and processes of each province to share wisdom and develop a congregational approach in accompanying women discerning God's call.

Holding All in Common

We, the members of the 25th General Chapter, in the spirit of oneness and collaboration, call our international congregation to embrace and to commit to the call to hold all in common.

We authorize that the general council:

- ~ continue to explore models of general chapters that foster membership participation and shared responsibility of all sisters for the life and mission of the congregation.
- ~ initiate and continue to offer international gatherings of congregational leadership, formation and financial personnel, sisters, associates, staff, and colleagues to strengthen our unity as one inclusive and welcoming congregation.
- ~ work together with provincial councils to plan for long range sustainability of the financial and personnel needs of the generalate and the congregational novitiate.
- ~ establish a commission that would study and develop guidelines for continuing province financial support for the Gerhardinger and Ministry funds.
- ~ establish an advisory board for the Gerhardinger and Ministry Funds, which would be composed of provincials, the general council, and other appointed members, such as the congregational treasurer and professional consultants. This board would review the protocols and procedures for accessing and distributing funds.

Governmental Structures

We, the members of the 25th General Chapter, authorize the general council to examine the existing governmental structures as written in our constitution and general directory to determine if they are still appropriate and free us for the ways of the Spirit (cf. YAS, C 40).

The general council will

- ~ form a commission to carry out a study that invites the participation of all members to share information about their experiences and realities related to the effectiveness of current governmental structures.
- ~ present the results of the study to the extended general council for further dialogue and discernment to facilitate co-creating structures that free and unite us.

- ~ submit recommendations for necessary changes in the constitution and the general directory for further clarification, dialogue, and approval at an extraordinary general chapter of affairs or, latest, at the 26th General Chapter (cf. YAS, C 99).

Communications

We, the members of the 25th General Chapter, endorse the continuation of the Congregational Communications and Technology Team (CCTT) and recommend that the general council:

- ~ test and set up a suitable digital working platform to be used by committees and working groups.
- ~ consider greater use of professional interpreters/translators where necessary.
- ~ commission a working group, including some representatives from the CCTT, to consider the possibilities of developing one congregational website.
- ~ review and update the Congregational Communications Plan.

We also recommend that provincial leaders:

- ~ encourage sisters to develop their skills in responsible media use.
- ~ support a congregation-wide email and cell phone directory for those who wish to be included.

Guidelines for Representation at the 26th General Chapter

We, the members of the 25th General Chapter, guided by *You Are Sent* and the evolving reality of the congregation, determine these broad guidelines for representation at the 26th General Chapter.

- ~ There will be one ex-officio member for each province and region (cf. YAS, GD 85).
- ~ Representation will be based on the principles of distribution: equal, proportional, and reflective of our diversity (for example, age, culture, ministry, etc.). At the provincial level consideration will be given to representation of sisters from units reconfigured since the 25th General Chapter.
- ~ The general superior, with the consent of general councilors and the advice of the extended general council, will determine:
 - a. the total number of delegates needed to effectively do the work of the chapter (cf. YAS, C 95).
 - b. additional delegates on the basis of criteria; consideration will be given to representation from units that have been integrated, merged, or formed into another unit since the 25th General Chapter.
 - c. non-voting members (cf. YAS, C 98).

At least a year before the general chapter, the general council will publish the total number of delegates for the chapter with the number for each province and region, along with the explanation of the principles and meaning of assigning delegates according to these broad guidelines.

*The Call and Acts of the 25th General Chapter
Approved November 17, 2023*

Composition of the General Council 2024-2030

We, the members of the 25th General Chapter, determine that the general council be composed of the general superior and four councilors (cf. YAS, C 101; approved by DICLSAL 2018).

Functioning of the General Council 2024-2030

We, the members of the 25th General Chapter, determine that the general council is free to make its own decisions as to how it will function.

*Composition and Functioning
Approved October 30, 2023*

Abrogation of the Acts of the 24th General Chapter

We, the members of the 25th General Chapter, determine that the following Acts of the 24th General Chapter, having been completed or integrated into the ongoing life and spirit of the congregation, are abrogated as specific legal acts:

A. Completed:

1. Composition of the General Council 2018-2024
2. Functioning of the General Council 2018-2024
3. Congregational Communication and Technology
4. Guidelines for Representation at the 25th General Chapter

B. Integrated into the ongoing life and spirit of the congregation:

1. Directional Statement: Love Gives Everything
2. Holding All in Common
3. Personal Development in Community

Abrogated November 17, 2023