

Hospitaller Order of St John of God
Sensing in the Province of the Good Shepherd in North America
General Chapter Report

Sam Cino
Sensing Groups Coordinator

Group Facilitators: Sam Cino, Hamilton, Ontario and Toronto, Ontario
 Brother Gary Hill, Miami, Florida
 Zachary Cooper, Westville, New Jersey
 Alyssa Russell, Westville, New Jersey
 Cathleen Scanlon, Westville, New Jersey
 Brother Charles Schreiner, Albuquerque, New Mexico

# of Sensing Groups	List of Topics	Composition of Groups
20 groups in total. 3 - GSM Toronto 2 - GSNPH Toronto 5 - GSC/GSNPH Hamilton 5 - Camillus House/Camillus Health Concern, Miami 1 – GSC Albuquerque 4 – SJOG New Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Financial Crisis • Climate Change/Biodiversity • Spirituality • Careers • Stress Management* • Affordability** 	Total of 197 participants 37 - GSM Toronto 24 - GSNPH Toronto 58 - GSC/GSNPH Hamilton 30 - Camillus House, Miami 10 – Camillus Health, Miami 8 – GSC Albuquerque 30 – SJOG New Jersey The cross representation of participants across the Province was as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 110 co-workers (staff and volunteers), • 35 management and senior leadership, • 21 Board members, and • 31 Clients/Service Users Many of the groups in Hamilton and Toronto were established exclusively for clients, co-workers and members of the Board and management.

Introduction

From among the 20 sensing groups, seven topics were chosen and discussed:

- 13 groups on the Financial Crisis/Affordability,
- 12 groups focused on Health,
- 11 groups on Climate Change & Biodiversity,
- 11 groups on Careers,
- 10 groups on Spirituality,
- *5 groups on Stress Management (incorporated into Careers Topic Summary),
- **5 groups on Affordability (incorporated into the Financial Crisis Topic Summary).

Health

- Pressures on the Health System
 - Rising health care costs
 - Impact of the pandemic
 - Increasing numbers of marginalized individuals needing care and support
 - Shortages of skilled professionals, health care and social service workers
- Shifting Social Environment
 - Shifts to virtual and retail-based medical care (not front-facing or impersonal relationships)
 - Disengagement with traditional health practitioners and reliance on self-care i.e. google
 - Proliferation of social media and addiction to electronic devices
 - Rise in substance abuse, homelessness, social isolation
 - Rise in mental health needs (depression, anxiety, loneliness, bullying, trauma, intergenerational trauma)
 - Rise in caregiver/service provider mental health needs who remain faithful to our mission
- Emerging Needs/Issues
 - Aging population and rise in senior's homelessness
 - Refugees fleeing war or LGBTQ persecution and those arriving with underlying medical needs
 - Individuals adversely impacted by gender expression
 - Rise in food insecurity, housing affordability, homelessness, addiction and mental health needs
 - Artificial intelligence in health delivery and impact on compassion and hospitality
 - Economic hardship on individuals impacting overall health

Careers

- Shift in Workplace Culture
 - Digital world creating less interaction (face to face contact) with people and clients, in addition to a rise in remote work. Desensitization to the human condition
 - Less loyalty – service suffers – less urgency – compassion and long-lasting relationships impacted
 - Workers don't have the staying power they once had
 - Insecurities related to Artificial Intelligence impacting jobs
- Labour Shortages and Work/Life Pressures
 - Labour shortages in professional, health care, primary care and skilled trades impact our ability to provide quality services
 - Staffing challenges/high turnover can erode our mission focus and ability to teach mission
 - There is a shift away from the caring profession to the trades for less stressful opportunities and higher pay
 - Stress Management- Life/Work Balance/Compassion Burnout: Recognizing that we live in a stressful world, how do we create an environment that supports life/work balance so we can remain faithful to our mission
- Economic Impact on Mission Delivery
 - Affordability to hire and keep co-workers i.e. motivational shift from 'mission' to 'money'- 'job' vs. 'vocation' - affects how mission is conveyed/demonstrated to service users
 - Most younger workers want to work less hours and don't stay in their jobs very long. Losing the ability to gain trust with clients and build rapport due to constant change
 - Difficult to provide rich opportunities for training and professional development (core competencies) when we have high turnover
 - Investment in enhanced (in-person) mission training and onboarding of new co-workers

Climate Change and Biodiversity

- Impact on Mission
 - The low-income, minorities and those with disabilities will be affected the most i.e. impact on nutritional health. Less variety of menu planning for institutions
 - Design of future shelters to adapt to climate conditions with higher operating costs
 - Competition for donors with causes responding to extreme weather disasters
 - Natural disasters may result in higher demands for services i.e. shelter, food and counseling
 - Increase in remote work – disengagement with clients
- Impact on Society/Economy
 - Increase in marginalized population i.e. more crime, unemployment, drug and alcohol use
 - Costs associated with more cooling and warming centers in extreme heat/cold temperatures
 - Climate based migration – Climate Refugees may put a strain on housing and shelters
 - Impact on supply chain will impact fresh food donations creating more costs to centers
 - Loss of crops – poorer nutritional choice and higher cost of fruits and vegetables
 - Global warming, wildfires, destruction of property, leading to homelessness
 - Rising costs from initiatives related to greening and recycling efforts
 - Rise in urban farming, social enterprises i.e. community gardens, garden rooftops
- Impact on Health Care System
 - Climate crisis = health crisis. Wildfires have widespread impact – lungs, breathing difficulty
 - Illness and trauma related to extreme heat and cold and impact on mental health
 - Strain on the healthcare system

Financial Crisis

- Affordability: Facing the challenge and sustaining our mission in an increasingly expensive world
 - Impact of digital currency on donations. Donors may be reluctant to utilize new technology
 - Government regulations, tax policies and growing government deficits may affect programs
 - International conflicts impacting import/export of goods and services, inflation, supply chain etc.
 - Educational needs for people to manage personal finances and to be proactive and self-sufficient
 - Financial impact on elderly may create more homelessness, higher health care costs
 - Growing income disparity, erosion of middle class, high level of debt and government deficits
 - Inflation threatening housing affordability, food security and donations
 - Higher unemployment = more crime. Demand for more services stretching available resources
- Impact on Staffing
 - Demands for higher wages, impact on retention and recruitment of co-workers
 - More people are getting poor, middle class is disappearing. Rich are getting richer
 - Working multiple jobs to make ends meet/burn-out and compassion fatigue
 - More calls for a living wage, guaranteed income, increases in disability and welfare benefits
- Increased Threats to Financial Stability
 - Cybersecurity risk mitigation re cyber-attacks. Aging infrastructure/vulnerability
 - Coping with the economic consequences of the Pandemic
 - Higher cost of borrowing. Limited investment strategies as cash is needed for programming
 - Exploring new strategies to increase donor base
 - Integration of AI Technology for operations and fundraising could expose us to financial and ethical risks, data privacy and legal compliance issues
 - Competition with other social service providers for salaries and benefits

Spiritual Needs and Meaning of Life

• Mission in an Increasingly Secular World

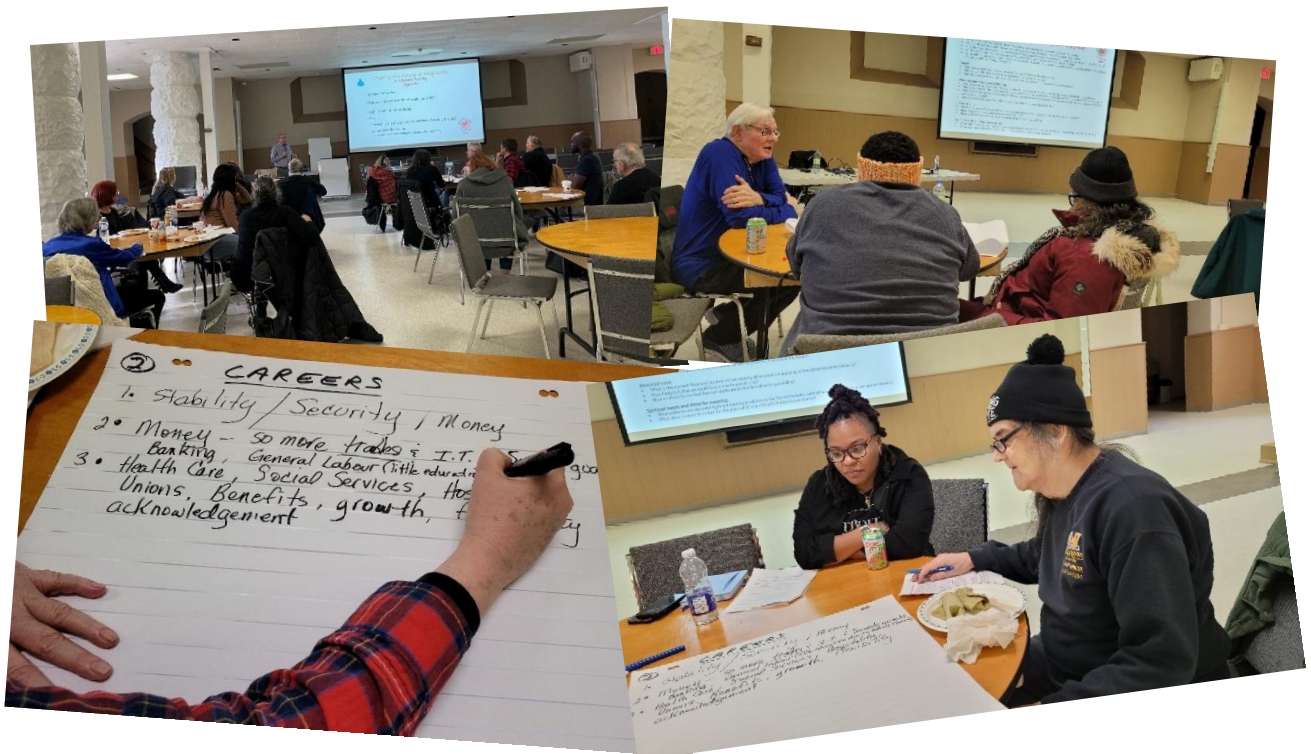
- Decreased support to religious organizations in lieu of charitable giving to environmental causes
- Brothers visibility is important. Co-workers desire more engagement in the history of the Order
- There is a dynamic relationship between a non-profit organization's mission and its faith community, though faith communities are shrinking
- Place more attention to the 'mission', less on "Church Identity" – just as St. John of God first started this mission as a 'non-professed' lay person
- Search for innovative ways to connect co-workers to the mission and roots of SJOG
- Help co-workers find meaning and purpose in their work and in shaping personal identity
- Rise in political ideological extremism may challenge the work we do. Atheist tendencies
- Erosion of values - People don't know what they stand for anymore. What are their values?
- Rise in egocentrism fostered through use of social media

• Reputation of Religious Institutions

- Need to create a more positive image of faith. Faith can often be riddled with negativity due to the news (e.g. sexual offences, residential schools), views on sexuality, etc. Dismantling these narratives is essential
- Despite reputation of the Church, the obvious needs of the day still attract those wanting to help
- Church needs to address a greater sense of responsibility toward homeless, marginalized people
- Pastoral care teams in our institutions have a positive impact in our ministries

• Spirituality vs. Faith

- Less people attending organized religion and less spiritually connected to their faith
- Many identify as 'spiritual' but not 'religious'- and still motivated to do good
- Charism of hospitality is on the rise, but not from a religious perspective
- A better sense of community and inclusiveness is needed to foster spirituality in the work and workplace
- Need to accentuate spirituality in a world of diminishing faith/attachment to organized religion



Why and how were these topics chosen?

The selection of topics chosen by the 20 groups varied, depending on the ministry coordinating the sensing groups. All of the groups were given the option of choosing from among 5 topics suggested by the Province: **Health, Careers, Climate and Bio-diversity, Financial Crisis and Spiritual Needs**.

Good Shepherd Hamilton and Toronto:

Each group in the large urban areas of the Hamilton/Toronto ministries, felt that all of the topics impacted the services of the Order within their communities. The groups were fairly large ones of up to 18 people. Each participant was asked if they preferred any particular topic for discussion. Each individual was assigned to a sub-group with others who chose a similar topic. The sensing outcomes of each sub-group was then reviewed by the larger group for further reflection and sensing/input.

Camillus House and Camillus Health Concern, Miami

The Miami sensing groups reviewed and discussed all 5 of the topics and narrowed them down to four, which were later narrowed down to the most important issues facing the Miami ministries. The outcomes of the sensing sessions were summarized and presented to a smaller committee whose task it was to arrive at two distinct statements. The two statements, once determined, were later presented to all of the 40 participants for approval. Those statements were:

- ‘Stress Management- Life/Work Balance/Compassion Burnout,’ and
- “Affordability: Facing the challenge and sustaining our mission in an increasingly expensive world”

Westville Grove, New Jersey

Four of the five topics were chosen by the groups; “*Careers, Climate and Bio-diversity, Financial Crisis, and Health Care*”. Each of the four groups met on several occasions for sensing discussions on their assigned topics, meeting up to 3 to 4 times.

Good Shepherd Center, Albuquerque

This was a very small group of co-workers and client volunteers that chose, what they believed to be, the most pressing current issue: “*Finance and maintaining their Donor Base*”.

What surprised you about the experience and what it generated? What did you discover? What have been your key insights on that topic? What was confirmed for you?

What was most surprising was that each of the topics were inter-related with similar and often overlapping issues. For example, you could not have the *Climate* discussion without discussing the impact that ‘Climate Change and Bio-diversity’ will have on the overall ‘*health*’ of individuals and society, or without reflecting on the ‘*financial*’ impact on our various centres.

Similarly, the ‘*health*’ topic generated discussion on affordability of health care, the staffing shortages caused by pressures in the health system and the rapidly rising cost of living. These were also identified issues in the “*financial crisis*” discussions. A recurring theme in many of the topics were similar, such as financial pressures experienced by co-workers, the increasing complexity of the work, co-workers leaving the caring profession to seek higher paying jobs outside the sector, etc. The topic of artificial intelligence also crept into the discussions in a number of the topic areas.

Another surprising observation was that common themes were apparent in many of the sensing groups, regardless of the demographic of the group i.e. whether it was a co-worker group, client group, management or Board member group.

One group reported that the discussion generated ideas that they could immediately put to action, such as more greening initiatives following discussion on the Climate and Bio-Diversity topic. Another group observed there was a “disconnect” between the Board and Co-workers regarding the complexity of fundraising. Yet, another group noted how rapidly the social and global environment has changed in the last 5 years.

What key questions has it enabled you to surface for your Province in the future? And for the whole Order?

Prior to the start of the sensing sessions, the majority of the sensing groups received an overview of the history of the Order, the rapidly declining number of Brothers and the future of hospitality being entrusted to our co-workers and benefactors within a new, and yet to be determined, governance structure. These introductory sessions were received with surprising results as participants became invested in the faith-based history of their centres and the governing body of Brothers, with a genuine concern for the future of the mission started by St. John of God nearly 500 years ago.

Awareness of the history of the Order, and the culture of hospitality imbued in the mission, allowed participants to understand the value placed on ‘the co-worker’ by the Brothers as caretakers of the mission. What became evident was that the ‘process’ of engaging our co-workers in this manner was just as important as the outcomes of the sensing discussions.

Challenge and Hope for the Future:

This is a time of profound change, from remote work becoming a norm, to the proliferation of Artificial Intelligence, to record inflation, limitations on philanthropic causes, uncertainties of the future (climate change, global conflicts), government deficit pressures and political changes. We remain open to new ideas and ways of doing things, searching for hope and inspiration, thinking outside the box, while remaining, at all times, focused on our mission.

Post Session Reflection:

Ten of the 20 sensing groups were provided a history of the Order of St. John of God, an overview on the diminishment of Brothers, and the role of the co-worker in the continuation of the mission of hospitality. Following each session, each of these sensing groups were asked to reflect and respond to the following question:

What role can we as co-workers/leaders play to Shape the Future of Hospitality?

Summarized Response:

- Focus on Co-workers
 - *Recruitment*: Recruit to core personality traits/values – focus on hiring for mission. We can train the core competencies
 - *Orientation*: to co-workers to find purpose in their work, and it’s a place for all, regardless of faith. Teach the values and seek alignment with an individual’s personal values.
 - *Brother’s Presence*: Brothers need to stay involved to the extent possible. Perhaps drop in – presence makes a difference. Include Brothers as part of the orientation, or about the Brothers when no longer available.
 - *Role modeling and Mentor Support*: – New co-workers to have someone to go to for support when needed
 - *Education*: Of the diversity and scope of the SJOG programs and various centers
 - *Succession Planning*: Test for the core competencies needed to be a leader to aid retention.

- Maintaining the Legacy of Hospitality
 - Tell the stories of SJOG and Brother Mathias and the diminishment of Brothers to motivate and inspire – to follow in the footsteps of those before
 - Opportunities for Mission reflection i.e. co-worker newsletters. Share our ‘mission moments’
 - Having someone in a Mission Coordinator role would be helpful
 - Optimize the use of social media to reach co-workers on mission focused issues

- Nurturing Mission Competencies
 - Focus on mission and values in newsletters –normalize it in everyday activities
 - Focus on empathy as a key to demonstrating hospitality toward others
 - Extend hospitality to family, friends and co-workers. Plant a seed
 - Create opportunities for leadership to flourish– leadership training – “we have faith in you”
 - Participate in more discussions on mission and values. Ignite passion among volunteers
 - Be leaders of hospitality regardless of workplace, role and capacity
 - Engage more co-workers in mission sessions like this one (sensing groups – mission, history and future of the Brothers). Create more opportunities for engagement
 - Practice the values – practice what we preach at all levels

- Hospitality – A Radical Response to Service
 - Focus and act on the Social Determinants of Health. Think of it in a holistic way. Shift in paradigms – factors that we are born, live and age with
 - Look for gaps in services – where can be where we are not, right now, such as responding to the growing needs of elders
 - Clients are coming with greater and more complex needs than before
 - Saving money and look for high return investments – are donations going to dry up?
 - Advocate politically for the populations we serve.
 - Spiritual needs – ensuring a holistic approach to service – getting back to spirituality – the soul is inherent in everyone