



MONTHLY MEMO
March 2022

For the first time since Emerging Futures began to work with religious institutes, we have been able to have some face-to-face meetings and even to travel to country NSW. While we have been really grateful for the opportunities that Zoom and Teams have afforded our work over the last two years, it is a real joy to actually be in the same room with congregational members, to share informal chats over morning tea and lunch and have the opportunity to renew acquaintances and make new connections. A couple of weeks ago the team travelled to Wagga to work with the Presentation Sisters and we so enjoyed the hospitality offered, the work that we did together and the wonderful hot and sunny weather under blue skies! Earlier this month we spent time with the Brothers of St John of God at their Assembly and this week we have been welcomed to Baulkham Hills by the Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta to work with the membership in their Assembly.

We remain grateful to the congregations who have, due to distance, continued to meet with us on Zoom. Religious have proved to be up to the challenge of learning new computer/tablet/mobile phone skills to enable them to join a Zoom and participate in discussion rooms etc. We hear lots of derogatory chatter about technology skills and older people, but it is certainly our experience that older religious are up for adapting and adopting.

While we often work initially, or even mainly, with a leader and leadership team members, we relish any opportunity to extend that work to all the members of the institute. Just this week we have worked online with all the members of the New Zealand Dominican Sisters and the Dominican Sisters of Western Australia.

Our understanding of the work of Emerging Futures continues to grow and evolve as we engage with different service partners in different aspects of the process. One of the areas in which we are currently developing new ideas is concerned with the way in which membership exercises agency and authority when they have let go of the leader and leadership team model. Towards the end of last year we were working with a group concerned about how individual and community life is affected by letting go of the leader and leadership team model. So that concern was uppermost in our minds when another group proposed the idea of a decision-making framework to enable the congregation to continue to exercise authority and agency when there is no longer an elected leadership team. This is only one way in which our different service partners are stretching our understanding and promoting on the ground agility, adaptation and implementation.

This way of working is, of course, true to the nature of Emerging Futures which is founded on the call to communion: on religious institutes being in communion with each other for mission, collaborating and choosing to work together to create our future.

You will see in the next week an advertisement for a Chief Executive Officer for Emerging Futures. You'll recall that on July 1 last year we became a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, with eight religious institutes as the members of the company and with an eight-person Board. The work created by operating as a company with a Board and a Finance, Audit and Risk Committee has added to the very welcome work we have by a higher than anticipated number of congregations choosing to work with EFCL.

The organisation's growth has exceeded projections and is expected to continue grow over the next few years. EFCL must now build appropriate capability and processes to support sound company governance, management and service delivery. The Board was very open to an approach from the team to consider a pre-emptive investment in a CEO who would assume the responsibility for leading the growth and development of the company as a sustainable, collaborative, mission driven, not-for-profit service. As we see it, this role will assist not only EFCL's current situation, but will provide for succession planning into the future as Judy and I finish our contracts in mid-2024. We are extremely grateful that the Board has set this search in motion.

As we know, our networks often furnish the "right person for the job". So next week, I will be sending to all leaders the advertisement and seeking your assistance to find the inaugural CEO for Emerging Futures. And we will, of course, be using all the external channels to recruit the right person.

I mentioned in February's *Memo* that Emerging Futures is currently looking to add to our pool of potential canonical delegates and consultants. The role of the canonical delegate and consultants is to ensure:

- all canonical governance responsibilities are met and addressed;
- the interests of the institute and institute members are safeguarded;
- the care and wellbeing of every member of the institute;
- the religious life, mission and charism of the institute is respected and nurtured;
- the institute is formally represented to church and other bodies.

Religious institutes members who have had experience as leaders or on leadership teams are invited to consider this ministry. **We are planning to offer a webinar in May** that provides further information about the role and fosters questions and discussion.

Many religious institutes members receive a copy of this *Monthly Memo* via your own leadership team. If you would like to receive each edition direct from EFCL, please send your email address to me at sharon.price@efcl.org.au and I will add you to our distribution list.

As we journey through Lent, we pray: Gifting God, You give us the gifts of the spirit to use to further your Kingdom and to be the Body of Christ in the world. We take time to remember the people devastated by floods and war. Empower us to continue to be your hands and feet to continue the work that needs to be done there and in so many other places.

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