

Synthesis Across All Countries: July 3, 2025

Here is the comprehensive, integrated synthesis across **Brazil, Jamaica, Bolivia, and the United States**, reflecting key takeaways regarding the Emerging Model of Leadership and Governance for the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany:

1. Wisdom Circles (WCs)

Overall Sentiment:

- **Brazil and Jamaica:** Strong, enthusiastic support; WCs are viewed as vital for fostering spiritual depth, inclusive community life, intercultural dialogue, and collective discernment.
- **United States:** Mixed reactions, slightly skeptical. Some groups support WCs for enhancing grassroots participation and communication, while others perceive them as redundant, overly complex, and prefer existing cluster structures.
- **Bolivia:** Expressed uncertainty, awaiting further clarification before offering clear support.

Common Modifications Suggested:

- Voluntary and flexible participation, without mandatory assignments.
 - Conversion or restructuring of existing cluster/regional teams into Wisdom Circles to avoid redundancy.
 - Each WC autonomously selects coordinators separate from Congregational Leadership Team (CLT).
 - Strongly encourage cross-cultural, inter-regional composition, facilitated by technology.
 - Selective, clearly bounded lay involvement, especially welcomed in Brazil and Jamaica, but cautious in the U.S. particularly around vowed life discussions.
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2. Guiding Team (GT)

Overall Sentiment:

- Predominantly negative across all countries.
- Viewed widely as unnecessary, redundant, overly complex, and potentially unsustainable given demographic realities.
- General preference for simplified governance structures that avoid duplication of roles.

Minority Views and Alternative Proposals:

- **Jamaica:** Some cautious openness to GT, recommending a smaller, renamed "Integrating Team" formed by WC coordinators separate from CLT.
 - **Brazil and Bolivia:** Some limited openness if clearer purpose and role are clarified, but mostly skeptical.
 - **U.S.:** Strong rejection of GT concept, with a minority open to a simplified team facilitating communication among WCs.
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3. Lay Participation

Overall Sentiment:

- Universally positive and strongly supported across all countries due to declining numbers of sisters, demographic realities, and the need for specialized skills.
- Clear agreement on the necessity of well-defined roles, boundaries, and ongoing Franciscan formation for lay participants.

Commonly Recommended Roles:

- Financial administration (CFO, Treasurer, Accounting)
- Healthcare coordination, eldercare, and memory care specialists
- Communications, digital media, and public relations
- Strategic planning, administration, and executive roles (Executive Secretary, Congregational Secretary)
- Human resources, property management, technology support
- Geriatric professionals and event planning

Boundaries and Concerns:

- Clear and unanimous boundary: laity should not assume canonical or vowed-life roles.
 - Some emotional hesitancy and grief, especially among U.S. sisters, regarding roles traditionally held by religious sisters shifting to laity.
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4. Congregational Leadership Team (CLT)

Preferred Structure:

- **U.S., Jamaica, and Bolivia:** Strong consensus favoring a smaller CLT (4–5 sisters elected at Chapter). Emphasized simplicity, flexibility, and minimal bureaucracy.
- **Brazil:** Prefers a somewhat larger team (7–8 members total), combining 4–5 sisters elected at Chapter plus regional ministers from Brazil, Jamaica, and the U.S., aiming for inclusive representation.

Regional Representation:

- **Brazil:** Widely supported across all countries, primarily due to legal requirements.
 - **Jamaica:** Agreement across countries that Jamaica should autonomously decide its regional structure, with U.S. groups mixed on integration with their own region.
 - **U.S.:** Highly varied responses within U.S. itself; some favor formal Regional Ministers, others prefer informal liaisons or "Personnel Coordinators."
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5. Regional Leadership Team (RLT) and Connections

Overall Sentiment:

- **Jamaica:** Advocates strongly for their own distinct Regional Leadership Team (RLT) with clear governance roles, currently experimenting with shared lay leadership structures.
- **Brazil and Bolivia:** Generally supportive of regional autonomy and flexibility, proposing periodic "Extended CLT Meetings" as a global integrative forum.
- **U.S.:** Generally skeptical of formal RLTs within the U.S., preferring informal liaison roles and virtual meetings to ensure communication and integration without additional formal structures.

Suggested Connection Mechanisms:

- Regular virtual meetings (Zoom) between regions and CLT.
 - Periodic "Extended CLT Meetings" recommended by Jamaica and Brazil to facilitate integration and collaboration among regions and congregational leadership.
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6. Underlying Desire: Change vs. Transformation

Universal Emphasis:

- Strong and consistent across all countries: desire for genuine, deep, spiritual transformation guided by the Franciscan charism and the Holy Spirit.
- Agreement that structural changes alone are insufficient; true transformation must be spiritual, personal, and communal.

Shared Aspirations:

- Simplified and flexible governance structures.
- Strong commitment to inclusivity, relational leadership, and intercultural dialogue.

- Intentional and meaningful integration of laity within clear boundaries and ongoing formation.
 - Emphasis on embracing demographic realities with openness, hope, and creativity.
 - Renewed clarity of mission and deepened spiritual discernment across all decisions.
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Comprehensive Meta-Synthesis Statement:

Across Brazil, Jamaica, Bolivia, and the United States, the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany collectively favor inclusive, simplified governance structures—particularly Wisdom Circles—highlighting voluntary participation, robust lay integration within clearly defined boundaries, and flexible regional autonomy. They express widespread skepticism toward additional complex leadership layers, such as the Guiding Team, preferring streamlined Congregational Leadership Teams (4–5 elected sisters) with clear regional representation adapted to local realities. Above all, there is unanimous agreement on the fundamental need for profound spiritual transformation deeply rooted in Franciscan spirituality, communal discernment, relationality, and intercultural unity.