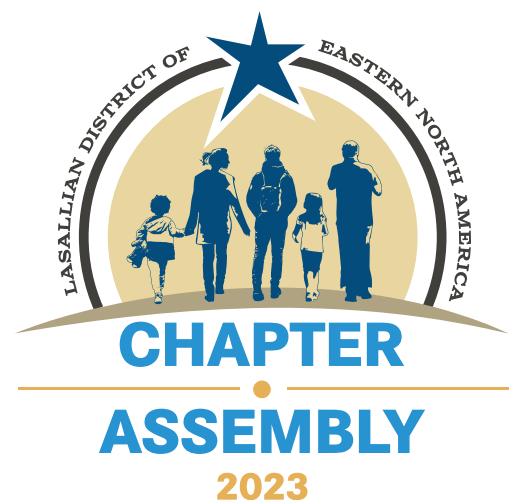


So the Next Generation Will Know the Joy of the Gospel

The District Chapter & Mission Assembly of the District of Eastern North America



Introduction

Elected and appointed Delegates to the first-ever joint convocation of the District Chapter and Mission Assembly gathered from July 24 – 26, 2023 to discern the apostolic future of the District of Eastern North America.

In a decisive step to create a structure that both reflects the reality of Association that has developed in the District and guarantees the vitality and sustainability of the Lasallian charism and mission, the Chapter & Mission Assembly were combined into one shared decision-making body made up of Brothers and Lasallian partners.

The District of Eastern North America is comprised of diverse educational and social service ministries that reflect the history of educational service begun in the mid-19th century when the first Christian Brothers arrived in Baltimore. Today, the Brothers find themselves in a significant transition as a large demographic section of the Community is less engaged in active ministry and leadership. Yet, the active presence of the younger Brothers of the District at the Chapter & Assembly was a clear sign of the Brothers' ongoing commitment to a dynamic, mission-focused future.

While recognizing the limitations and challenges due to demographic shifts among the Brothers, the Delegates were cognizant of the many graces received. The District continues to welcome candidates to the Institute who desire to live as Christian Brothers. The District's efforts in mission formation and Lasallian association over many decades has resulted in an abundance of dedicated Lasallian partners who are ready to take on key leadership roles that will sustain the mission into the future.

The discernment process during the Chapter & Assembly was guided by a commitment to position the District to be able to faithfully respond to new and emerging educational needs of young people, with a particular focus on those who are poor and on the margins.

The Chapter & Assembly established seven Thematic Groups to develop pathways that will guide District leadership in their work over the next seven years. Each thematic group developed a vision statement that provided the context for directional statements to be implemented in a coherent action plan.

Over this year, specific action plans for each thematic group are being developed to ensure that progress is made in moving the District forward in each of these important areas. A final, comprehensive action plan will be shared in June, 2024.



Thematic Group 1: Animation and Leadership of Brothers' Communities



Image courtesy of La Salle Academy Providence (www.flickr.com/people/197356288@N06/)

Vision Statement

“The Brothers find inspiration in the prayer of Jesus Christ: ‘Father, that they may be one as you and I are one, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.’ The community is where the Brothers live out their consecration to God. It is a community of faith in which the Brothers share their experience of God, encountered in daily commitments and in listening to the Word of God, in personal and community prayer, in reading the signs of the times and in the discernment of the will of God.” R 46

This work group, which is specific to the Brothers, deals with the Animation and Leadership of Brothers' Communities as we consider the current realities of our communities in the District of Eastern North America. We recognize that there are currently three types of communities: Apostolic Communities, Retirement Communities, and a mix of Apostolic/Retirement Communities.

Some of our realities include the expanded role and duties of a Director, healthcare issues related to aging, fewer Brothers involved in full time ministry, a sense of disconnect from the ministry in some communities, keeping Brothers engaged in their consecrated life and a sense of purposefulness.

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“So the next generation will know the joy of the Gospel.”
District Chapter & Mission Assembly 2023

We understand that our communities have changed since the founding of DENA. Some communities have closed, the number of Brothers in a community is smaller, and there is a smaller pool of Brothers who can serve as Directors. Examining these issues will help us make informed decisions over the next several years. These current realities also provide us with some opportunities for being Brother to one another and strengthening fraternal bonds, along with being present to our ministries in new ways. In addition, these realities also provide opportunities for our lay colleagues to assist the community in appropriate ways.

Directional Statements

In order to ensure community health and vitality, we recommend the following:

- An objective study be conducted that would take into consideration the number of Brothers in the community, the availability of adequate health care, age appropriate facilities, and the need for care communities.
- That the relationship between the community and ministry needs to be given a high priority.
- The community, with the assistance of District Leadership, will ensure that there are opportunities for ongoing formation for the Brothers that enriches their spiritual life and relationships with one another and our colleagues.
- We encourage the Visitor to continue the process of determining the viability of our communities.



In order to provide support and assistance for community leadership, we recommend the following:

- That District Leadership work with the Directors in establishing a Directors' Association.
- That Community Directors take advantage of professional services that can assist them with various community needs.

In order prepare for the future of community life, we recommend the following:

- That District Leadership identify several apostolic communities that should receive priority for placement of Brothers when planning for the future.
- The District acknowledges that the new place for mission/ministry for some of our elderly Brothers will be the community.
- Due to aging and health issues, the District recognizes that the role of the Director requires them to focus more on the pastoral rather than the managerial dimension of their role.
- We support the Visitor in his exploration of opening a new community in Homestead, Florida.



Image courtesy of La Salle Academy Providence (www.flickr.com/people/197356288@N06/)

Thematic Group 2:

Lasallian Association for Mission: A Pathway towards deeper commitment

We recognize the current reality and trends:

In a post-COVID, 21st century world, there is a desire for belonging and affiliation with others in light of politically divided and religiously disaffiliated societies. Creating a sense of community and belonging for a more fraternal world through association between Brothers and Partners is a contribution the Lasallian Family offers the Church and world. Exercising our educational ministry, “together and by Association,” is a distinctive dimension of the Lasallian charism. There are Lasallians interested in a deeper and more formalized association for mission to ensure the vitality and viability of the mission, and DENA should be open to exploring the possibility of what this would look like within the District.

DENA provides formation experiences for all members of the District to deepen their understanding of the Lasallian Mission and invites all to a deeper Association for that Mission. DENA also provides opportunities for various experiences of belonging and association with the Lasallian Family. Recognizing the many new members of the educational communities of the DENA ministries, an increased emphasis needs to be given to fostering gatherings of the Lasallian Family (locally and across the District). DENA needs Lasallians that will foster a sense of commitment in others. As an existing significant group of Brothers and Partners committed to Association for Mission, we are hopeful for the future of the District and its educational mission.



We understand our challenges:

- The large turnover of members in our educational communities resulting in increased new members.
- We live in a more transitory society.
- Establishing association with people who are looking to move in 3-5 years.

Directional Statements

As a district, we are called to continue to provide opportunities, locally and across ministries within DENA, for belonging and affiliation through formation experiences, utilizing the five thresholds of the Pilgrim's Handbook, that foster a better understanding of and a deeper commitment to association for mission.1 The District should further explore, share, and support/experiment with various options for a more formalized association for mission.



Justin
Martineau



Julia
Turner



Connor
Richardson



Johnny
Rende



Jaycie
Jordan



Jimmy
Petrella



Charlotte
Sochia



Cassandra
Camille



Susan
Morgan



Haley
Griffin



Morgan
Guzy



Paola
Hernández



Gina
Spohr



Jorge
Vilca



Jon
Hernández



Tori
Jones



Danielle
Ashworth



Sam
Thompson



Meg
Ryan



Br. J.D.
Macloce, FSC

Meet the *VEGA'23* Community!

La Salle University, Philadelphia

Thematic Group 3:

District Governance and Leadership

“The mission of the District Council is to promote the unity of the District and assist the Brother Visitor in the exercise of his duties. The Brother Visitor and his council draw up plans together regarding the running of the District, and they study how to face the problems that arise.”

The Rule of The Brothers of the Christian Schools, Article 147

“In increasing numbers, the laity consider themselves the bearers of John Baptist de La Salle’s mission, and they proudly affirm it. Motivated by their commitment, together with the Brothers, they declare themselves the heart, memory, and guarantor of the shared mission.”

The Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission, 2020, p. 50

“Participation in solidarity with the responsibility for the mission. Throughout the Lasallian world there is underway a renewal in the structure of leadership and new ones are being created in which responsibility for the Mission is shared between Brothers and other associates: Mission Councils, District, Regional, and International Assemblies.” Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission Bulletin FSC No. 250, 2005, p. 13

We recognize the reality and trends:

- As the Brothers of DENA age, with average age moving through the 8th decade, fewer will become available for shared leadership on District and Mission Councils.
- Mission Councils have been part of the structure called for by the Institute to promote and express shared mission throughout the 21st century, but locally few associated with the Lasallian Mission are aware of this structure, its goals, function, and work.
- The first generation of Lasallian partners, those who worked most closely and directly with the Brothers, has all but aged out of both school leadership and governance.



- A new generation of young faculty are being employed whose educational experience does not include the presence of a sponsoring community, teaching religious, and discussion of founders and charism. This development takes place within a general weakening of catechetical foundations among new faculty.
- The FSC DENA Ministry Corporation is the vehicle by which DENA has chosen to exercise the corporate member/juridic person/reserve powers aspect of its responsibilities. This group has come to include an increasing number of Lasallians other than vowed members of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.
- Boards of Trustees have rightly assumed much of the fiduciary and moral responsibility for the welfare and strategic direction of our ministries not subsisting within (arch)diocesan structures. DENA representation on these boards has evolved from being FSC members to an almost equal mixture of Brothers and partners.

We understand the challenges:

- With its aging and shrinking membership, DENA's District Council will be less likely to include different persons and fresh voices. Leadership will become concentrated in an increasingly narrow segment of the membership.
- Despite existing throughout the history of DENA and for a period in the legacy districts, the Mission Council has been a work in progress requiring attention to clarify its responsibilities and ways of operating. Its member composition has been revised once to reflect better a capacity to meet its obligations and to do so in credible ways.



- Likewise, little reference was ever made to the Directional Statements of the 2015 Mission Assembly “Beyond our Borders” and the Mission Executive Council’s 39 Action Items in support of the Directional Statements, particularly within the context of District schools and educational centers.
- While the universal law of the Church and the particular law of the Institute prescribe particular functions for a provincial council, no such competence or field of action exists for a mission council.
- A tension exists between creating a Mission Council that is truly representative of the range of DENA members, vowed and partner, and one in which the members hold positions with the “clout” to make the direction of the Council concrete in the ministries.
- DENA representatives on Boards have had inconsistent training and experience to engage substantively in governance conversations around a board table .
- DENA’s influence on the direction of ministries varies based on whether they are ministries in which DENA has reserve powers, or they are otherwise governed.
- The reserve powers exercised for DENA by the FSC DENA Ministry Corporation in the schools for which it is the Member are not well understood and at times unevenly adhered to. Critical decisions like the appointment of a head of school can be made in ways that often don’t secure the centrality of mission, catechesis and formation in the life of the school.

We feel called to these horizons and opportunities:

- The development of substantive and formalized responsibilities for which the Mission Council has recognized decision-making responsibility, particularly around the mission assessment process and the maintenance of covenant relationships which give or assure a ministry its Lasallian character and belonging.





- A recognition of the shared interest among Brothers and Partners with regard to so many aspects of District life, requiring increasing coordination of the councils with a view to a unity that allows space for the Brothers to deliberate on issues of the vowed life.
- A promotion of a greater understanding among Boards of Trustees regarding the role and responsibilities of the FSC DENA Ministry Corporation and the expectations it has for communication from the Boards and leadership of individual ministries.
- That DENA makes the formation of Trustees an equal priority to that of students, faculty and staff in its discussion and evaluative activities with the ministry.
- Substantive work, assigned by the FSC DENA Ministry Corporation to the proper entity, to define and explore the qualification and formation of a DENA Representative prior to their service and to place the Member Representative on the Executive or Governance Committee of as many Boards of Trustees where possible.
- Work by the Mission Council, communicated by the FSC DENA Ministry Corporation as a condition of appointment, on a program of mentorship for first-year heads of ministries is required of canonically sponsored while an invitation is offered to other ministries, and offers accompaniment to ensure the increasing number of heads new to this work understand leadership and decision-making within this context.

Thematic Group 4:

Mission Accompaniment and Board Relations

“The Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools has a long and rich history of stewarding what was in the past ‘the Brothers schools’ into what is now the ‘Lasallian educational mission.’”^[1] Today, that Lasallian educational mission is served by a diverse and talented community of Brothers and Partners, men and women, who, together and by our association, seek to “proclaim, announce, and live the good news of Jesus and walk in the vision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.”^[2]

Throughout the richly diverse ministries of DENA, we endeavor to ensure the Lasallian charism and live out our shared mission for those entrusted to our care in this generation and in all those who will follow. We recognize that for over four decades the Brothers have invited Partners into a richer and fuller understanding of the charism and mission, into leadership at both the ministry and Board levels and into a deeper commitment to share as “heart, memory, and guarantor” of the Lasallian heritage.

Critical to this endeavor is our effort to “affirm and deepen the relationships we have with ministry trustees and heads of ministries so that the future of planning for the Lasallian mission may be strengthened through growth in trust, apostolic vision, competence, and effectiveness rooted in the vision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. We seek to nourish a solidarity with those who serve in ministry governance and school leadership.”^[3] We know that when the leadership of the ministry and the District are committed to ensure the Catholic nature and Lasallian identity of the mission there is a much greater likelihood that these commitments will be imbued and realized throughout the entire local educational community.



[1] The Brothers, Our Trustees, and Heads of Ministries: Apostolic Vision & Leadership for Our Time, Shared Governance Committee, 2015 District Chapter

[2] Ibid

[3] ibid

We recognize that we are rapidly moving into a future where the ministerial and governance leadership of our ministries will look much different. Beginning in September of 2023, of the 31 ministries in DENA, only 7 (23%) will have a Brother serving as Chief Administrator. No Brother will serve as a Board Chair although many will serve as Board Members. We have done much over the last four decades to prepare for this reality but now we are called again to trust in the Holy Spirit, embrace the signs of the times, and respond with faith and zeal.

In light of this reality, we call upon the District to engage with the leadership (Board Chair, President, Executive Director) in each ministry to express with clarity and conviction their intentional commitment to conduct their ministries in the Lasallian tradition abiding by the commitments all three will make in the signing of the revised Covenant of Ministerial Relationship agreement.

Directional Statements

The revised Covenant Agreement and Lasallian Mission Assessment Process (LMAP) call for action steps on the part of the District, the Chief Administrator, and the Board Chair which are intended to enhance this trinity of relationships and ensure the Lasallian Charism and Mission within each ministry. Therefore, we call upon the District to fully implement both of these revised processes.

Additionally, we call upon the District to provide the leadership and resources to renew and deepen commitment of the leadership triumvirate: the District, the Chief Administrators, and the Board Chairs together in formation and association for mission. This includes the District and the ministries embracing new forms of formation and association that address current and emerging realities and needs that will help to enliven the Lasallian charism and mission within each of our ministries.



Thematic Group 5:

Faith Formation and Announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ



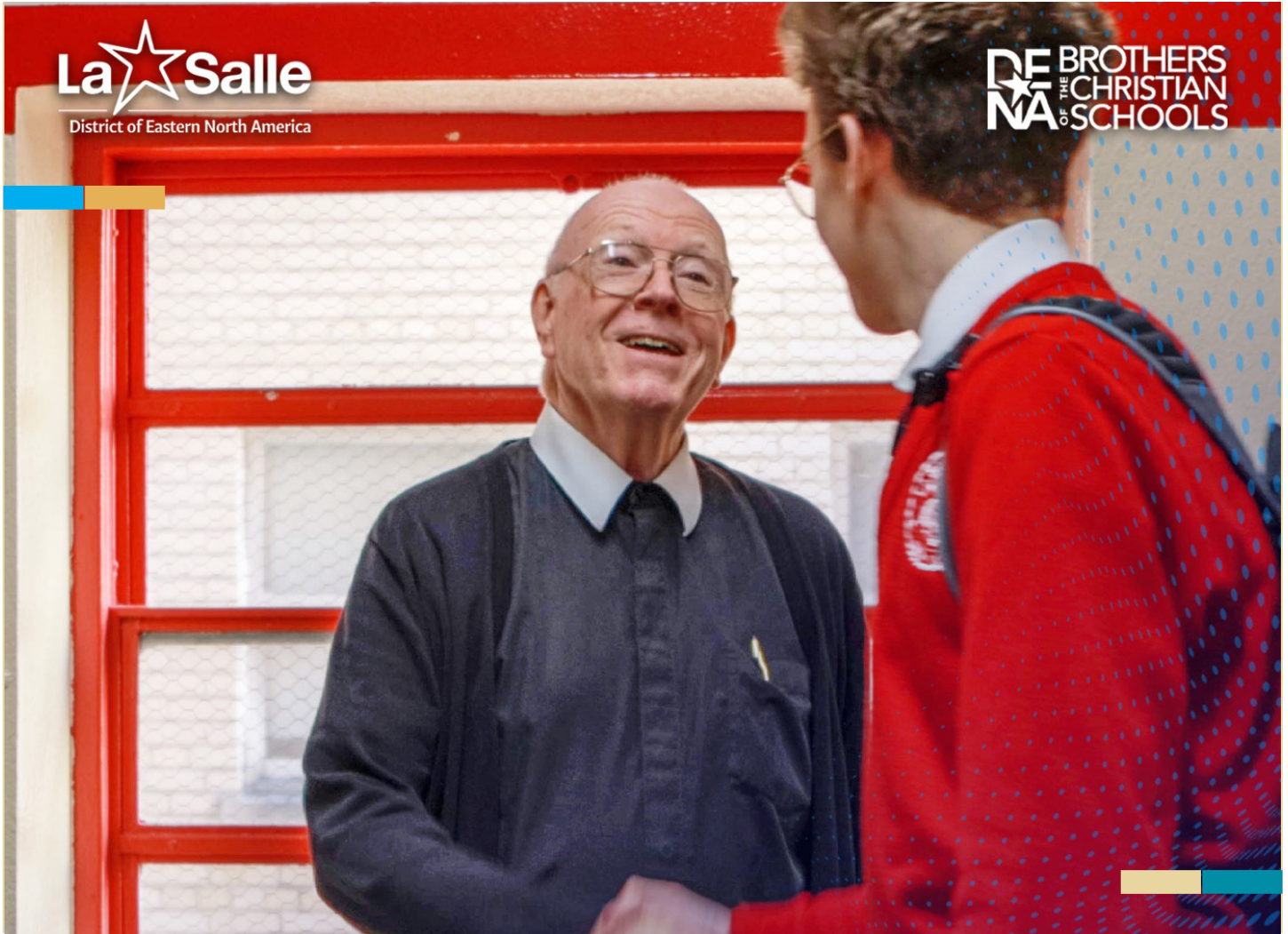
Image courtesy of lasalle.org (https://www.flickr.com/photos/lasalle_org/)

From the beginnings of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, reflecting the vision of John Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers, to provide a human and Christian education to the young persons entrusted to our care encapsulated an essential element in calling this ministry to the service of the Church. Over 340 years later, the various ministries of the District of Eastern North America exist to nurture our students with a Catholic Christian view that understands each person as a unique and gifted child of God, and to help build a global community that witnesses to the reality of God's reign announced here and now in the incarnate work of Jesus Christ – the belief in a world that reflects the values of human dignity, justice, peace and respect for all creation.

As Lasallians, we particularly cherish the dynamic of the actions of the Holy Spirit to live as persons of deep faith and energetic zeal. This vision is sometimes challenged by Twenty-first century realities that impact it. Ours is a complex world, often dragged down by partisanship and warring ideologies. Young people mirror all of the contradictions of today's culture including, but certainly not limited to, a distrust for institutions (including organized religions), disaffiliation from faith communities, ramped up political rhetoric and partisan divisions, fear of the threat of violence and war, environmental degradation of the planet, and the still emerging problems associated with the global pandemic that COVID inflicted on us all. What is true of the young people in our ministries is equally real for their parents and families as well as for ourselves as teachers, administrators and support personnel in our ministries. We live as people in a world with multiple understandings of what being people of faith means. Given this diverse, contentious, and baffling reality, we forge ahead in the spirit of faith and zeal to meet these challenges to evangelize with prophetic hope.



As we envision a future for the faith formation dimension of DENA ministries, we do so recognizing that Lasallians have always accepted the summons of present realities to meet the educational needs of the young. This future for DENA ministries embraces the call to provide a Christian and human education to contemporary persons and to support the formation for ministry of current and future generations of faith-filled educators. While acknowledging and accepting the wide diversity of degrees and kinds of religious connections within our ministries, we remain true to our Catholic Christian roots. We must proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and encourage the Christian vision that embraces and respects difference. In doing so, we will create communities where all people receive welcome and respect. In the immediate future, we must recognize and address the need to provide practical, effective and authentic formation to assist all of our Lasallian colleagues, but especially those who are charged with providing students with religious education programs. We have to cultivate theological places where young people can encounter and know the loving presence of God, and to see the effects of that presence flowing out into the wider community through loving actions of respect and service to others, especially the marginalized.



The 46th General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools invites us to create “One La Salle,” reflecting the global reality of our influence and the shared humanity that bonds us as one family. The Leavening Project of the Institute describes “a pastoral way of journeying together, in a synodal style, welcoming everyone, from all the places and types of ministries and communities that the Lasallian family has...(The Leavening Project, 7).” In this spirit, we embrace opportunities for discernment as invitations to recommitment and renewal of the faith-based purposes of Lasallian education, which invites all of us – students, parents, administrators, teachers, service providers, staffs, alumni, Board members, and the general public – to discover our unique vocations of faith, zeal and service for today and the future.

To achieve this direction, the District will work:

- to support ongoing education and faith formation of educators in the District – especially those new to Lasallian education – to ensure that all educators have a fundamental understanding of our shared Lasallian mission and Catholic tradition, with consistency across all ministries.
- to provide frequent opportunities to interact among ministries to discuss and exchange best practices in faith formation, and to establish a Gospel-centered community that extends beyond the walls of any one particular place.
- to encourage “the young people entrusted to our care” to live into their God-given potential as engaged believers through opportunities, both within and among our ministries, to pray, to reflect on their experiences, to learn about our Lasallian Catholic tradition, to serve those in need, and to work for justice and peace in our world.

Thematic Group 6: Lasallian Vocations



Vision Statement

The current cultural climate defines achievement and recognizes success in ways counter to the vocation to religious life and a career in education.

Hence, the need for Lasallian education and evangelization remains great in service to the church and the world. The Holy Spirit continues to invite men and women along a journey of faith in service to God's mission given by Jesus. The vocations of Brothers and other Lasallian educators are intentional responses to the summons of the Spirit as experienced by Saint John Baptist de La Salle and his first Brothers.

Our Lasallian charism is a particular path of life that grows in light of God's word. This charism calls us to be present and visible in the universal church. The promotion of all Lasallian vocations, including the vocation of the Brother, necessitates a faithful response to the 46th General Chapter's call to live prophetic audacity rooted in the Gospel. Therefore, Lasallian spirituality is foundational to pursuing God's mission of providing a human and Christian education that guides our accompaniment of candidates for the complimentary vocations of Brother and other Lasallian educators.

To effectively accomplish this accompaniment, we affirm the need for dynamic structures which invite Lasallian educators to strengthen and deepen their faith to participate more fully in our charism - to acquire "the spirit of faith that gives rise personally and communally to a spirit of zeal for salvation of the young, especially those who are poor." Each person who participates in the mission is responsible for nurturing his/her own vocation. All share the call to promote the Brothers' vocation and other Lasallian vocations.

Directional Statements

- Recognizing that all vocations are a call from God:
 - the District and its ministries provide opportunities for all Lasallian educators to discern God's invitation to live a gospel-centered life and to provide accompaniment so they may live lives rooted in our Lasallian spirituality.
 - the District supports ministries and Brothers' communities in nurturing a culture of vocation in their respective settings
- Creating robust local vocation animation teams supported by an annual convocation and ongoing support to implement a culture of vocation in accordance with Circular 475.
- Updating multimedia tools to equip local vocation animation teams, faculty, staff and parents in their promotion of consecrated life and other Lasallian vocations.
- Encouraging Brothers to engage in the local church and wider society to joyfully share the prophetic dimension of their vocation.
- Affirming the Adrien Nyel Project's initiative to promote the vocation of the educator, a significant dimension of our charism in service to the church and the world.



Thematic Group 7: New Calls from the Peripheries



*“Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel.” **Evangelii Gaudium, 20***

*In recent decades, most countries – even the poorest – have significantly increased the availability of schooling, but without ensuring quality in the process. In this way, they have turned education into the biggest factor of exclusion. In other words, the tension between coverage and quality, between schooling and learning persists. Poor education for the poor deprives them access to the opportunities that their birth, surname or their social condition have denied them, thus perpetuating their marginalization and conditions of misery. **Declaration on the Lasallian Educational Mission, 4.1***

*You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the LORD, am your God. **Leviticus 19:34***

*For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me. **Matthew 25: 35***

We recognize the reality

1. While recognizing the obligation for individual ministries to respond to the call from different experiences of the peripheries, as a District we have chosen to focus on a particular community on the margins.
2. We recognize the need to respond to the General Chapter mandate of “One La Salle” and therefore, engage the District in cooperation with the global Institute in the plan in Homestead.
3. We recognize a clear priority from the Church and the Institute to look toward the peripheries, those places where people are marginalized and denied opportunity in order to bring the light and joy of the Gospel of Jesus;
4. We recognize that peripheries can be described as cultural, confessional, geographical, social and existential;
5. We recognize that peripheries are where there is material and spiritual poverty and are the new mission territory;
6. We recognize that the Lasallian mission first arrived in the geographical area of DENA in the mid-19th century to serve newly arriving immigrant populations in cities like Baltimore, New York and Providence;
7. We recognize that during the course of 175 years of Lasallian education in the USA, the descendants of those first immigrant students have benefitted from the education offered and have become faithful disciples and responsible citizens;
8. We recognize that Lasallian ministries continue to respond to the calls from the peripheries. Youth and family service agencies, San Miguel Schools, innovative academic support programs and commitment to provide substantial financial aid to deserving students characterize our commitment to the periphery;
9. We recognize that today, a new generation of vulnerable migrants are in our midst living in fear and misery;
10. We recognize that unlike in the past, there are very few native clergy or religious to accompany them;
11. We recognize that our charism took root in the United States with one small school in Baltimore in 1845 serving immigrants;
12. We recognize that our District has the advantage of the La Salle Educational Center, which serves low-income and agricultural families, many of whom are immigrants, in Homestead, Florida.

We understand the challenges

1. We understand the necessity to respond to new realities that resonate with the Charism and Mission;
2. We understand the political and cultural tensions around immigration in our country;
3. We understand that many immigrant children are unaccompanied and at risk for harm;
4. We understand that the global phenomenon of migration can seem overwhelming and complicated;
5. We understand the financial and organizational hurdles in responding with new educational projects in service to those who are poor and unable to pay for such services;
6. We understand that cultural diversity must be respected in any response;
7. We understand that the La Salle Education Center has the potential to better serve the spiritual and educational needs of the families that make up the community.

We feel called to respond in the Spirit of Faith and Zeal

1. Like our Founder who was moved by the plight of the poor boys in the city Reims, we hear the call of the families that make up the La Salle Education Center Community for quality educational opportunities for their children;
2. With confidence in the call of the Holy Spirit, we feel called to open an international Community of Brothers and Lasallians in Homestead, Florida;
3. Knowing the transformative power that our educational mission has had on past generations of immigrants to the United States, particularly in recent years with the Miguel Schools and the Cristo Rey Schools, we feel called to establish a Lasallian educational project that will address the needs of the children of Homestead.

Directional Statements

The District will establish a residential Lasallian Community in Homestead in order to discern with the local community a plan that will respond to the socio-educational needs of the children with a Lasallian educational project.

- Respond to the invitation from the Archdiocese of Miami to serve in Homestead
- Engage with the Board of Directors of the La Salle Educational Center to clarify vision and scope of the Center's mission (i.e. the Pillars of Social Service, Education, Faith Formation)
- Propose an invitation to other Districts for Brothers and Lasallians to join the Community
- Expand participation in service immersion for the schools of the District



The Brothers of the Christian Schools

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