

Lay Marist Report to the Chapter

After the last chapter, it was on Br Patrick's initiative that the Office of Life and Mission was asked to begin planning a Province Lay Assembly. In that process, we invited Pep Buetas, who at the time was in the office of the Laity and Patricia Rojas, from the Champagnat Movement of the Marist Family in Mexico, to join us and help us facilitate the program of the assembly.

July, 2018: The Lay Assembly was held. 75 people attended, from various locations around the country. The assembly was subsidized by the province, which greatly helped with attendance from the outlying communities. The statement that came at the conclusion of the assembly:

“Our dream is to become a community
where Marists are connected at local, national, and international levels,
growing in communion and purpose through a wise leadership.
We take care of our people,
enhancing the formation processes
that allow anyone who wants to be around the table to find his/her place.

September, 2018: A steering committee was invited by Br Patrick and the provincial council to work on these priorities. The committee members were: Matt Fallon, Maureen Hagan, Lindsay Irwin, Chris Sullivan, and Adam Wouk.

September 2018 – April 2019: The committee worked on the priorities and came up with a proposal. Said proposal was submitted to the Provincial Council. The Steering Committee sent out “Expression of Interest” (EOI) forms to as many people as possible, to begin to get an idea of numbers.

Approximately 85 EOIs were returned. Each person was called personally by one of the members of the Steering Committee, to have a further discussion on their level of interest and intention.

June 2019: The steering committee and the provincial council met in person to collaborate on the proposal initiatives and to discuss names for the appointment of a Lay Council.

May 2020: The Lay Council was appointed. Members are: Maureen Hagan, Richard Karsten, Adam Wouk, Lindsay Irwin, Earline Tweedie, Ellen Salmi VanCleeef, Br Ken Hogan and Br Owen Ormsby.

Between the end of the Lay Assembly and the beginning of the formation program, the brothers' communities were visited twice, to help keep them informed of progress and to continue to invite their participation in any and all events and programs.

January 2, 2021: 56 people begin the formation program. We are very happy to have 22 brothers involved, either as participants and/or mentors.

The council has met faithfully every 2 weeks, in spite of Covid 19, working, so far, with three committees: Formation, Membership and Communications.

- Formation: organized the structure that now exists for the formation of Marists Of Champagnat, based on the RCIA model and including resources from Marist texts and documents. They set up the webinars, presenters, prayer for kick-off and commitment ceremonies, and mentoring workshops.
- Membership: Conducted mini-assemblies for all those who filled out EOI forms. Invited members to prayer on Jan 2 and March 13. Continues to maintain contact with those members who are not in the first cohort of formation and continues to reach out to increase membership.
- Communications: Met with communication directors from each school to discuss collaboration on how to get the word out about the program. Designed the website and graphics for use on all social media platforms. Works on the recordings of each webinar to make them available to those who could not attend in person.

As of now, I would say we have several categories of Lay Marists.

- The group which does not yet formally exist – those in the first cohort who are in the discernment process to become a “Marist of Champagnat”. This term is being used internationally. Here in the US, this designation means that one has committed, in a more conscious way, to live out the charism of Marcellin Champagnat and further the mission to Make Jesus Known and Loved.
- The first formation cohort – 56 people who are now in the process of formation, via the zoom webinars. Many of these people have already been living the charism for many years, have been “in mission” for many years, by virtue of their service in the schools. They have decided to take this time to discern a further calling, a calling to go beyond that association, to find ways to live out the charism in a formally committed way.
- The “members” who have filled out the EOI. Some will be part of the next cohort. Some may just stay in touch via province programs or local groups.
- The unknowns – the people who are out there that we haven’t reached yet. Retired teachers, former students, especially former Marist Youth or Young Adults -people outside of our school ministries. And those in our school ministries. Those whom we hope may want to connect in a deeper way with Marist spirituality. Brothers continue to be invited to all gatherings, just as they are for Sharing Our Call programs.

The future of the Lay Council:

- To expand our existing committees with people from the first cohort.
- To address future challenges– e.g, connection to mission , bylaws and structures, finances.

- To encourage the formation of new groups, to support existing groups with resources, with province wide opportunities for prayer and service
- To continue reaching out to the brothers, inviting them to journey with us. We need their experience and perspectives. Our call is to be in communion, as one, to be part of the mission, to move forward in this 3rd century.
- To take part in the Institute wide International Forum on Lay Marist Vocation, ongoing from March 2021 – November, 2024.

The theme of the Forum is "WELCOME, CARE FOR, LIVE AND SHARE OUR VOCATION", a four-year journey of reflection and discernment shared among laity and brother.

Adult Formation programs, such as Sharing Our Call, Embracing Our Call, etc were cancelled due to Covid. However, we have continued to meet with Campus Ministers on a regular basis, via Zoom. Sharing Our Mission, hybrid version, was held this year, March 12-14. Nine participants were on site at Esopus and the rest were on Zoom.

Our hope for these programs is to expand beyond Esopus. We'd like to reach as many of the school staff as possible to share the charism, to help educate and inform re: province work and to keep school personnel informed of work being done on the regional and global levels.

Submitted by Maureen Hagan
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