

BULLETIN OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

# RELAN

LASALLIAN REGION OF NORTH AMERICA



BULLETIN  
**260**  
JANUARY 2022



Brothers of  
the Christian  
Schools

La  Salle



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# BRINGING THE MISSION TO LIFE

The Lasallian Region of North America (RELAN) is delighted to share the history and current realities in our Region. As with the other four Regions of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, RELAN was commissioned to publish a Bulletin following the Superior General's pastoral visit.



Brother Robert visited two Districts before canceling the remainder of his pastoral visit to RELAN due to COVID-19. (Pictured: Christian Brothers Academy, Syracuse, New York)

Brother Superior General Robert Schieler and I had completed our visits to the Districts of Francophone Canada (October – November 2019) and Eastern North America (November 2019) prior to the pandemic. We returned to RELAN in early March 2020 to begin our visit to the District of San Francisco New Orleans, to be followed by a visit to the Midwest District.

However, as concerns over COVID-19 began to intensify, we decided to postpone—and eventually cancel—the remainder of the pastoral visit.

This Bulletin tells the story of RELAN as we live into the realities of a world altered by the pandemic. We provide insight into its history, strengths, innovations and challenges, along with a snapshot of life at the complicated moment in time during which this Bulletin was written. We highlight the Region's vitality, sustainability and resilience through exploring a variety of themes that bring the mission to life, including association for mission, shared leadership, evangelization, beyond the borders, culture of vocation, formation, Brothers, Young Lasallians and vitality and sustainability.

It is our hope that this text will stimulate your conversations, reflections and discernment as together we move with energy and creativity into a future God is inviting us to “come and see.”

Brother Timothy Coldwell  
General Councilor  
Lasallian Region of North America

# CHARISMATIC ENERGY: AN INTRODUCTION TO RELAN

## Coming to North America



The Brothers opened Ste. Geneviève Academy in a limestone Federalist-style building located on the highest hill overlooking the town of Ste. Geneviève.

The Lasallian mission in the Lasallian Region of North America (RELAN) traces its historical roots to 1819 and Ste. Geneviève Academy in Ste. Geneviève, Missouri, the first school operated by the De La Salle Christian Brothers in the United States. The school operated only until 1822; it wasn't until 1837, when Brother Aidant and three Brothers debarked in Montréal, that they established the first permanent foundation of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in North America. Alighting from those ships were men imbued with a charisma and vision that would transform the educational landscape in its day.

## Inspired by De La Salle

The Lasallian charism traces its roots to Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the first communities of Brothers. The grace and gift of the Holy Spirit filled them with an energy to associate together for the educational service of the poor. This charismatic energy expressed itself in three integrated and dynamic ways: in gratuity, founding and justice.

Nearly two hundred years later, this charismatic energy continues to find expression in the countries of Canada and the United States. Today, as in our origins, this energy brings the living love of Christ into the teacher-student relationship and transforms the educational center into a redemptive and saving place.

## Charismatic Dynamism in Action

This Bulletin offers a tour of the Lasallian Region of North America and the many expressions of the charismatic dynamism that

narrate its past and present. RELAN is comprised of four Districts: Eastern North America, Francophone Canada, Midwest and San Francisco New Orleans. There are nearly

500 Brothers and 10,000 Partners serving in association to touch the hearts and minds of nearly 77,000 youth and young adults in more than 80 elementary, middle and secondary (high) schools, colleges and universities, educational centers, youth and family services centers, retreat and pastoral centers, and camps.



Brother Robert visited Cathedral High School in El Paso, Texas, just days before canceling the remainder of his pastoral visit to RELAN because of COVID-19 concerns.

The educational system in the United States and Canada is elementary (5-10 years), middle school (10-13 years), high school (13-18 years), and college and universities for adults. More than half of the educational ministries are high schools. Four of those are low-tuition Cristo Rey-model schools where economically disadvantaged students complement academic studies with professional work experience. Eleven are San Miguel-model middle schools, largely located in low-income neighborhoods that provide quality education to underserved students. Additionally, youth and family services, retreat and pastoral centers, after-school programs and camps bring the Lasallian mission to life for youth and young adults.

In Canada, the educational system varies from province (state) to province. In Québec, until a few years ago, public schools were either Catholic or Protestant, and they were all fully subsidized by the state. For about 30 years, the system has been secular, but a private system exists, which can be Catholic, and it is subsidized by the state up to about 60%; all this ensured that, for many years, Lasallian schools could easily carry out their mission among the poor and the working classes. At this time, there is one Lasallian school in Canada. As this school chose some years ago to regain its autonomy and become wholly private, it receives no state funding.

In the United States, Catholic schools are not funded by the state or federal government—there is a strict interpretation of the separation between church and state. Salaries and operating



San Miguel High School in Tucson, Arizona, serves families of limited financial means. As a Cristo Rey-model school, its Corporate Work Study Program places students in local businesses one day a week to provide work experience and help support the cost of their tuition.

and capital expenses for the site and buildings are provided by tuition and fees from the families. In this tuition and benefactor-dependent model, the vitality and sustainability are dependent upon the educational community. Keeping the doors open in a literal sense and keeping the doors open to faith in a pastoral sense is quite dependent upon the revenue that is generated from the families and from fundraising.

## Together and by Association

To strengthen the Lasallian educational network, the Lasallian Association for Secondary School Chief Administrators (LASSCA) meets on an annual basis for formation and collaboration, and the Lasallian Association of Colleges and Universities (LACU) and its mission officers meet regularly to collaborate and sponsor events to promote dialogue and research. This LACU collaboration extends beyond the six institutions of higher education in the United States and includes Bethlehem University in the Holy Land, Christ the Teacher Institute of Education in Nairobi, Kenya, and Ethiopian Catholic University – La Salle in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

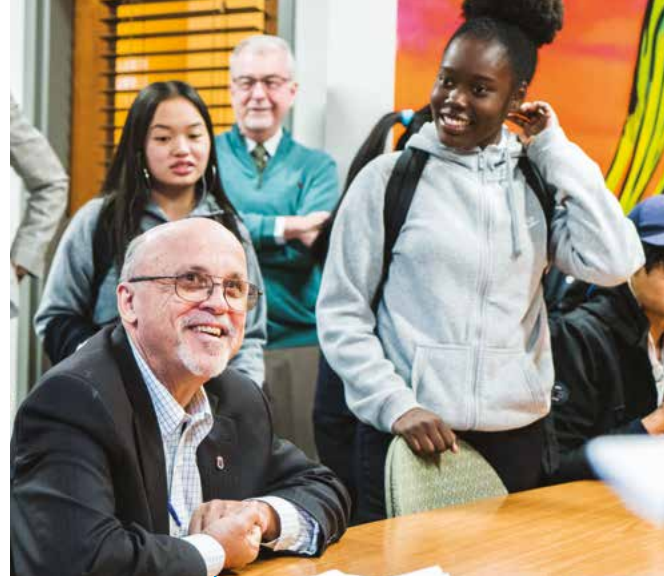
Two companies provide critical support for the people and programs of the Lasallian charism. Christian Brothers Services (CBS) administers cooperative programs in health, retirement, property/casualty, technology, school management, financial and administrative consulting to schools and church organizations. Christian Brothers Investment Services (CBIS) provides investment services for Catholic institutions worldwide. CBIS actively promotes and guides investors through its Catholic Responsible Investments program. Both companies provide services within and outside the Institute and Lasallian mission.

## Gratuity, Founding and Justice

There are many contemporary examples in RELAN of the three-fold charismatic energy of gratuity, founding and justice. In this Bulletin you will read about the founding of Lasallian Volunteers (1989), De La Salle Blackfeet (2001) and the Saint-Michel Lasallian Center (2005), examples that illustrate the indissoluble

link between these three aspects. The spirit of gratuity infuses the founding spirit, and the desire for justice inspires risk on behalf of those who are pushed to the social margins.

The charism moves to where the needs are. Sometimes it is located in brick and mortar, such as the First Generation Initiative at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota that serves students who are the first in their families to pursue higher education. At times it's found on the U.S.-Mexico border in the service-learning program El Otro Lado. And at times it is in those neighborhoods where Tides Family Services reaches out to disenfranchised youth.



Brother Robert visited the Saint-Michel Lasallian Center, which serves an immigrant population in Montréal, Québec.

## Responding to Challenges

The charism moves to respond to emerging social, religious and economic challenges, such as the systemic racism that has embedded itself in the United States, the growing number of youth who are stepping away from faith communities, and the growing gap between what families can pay and what schools charge for tuition. The resilience of this charism was especially tested during the COVID-19 crisis.

With renewed attention on racial justice, Lasallian institutions are taking steps to initiate discussions, examine their policies and create change. (Pictured: Lewis University student demonstration)

The Region's aspiration is that the mission stands as a prophetic sign of justice and the community is a prophetic sign of love. In support of this aspiration, the Districts and Region dedicate their resources to restore justice and support the young.

In the following sections we would like to share with you how the people of RELAN work together to nourish and sustain the same charism and vision that was first brought to us 200 years ago. ◆



**1819**

Brothers Antonin, Fulgence and Aubin establish the first school operated by the Brothers in the United States. Ste. Geneviève Academy in Ste. Geneviève, Missouri, operated until 1822.

**1837**

Brother Aidant, along with Brothers Adalbertus, Rombaud and Euverte, arrive in Montréal from France and establish the first permanent foundation of the Institute in North America. The school, which is not named, opens three days before Christmas 1837. The school moves in 1840 and is called Saint-Laurent School.

**1845**

Brother Francis McMullen returns to his hometown of Baltimore at the age of 17 after completing the novitiate in Montréal. He and Brother Edward Whitty begin classes in the school that would become



today's Calvert Hall College High School. Brother Francis is the first American Brother. (Pictured: Calvert Hall's original building)

**1864**

The Institute creates the Province of the United States of America and names Brother Ambrose Roarke as Visitor.

**1882**

Christian Brothers Winery begins operations. The winery is nearly lost during the depression of 1929 but finds success again in the 1940s and 1950s.



In 1957, the winery is separately incorporated as Mont La Salle Vineyards, a commercial, tax-paying entity, with royalties used to support educational works, communities and novitiate in the District of San Francisco. The operation and rights to the name are sold to Heublein, Inc., in 1989.



**1923**

The Institute permits the teaching of Latin, bringing to a close the “Latin Question” (dating to the 28th General Chapter in 1894) and the negative impact on the scope and reach of the educational mission in the United States.



**1943**

Brother Alphonsus Pluth, the author of the texts “Living with Christ,” considers 1943 as the founding of what is today Saint Mary’s Press.

**1962**

Sangre de Cristo Center for Spiritual Renewal near Santa Fe, New Mexico, opens to provide continuing formation for Brothers in their mid-years. The 100-day program of renewal, reformation and rediscovery eventually opens to men and women religious and priests. Sangre serves thousands of people over 50 years and 100 sessions until its closing in 2012.

**1960**

Christian Brothers Major Superiors (dba Christian Brothers Conference) is incorporated. Today, the Conference is based in Washington, D.C., and provides programming and support for Lasallian education and formation in the four Districts and 100 ministries of the Region.

**1964**

The government of the Québec State announces that the Brothers can no longer run public schools and hires the Brothers individually, stripping both the Catholic and Protestant Churches of their influence over education. The Brothers keep only a few private schools and juniorates before closing or selling all of them.

Brother Joel Damian organizes a mutual cooperative purchasing group for Chicago area high schools conducted by the Christian Brothers. Christian Brothers Services grows to administer and serve seven trusts, which provide a variety of programs to schools, congregations, organizations and dioceses in the United States and Canada.

**1968**

The first U.S. Regional Chapter is held in Lockport, Illinois.

**1973**

The United States Regional Christian Brothers educational workshops are initiated to provide a forum for updating and networking for teachers and administrators. In honor of the first executive secretary, Brother Francis Huether, they are renamed Huether Workshops in 1985, then the Huether Lasallian Conference in 2002. Each conference is, as in its origins, organized around a theme focusing on innovative educational topics and serves both veteran and new educators in the Lasallian mission.

Bethlehem University, the first Catholic university in the Holy Land, is co-founded by the Holy See and the Institute. The Region provides financial and personnel support for this co-educational Lasallian institution of higher learning, open to students of all faiths.

**1978**

The Toronto District (est. 1888) joins the U.S. Districts to create the United States-Toronto Region.

**1981**

Christian Brothers Investment Services (CBIS) is founded by the Brothers to provide trusted, socially responsible investment management services to Catholic organizations.



**1984**

The first Regional Convocation of Brothers is held. Brother John Johnston's address is considered a pivotal moment in calling attention to the new reality of a Lasallian school served by Partners and Brothers as equal partners and to the emergence of Lasallian schools without Brothers on staff. (Pictured, from left: Brothers John Johnston, Superior General José Pablo Basterrechea and Augustine Loes)

**1986**

The Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies opens as a three-year formation program for Brothers and Partners to study the life, work and spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the origins of the Lasallian educational mission.



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**1989**

Lasallian Volunteers officially becomes a program, following a decade of grassroots efforts to bring volunteers into ministries and communities. By 1993, the program grows into a national movement, with a staff working to recruit, train and support the volunteers.

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**1992**

The District of Francophone Canada is formed from the Districts of Montréal (est. 1837), Québec (est. 1927), Trois-Rivières (est. 1957) and Ottawa (est. 1958), with its provincialate in Longueuil, Québec.

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**1993**

The San Miguel movement begins with the establishment of its first school, The San Miguel School of Providence (Rhode Island).

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**1995**

The Region launches a twinning program that partners its schools with Lasallian ministries in the Lwanga District of Africa, which includes the countries of Kenya, Nigeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia and South Africa. The twinning program provides financial support for the Lwanga ministries and encourages connections between students.

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The Christian Brothers of the Midwest District is formed from the Districts of Chicago (est. 1966), St. Louis (est. 1870) and Saint Paul-Minneapolis (est. 1963), with its provincialate in Burr Ridge, Illinois.

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**1997**

The Lasallian Leadership Institute (LLI) begins as a three-year program focused on leadership formation to prepare future leaders of Lasallian ministries. It concludes in 2012 after providing formation for five cohorts.

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**2002**

The first International Symposium of Young Lasallians is held in Québec, Canada, which led to the creation of the International Council of Young Lasallians.

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**2004**

*De La Salle Today* publishes its first issue as the Regional magazine.

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The Lasallian Social Justice Institute (LSJI) begins as a formation program for Brothers and Partners based on the Gospel and the promotion of social justice and service to the poor. LSJI embodies the Lasallian commitment to association for the educational service of the poor and the rights of children.

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**2005**

The first Regional Assembly for the Lasallian Educational Mission, comprising 112 delegates (65% Partners and 35% Brothers), convenes in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The Lasallian Association of Secondary School Administrators (LASSCA) forms to foster and preserve a cooperative spirit among the chief administrators of Lasallian secondary schools.

**2009**

The District of Eastern North America (DENA) is formed from the Districts of Baltimore (est. 1878), Long Island-New England (est. 1956) and New York (est. 1864), with its provincialate in Eatontown, New Jersey.

**2010**

The first Young Lasallian Formation Assembly (VEGA) is held in Memphis, Tennessee.

Called to Be Brothers, a three-year continuing formation program, begins with a focus on the spiritual and community lives of Brothers following a call from the 44th General Chapter in 2007. It culminates with a Regional gathering at Lewis University in 2012.

**2011**

The Lasallian Education Council is created as an innovative structure for sharing

responsibility for the Lasallian mission among Brothers and Partners, making the Region the first to implement a structure as proposed by the International Assembly in 2006 and adopted by the 44th General Chapter.

The Lasallian Education brand is adopted to unite schools and ministries in the Region to collectively tell the Lasallian story.

**2012**

The Lasallian Region of North America (Région lasallienne de l'Amérique du Nord), formed of the United States-Toronto and Francophone Canada Regions, is inaugurated in Laval, Québec, in the presence of Brother Álvaro Rodríguez, then-Superior General.



The first International Symposium on Lasallian Research is held at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, co-sponsored by Christian Brothers Conference.



**2013**

The first Lasallian Women's Symposium is held in RELAN. With each District represented, 33 women and five Brothers gather at St. Joseph's Camp in California.

**2014**

The District of San Francisco New Orleans (SFNO) is formed from the Districts of New Orleans-Santa Fe (est. 1921) and San Francisco (est. 1868), with its provincialate offices in Napa, California, and Covington, Louisiana.

The Brother John Johnston Institute of Contemporary Lasallian Practice begins as a two-year formation program focused on deepening participants' understanding of Saint John Baptist de La Salle's story and vision and Lasallian pedagogy, justice promotion and spirituality while utilizing

contemporary texts to inform and influence current and future Lasallian practice.



**2015**

The Regional Novitiate moves from Napa, California, to Chicago, Illinois.

**2019**

Brother James Miller is beatified, making him the first religious Brother from the United States to be beatified. Brother James was killed in 1982 while repairing a wall of a school in Huehuetenango, Guatemala.



The Regional Formation Institute (RFI) is formed with the goal of developing the next generation of formators, leaders with in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Lasallian charism and mission, to teach in current and future Regional formation programs.

The pastoral visit of Brother Superior Robert Schieler to RELAN begins with visits being completed to the Districts of Francophone Canada and Eastern North America in late 2019. In March 2020, the visit is abruptly cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (Pictured at Saint-Michel Lasallian Center, Montréal, Québec) ♦



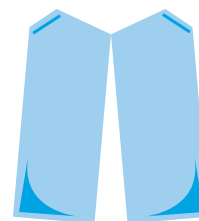
# LASALLIAN REGION OF NORTH AMERICA

The Lasallian Region of North America (RELAN) has a more than 200-year history of transforming lives. Built on the legacy of the first Brothers who founded the mission in the United States and Canada, RELAN continues to adapt to the ever-changing realities to meet the needs of the young. Today, that includes elementary, middle and secondary schools, colleges and universities, youth and family services agencies, camps, educational and faith formation centers, support services and more. Brothers and Lasallian Partners work together to serve youth and young adults, form the next generation of Brothers and Lasallian leaders, and reach beyond borders to serve those most in need. The Region and Districts offer support and accompaniment through formation and education programs as well as other initiatives to strengthen the bonds that are so critical for the educational community and its shared ministry.



2

COUNTRIES



497

BROTHERS

10,062

PARTNERS

7 COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

65 ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

12 EDUCATIONAL CENTERS

5 YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAMS

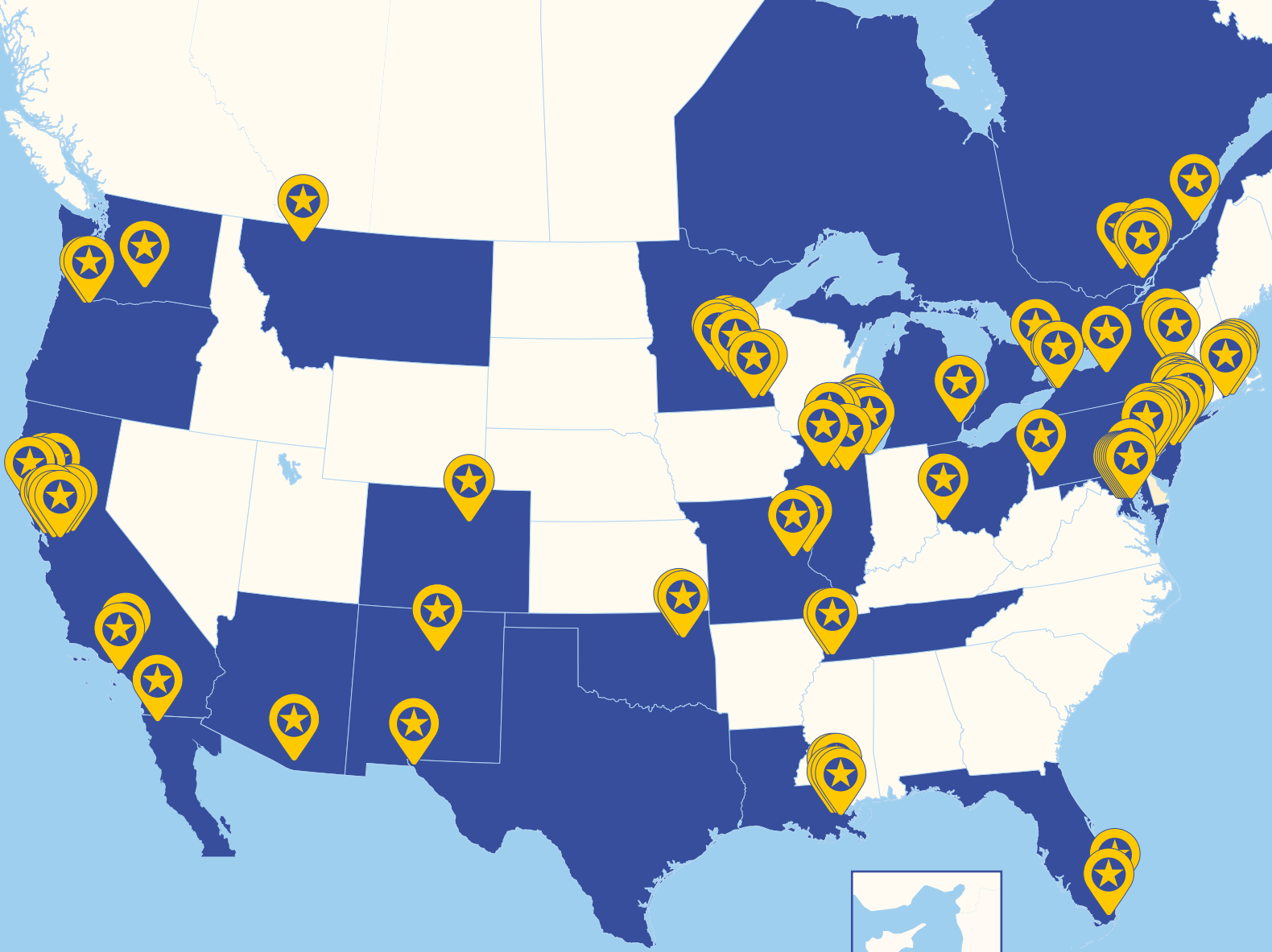
10 SUPPORT MINISTRIES, DISTRICT, REGIONAL OFFICES



76,964

YOUNG PEOPLE SERVED

2020-2021 STATISTICS



## Ministries and Communities



### DISTRICT OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA

District of Columbia  
 Florida  
 Maryland  
 Michigan  
 New Jersey  
 New York  
 Ontario  
 Pennsylvania  
 Puerto Rico  
 Rhode Island

### MIDWEST DISTRICT

Illinois  
 Minnesota  
 Missouri  
 Montana  
 Ohio  
 Oklahoma  
 Tennessee

### DISTRICT OF SAN FRANCISCO NEW ORLEANS

Arizona  
 Baja California  
 California  
 Colorado  
 Louisiana  
 New Mexico  
 Oregon  
 Texas  
 Washington

### DISTRICT OF FRANCOPHONE CANADA

Québec

## Shared Leadership

### Partnering in Education and Formation



Brother Robert interacted with students at Manhattan College, one of six institutions of higher education in the United States.

Shared leadership between Brothers and Lasallian Partners is a hallmark of the Lasallian mission in RELAN. The majority of ministries are led by Partners, and there has been an intentional movement toward shared leadership at the Regional level. In 2011, the Regional Conference of Christian Brothers (RCCB) established what is now called the Lasallian Education Council (LEC) to facilitate shared responsibility between Brothers and Partners and to strengthen the sustainability of the mission.

The Region created the LEC in response to the 43rd General Chapter (2000), 44th General Chapter (2007) and the International Mission Assembly (2006), which called for a structure of voice and vote at the Regional level. The LEC oversees mission formation and education programs that are designed and implemented through the Regional Office for Lasallian Education (OLE). It also serves as a platform for collaboration among the Districts to increase partnerships within and outside the Lasallian family in order to strengthen the legacy of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

**“Shared leadership—this sense that the Lasallian mission is something precious for which the Brothers and Lasallian Partners alike bear responsibility—is an essential element for the future flourishing of this charism.”**

*—Kurt Schackmuth,  
Lasallian Education Council Chair*



During Brother Robert's pastoral visit in November 2019, the Lasallian Education Council spent time with Brother Robert and Brother Gerard Rummery (District of Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea) at the Huether Lasallian Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



Since their founding, the LEC and OLE, in collaboration with the RCCB, have worked to study and improve existing formation programs and create new opportunities for Lasallians to pursue formation. The LEC also works to provide resources and support to middle schools, secondary schools and higher education institutions.

### RELAN Office

OLE is part of the Regional office, Christian Brothers Conference (CBC). Located in Washington, D.C., CBC expresses shared leadership through the collaboration between the General Councilor, OLE executive director and director of administration. CBC supports vocation promotion and formation of Brothers and Lasallian educators, recruits and trains Lasallian Volunteers, creates print and online resources to tell the story of the mission in RELAN, collaborates with and accompanies Young Lasallians, the Lasallian Association of Secondary School Chief Administrators (LASSCA) and the Lasallian Association of Colleges and Universities (LACU), and maintains relationships with the RELAN Districts, the other four Regions and the Center of the Institute.

## Evangelization

### Accompanying Young People

At the heart of schools, retreat centers and pastoral centers is the ministry of faith formation. The spectrum of faith formation includes evangelization, proclaiming the good news of redemption brought in Jesus Christ, and catechesis, the ongoing instruction and accompaniment in deepening one's relationship with God.

The Lasallian approach to faith formation is to bring the Catholic tradition of prayer, sacraments, social teaching and practice into dialogue with life experience. This approach builds on the conviction that the foundation for faith and trust in God is cultivated in a community that respects and honors one another. Each educational center therefore aims to provide young people with a space in the company of trusted adults to express what is happening interiorly and to openly explore questions about faith and the meaning of life.

Whether during studies and dialogue in classrooms, service activities in the community or prayer experiences on retreat, the interior and spiritual growth of each person is paramount. The Region helps support Springtide Research Institute, which conducts research and analysis and interpretations to amplify the voice of young people (ages 13-25) in order to fortify youth ministry efforts within the Lasallian network in the U.S. and beyond. Their actionable research is equipping religious and cultural leaders with new ways of caring for young people, rooted in fresh research.

**“At Springtide we want to help those who care about young people to care better. That starts with understanding the fullness of their religious and spiritual longings. We are committed to listening to young people and conveying what we learn through actionable findings for the adults who care.”**

*—Dr. Josh Packard, Executive Director, Springtide Research Institute*

# Beyond the Borders

## Supporting Immersion Programs

In response to the 45th General Chapter (2014) the Region now offers support for two service-learning immersion programs. The first, El Otro Lado (the other side), is a U.S.-Mexico border immersion program that takes place in El Paso, Texas, and Tucson, Arizona, where communities of Brothers and volunteers serve in Lasallian secondary schools. El Otro Lado provides Lasallian students and educators with the opportunity to explore the U.S.-Mexico border and learn about the many complexities surrounding the topic of immigration. Through various components, the program allows students to interact with humanitarian aid groups, government officials and those directly impacted by U.S. immigration policy. Discussion and prayerful reflection are key elements of the five-day service-learning immersion program.



OKI-NI-SOO-KA-WA (Come and See) Blackfeet Immersion welcomes secondary and higher education students for a one-week program. It partnered with the Lasallian Social Justice Institute, a Regional formation program, to offer the experience to educators in 2021 (virtual) and 2022 (in person).

OKI-NI-SOO-KA-WA (Come and See) Blackfeet Immersion provides students and educators with an intercultural experience in Browning, Montana. A community of Brothers and volunteers serves at De La Salle Blackfeet School where the encounter takes place. It invites participants to affirm a common bond among all peoples as children of God and challenges perceived boundaries between oneself and others as well as oneself and God. The OKI-NI-SOO-KA-WA Blackfeet Immersion experience includes meeting people of the Blackfeet American Indian Reservation as well as time for prayer and reflection, all in the context of community, simplicity and service-learning.

## Walking Together in Solidarity

In 1995, the Region established links with Lasallian ministries in the Lwanga District of Africa. Each middle and secondary school is “twinned” with a ministry in Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea or Nigeria. The partnership brings together Lasallian students and educators in solidarity as brothers and sisters to share challenges, accomplishments, stories and experiences. The relationships have flourished with students and educators connecting over video conferencing, groups from RELAN visiting twinned ministries in Africa, and the Lwanga Visitor coming to the Region in 2014, 2017 and 2019 to visit ministries. RELAN schools support their twins financially to help them attain self-sufficiency.



Brother Ghebreyesus Habte demonstrated the twinning theme, “Walking Together in Solidarity,” during his 2019 visit to Cristo Rey De La Salle East Bay High School in Oakland, California.

works closely with the International Association of Lasallian Universities (IALU) to strengthen and support Lasallian higher education throughout the world.

The Regional office also collaborates with La Salle International Foundation to support fundraising efforts for global education, health and human service needs, along with emergency support for humanitarian relief projects around the world in times of crisis.

This type of international relationship building is also present in efforts of LACU, which includes the six institutions of higher education in the United States, along with Bethlehem University in the Holy Land, Christ the Teacher Institute of Education in Nairobi, Kenya, and Ethiopian Catholic University – La Salle in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. LACU also

# Culture of Vocation

## Responding to the Vocational Call

The Lasallian vocation is given life through a diversity of expressions—as women and men, celibate or married, religious or lay—in response to God’s call to serve others and to the invitation to deepen and internalize the Lasallian charism in one’s life journey.

Educational ministries and communities cultivate a “culture of vocation,” where all are invited to engage. In practical and profound ways, the people, structures and programs of this culture invite and support an openness to God’s call.

**“Saint John Baptist de La Salle is the patron saint of educators. As a Lasallian, I see education—in all its forms—as an integral part of my vocation as a De La Salle Christian Brother.”**

*—Brother Robert Smith*

Young men and women’s attraction to the Lasallian vocation gives witness to this vitality. They find a charism and community to belong to within our Lasallian family, as seen in the following examples: Lasallian Youth assemblies, the VEGA formation program for young professionals, recent college and university graduates living in community and ministering as Lasallian Volunteers, and young men exploring, discerning and making vows as Brothers. Lasallian vocation ministry promotes, invites and accompanies the discernment of the Brother’s vocation. The Catholic and Lasallian educational mission continues to need the witness of this vocation as a gift for the Church and world.

Believing that when we accompany one another we bring about new life, the Districts and Region have structures and full-time personnel dedicated to this purpose. Regional gatherings offer ways to invite one another to deepen one’s vocation and to accompany one another. The Brother Charles Kitson Institute



Attendees of the 2018 and 2019 Huether Lasallian Conferences celebrated the Year of Lasallian Vocations.

for Formation of Lasallian Volunteers, the biannual Brothers in Initial Formation gatherings, the Year of Lasallian Vocations activities, the Brother John Johnston Institute and the Huether Lasallian Conference engage participants in reflection, renewal and (re)commitment in their personal, professional and spiritual lives.

A commitment to collaboration supports the culture of vocation. District vocation and association personnel, Young Lasallians, associative groups, as well as numerous other networks and committees, work together to support developing a culture of vocation. During Brother Superior Robert Schieler's Huether keynote in 2019, he called Lasallians to challenge the status quo. New efforts and next faithful steps are being taken in a variety of settings to respond.



During his pastoral visit, Brother Robert delivered keynote addresses at the Huether Lasallian Conference and the 7th World Congress of the Association of Lasallian Alumni (UMAEL), both held in Minneapolis.

# Formation

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## Fostering Association for Mission

Fostering the community's fidelity to the charism is supported many ways, from programs to accompany Brothers in initial and continuing formation, to programs for educators and leaders to deepen and affirm their vocational calling as a Lasallian educator, and to initiatives for young people. To ensure that formative encounters meet current needs and adapt to emerging ones, OLE works in collaboration with the LEC, the Districts and other constituencies to evaluate programs and think creatively about how to provide experiences that nurture educators on their personal, professional and spiritual journeys.

**“We come together for a shared purpose, to better understand the mission of Saint John Baptist de La Salle so that, together and by association, we can live the mission for our students.”**

*—Lisa Moran, La Salle Catholic College Preparatory, Milwaukie, Oregon, Johnston Institute participant*

Programs include the Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies (est. 1986), the Brother John Johnston Institute of Contemporary Lasallian Practice (est. 2014) and the Lasallian Social Justice Institute (est. 2004). They invite participants into a deeper level of commitment and engagement with the Lasallian mission while learning, praying and discerning their vocation in community with other educators. The Regional Formation Institute (RFI, est. 2019) aims to develop the next generation of formators—leaders with in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Lasallian charism and mission—to teach in current and future Regional formation programs. OLE also offers educational programming, including sponsoring the yearly Huether Lasallian Conference (est. 1973) and partnering with LASSCA (est. 2005) and its annual conference.



Since its inception in 1986, more than 1,000 participants from around the world have graduated from the Buttimer Institute.

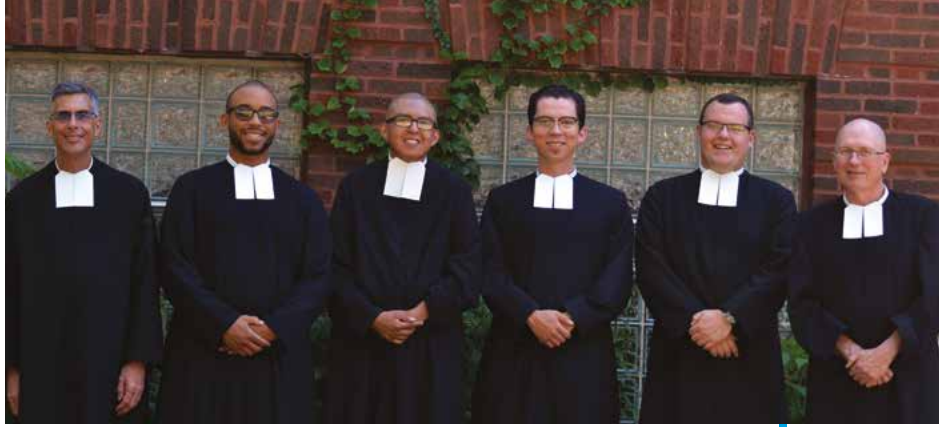
The emergence of COVID-19 just months before the 2020 summer programs prompted changes to programs. This included postponing some programs, while moving others online. As the pandemic continued, RFI transitioned to an online experience, and the November 2020 Huether Lasallian Conference took place online, featuring keynote speakers, breakout sessions, prayer and community building. Johnston, a hybrid program, moved fall 2020 and spring and summer 2021 sessions to an online format. In the summer of 2021, with in-person Buttimer sessions on hold, participants gathered online for speakers, prayer, discussions, socials and retreats. Learning from these experiences and looking to the future, OLE will continue to embrace the call for innovation.

### Initial Formation for Brothers

Initial formation is coordinated in District and Regional communities. Aspirants and postulants are welcomed into apostolic communities for accompaniment and formation. Postulants engage in a blend of apostolic work and study, undergraduate and graduate, and are accompanied by their community and District director of formation. Postulants regularly gather in person or virtually for formation sessions. The Novitiate, the second stage, is located in Chicago, Illinois. (Since 2010, there have been 17 novices.) Novices spend a year deepening their engagement with the fundamental elements of the Brother's life. During the years of temporary profession, Brothers are



accompanied by a formation director and gather biannually with postulants and novices for fraternal and formation events. Two Regional committees meet biannually to support the formators and programs.



Accompanied by a director and sub-director, Brothers spend their novitiate year prayerfully discerning their vocational call and deepening their understanding of the charism.

## Brothers

### Called, Consecrated and Sent

The publication of the revised *Rule* in 2015 gave fresh impetus to many aspects of the lives of the Brothers. The centering of the vow of association for the educational service of the poor shapes their educational ministry and provides impetus and direction for their community and spiritual life.

**“As Brothers of the Christian Schools, we not only bring Christ to our students, but we are called to see Christ in our students and to learn from Christ through them.”**

—*Brother Mark Engelmeyer*





Elder Brothers at Résidence De La Salle in Laval, Québec, are regularly included in formation programs with educators.

Continuing formation opportunities bring Brothers together to deepen their fraternal bonds. While many of these gatherings are offered within Districts, Brothers from all Districts attended the Called to Be Brothers Regional Assembly in 2012. Traditionally, special importance is given to District gatherings to celebrate fraternity. District Days are convened to renew friendships, exchange information and to reflect and pray together. Annual retreats are offered, some of which are tailored to senior Brothers unable to travel. During the pandemic, these retreats were creatively designed and facilitated to accommodate an online setting.

Brothers are engaged in a variety of apostolic ministries: elementary and secondary schools (37%), higher education (26%), youth and family services (5%), overseas service (5%) and other apostolates (7%). Brothers support the mission in leadership at the levels of the Center, Region and Districts (15%) and providing care for senior Brothers (5%). Just over half of the nearly 500 Brothers are in retirement. Brothers who are semi-retired or in full retirement live in communities that offer opportunities for apostolic service as well as in communities offering different levels of health support.

# Young Lasallians

## Faith, Service and Community

For more than 30 years, Lasallian Volunteers (LV) has provided dedicated, well-trained volunteers for one or more years of service in ministries that serve the poor. The volunteers, primarily recent college graduates, typically live in community with Brothers as they work to empower young people through education and find themselves transformed in the process. Personal relationships are at the heart of the program, which supports approximately 30 volunteers per service year. Since the official start of the program in 1989, 785 young people have served as LVs, and many have continued to serve as educators in Lasallian ministries or in other forms of educational or social service.

The LV staff, part of the Regional office, accompanies volunteers throughout the service year with an orientation program called the Brother Charles Kitson Institute for Formation of Lasallian Volunteers, the Midyear Retreat and the Debriefing Retreat, along with personalized support throughout the year. The staff adapted to COVID-19 by transitioning these in-person events and visits to virtual experiences that allowed the volunteers to grow in the program's core values of faith, service and community.

Community life has always been an essential part of the LV experience with volunteers being accompanied by the Brothers and the Brothers being inspired by the young people's commitment to the mission. The program continues to explore ways

While Lasallian Volunteers became an official program in 1989, the idea began a decade earlier with young people serving in ministries and living in community with Brothers. (Pictured: 2019-2020 LVs)



to maintain that synergy. A model for vitality and sustainability is emerging, namely, volunteers living together as a community, accompanied by the District and local Brothers' communities.

**“Being a Lasallian Volunteer confirmed that working in education, specifically in teaching, was truly my vocation from God, and it helped to build the foundation of my teaching philosophy. Everything that I do in my classroom is rooted in the Lasallian charism, and it inspires me to continue growing to better meet the needs of my students.”**

*—Stephanie Carlsen, LV 11-13*

### Inviting and Inspiring

With an eye to the future, attention is given to inspiring a deeper connection to the mission in Young Lasallians (18-35), which includes Brothers, Lasallian Volunteers, educators, alumni, college-age young people and others. Robust programs in ministries and Districts to engage Lasallian Youth (16-18) and Young Lasallians provide formation, create resources, host gatherings, facilitate relationships, and connect and form young people within the wider Lasallian mission.

The Regional Council of Young Lasallians (RCYL) encourages those efforts and works closely with the International Council of Young Lasallians to engage young people in faith sharing, service with the poor through education, and community building. RCYL leads efforts to promote the annual Spring into Action and International Lasallian Days for Peace campaigns, along with other efforts, such as partnering with the LEC's advocacy subcommittee to support justice issues.



In 2010, the Region held its first VEGA, a formation experience for young professionals, at Christian Brothers University in Memphis, Tennessee. This inaugural program, and another held in 2019 as part of the Year of Lasallian Vocations, provided opportunities to delve more deeply into Lasallian spirituality and pedagogy, build community through prayer and socials, and reflect on their vocational call. In 2021, the Districts organized the first virtual Regional Lasallian Youth Assembly to gather secondary students from around the United States for a one-day formation event with the goals of preparing students to lead Lasallian Youth initiatives and encouraging them to reflect on how their vocational call can connect with the promotion of social justice.

The 2019 VEGA celebrated the Year of Lasallian Vocations by bringing Young Lasallians together at Christian Brothers University in Memphis, Tennessee, to learn more about De La Salle's story and share their personal experiences.

**“In the same way that we look to our veterans for resilience, we look to our young Lasallians, particularly those in their 20s and 30s, for vitality. A vocation often begins with a simple invitation to hear the story of De La Salle together, which can lead to a response giving fresh and sustained life to the Lasallian movement. That young people are zealously responding to the invitation, and that educational communities support them, is evidence that the charism is alive in RELAN, even growing.”**

*—Brother Timothy Coldwell, General Councilor*

## Vitality and Sustainability

### Telling the Story, Living the Story

Ensuring the vitality and sustainability of the charism are ever-present challenges. Sustainability is often associated with financial stability for the educational mission, and rightly so, but of equal importance is the stable commitment of the educator to embody the charism. At the Intercapitular Assembly in 2018, Regional delegates identified four aspirations to fortify this understanding of sustainability: to provide formation for all, accompaniment for all, educational accessibility for the poor, and leadership preparation for the next generation.

**“The Region’s response has been more than a reaction to the diminishment in vocations to the consecrated life of the Brothers. It has been a response to the conviction that the Holy Spirit is moving in our midst and is calling forth from today’s educators the same free, generous offering of time, talent and treasure for young people. This response has shown itself to be rooted in the conviction that association is crucial to ‘ensure the vitality of the charism.’”**

*—Brother Robert Schieler*

Brother Robert visited the Saint-Michel Lasallian Center in Montréal, Québec, which has established partnerships with community organizations to sustain its mission and serve neighbors.



In the same way, the Lasallian Education Council's strategic directions include developing the next generation of Partners and extending the Lasallian mission, especially for those most in need. As the previous sections illustrate, the Region puts a strong emphasis upon vocation promotion, formation and accompaniment. In most cases one's vocation can be traced to an invitation. Someone shared the Lasallian story or invited us into a community living that story.

Lasallian publications, sponsored by the Region, keep that story alive by giving vigorous support to preserving the intellectual history of the Institute and Lasallian charism and to making it accessible for researchers, formators and educators. The Regional communications office, often in collaboration with the Districts' communications personnel, creates and distributes print and digital materials that support the vitality of the community and mission.

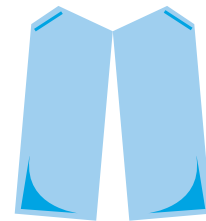
### Looking to the Future

The vocational narratives we share are of the innumerable Brothers and Partners living the story with extraordinary faith and zeal. As it was for the early Christians of the Church's 1st and 2nd centuries and as it was for the first Brothers in the 17th and 18th centuries, so it is for us in our century: our future's vitality and sustainability are in the hands and hearts of the people of our Region who join faith and zeal to God's grace and providence. ◆

# DISTRICT OF FRANCOPHONE CANADA

The Brothers of French-speaking Canada have a rich history and continue to serve today as an example of zeal for the mission. Despite their advanced ages, their generosity is alive in their commitment to the ministries, educators and young people in the District of Francophone Canada. Their close relationship with young people has undoubtedly helped to maintain their dynamism, which they are passing on to Lasallians who have taken leadership of the ministries.

The first Brothers, four men from France, came to Montréal in 1837 and quickly became known for their care of poor students and the successful management of their school. With the rapid expansion of schools, the Districts of Montréal, Québec, Trois-Rivières, Longueuil and Ottawa were formed. In the 1940s through 1970s, the Brothers began opening summer camps, vocation camps and retreat centers. When the Québec government reorganized the education system in 1964, religious congregations lost the role they had previously played in public education. The Brothers continued to manage their private schools for a few years before concentrating their energy on the camps and animation centers. By 1992, the Districts had merged to create one District, and Francophone Canada joined with the United States-Toronto Region in 2012 to become what is today the Lasallian Region of North America.



47

BROTHERS

81

EMPLOYEES



6,220

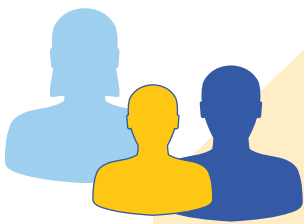
YOUNG  
PEOPLE  
SERVED





## Ministries and Communities

Québec



**22**  
FORMAL  
ASSOCIATES  
(INCLUDING  
10 EMPLOYEES)



**4** EDUCATIONAL  
CENTERS

## Association for Mission

### A District Alive and Well

Four ministries are active in Francophone Canada, all in Québec: Saint-Michel Lasallian Center in Montréal, the Villa des Jeunes in St-Augustin-de-Desmaures, Notre-Dame-de-la-Rouge Center in Grenville-sur-la-Rouge and Camp De-La-Salle in Saint-Alphonse-Rodriguez. They are all very dynamic and reach thousands of young people every year, and their reputation in the pastoral, educational and local communities is well established. Their administrative practices and approaches to programming are highly regarded, and some serve as community leaders and partners by welcoming interns or participating in studies organized by universities in Québec.

With the aging of the Brothers, the District is taking intentional steps to prepare Lasallians to lead the ministries and to accompany them along the way. At the heart of each ministry is a culture of empowerment that naturally leads young people, employees and volunteers to take on greater responsibilities.

On September 10, 2005, 12 Lasallians formally associated themselves with the Lasallian mission. In 2021, they number 22, more than half of whom are no longer employees of ministries. In addition, a position was created in 2019 to support these 22 Associates to develop with them new ways of living association within the District.

Brother Robert met with young people who are served at the Saint-Michel Lasallian Center in Montréal, Québec, during his pastoral visit in November 2019.



**“Being associated with the Brothers for the Lasallian mission means to me that the mission defines me both as a professional educator and as a human being. It is indeed a vocation that challenges me more every day.”**

*—Denis de Villers, educator, administrator and formator*



The Mission Council, which watches over the quality and dynamism of the Lasallian charism in the District, is made up of those involved in Lasallian life. The Mission Council is a catalyst for animation and the creation of new projects. It is also responsible for preparing and animating the District’s Mission Assemblies. The directors of the ministries are ex-officio members.

### Ministries Made to Endure

While the ministries were established as independent legal entities, they fall under the authority of the Visitor. The leadership and administration of ministries have now passed from the Brothers to lay Lasallians. When possible, a community of Brothers lives on location to accompany and support the work.

The Mission Fund was set up to subsidize the salaries of those involved in the ministries, now and for the next 25 years at minimum. This fund gives the ministries time to prepare self-financing strategies that will prove necessary for the future. In the meantime, the centers submit financial and experiential reports to the District, highlighting their financial management and embodiment of the Lasallian mission.

The ministries have a close relationship with the District, as well as between themselves. This is their strength. They come together once a year to share dreams, successes and challenges. They also share in formation, which contributes to maintaining the sense of belonging to the Lasallian mission.



Julie Baillargeon led Brother Robert's pastoral visit to Villa des Jeunes in St-Augustin-de-Desmaures, Québec.

**“It is in intense times, such as the pandemic, that we appreciate being able to count on colleagues who are going through the same thing as we do. And conversely, we shared our programs, activities and ways of doing things to continue our mission of education with the schools that come to us for our expertise.”**

*—Julie Baillargeon,  
Villa des Jeunes Director*

### Each Challenge is an Opportunity to Go Beyond

The way in which the educational teams of each ministry form a Lasallian community is inspiring and reassuring for the future. However, these teams have a duty to use all their creativity and resourcefulness to find new sources of funding. They must also succeed in operating in a way that is authentically Lasallian and work to share the mission with the community. While the ministries are known, the public is not aware of the connection to the Brothers, the Lasallian mission or the Founder.

It is important to mention that the ministries are dependent on schools, parishes and various organizations with which they develop contractual partnerships. These partners have great confidence in the ministries, and some even feel like members of the Lasallian family.

**“With the Civics and Inclusion workshop at Villa des Jeunes, I realized through activities in small ‘bubbles’ and back in large groups that even if I’m not being chosen by others, I can help them, initiate conversations, be open to them and realize that we have complementary strengths.”**

*—15-year-old student from École Joseph-François Perreault, a neighborhood school*

## **Shared Leadership**

### **A Culture of Succession**

What is striking, at first glance, when one learns about the context of the Francophone Canada District, is to what extent the Brothers—even at an advanced age—continue to assume responsibilities in the mission. At the same time, they have established an institutional succession plan while supporting the laity in their new high-level responsibilities. In the past, managerial positions were offered to long-standing Lasallians or to former workers, while today the tendency is to recruit professionals with specific skills who are then introduced to education and the Lasallian charism. The Brothers support these new leaders, as the Brothers are called “to be among them [Partners] and with them the heart, the memory, and the guarantor of the Lasallian charism” (*Rule 157*).

For example, a general manager from the local Haitian cultural community was hired as director of the Saint-Michel Lasallian Center. Because of his knowledge of the needs of young people

and through his previous roles, he recruited key people for the work involved. Two Brothers of the Sacred Heart in this educational community are also discovering the spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. This reality had the effect of multiplying services to vulnerable young people in addition to propelling the influence of the center to levels that were previously not imagined. These creative initiatives show new ways to revitalize the ministries.

### A Tightly Knit Family

Although many Brothers watch lovingly over those who bear the responsibility for the mission within the District, one might think that these leaders experience distressing loneliness, and yet this is not the case. There is a wide channel of collaboration and communication between the ministries. Indeed, a culture of resource sharing has been cultivated over the years and formation is shared. In addition to having the ministry leaders serve as ex-officio members of the Mission Council, the District continuously plans for new formation opportunities. In April 2021, the District started a long-term Lasallian formation program for leaders, ministry directors and board presidents, with a first meeting planned for late 2021 to present the Lasallian culture, charism, spirituality and history.

Building on the strong partnerships the Saint-Michel Lasallian Center has developed within its community, the center reinvented itself during COVID-19 to find ways to serve people in need, such as by working with partners to provide internet access to students for online learning and delivering food to struggling families.



Brother Robert spent time with members of the Mission Council during his pastoral visit.



## Evangelization

### Rowing Against the Tide

The socio-religious context of Québec undoubtedly represents one of the greatest challenges ever encountered at the level of Christian education, for all the major public institutions have been secularized, thus making any religious manifestation, any form of religious symbols or any teaching of a religious nature prohibited.

Moreover, in large urban centers, the human fabric is now multicultural, multireligious, often atheistic, and human distress is manifold.

In such a context, the Lasallian mission has had to develop new approaches to continue education in the faith. The pastoral animation centers have developed meaningful ways to help young people discover the spiritual elements that are part of their life. They are offered support to name these interior realities. Private schools and parishes look confidently to the centers to raise these issues with young people.

## Partnerships for Faith Education

Pastoral animation and Christian education are huge challenges in Francophone Canada. Even among employees, a diversity of beliefs coexists. In some communities, prayer in common holds an important place and is always a source of inspiration and hope. Partnerships with parishes and dioceses provide motivation not to give up and to maintain the momentum of innovation.

The partnership of Notre-Dame-de-la-Rouge Center with the French-speaking School Commission of Alberta for the Christian education of students and training of personnel is one to highlight. The expertise of the center's personnel is so highly valued that the School Commission does not hesitate to defray all travel costs for the entire team within its jurisdiction.

**“The people at Camp La Rouge have a dynamic way of lighting up young people with faith, which inspires us a lot. Through their know-how, they help us chart a new course for faith education in francophone Alberta.”**

*—Caroline Maillet-Rao, parish pastoral worker and director, Alberta Francophone Education Council for Catholic Faith*

## A Desired Expertise

Informed by a study led by a Lasallian associate, Reverend Gilles Routhier, rector of the theology faculty at Laval University in Québec City, titled “Faith Journey for Young People in Québec” (2005), the District has been better able to understand the dynamics of awakening faith. Ministry leaders have developed programs and activities to address to this reality of those who are distanced from the faith. They have always participated in the events, formation sessions and gatherings of their diocese and local church in order to help them adapt to the lack of spirituality in the lives of youth.





“Formation for me was a blessing since it fulfilled the needs we had at this particular time in our ministry, and it allowed me to develop fraternity and new collaboration.”

—Brother Robert Lavallée,  
Saint-Michel Lasallian Center,  
on participating in an  
international formation session  
and bringing lessons home

## Formation

### Every Lasallian is a Guide

Formation has always occupied an important role in Lasallian life. The number of Brothers in the District of Francophone Canada is declining rapidly and that of lay Lasallians is growing, in proportion, almost just as quickly. Therefore, a first challenge arises in that these new Lasallians have rarely seen one or more Brothers, whether in their formation or professional life. This fact must be taken into account in the formative activities offered to them.

Sometimes lived outside the ministry, sometimes on the premises and sometimes even internationally, formation experiences have obvious positive outcomes. Most Lasallians in the District have had the opportunity not only to experience such formation, but also to give to others in return. A significant number of Lasallians have participated in international formation programs, which enables them to accompany new Lasallians. A Mission Council subcommittee ensures the organization of these formation experiences.

Experiences include an annual gathering for ministries where they share their best practices and the ways in which they live the Lasallian charism through their interaction with young people. Another two-day meeting allows for more focused training on a specific subject related to educational concerns. A recognized expert in the chosen subject is usually hired to conduct this training, and the participation of ministry staff is always important. Additionally, lay formators are invited to enlighten ministry leaders about the current realities of young people, thus helping them to reinvigorate programming to meet the day's needs.

Associates have a day of formation in June, to which educators from local schools that collaborate with the Lasallian ministries are also invited. Founder's Day in May presents an opportunity to gather with the Brothers of the De La Salle Residence (infirmary, retirement home) to discuss how to serve young people.

### Formation as an Opportunity for Community

Francophone Canada increasingly calls on non-Lasallian formators to address specific subjects, such as the mental health of young people, stress, the importance of telling one's life story, etc. This allows ministries to enrich their practices.

When a formation session is offered either in the United States or at the Generalate in Rome, Francophone Canada sends a representative there who, upon returning, shares the experience with colleagues in the District.

In recent years, the District has developed a shared formation system, in which the District identifies a formation theme that is meaningful for all four ministries and provides simultaneous formation to all staff. In addition to formation, it also provides a sense of belonging as Lasallians. With a small network of Lasallians and ministries that are not schools and instead offer pastoral animation and popular education, it is a challenge to find formation appropriate to the realities in Francophone Canada.

# Brothers

## Continuing to be the Heart and Memory of the Mission

As the realities in Francophone Canada continue to change, the Brothers continue to be the heart and memory of the mission. They remain as active as possible in the mission and work to prepare the ministries for a sustainable future.

The District has made efforts to attach a community to each ministry. This is still the case at the Saint-Michel Lasallian Center and at the Villa des Jeunes. While the Brothers of these communities are not salaried employees, they are directly involved in the daily work of the ministries through volunteering and providing a dedicated presence, which constitutes an important witness, especially for the animation team.

With great interest, members of the infirmary community receive information on what is happening in ministries. As the dangers of COVID-19 decrease, members of the ministries will resume their visits to the community to spend time with the Brothers.

At age 86, Brother André Dubuc volunteers at the Saint-Michel Lasallian Center helping younger students with their homework and at a local school teaching young adults who are working toward their high school diplomas.



Often Lasallian formation sessions or Lasallian events are held on the premises, which brings the Brothers closer to what is happening in the District.

Due to the significant aging of the communities, the Brothers will not be able to maintain a presence near the ministries for a very long time. The community of Notre-Dame-de-la-Rouge closed in 2018, and those of the Villa des Jeunes and the Saint-Michel Lasallian Center will only be maintained for a few more years.



**“At the Villa des Jeunes, there is not on one side the work team and on the other, Brothers. There is only one community where Brothers and educators carry together the educational vision of the ministry and support each other. Even in times of pandemic, the elderly Brothers, in forced confinement, kept abreast of our progress to continue the mission in a challenging context and stayed with us in prayers.”**

*—Johanie Chabot, Villa des Jeunes educator*

## Young Lasallians

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### Remaining Connected

The pastoral animation centers serve young people who visit the centers for only one experience and rarely return. Although the experiences are designed to be intense and memorable, it is difficult to maintain a lasting bond with participants. Therefore, various initiatives are underway to create and maintain this bond. The Villa des Jeunes has developed an Alumni Club, a group of young people who have frequented the center and who, in turn, are passionate about serving young people and their families, often in very difficult situations. Not only do they gather for retreats, they also plan a Christmas dinner for disadvantaged families in the Saint Roch Parish of Québec City. The Notre-Dame-de-la-Rouge Center offers a camp in the fall allowing campers to return. This program trains campers to come back the following year as a counselor. Many hopes are placed in such endeavors to give rise to Lasallian vocations.

## Vitality and Sustainability

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### Foreseeing the Unknown

The District has spent much time planning for the future of the mission. Over many years, the District Council and various Visitors have made it possible to appoint non-Brothers to the general direction of ministries and to entrust them with responsibilities in connection to the mission.

As noted, the District's Mission Fund will help the ministries financially for at least 25 years. The District is currently in the process of converting the legal charters of each ministry to make them non-profit organizations under the Québec Companies Act, detaching them from the legal link with the Brothers. This process will make it easier for government or charitable organizations to subsidize the ministries.

Funding is obviously very important for the survival and development of the ministries. Lasallian formation, commitment, strong leadership and creativity are also essential for continuing the mission in Francophone Canada.

### The Rebirth of Camp De-La-Salle

An example of these qualities can be seen in the revival of Camp De-La-Salle. In 2014, the Brothers made the painful decision to close Camp De-La-Salle for financial reasons. In shock, former counselors asked the Brothers if they could continue the Lasallian camp on their own. The Brothers agreed to let them use the land and building, and the counselors quickly created a new legal entity, formed a board of directors, advertised, reassured partners and campers' parents, and hired staff. For seven years, the camp operated on an autonomous basis led by former counselors who continued activities in accordance with the spirit of Lasallian education, including offering Lasallian Week, a weeklong camp experience for children from disadvantaged families in Montréal and the Lanaudière region northeast of Montréal.

Camp De-La-Salle closed in 2014 but was revived thanks to the dedication of camp counselors.



“I believe it’s the sense of urgency to save the camp, experienced by current and former camp staff members, that has opened the door to new creative and bold approaches. That thinking outside the box has provided the ministry a new vitality and allows future generations to flourish in the camp environment.”

—Martin Lapointe, Camp De-La-Salle Director



Thanks to these efforts, Camp De-La-Salle is experiencing a renewal of energy with its new activities, its partnerships with the economic players in the Lanaudière region, and through the creative approaches put forth on social media by the camp’s supporters. In May 2021, the District Council officially decided to fully support Camp De-La-Salle as a District ministry. That implies financing of human resources and development of new programs and activities.

### Looking to the Future

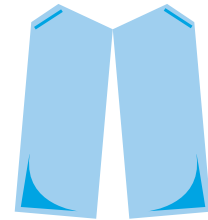
As noted, today’s reality in Québec is radically different from that experienced by the Brothers between 1837 when they arrived in Montréal and 1964 when the government reorganized public and private education. Today’s Lasallians have developed a know-how that attracts the attention of educators who are not familiar with the ministries but who find their pedagogical approaches inspiring in the presentation and promotion of values inspired by the Gospels (though this cannot be referenced). The Brothers are encouraged by these successes and continue to support them. As more Lasallians work with and learn from the Brothers, experience formation and commit to the young people served in the ministries, the future of the mission in Francophone Canada is full of optimism. ◆

# DISTRICT OF EASTERN NORTH AMERICA

The District of Eastern North America (DENA) is a community of nearly 240 Brothers and 4,300 educators, who together sponsor and operate 35 ministries mostly in the northeast region of the United States and Ontario, Canada. DENA was formed in 2009 from the Districts of Baltimore (est. 1878), Long Island-New England (est. 1956) and New York (est. 1864).

DENA ministries respond to the diverse needs of more than 23,000 young people from various socio-economic backgrounds. The four ministry types—higher education, secondary schools, youth and family services, and San Miguel-model elementary/middle schools—strive to provide a quality Lasallian Catholic education that offers opportunities to grow academically, spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically within an environment based on Lasallian values and relationships.

Sustaining and strengthening these ministries to respond to young people's evolving needs requires intentional and purposeful planning, as well as trust in God's Providence. This planning is embodied in the District's strategic plan *Vision 2020+*, which focuses on four pillars known as B.A.S.E.—Brothers Vocation, Association/Formation, Service of the Poor and Evangelization. These pillars serve as the primary means to create a roadmap to sustain and strengthen the mission in DENA.



**239**  
BROTHERS

**4,289**  
PARTNERS



**23,195**  
YOUNG  
PEOPLE  
SERVED

2020-2021 STATISTICS





- 2** COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
- 26** ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS
- 1** K-12 SCHOOL
- 1** EDUCATIONAL CENTER
- 5** YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAMS



## Association for Mission

### Celebrating Association

Association is alive and blossoming in DENA. A celebration of this vibrant quality took place on November 8, 2019, during Brother Robert's pastoral visit to RELAN. Through a livestream hosted at La Salle University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Brother Robert addressed the more than 4,000 Lasallians gathered at 10 ministries in Rhode Island, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Florida, Washington, D.C. and Ontario.



Brother Robert, a DENA Brother, celebrated the District's 10th anniversary from La Salle University in his hometown of Philadelphia with an address livestreamed throughout DENA.

**“Together we can do more than doing something ourselves.”**

*—Brother Robert*

This day served as a reminder to Brothers and Partners that the Lasallian mission is in very good hands and that the charism

of De La Salle lives on in the thousands of Lasallians who share their faith and zeal in their daily work in the ministries.

For Brother Robert, this event and his pastoral visit proved to be a homecoming as he spent time in his hometown of Philadelphia. The Superior General was first introduced to the Brothers at West Catholic Boys High School (now West Catholic Preparatory), and would later earn his bachelor's degree at La Salle College (now University).

Following that event, Lasallians across the District were energized to plan local gatherings and grow association. Additionally, events were being organized for the spring, such as welcoming the co-secretaries of the Institute's Secretariat for Association and Mission. Unfortunately, COVID-19 halted all in-person plans.

Despite the setback, the association committee looked ahead to the 2020-2021 academic year. As part of its commitment to association, the District hired an associate director of the

Office for Mission and Ministry allowing for an expansion of focus on association through working with ministries. Lasallian Youth, Young Lasallian Professionals and Legacy Lasallians (retired from ministry but who remain active in the mission) continue to be developed.

## Shared Leadership

### Together and By Association

Together and by association, Brothers and Partners are fully engaged in mutual responsibility through their leadership roles for the vitality of the Lasallian mission in order to ensure a well-run school, agency or center. DENA's system of governance, through the ministry-based boards of trustees, has District-appointed representatives serving as delegates of the Visitor, who include Brothers, lay women and lay men. Lasallian formation for board members occurs at the ministry level, while opportunities are also provided for District and Regional professional development. Annual conferences are offered for the heads of ministries at the San Miguel model schools and Lasallian Association of Youth and Family Services, while the secondary school leaders gather with administrators throughout the Region for the Lasallian Association for Secondary School Chief Administrators (LASSCA) Conference.



Brother Robert visited West Catholic in Philadelphia, which is where he was first introduced to the Brothers.

The District's Mission Council, comprised of representatives from each ministry type and those who are Visitor-appointed, serves as advisory to the Visitor on a variety of issues. A particular focus has been given to the Rights of the Child, child protection, social justice and solidarity, especially in the areas of immigration, migration and racial justice. The Mission Council also advises on the admittance of new ministries to DENA and takes primary responsibility for mission assemblies. The Mission Council has an annual meeting with the District Council, and collaborates on joint projects with the Office for Mission and Ministry.



Schools implemented a number of precautions for in-person learning to keep students and educators safe during COVID-19. (Pictured: San Miguel School, Washington, D.C.)

## Pandemic Challenges

The pandemic presented significant challenges, and it fell primarily to local leadership to craft responses and to find innovative ways to continue to provide quality education to

students and clients as well as provide services to families. In all cases, a collaborative approach was implemented to determine how best to navigate new realities. The mission remained in the forefront of all decision making, and leadership provided the support and resources necessary to address the emerging needs of the educational communities.

The District provided significant funds to ministries to assist in addressing needs related to COVID-19. Additionally, educational grants were provided to assist individual members to respond to their professional needs so that they might more effectively accompany their students and clients throughout the pandemic.

As DENA continues to look to the future, the District will take lessons learned during the pandemic into the post-pandemic world, including continuing to offer online learning and formation opportunities in the areas of Lasallian vocation and spirituality.

## Evangelization

### Sharing Experiences

When DENA was established, a foundational project was the creation of the Brother Luke Salm Religious Education Workshop. This annual workshop provides the opportunity for religion teachers, campus ministers, vocation coordinators and other Lasallian educators and administrators to engage with leading theologians and practitioners in the fields of religious education and catechetical studies. A primary focus over the past three years has been the work of Springtide Research Institute, a Midwest

District ministry, and their groundbreaking research regarding the attitudes of young people toward religion and spirituality. Innovative and practical, the workshop also provides a setting for experiences of Lasallian spirituality and association.

### Associative Groups

A unique feature of the District is the grassroots efforts of Lasallians to gather locally in association. Six associative groups were born out of a need for the Lasallian family to be together and by association outside of the ministry setting to grow in faith and community. The Lasallian lens animates and gives meaning to Lasallians in their service to the Church and God, and the associative groups and their activities bring a deeper connection. The District continues to accompany these groups in order to grow and nurture the togetherness they provide.

### Supporting Catholic Identity

An online program, Faith Formation for Lasallian Educators, was initiated to meet the need for adult faith formation in Lasallian ministries, including non-Christians, and to support Catholic identity in ministries. This certificate program provides a foundational understanding of Catholic Christianity and offers courses in interfaith studies and Lasallian spirituality and heritage. Lasallians from the Lwanga District participate in this program as well.



The District's vocation team hosts Vocation Summits, providing opportunities for young people and Brothers from different ministries to gather for prayer, association and discussion on vocation and God's call in their lives.

### Innovative Approaches

Innovative online approaches have been applied to evangelization and catechesis. Examples include an annual self-directed online retreat for the Advent and Lenten seasons, weekly Sunday Gospel reflections, novenas focused on special intentions or liturgical seasons, monthly online praying of the rosary and weekly gatherings for centering prayer. During the COVID-19 pandemic, opportunities were provided for Lasallians worldwide to gather for prayer. A special outreach has been

to invite Legacy Lasallians to join in prayer through daily intentions. Additionally, webinars have been offered on major world religions and the role of evangelization in the Lasallian mission.

## Beyond the Borders

### Twinning with Lwanga

DENA's commitment to go beyond the borders builds on the work done in the legacy Districts to embrace inter-District collaboration, international projects, service immersion experiences and Brothers in international service.



Twinning encourages young people in RELAN and Lwanga to connect and grow together. Video calls, such as those between St. John's College High School in Washington, D.C., and Child Discovery Center in Nakuru, Kenya, have helped build relationships.

DENA's collaboration with the Lwanga District in Africa dates back to before the formation of the current Districts through the dedication of DENA Brothers who served in African ministries. For more than 25 years, the now DENA ministries have raised money through the school-to-school twinning program to support ministries in Lwanga. In recent years, both Districts' ministries have created a more

mutually beneficial relationship in the areas of formation and association. Additionally, the District has supported Lwanga participants at the Buttimer Institute of Lasallian Studies to bolster Lwanga formation efforts, and the "Come and Be" program helps DENA Lasallians better understand the mission and realities in Lwanga through in-person visits to Lwanga.

### International Collaborations

Collaboration with the District of Antilles-South Mexico (DASM) began in 2012 with a visit by DENA representatives to Collège Saint Jean-Baptiste De La Salle and a women's health education center in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, which opened in response to the devastating 2010 earthquake. The District made a commitment to these important new Lasallian works by helping

to financially support them through the annual Advent Haiti Appeal. Financial support from the District, ministries and individual donors has helped construct a classroom building, fund student scholarships and purchase solar panels, a water bagging system, educational materials and technology. Annual visits, service immersion trips and work with the health center have resulted in solidifying relationships between DENA and DASM.



La Salle Educational Center in Homestead, Florida, which joined DENA in January 2020, serves low-income families with childcare, homework help, extracurricular activities, vocational training, religious instruction and classes in English, computers, parenting, health and nutrition.

The DENA-DASM relationship has grown to consider the transfer of two DASM works to DENA. On January 1, 2020, the La Salle Educational Center in Homestead, Florida, joined DENA, and the transfer of Colegio De La Salle in Bayamón, Puerto Rico, took place on August 1, 2021.

Additionally, each District has sent a Brother to work in the other's District with the hope that collaboration will continue as the Districts respond to emerging needs.

Beyond these collaborations, the District and its ministries have crossed borders in many other ways, including by helping to establish the Lasallian Women of Hope program, offering service immersion trips to allow students to experience the Lasallian mission in other countries, participating in the World Congress on Lasallian Education and participating in the International Women's Symposium in New Zealand.



The mission of Lasallian Women of Hope, a project of the Solidarity and Development Secretariat, is to ensure girls and women enjoy full access to Lasallian education by delivering creative, effective and durable solutions to educational inequities. (Pictured: Collège Saint Jean-Baptiste De La Salle, Port au Prince, Haiti, site of an LWH partnership between the school, DENA and La Salle University in Pennsylvania)

## Culture of Vocation

### Answering the Call

Enthusiasm and hope surround the Brothers' vocation, which is expressed not only as a priority in the District, but also in how Brothers and Partners take an intentional role to create and promote a culture of vocation in ministries and support those who are discerning vocations. The appointment of a lay vocation coordinator in each ministry and a District liaison for these coordinators has been an important effort in this regard. A tip-card for teachers and an accompanying video were created to complement other efforts to remind Lasallians of their role in

vocation promotion and the opportunity they have to motivate young people to consider their vocational call.

As the National Religious Vocation Conference lists the average age of new members to religious life at 28, DENA created a "Called to Rise" component as part

of its vocation effort to reach post-college aged men and young professionals in the vocation discernment process. An effort has been made to reach out to alumni of ministries as well.



The teacher-student relationship is foundational in nurturing a culture of vocation.

### Making Virtual Connections

While the emergence of COVID-19 brought a halt to all in-person visits by the District's vocation team, it led to the incorporation of virtual connections to keep alive the relational aspect that is so vital in vocation ministry. This included video conversations with young men in discernment and younger Brothers, along with classroom vocation presentations. Additionally, Brothers recorded videos to share their vocational story and how they were living out their vocation during the pandemic.



One lesson learned that will help inform the future is that the District's vocation team and vocation coordinators will need to be flexible and creative as they work collectively to nurture a culture of vocation.

## Formation

### Continued Vitality

Formation for Partners and Brothers is central to the continued vitality of the mission. While not a perfect formula, the formation programs work to incorporate practical knowledge and spiritual development, wrapped in the Lasallian charism, together in community. The pandemic complicated the ability to host formation programming, but creative fidelity to the core principles helped devise ways to continue formation efforts.

The initial energy for DENA's 10th anniversary helped sustain the District family as events pivoted from in person to virtual, or were canceled or rescheduled. New formats, such as the Digital Learning Series and LET'S Talk (Lasallian Education Teaching Series) programming, invited Lasallians to gain new skills for virtual teaching and engage in rich conversation about racial and social justice issues. DENA, in partnership with the other Districts of RELAN and the Regional office, supported efforts led by the Lasallian Association of Colleges and Universities to create a space for conversations around racial justice following the killing of George Floyd with the "Responding to Racism: A Lasallian Dialogue" livestream.

### Pandemic Impacts

The usual schedule of formation activities for Brothers was altered during the pandemic. The Superior General's pastoral visit and the District's anniversary celebration made for an eventful fall 2019, which was to be followed by smaller gatherings. With COVID-19, virtual gatherings took place in order to keep Brothers connected and supported. Brothers were invited to write articles for distribution via DENA's weekly newsletter that touched upon challenges faced during the time of uncertainty. Others prepared creative prayer services, shared across the

District, that focused on race issues, pandemic-related topics and opportunities for learning and spiritual growth.

### Lasallian Spiritual Accompaniment

A new program in 2021, the Lasallian Spirituality and Accompaniment Formation Program, commenced with an optional practicum in spiritual direction. The 18-month program includes six sessions to provide participants with an opportunity to study Lasallian spirituality through the lens of spiritual accompaniment and association.

## Brothers

### Serving with Faith and Zeal

Brothers actively serving in ministries continue to do so with faith and zeal, alongside many Lasallian Partners. Brothers' vocations are animated by their interaction with young people each day,

**“My experience as a Brother has been adventurous. Each academic year, I get the opportunity to meet and teach new students from diverse economic backgrounds. The Christ-like attributes that each student possesses has given me a lesson on how to be a better teacher and Christian Brother.”**

*—Brother Steven Barbaro*



teaching minds and touching hearts, as the Founder instructed. Even in the pandemic, Brothers enthusiastically transitioned their teaching and ministering methods to meet their students and clients where they were, whether virtually or in person with safety precautions. Brothers' communities, welcoming Lasallian Partners and Lasallian Volunteers, continue to be homes of prayer, fraternity and association. As Brothers age and find themselves more removed from ministries, their lives continue to be fulfilling and enriching, bolstering the human and Christian education for the young, especially the poor, through volunteering, prayer and any way that God calls them to be of service.

### Caring for Aging Brothers

As the average age of Brothers in DENA rises, the District is working to accommodate senior Brothers so they can continue to live with a sense of vitality for the mission. The District contracted a professional group specializing in gerontology to help plan for the future of an aging religious order. The educational resources provide valuable insight to leadership and community directors. A plan was put into action to have key personnel visit each community in the hope of evaluating each location to determine if it was suitable for an aging population. A series of well-attended workshops were held on topics, such as aging in community, dealing with challenging Brothers and the stages of dementia. This practical knowledge has proven invaluable.

### Experiences of COVID-19

For Brothers, the experience of COVID-19 and isolation reinforced the importance of community life and fraternal witness. Brothers relied on one another more than ever and gave each other space—both literally and figuratively—while navigating community life during quarantine. This experience underscored the sentiment Brother Robert shared in a letter to Brothers following his visit to DENA in which he reminded them that the witness of their lives in community is critical for the viability of the Institute.

The time of isolation challenged all Brothers, especially those in health care facilities who were not permitted to leave their rooms

or receive visitors. Gratitude goes to the healthcare workers who showed concern and compassion for the Brothers, keeping them safe. Brothers in active ministry also showed resilience, collaborating with colleagues to continue to touch minds and hearts from a distance.

In a spirit of giving, Brothers shared the stimulus checks they received from the United States government with those most affected by the pandemic in their local neighborhoods. More than 26 charitable organizations, individuals and families benefited from this money.

### Senior Brothers in the Pandemic

While the pandemic forced vulnerable Brothers into isolation, De La Salle Hall's staff was creative in offering meaningful opportunities to connect, such as an outdoor prayer service on Founder's Day.

The pandemic forced the isolation of communities, especially the nursing home, De La Salle Hall in Lincroft, New Jersey, which went into lockdown in an attempt to keep the Brothers safe. It also meant that the facility would accept no new residents until it was safe. Some Brothers moved to local nursing homes for a lengthy period of time.

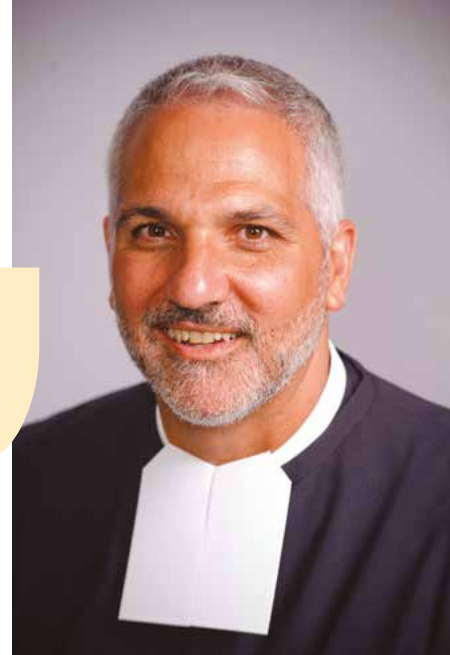


The Visitor and Auxiliary Visitors wrote personal notes to each of the Brothers and Partners in community to offer support and maintain connections. Each community member heard from the three Visitors, and members who needed additional support received multiple letters. Connecting by phone and letters helped diminish the sense of loneliness experienced during isolation, especially for senior Brothers.

To connect spiritually, Senior Brothers in the retirement communities led an online rosary initiative, which was expanded to one session per month for 10 months during the pandemic.

“The Brothers’ community and the apostolate in which we serve are indeed privileged places to meet God.”

—*Brother Peter Iorlano*



This proved to be a special time for spiritual accompaniment and nourishment of Brothers. On occasion, they were joined by Brothers and students from Central Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

## Young Lasallians

### Focusing on Youth

There has been an emphasis on supporting Young Lasallians and Lasallian Youth for more than 20 years. Prior to becoming DENA, the three legacy Districts hosted secondary school students for the annual Lasallian Youth Summer Assembly (est. 1994). This weeklong gathering focused on faith, service and community continues to gather young people yearly and serves as a primary way of evangelizing and welcoming them into the Lasallian mission.

The biennial VEGA program for Young Lasallian Professionals (est. 2010) offers formation in Lasallian spirituality, heritage, association and mission. The gatherings give participants a deeper understanding of De La Salle’s spirituality and pedagogy, taking into account the varying levels of participants’ familiarity with the mission and formation experiences. VEGA also includes a service project in the local community.

## Vitality and Sustainability

### Service of the Poor

Using the District’s *Vision 2020+* strategic plan, B.A.S.E.— Brothers Vocation, Association/Formation, Service of the Poor



Each year, the Lasallian Youth Assembly features a theme that focuses on social justice and equality. The 2019 assembly celebrated the 25th anniversary of the gathering and the Year of Lasallian Vocations.

and Evangelization—as a guide, DENA looks to the future of those four pillars. Service of the Poor is the preferential option for all Lasallians; this pillar represents the most challenging area for sustaining the mission.

The strategic plan's Service of the Poor specifically calls to “Create a bold, compassionate and practical Lasallian vision, on the District level and on the local level, of what it means to serve ‘especially the poor’ having looked critically at existing practices and assessed current needs.”

Some of the ways the District has responded include:

- The Saint John Baptist de La Salle Fund (est. 2012) provides funds for students who otherwise could not afford a Lasallian education. In 2020, \$900,000 was distributed to students in 16 ministries.
- DENA ministries offered more than \$219 million in financial aid to students in 2019-2020. They are engaged in increasing local endowments to ensure educational access, regardless of students' financial situations. They also provide funds to enable students to participate fully in school co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- DENA provides annual grants and subsidies for faculty formation and professional development to ministries that serve students predominantly coming from poverty or who are struggling financially.

- Students provide hundreds of thousands of hours of Christian service, with nearly 60% of these hours in direct service to the poor.
- The District has strengthened its advocacy for the rights of the child, immigration/migration and environmental justice, and has established a racial justice coalition.

One-third of ministries operate in challenging urban environments. Their viability is always fragile, and their sustainability always challenging. Urban ministries, especially vulnerable during the pandemic, will be of crucial importance to support in order to continue exercising a preferential option for the poor.

### Looking to the Future

The District looks to the future with eyes of faith and hearts of hope. While the education of young people at the margins can be challenging, our vocation calls us beyond figurative and physical borders to be guides and companions, brothers and sisters to those entrusted to our care. This expression has taken on a deeper meaning in the pandemic, showing how together and by association and through creative fidelity to the mission, education and care was possible in new, interesting and profound ways, while recognizing the God-given human nature of all people.

While society slowly starts to make its way back to “normal,” Lasallian education must never do so. To go back to the way things were would be failing to see the beauty of this ever-adaptable mission, as the Founder prescribed so long ago to meet the needs of poor street children.

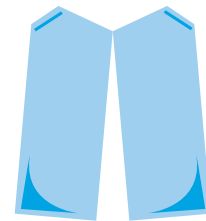
Lasallian education continues to grow throughout the District as Partners to take on a deeper responsibility. Recognizing the ever-changing landscape of the world, members of DENA, reflecting the global Lasallian family, have responded generously to serving missions in the Region and abroad, together in new and evolving forms of community. The mission will continue to be ready to serve the vulnerable and marginalized. ◆

# DISTRICT OF SAN FRANCISCO NEW ORLEANS

The District of San Francisco New Orleans (SFNO) is composed of approximately 100 Brothers in 15 communities and 2,000 Lasallian Partners. Together, they serve nearly 17,000 students in 23 apostolates located in 14 dioceses and arch-dioceses in the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas and Washington, as well as in Tijuana, Mexico.

SFNO was founded on July 1, 2014, formed from the Districts of New Orleans-Santa Fe (est. 1921) and San Francisco (est. 1868). Each District brought to the new District its own strong history of ministry in schools and other apostolates, a long memory of the Brothers who had worked so diligently to make a Lasallian education possible, the true attachment of Lasallian Partners who had shared in the mission, and the deep loyalties of the students throughout the South, Southwest and West for over 150 years.

Since 2014, SFNO has continued to build on these legacies. Driven by its multifaceted leadership structure, Brothers and Partners collaborate to create the distinctive identity and culture of the District, one that joins its past, present and future in a robust conversation of traditions, practices and vision in service of our shared mission of Lasallian education.



103  
BROTHERS

1,951  
PARTNERS



16,649  
YOUNG  
PEOPLE  
SERVED

2020-2021 STATISTICS





## Ministries and Communities

Arizona

Colorado

Oregon

Baja California

Louisiana

Texas

California

New Mexico

Washington

- 18** SECONDARY SCHOOLS
- 3** MIDDLE SCHOOLS
- 1** COLLEGE
- 1** LEARNING CENTER



## Association for Mission

### Ensuring Vitality

In addressing association for mission in the SFNO District, a priority is to ensure the vitality of its association by focusing on both the vitality of the Brothers and the vitality of the Lasallian Partners associated for the mission.



Brother Robert visited with local El Otro Lado program leaders and participants at Cathedral High School in El Paso, Texas (pictured above), then visited Centro La Salle in Tijuana, Mexico (pictured at left), before his pastoral visit to RELAN was canceled due to COVID-19 concerns.

For the Brothers, the District Council was asked to be attentive to the Brothers' call to a personal conversion and communal revitalization that takes into account the need for belonging, engagement and validation of each Brother and of each community, ensuring a quality sustainable mission into the future. Special attention is paid to the care and formation of the Brothers who are retired or in need of pastoral support. These Brothers are encouraged to involve themselves in ministry in association, commensurate with their ability and energy.

For the Lasallian Partners, in order to ensure association for mission, which includes a culture of formation and accompaniment, the Office of Education, in consultation with other District leadership entities, established a District Formation and Accompaniment Committee. Its goal is to ensure effective formation and accompaniment of faculty, staff and leaders. Given that association makes possible the goal of quality education, there is a particular emphasis upon addressing the needs of those who do not benefit from Lasallian formation beyond an initial orientation.

In order to sustain the mission as a truly shared mission, various leadership groups were asked to advance and promote the quality of the schools and their unique Lasallian Catholic character to ensure strong enrollment and to inspire philanthropic investment. They were asked to help develop a culture of philanthropy and gratitude within the schools.

**“As we found ourselves isolated from one another, the pandemic heightened the importance of the Lasallian core principle of inclusive community and the universal need to belong, connect and simply be with others.”**

*—Joey Scaffidi, President, Christian Brothers School,  
New Orleans, Louisiana*

Every school, such as La Salle Catholic College Preparatory in Milwaukie, Oregon, took on the added roles of healthcare agency, medical clinic and public safety monitor during COVID-19.



## Shared Leadership

### Leadership Development

It is significant that of the 11 members of the District leadership team, three are Brothers and eight are Lasallian Partners. This is, and continues to be, an important model for all District ministries: competent Partners working alongside the Brothers to further the mission.

**“The Lasallian leadership tradition holds that to lead is to model, to accompany and to empower. We must embody the vision of faith, community and service to which we are calling others.”**

*—Brother Donald Johanson, Visitor*

School board trustees work together to assist the Brothers as caretakers of the District's schools' Lasallian charisma and mission.

Recognizing that communal strength is a hallmark of all Lasallian ministries, leadership is cultivated by providing opportunities in affinity groups to share best practices, develop creative solutions and build communities of support. One focus has been the development of educational leadership for the



present and future of the mission on both the chief administrative and governance board levels. Programs of formation are continually provided for those who are chief administrators, board trustees and those considering school leadership.

School leaders experienced incredible hardships. In the face of COVID-19, chief

administrators and board trustees encountered an unprecedented situation that required them to find answers when many times there were no right answers. The challenge for District leadership is to create opportunities and programming that accompanies school leaders as they begin to pick up the post-pandemic pieces. A key focus area will be leadership sustainability, always of importance and now complicated by pandemic leadership burnout. The task is to be diligent in providing mental, emotional and spiritual support needed by school leaders.

## Evangelization

### Ensuring the Lasallian Catholic Identity

The District's overarching priorities for evangelization and catechesis have been ensuring the Lasallian Catholic identity of ministries; increasing collaboration and cooperation among the religious educators of the District; and addressing the spiritual needs of young people in a quickly evolving religious context.

The Lasallian Catholic Assessment Process (LCAP) instrument is used with every school to address this fundamental question: How does the Lasallian Catholic spirit and mission permeate all aspects of the school and create a distinctive identity now and into the future? The LCAP brings the five core Lasallian principles into focus for the entire school community and ensures that whatever programming is re-established, established or dropped will be in service of the Lasallian mission. Prior to the pandemic, the LCAP involved on-site visits by a team of Lasallian educators to conduct focus groups and leadership workshops. During the pandemic, the process converted to a "distance" experience, which the "visiting team" conducted virtually. Emerging out of the pandemic, the in-person LCAP visits will resume and serve as a major support to local ministries as they rebuild their local cultures disrupted by COVID-19.

The Lasallian Catholic Assessment Process helps to assure the strength of teacher-student relationships in schools. (Pictured: De La Salle High School, New Orleans, Louisiana)





# Beyond the Borders

## Meeting Limitations with Imagination

The District's engagement with the 45th General Chapter's call for Lasallians to go beyond borders has included the full spectrum of interpretation of that term, from the borders that limit the Lasallian imagination to those encountered between peoples and places. Given recent world and local events, it is the challenge of overcoming boundaries to human community and social justice that has received much attention.

Since its inception in 2015, SFNO's Lasallians Without Borders Committee (LWOB) has led much of the conversation around how to address serving the poor and unprotected who live in the world of international displacement, migration and exploitation. The committee is made up of representatives from the Districts of México Norte and SFNO and meets regularly to share their understandings of the ever-changing socio-political situation at the southern border.

A key initiative that LWOB coordinates is El Otro Lado, a student and adult immersion program focused on responding to social justice needs along the U.S.-Mexico border. The program began in 2008 at San Miguel High School in Tucson, Arizona, and expanded in 2016 to Cathedral High School in El Paso, Texas. Since that time, efforts have begun to establish such a program at Centro La Salle in Tijuana, Mexico.

**“We have been called to open eyes, touch hearts, and attend to the needs of the vulnerable through service and education on the border.”**

*—Alma Mejia-Garcia,  
LWOB Project Manager*



El Otro Lado provides an opportunity for participants to learn about the realities of life for migrant populations along the southern border.

All in-person El Otro Lado programming shut down during the pandemic. LWOB's creative responses included holding a virtual one-day El Otro Lado experience and organizing a Think Tank to consider next steps. Experts and those on the front lines from México Norte and SFNO were invited as were religious congregations, such as the Marists, to share their experiences of service to meet needs on the border.

## **Culture of Vocation**

### **Co-responsibility for Lasallian Vocation Ministry**

The Office of Vocation Ministry focuses on three primary areas: fostering a culture of vocation, inviting and accompanying young men in their discernment of the Brothers' vocation, and assisting with Lasallian formation efforts. The District's vocation team maintains availability to schools, regularly engages the Brothers of the District in vocation ministry efforts, and works closely with school vocation coordinators while mindful of their particular contexts. This fosters a broad sense of co-responsibility for Lasallian vocation ministry rooted in faith, service and community.

During the pandemic, accompaniment of young men discerning the Brothers' vocation prioritized personal contact and attentiveness to the spiritual growth of each young man. Periodic retreats and gatherings also took place to help create relationships among the young men and to encourage their accompaniment of one another.

Attentive to the "signs of the times," in 2017 the Office of Vocation Ministry instituted a residential aspirancy program that allows for young men to discern in community while serving at a local Lasallian apostolate. This provides local Brothers' communities the opportunity to directly participate in the accompaniment of young men discerning the Brothers' vocation.

### **Collaborating and Considering Purpose**

Finally, the Office of Vocation Ministry came to recognize the importance of collaboration with other Districts, participation



“We will listen to their voices, invite them to share their vision for our vocation, and challenge them to be the Gospel-witnesses needed today.”

—Brother Chris Patiño, SFNO Vocation Ministry Director

in Regional and Institute initiatives, and the role it must play in engaging with the larger Church. This came to create relationships that fostered creativity, accountability for professional and ethical ministry standards, a Lasallian presence in the Church’s vocation ministry efforts, and a general sense of shared ministry affirming that “the entire people of God is responsible for awakening vocations in the Church” (*Rule*, 84).



The Brothers’ own faith-filled presence and lifelong example continues to be their most powerful call to those who might follow in their footsteps.

The reality of the pandemic has provided the opportunity to step back and consider the purpose of the many activities and initiatives taking place in vocation ministry. It also allowed for more regular and personal reaching out to individuals that the “busyness” of ministry prior to the pandemic did not always allow. Transitioning out of the pandemic reality will necessitate carefully resuming activities so as not to simply go back to what was, but rather to focus on what could be.

## Formation

### A Deeper Understanding and Commitment

The Office of Education (OOE) strives to provide comprehensive, effective and developmentally appropriate formation programs for Brothers, Lasallian Partners, trustees, educators and students of the District. The goals of these activities and programs are to engage the participants intellectually, emotionally and spiritually, to promote a deeper understanding and commitment to the Lasallian mission and charism, and to advance the Lasallian Catholic character of the District communities and works.

OOE has traditionally offered an array of formation activities and programs for Lasallians across the District. Some programs are deemed most effective at the local level, while others take place at District-hosted events. These programs provide a myriad of opportunities for teachers, staff and administrators to come to more fully know, understand and embrace the Lasallian mission. In addition, these formation programs promote community building on both the local and District levels.

**“Our mission engages challenge and change bravely and boldly. This was the position we needed to take in the pandemic. We engage in faith that we are always in the Holy Presence of God. This position guided me daily.”**

*—Jeff Howard, Principal, Mullen High School,  
Denver, Colorado*

The COVID-19 pandemic had a tremendous impact on Lasallian formation at all levels. As face-to-face programs and travel became heavily restricted, creativity and resilience were put to the test, as many programs pivoted from an in-person model to a virtual model. This provided opportunities for District personnel to partner with local formation personnel to co-facilitate formation programming. Sadly, the pandemic also required some formation programming to go on hiatus.

As schools and District offices pivoted back to in-person programming, plans got underway to resume in-person formation activities and programs. OOE spent time discussing lessons learned during the pandemic and making decisions about the best use of different formats. While the in-person format is most appropriate for a number of formation activities and

programs, the experience and even proficiency gained using virtual meeting platforms will make it possible for more smaller group activities, including meetings, to take place in a way that will be more inclusive and accessible for more Lasallians across the District. The OOE will continue to consult with local school leaders to best determine which formation for mission approaches will best serve the needs of schools.



The backbone of SFNO formation for mission is its wealth of peer leadership and expertise.

## Brothers

### Overcoming Crisis

The Brothers have been through crisis times before, but one of the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic was the first in a long while. Meeting the daily needs of students involves so many moments of social interaction, especially with those encouraging remarks and questions on the school yard and in the classroom that build community. “Brothering” is challenging when you’re stuck in quarantine and you’re a face on a computer screen. When you’re checking off most of the boxes on the list of “most susceptible to contracting and becoming seriously ill from COVID,” “Brothering” is fraught with fear and the hesitation of relating with others.

Brothers were able to engage in educational ministry every day throughout the pandemic, sometimes in person and sometimes virtually. Those over the age of 70 who have honed their ministry skills through relational presence faced more challenges. Others, usually because of health limitations, offered service to each other in community. Brothers were less likely to travel. As such, they were not seeing other Brothers in other areas, some of whom they had lived and ministered with over the years. And many, though familiar with the use of a computer and some even of social media, were not inclined toward using them as a communication tool.

## Adapting to Changing Times

So, as the pandemic settles into a life issue we will be dealing with going forward, what changes for the Brothers? The pandemic has opened a few doors. Video streaming has allowed those who can't travel a way to be virtually present to important life events of confreres in other communities. Growing in comfortability with video conferencing has supported retreats and discussion groups and fostered District unity. Many have discovered that not traveling for events and meetings has provided more energy and availability for needs at home. Many Brothers have realized how much they miss being with their students and fellow Brothers, and moving into post-pandemic mode, they are making efforts to focus on their interaction. Overall, the sense of gratitude for the simple daily ways we relate to each other in community is more tangible.

As we learn to live with a virus that is not going away, maybe we can all learn something from our elder Brothers. On a daily basis, many have faced the growing limits of health with a stronger appreciation for the little interactions of the day. They know they can't do everything they want, but they are able to do what they can do. And with the things they cannot change, they tap into the deep well of faith, the place where viruses can't ignite ill health or fear.

## Young Lasallians

### A Focus on Vocation

Initiatives for Young Lasallians and Lasallian Youth have long centered on vocation, leadership development, service and social justice, and accompaniment. While the pandemic did not change these areas, it shifted some points of emphasis.

Prior to the pandemic, a key focus was on cultivating a culture of vocation in a way that enables young people to see how they can respond to needs, especially those of the poor. This developed following calls from the November 2018 formation session in Nairobi, Kenya, "Walking with Young People: A Gospel Adventure,"

for more intentional connection points between youth ministry and vocation ministry. This provided a natural opportunity to strengthen and build upon existing collaboration in the District, namely through vocation retreats for secondary school students and through including a vocation component in leadership development, service and justice education programs. This collaboration resulted in the June 2019 Young Lasallians Assembly, which marked the celebration of the Year of Lasallian Vocations.



Events for Young Lasallians and Lasallian Student Leaders bring students together to enrich their sense of vocation and unite them as members of the Lasallian family.

One hope in cultivating and nurturing a culture of vocation and emphasizing leadership development for Young Lasallians is to inspire them to see a future place for themselves in the Lasallian mission as educators, as collaborators in the mission or as vowed Christian Brothers or La Salle Sisters.

### Social Justice and Accompaniment

Two additional areas of emerging emphasis are around social justice and accompaniment. As we continue to emerge from the pandemic, special attention to the accompaniment needs of young people and those who walk most closely with them will be of great importance. This will necessitate creating spaces through formal programming and informal opportunities to process what has been and grow into what will be.

In considering what will be or what can be, another key area is social justice. Prior to the pandemic, one of two annual student programs focused on service with an element of justice education. Themes previously covered included immigration, incarceration and human trafficking. As the District continues to respond to the signs of the times, a renewed emphasis on social justice education and advocacy will be points of focus.

## Vitality and Sustainability

### Being Good Stewards

To ensure the sustainability and vitality of ministries, at the level of District leadership, two members of the District leadership team have specific responsibility for overseeing the finances of the District and of its ministries. They are vigilant in monitoring current and future realities, using professional assessment and support. Special attention is paid to those ministries that are most in need so as to maintain focus on a mission in service to the poor. The collection of data in order to support District decision-making is a priority for exercising good stewardship of the resources God has given us.

The District has accepted the challenge to increase service to the underserved families of marginal status and ordinary means. District ministries have been challenged to ensure students have appropriate accessibility to the various curricula and services that they offer, now and in the future.

Equally important is ensuring the sustainability, vitality and resilience of Brothers' communities by monitoring both the finances of communities and their continuing formation for service to the poor. Support and assistance for communities helps them be the best possible centers of animation for District apostolates. Special attention is paid to the care of Brothers who are retired or in need of pastoral support.

In the end, Lasallian education is and will continue to be about students learning and being together. (Pictured: De Marillac Academy, San Francisco, California)



The District regularly assesses and works to increase its development efforts. A priority is exploring alternative sources of revenue and support. Various District leadership groups have been challenged to create new revenue sources through the organization of a series of dialogues among different leadership constituencies to explore monetization of current assets, entrepreneurial partnerships and researching best practices for new revenue sources. District leadership has developed both short- and long-term District financial forecasts that project contributions to, and assessments of, District apostolates.

“We will need to continue to adapt our teaching and learning practices in the post-COVID world. We will never just go back to the way it was.”

—Annemarie Bacich, Principal, Christian Brothers High School, Sacramento, California

### Looking to the Future

While little has changed with regard to District priorities, there will certainly need to be changes in approaches based on what has been learned. One challenge for ministries has been maintaining inclusive communities in the light of so much virtual interaction. Hard work will be required to reintegrate faculties, staff and students into a sense of belonging since many have never met each other except via online. Technology provides much, but it will be imperative to safely reestablish in-person contact in order to continue Saint John Baptist de La Salle’s vision that we are models for one another.



Saint Mary’s College of California constructed 12 pavilions to move in-person classes outdoors during the pandemic.

Similarly, while the schools have done an admirable job with student learning, there are gaps that will have to be dealt with in order to ensure that quality education continues. This includes Lasallian formation of new Partners along with that of students. This is a District priority as it is central to association for mission.

A continuing focus will be the financial stability of the schools in a traditional tuition-based educational economy. Thus far, they have weathered the pandemic and continue to be in relatively good shape financially.

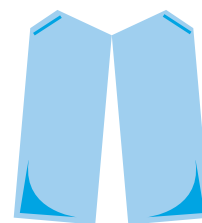
The outlook for the future is bright. The mission is vibrant throughout the District, with Brothers and Partners of all ages creatively and confidently engaged in shaping the next chapters of its story. SFNO welcomes the work of moving forward into the emerging “new normal.” ♦

# MIDWEST DISTRICT

What is today the Midwest District was originally one District called the St. Louis District, which spanned from Minnesota to Texas and from Ohio to Nebraska. As time progressed and the number of Brothers declined while the number of Lasallian Partners grew, it became clear that a different alignment and new way to manage ministries would be beneficial. Following a lengthy discernment process, the Midwest District was created in 1995.

The Midwest is composed of 108 Brothers in 18 communities and approximately 3,800 Lasallian Partners serving three universities, 14 high schools, three middle schools, four retreat centers and two publishing houses. They serve 23,000 students and 7,900 retreatants in the 29 apostolates. They minister in 10 (arch)dioceses in the states of Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Oklahoma and Tennessee.

Since 1870, the growth of the mission in the Midwest has been a response to the needs and realities that change and time have brought. While the experience of running ministries has changed with the progression of time and technology, the commitment to the charism of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and the mission of providing a human and Christian education to the young and especially the poor has remained consistent.



**108**  
BROTHERS

**3,800**  
PARTNERS



**30,900**  
YOUNG  
PEOPLE  
SERVED

2020-2021 STATISTICS





## Ministries and Communities

Illinois

Ohio

Minnesota

Oklahoma

Missouri

Tennessee

Montana

**3** UNIVERSITIES

**17** ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

**6** EDUCATIONAL CENTERS

**3** SUPPORT MINISTRIES



## Association for Mission

### Creating and Sustaining Community

The District's vitality for the Lasallian charism is expressed in a number of ways, including through its online program, Lasallian Formation for Mission (est. 2018). While the program offers administrators, teachers and staff members an opportunity to have common baseline formation experiences, other avenues of creating community have also taken hold. Lasallian Companions, for example, began as an effort to bring together retired teachers and others who have embraced the charism so that they would not feel separated from the sense of purpose and spirit they experienced while actively serving in ministries.



Lasallian Companions facilitate retreats, gather to meet and pray, offer their expertise as board members, participate in formation events at schools and assist universities in creating a culture of vocation.

Prior to the pandemic, the District was planning a major convocation to discuss association, mission and what it means to be Lasallian, along with reaching a consensus about unity and spirit and the nature of the educational projects throughout the Midwest. These plans are on hold until gatherings of this size are once again safe.

Lasallian animators, Young Lasallians, Lasallian Youth, advancement personnel, retreat center staff, board chairs and presidents of ministries came together by group for shared reflection, conversation and input. These gatherings did not diminish in number or substance during the pandemic. Instead, they increased in regularity, and the conversations grew even more significant and intimate. It has been a clear sign that people value one another and the common mission, support each other in the shared journey, and look to life's blessings in order to move forward.

As another opportunity for educators to share association, the Vocation Ministry Team started Circular 475 Conversations. Utilizing the circular, "From Hope to Commitment: Understanding Lasallian Vocations," Brothers and Lasallian Partners listened and shared their reasons for association, especially during the

conversation on Vocation Ministry for Association. Laughs, smiles and heartfelt words were shared by all as participants were reminded of the importance of “together and by association.”

**“Circular 475 readings, virtual happy hours and discussions with other Lasallians were informative, fun and something I looked forward to. Truly, a validation that I’m a member of a caring and compassionate Lasallian family.”**

*—Patrice Henning, undergraduate alumna and graduate student, Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota*

During the pandemic, association among the Brothers was enhanced through virtual prayer services and meetings, and in-person community gatherings resumed after all community members had been vaccinated. Brothers addressed challenges and sufferings of the pandemic, as well as celebrated the blessings received. They celebrated jubilees, vow renewals and the sense of fraternity that gives life.

## Shared Leadership

### Ensuring Stability

Before the pandemic, the Auxiliary Visitor and District superintendent of schools attended all board meetings for ministries in the service of governance and accompaniment. This model provided an opportunity for ministries to feel connected. To maintain that sense of connection during the pandemic, District leaders attended board meetings virtually, and regular virtual sessions were held with various groups within the District, such as presidents, principals, development staff and retreat center staff, to provide opportunities to share experiences and identity.

Leadership at secondary schools is stable, though some leaders have long tenures and are planning to retire. Today’s opportunity



COVID-19 forced ministries to adapt how they connect with and educate students, from increased in-person safety precautions to online learning. (Pictured above: Montini Catholic High School, Lombard, Illinois)

The Br. David Darst Center incorporates community service into its retreat programs, which have a focus on social justice. (Pictured below: Students from Totino-Grace High School in Fridley, Minnesota, serving at San Miguel School Chicago)

## Evangelization

### Offering Salvation to the Young

Evangelization is core to the Lasallian mission. We challenge ourselves to offer salvation to the young—a relationship with Jesus, a deepening of faith and the skills needed to build a viable life in the world as contributing members of civic society. While educational ministries have always been centers of justice and evangelization through the teaching of religion, student days of reflection, and appropriate relationships with Brothers and other Lasallian teachers, more structured and institutional forms have also developed.

is in engaging new leadership in extensive formation, a requirement for anyone accepting a leadership position. The school governance model is being re-evaluated in light of demographic realities that call for greater inclusion of Partners in oversight and governance roles.



For example, the District has four retreat centers: La Salle Retreat Center (Wildwood, Missouri), La Salle Manor (Plano, Illinois), Dunrovin Retreat Center (Marine on St. Croix, Minnesota) and Br. David Darst Center (Chicago, Illinois). Three of the centers were established specifically to serve the Lasallian students. They have done that so well that their retreatants now come from other schools and parishes. While La Salle, La Salle Manor and Dunrovin provide more traditional retreat models, the Darst

Center was founded to serve with an emphasis on social justice. It is an immersion program that introduces retreatants to the world of the poor and disenfranchised by collaborating with a broad range of justice and service agencies. Each retreat experience offered by these four centers is specifically designed with evangelization in mind.

### Inspiring Materials and Research

The District is home to Saint Mary's Press, a ministry started through the efforts of Brother Alphonsus Pluth in 1947. As it grew, the Press provided religion texts to schools in the United States for many years. It continues to publish religious texts for all levels of education. In more recent times, Saint Mary's Press has created digital materials for use in schools, specific texts for university classes, activities and games for younger students, and a wide variety of materials for use in parishes. Saint Mary's Press has now become part of a larger vision called Lasallian Educational and Research Initiatives. The change in name more closely captures the mission as the Press now includes Springtide Research Institute, a premier research organization studying the values and faith of young adults. Saint Mary's Press was key to the Brothers' ability to evangelize. Now, there is greater capacity to reach beyond the Midwest and into the global faith community.

The District is also home to Instituto Fe y Vida (Faith and Life), which publishes a Spanish language youth bible that reaches deep into Latin America. It also trains young parish and diocesan leaders for youth ministry. This ministry profoundly touches those archdioceses and dioceses with significant Latin American populations.

**“Springtide has taught me that we Lasallians—no matter what our age or lifestyle—are capable of listening, transparency, integrity, care and expertise. Relationship is more important than program; who is more important than where or what.”**

*—Brother Armand Alcazar*

Fe y Vida, founded by Saint Mary's Press in 1994, has been affiliated with Lewis University since 2015 and has offices on Lewis University's Romeoville campus.



## Beyond the Borders

### Creating Worldwide Relationships

The District is keenly aware of its relationship with Lasallians around the world. The Brothers have a long history of sharing personnel with other Regions and Districts. They have been present in Nicaragua, Guatemala, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Philippines, Singapore, Lebanon, Egypt and Italy.

In addition, the District hosts international Brothers to pursue advanced degrees from the three universities in the Midwest. They have come from the Districts of Lwanga, West Africa, Bogotá and Bolivia-Perú, among other locations. Their education equips them to take leadership roles in the educational institutions of their home Districts.

**“I recognize that my education at Saint Mary’s is helping me a lot in my ministry, in the sense that as Brother Visitor, I have to visit our schools, more than 30, and make them go well. Also, from time to time, I talk with teachers and share with them what I have learned at SMUMN. Today, I am happy with this experience and thank God for that.”**

*—Brother Pie Nsukula Bavingidi*

Brother Pie Nsukula Bavingidi, Visitor of the District of Congo Kinshasa, graduated from Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota in 2017 with a master’s in instruction and a master’s in Lasallian leadership.



Also in terms of higher education, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota worked for many years (1995-2021) through the Christ the Teacher Institute for Education (CTIE) in Nairobi, Kenya. Saint Mary's offered diploma, bachelor's and master's programs for aspiring educators.

### Transcending Geographic and Personal Borders

Brothers have also been encouraged to transcend their own personal borders and look beyond their comfort zones. Inviting students to go beyond borders happens in a number of ways, such as through the Regional twinning program that pairs RELAN schools with ministries in Africa's Lwanga District. Students connect with and financially assist young people in the Lwanga District, and the District and its ministries have hosted the Lwanga District Visitor when he has visited RELAN to build relationships.



Students and educators from Holy Family Catholic High School in Victoria, Minnesota, have visited twinned ministries in Ethiopia four times since 2011.

**“Twinning makes this large world a little smaller. On our trips to Ethiopia, my students have had wonderful experiences, met amazing people and experienced incredible hospitality, and we have all come back changed.”**

*—John Dols, Principal, Holy Family Catholic High School*

A number of trips have been made to France in the “Footsteps of the Founder,” a pilgrimage through historic sites in the life of De La Salle and the founding of the Brothers, to educate board members and teachers about Lasallian history, the charism and the mission. These trips have provided significant formation experiences for participants as they personally visit the sites where De La Salle prayed, started his journey and opened schools.

Students at DeLaSalle High School in Minneapolis, Minnesota, go beyond borders through the Global Advantage Program, which provides them opportunities to travel internationally and participate in student exchanges, often with Lasallian schools and families. (Pictured: DeLaSalle students visiting Colegio La Salle in La Paz, Bolivia)



Part of the journey through the District's online formation program is helping educators connect to the global Lasallian world. The District, in collaboration with the Institute's Secretariat for Formation, has formatted the program and placed it on a digital platform that makes it accessible globally to English-speakers.

Additionally, the District has collaborated with the Solidarity and Development Secretariat to help create a "Protecting the Child" program, which also resulted in a "Saving Children from Abuse" program for the African continent. This culturally appropriate program introduces English-speaking Africa to the dangers of abuse and how to protect children from inappropriate contact with adults.

## Culture of Vocation

### Creating a Culture

While the emergence of COVID-19 impacted efforts, the District's vocation team has undertaken initiatives to promote and support vocations, using Circular 475 as a guide. The team used the circular to focus on connecting with the three Midwest universities (Christian Brothers University, Lewis University and Saint Mary's University of Minnesota) to establish a "culture of vocation" plan for each campus, to inspire the 2020-2021 Community Annual Plan, and to publish a daily prayer book



on vocations for each community member, with prayers written by Brothers and Partners.

Embracing technology and virtual gatherings, the District held an online gathering in January 2020 for young men who might be interested in becoming a Brother. The gathering included a veteran Brother, young Brother and contact sharing their vocation story and about the Brother's life, along with an opportunity for the young men to ask questions. The vocation team is integrating lessons learned during the pandemic about optimal ways to gather and share as they look to the future of the Brother's vocation, focusing on promotion, invitation and accompaniment. Those pandemic lessons also include virtual accompaniment of Brothers in temporary vows. While their visits were held virtually during the pandemic, they typically take place with a Brother visiting young Brothers twice a semester and spending time with them in their ministry and community settings.



As pandemic restrictions eased, the vocation team envisioned new ways of connecting with young people to encourage them to pursue a vocation as a Brother or Lasallian educator. For example, Vocation Awareness Week featured a virtual gathering on religious life. Brothers speak in university classes about topics such as environmental justice and vocation as ministry, and the Lasallian Companions group helps promote vocation on university campuses. The District is also developing an online program to train Lasallians on how to accompany educators.

As part of creating a culture of vocation, Brothers and educators share their vocation stories or talk about international ministries with higher education groups, such as Lasallian Collegians at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota.

## Formation

### Bringing Formation Online

The District has embraced technology as a tool to bring formation encounters to as many people as possible. The District created its Lasallian Formation for Mission online program in response to requests from educators who wanted more formation opportunities. The online formation platform promotes association for mission by providing a continuous formative journey and allowing Lasallians to interact with each other. This free program starts at the basic level of introducing Saint John Baptist de La Salle and expands to allow for deeper exploration of his story and for discussion with other participants. The online program is continual, based on a six-year cycle, and offers a transformative experience that starts with the individual and grows into a community.

**“At DeLaSalle, we organize the Lasallian Formation for Mission online material into mini-retreats. It has given us carefully curated material to participate in great conversation that reinvigorates, educates and challenges us to progress in the mission.”**

*—Brother Dylan Perry, Theology Faculty, DeLaSalle High School*

Christian Brothers High School in Memphis, Tennessee, and DeLaSalle High School in Minneapolis, Minnesota, are two examples of how this online program has been effectively implemented. While the assigned reading is done independently, videos are watched together, periods of private reflection are shared, and the important community conversation then takes place. The dialogue portion of the program is what builds a deeper sense of association and communal commitment. For example, one teacher was in a conversation group with another who had been on staff for 30 years. The teacher commented, “I learned more about you in this hour than I have in the last 30 years.” Knowing each other’s story builds bonds and shared values, while also serving as a source of inspiration and ongoing discernment.

## Supporting the Formation Journey

The District offers several opportunities for formation, with new initiatives that respond to emerging needs. Most recently, the District opened a guest house to bring Lasallians together in small groups for formation experiences, and a new kind of formation for board members was initiated. In addition, formation is provided for people in similar roles, such as animators, Young Lasallians, Lasallian Youth moderators, Lasallian Companions, board chairs and school presidents. The District has also provided regular in-service formation experiences within schools through days of reflection, retreats and presentations on Institute history, the Founder, the charism and the mission. The Saint Yon Retreat, a series of “busy person” retreats, involves Lasallians visiting a ministry and offering one-on-one accompaniment based on both Institute documents and Scripture.

## Formation for Brothers

The District’s vocation team, composed of three Brothers and one woman, has devised a strategic plan to introduce the idea of vocation awareness and invitation to young men who could be interested in becoming Brothers. The contact program is housed in the District’s three universities where the young men continue their studies, are accompanied by a member of the team, and are connected with veteran Brothers through letter, text, prayer and invitation to visit a community.

Each Brother is encouraged through accompaniment, personal interviews, spiritual direction and personal prayer and meditation to deepen the commitment he has made as well as to discern how he will live that commitment in the context of our communal mission to educate the young—especially the poor—and witness the relationship with Christ that we invite each student to enter.

It is important for young Brothers to be creative, to search their heart and minds for ways to catechize and evangelize. The communities in which young Brothers are placed are expected to be formation communities that pay special attention to the needs of each Brother and especially of the youngest members.

In addition to the formation of young members, each community is asked to engage a process of formation using the Community Annual Program. The design promotes active engagement in the life of the community, the building of relationships among community members, a deepening sense of commitment to mission, personal and communal prayer, and ways of living the charism and mission regardless of age. The District has also started a weekly online opportunity to invite Brothers to read a common set of reflections and to share their thoughts.

## Brothers

### Vibrant Commitment to the Mission

The Brothers of the Midwest District are a vibrant group that adapts to the ever-changing realities of life in the contexts of faith and fraternity—and with a good dose of humor. Young and old alike, the Brothers share an enthusiasm for the mission and are dedicated to using their talents to serve those entrusted to their care.

San Miguel schools, middle schools mostly located in low-income neighborhoods that provide quality education to underserved and at-risk youth, have been supported since the beginning of the Midwest District 25 years ago. Brothers are very active in two of them. One is in service to the Blackfeet American Indian Tribe and in the local parish in Browning, Montana; another serves an underserved population in Chicago, Illinois. In addition to their educational service, Brothers in these communities mentor and accompany Lasallian Volunteers in their community living and ministry.

Brothers James Krause, left, and Dale Mooney, right, serve at De La Salle Blackfeet School where they welcome Lasallian Volunteers each year.



Brothers also serve in leadership and support positions at Christian Brothers Services, a nonprofit that administers cooperative programs in the areas of health, retirement, property/casualty, technology, school management and consulting services to church organizations, and which also provides multiple forms of service and assistance to schools, faculties and staff of ministries throughout the Region.

Many Brothers are actively engaged in universities as campus ministers, professors and administrators. Younger men are filled with enthusiasm for their ministries and are open to many opportunities, including missionary work. While there can be a natural tendency to focus on self-care and the gradual diminishment age brings, elder Brothers continue to respond to the needs of others. Brothers who have celebrated their 60th, 70th and 80th anniversaries remain engaged in service to the homeless and the promotion of justice, writing books, doing research, and serving in schools and universities.

### Resilience of Brothers

The District provides retired and aging Brothers with resources to remain healthy and strong, such as nursing care and fraternal support. The District accompanies younger members throughout their vocational discernment and provides the support and encouragement they need to develop a strong sense of meaningful purpose and vision for their lives. The communities are dynamic and living the fraternity that De La Salle saw as so essential to the success of the mission.

District Days held in June 2021 illustrate the resilience of the Brothers as they emerged from life in the pandemic. Most Brothers attended and experienced the days as an opportunity to reunite, celebrate, mourn and look to the future. They are gradually adapting to a post-pandemic world and are looking to utilize what they have learned from the pandemic about education and the resiliency of students. That includes lessons learned about



Brother Louis Rodemann continues to keep in contact with students and clients he served in his ministries.



“REuniting, REMembering, REconnecting, RENewing, REjoicing’ was our theme for District Days. Connecting with one another again was not only welcomed but also celebrated as we mourned the Brothers we have lost, honored our jubilarians, and supported our Brothers in formation who publicly renewed their vows.”

—Brother Chris Englert, Auxiliary Visitor

the value of effectively used technology for Brothers, faculties and students. The pandemic experience has also reaffirmed the importance of face-to-face, personal interaction to satisfy the human need for contact.

## Young Lasallians

### Sustaining the Legacy

The Midwest District expanded upon its dedication to the sustainability of the Lasallian legacy by hiring a full-time Young Lasallian coordinator in 2018 to focus on the formation and accompaniment of Young Lasallians. From early on, there was a clear need for young professionals to learn more about the Founder, his pedagogy, his spirituality and his vocation to educational service. Helping young people gain a deeper understanding about the shared Lasallian mission is intended to enrich their sense of purpose and belonging in their work, and ultimately to enhance their desire to stay with the charism. That is why the District introduced VEGA, a formation experience specifically for young adults, into its programming in the summer of 2020. Like all other in-person events, it was canceled due to COVID-19, but was reintroduced as an in-person event in July 2021.

# Vitality and Sustainability

## Fidelity to the Founding Story

Where is the start of the Lasallian story? Some say it was the year 1680 when De La Salle brought the young teachers into his home; for others, it was 1694 when the first perpetual vows were professed. It could it have been in 1691 when De La Salle, Gabriel Drolin and Nicholas Vuyart pronounced the Heroic Vow; or perhaps the origins are in his relationships with his grandmother and mother where the seeds of zeal and spirit of faith were first planted.



The inaugural Midwest VEGA gathering brought together 40 participants in July 2021 to explore their vocational calling as Lasallian educators.

Whenever the beginning might have been, it is important to attribute it, in an absolute sense, to the Holy Spirit who animated De La Salle and the early communities. Over three centuries, many great Brothers and now many great men and women followers of De La Salle have fallen in love with God because they pointed the way.

## Looking to the Future

The Midwest District is among those disciples of De La Salle living the Paschal journey of Jesus. The Lasallian charism offers a path to living a just life. Education is its work of justice. Key to its vitality is its welcome of immigrants. The District has a rich history of working with immigrant children through the original school in Ste. Geneviève, Missouri, Christian Brothers College High School in St. Louis, Missouri, and St. Patrick High School and De La Salle High School in Chicago. Then in the Twin Cities in Minnesota and Memphis in Tennessee after the catastrophic Chicago fire.

The first Brothers who founded Lasallian schools have been followed by thousands of Partners who have embraced the charism and live it as their own vocation. This is the key to sustainability. The spirit of Saint John Baptist de La Salle is alive, and the Spirit of God animates the educational communities who welcome all who come, without distinction. ◆

# LORD, THE WORK IS YOURS

Drawing a lesson from a parable Jesus says, “Every student of the Scriptures who becomes a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like someone who brings out new and old treasures from the storeroom” (Matthew 13:52). As this Bulletin has demonstrated, this Region is blessed with a storeroom full of treasures for mission and community. There are old treasures of fidelity and generosity and new treasures of open and energetic responses to the future as it unfolds.

**There are old treasures of fidelity and generosity and new treasures of open and energetic responses to the future as it unfolds.**

Two stories of the many that emerged in this Bulletin witness to these old and new treasures that fuel the charismatic dynamism. One is of the men and women in Francophone Canada who wish to associate closely and live in communion with the Lasallian charism. Associates express their will to follow Christ according to the Lasallian charism in association with the Brothers. They deepen their understanding of the educational spirituality of the Lasallian charism. One could say their desire is not simply to belong to the Lasallian movement but to *be* Lasallian. In a similar way, Lasallian Volunteers strive to *be* Lasallian. Over the years, a dozen men have completed their service as volunteers and entered the Brothers’ formation program, some of whom have pronounced first vows, and there are now 85 former volunteers currently serving in the Lasallian mission. Many of these are in leadership positions as animators, principals and presidents. They also serve in leadership positions at the District, Regional and international level.

In North American culture at large, there is an impetus to be pragmatic, entrepreneurial, innovative, divergent in thinking, and open to taking risks. RELAN’s vitality and creativity can be traced, in part, to that impetus. At the same time, there are clear signs of immobility and fragility. The surrounding economic, social, political climate is dynamic, and the educational communities are impacted by those tensions and challenges. We hope this Bulletin has shed light on how this Region has engaged its reality with fidelity, generosity, openness and energy.





RELAN's narrative is a common one in the Institute and Lasallian mission. After all, we live in a story that unfolds in a bigger story, dealing with creative tensions between what is old and what is new, what is essential and what is transitory. The movements and trends emerging in RELAN's story transcend boundaries. The broadening and deepening of our understanding of vocation has led us to expand the way we invite, encourage and accompany. Association for mission has grown in our consciousness and experience, and it is leading us to imagine and implement new approaches to mission and community. The dynamic social and cultural environment is impelling us to adapt and deepen our relationships at informal and formal levels. What is also universal is the call to a responsibility for ensuring the Lasallian charism is generative, that is to say, generous and life-giving. With God's grace, we hope to respond to that call.

In sharing the contemporary story of RELAN you may be struck—as we were in telling the story—by the profound power the Lasallian mission and community is bringing to countless lives. In history and unfolding in real time, God's grace continues to inspire and impel us into a future we can only glimpse. If it appears we are moving forward with some confidence, please note it is also with humility and gratitude, for the story we are living daily reminds us of a truth that our Founder never failed to call to mind and heart: *Domine opus tuum!* Lord, the work is yours! ◆

A 2018 Lasallian Vocation Symposium focused on developing ways to further invite reflection, conversation and resource development to foster a culture of vocation in the Region.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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