

United States Catholic Mission Organization
2017 Membership Meeting
Report to the Membership

Introduction

I am pleased to submit this annual report to the USCMA membership. It covers the period from the last Membership Meeting to the present – August 2016 to July 2017.

Association Activities – A Year in Review

USCMA kicked the year off with its second membership meeting “on-line.” Members reviewed reports, both video and print, considered a draft of the USCMA mission statement and a resolution on the centrality of Gospel Nonviolence, and vote on candidates to the Board of Directors. Based on voting, 16% (103) of the members participated in the 2016 Membership Meeting surpassing the 2014 participation of 10%. The resolution on Gospel Nonviolence passed and the proposed slate of candidates to the Board was affirmed. The minutes of the meeting is available with the 2017 Membership Meeting materials.

The association came together for the annual conference in Cincinnati to be *Together in Mission*. The conference began with remembering some failures of mission – such as slavery in the United States and human trafficking today. **Dr. Clarence Newsome**, President of the Freedom Center, reminded us of the unspeakable horror of chattel slavery. **Lara Green**, also from the Freedom Center, painted the grim picture of slavery today. In the face of such horrendous crimes against humanity, the **Very Rev. Bill Nordenbrock, C.P.P.S.**, Moderator General of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, reminded us that mission brings with it the promise of reconciliation. **Fr. Bill Vos**, the 2016 Pope Francis Mission Award recipient, helped us appreciate the impact Joy of the Gospel will have on our understanding of mission. **Julie Lupien**, Executive Director of From Mission to Mission, helped us appreciate the many faces of mission today. After an engaging and thought-provoking day at Xavier University, the association gathered for liturgy with Bishop Joseph Binzer and dedicated a tree on campus to the memory of Sr. Dorothy Stang, S.N.D. de Namur.

USCMA was invited to participate in the Convocation of Catholic Leaders – the Joy of the Gospel in America. We convened a small delegation from dioceses, religious communities, and lay mission organizations to attend the convocation in Orlando July 1-4, 2017. USCMA helped organize a breakout session on “international mission work” and led the closing session on “next steps for mission.” While mission seems to be on the periphery of the Church, there are a lot of groups focused on mission. USCMA promised to be a place to connect mission related organizations with each other.

Board of Directors

USCMA is served by a Board of Directors composed of 13 members under the leadership of **Rev. Greg Gallagher, OMI**. In October 2016, the Board approved a new strategic plan with mission statement, vision statement, core values, and an accountability matrix. It also established an official relationship with the Third Wave of Mission Institute. On behalf of the Board, **Dr. Donald R. McCrabb**, USCMA Executive Director, gave a presentation to the USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis in November 2016.

At the March 2017 meeting, the Board explored the meaning of mission by reading and discussing Roger Schroeder's text, *What is the Mission of the Church?* (Orbis, 2008). The Board approved initiatives on behalf of dioceses and parishes. It considered the dynamics of animation and the challenges facing the association to engage new generations of missionaries. The Board affirmed that communications is one way the association does animation and that USCMA needs a communications plan. The Board also decided to revisit its committee structure and reviewed the staffing of the association.

2021 Strategic Plan

The strategic plan identifies five “mission areas” for the association in its efforts to “convene, connect, and collaborate on efforts to animate missionary disciples.” Each mission area has its own nature and scope.

1. Animation focuses on engaging Catholics in the work of mission. The goals for animation involve membership and communication.
 - a. We continue to have a modest growth in membership; 644 in 2016 compared to 686 in 2017 (7% growth). A campaign to re-engage former members in January fueled this growth. An Associate Membership will be launched in September to help members share the good news of mission to a much wider audience. A white paper on **Mission Cohorts** is a resource to inform conversation about animation and the Associate Membership during the Membership Meeting. The emphasis over the next 16 months will be on dioceses and parishes. In addition to membership privileges, USCMA has three programs for dioceses and parishes:
 - i. **Voice and Vision** is a day of renewal for missionary disciples. It is designed to bring together within a parish or a diocese those who have had missionary experience, help them give voice to that experience, explore the more of mission, and discern their current and future participation in mission.
 - ii. **The Apostles Journey** is a parish based “mission” to explore the call to missionary discipleship and assist the parish in forming a mission council.
 - iii. **Mission Review** is designed for a mission to provide an internal review to identify all the ways a diocese is currently engaged in mission, appreciate the missionary strength of the diocese, and identify future directions.
 - b. USCMA continues to participate in the Mission Cooperative Plan visiting with 17 parishes in 7 dioceses over the summer of 2017.
 - c. Communications involves group emails to members and friends, our social media efforts, and the USCMA website.
 - i. Over the past year, USCMA sent 12 Mission Monthly's, 3 Mission Updates, 13 Inspiration for Mission, and 15 Mobilize for Mission (43 emails). The Mission Update has the highest engagement rate at 40%.
 - ii. Facebook is USCMA's first step into social media and it, too, has seen a modest growth over the year with 851 followers in 2016 compared to 889 in 2017; a 4% growth. There was a significant growth in average reach – from 32 to 92.
 - iii. Finally, more people are going to USCMA's website; from 11,958 in 2016 to 12,322 in 2017.
 - d. Diane Conocchioli, USCMA's Membership and Development Coordinator, has worked hard to update and “scrub” USCMA's Database. The database was purged

of inactive records in the Spring. All mission orders and dioceses, regardless of membership status, were entered or updated. USCMA currently supports a database of 2,389 records; 29% of those records are members.

Members are encouraged to keep their contact information up-to-date. If you move or just change your phone number, email dconocchioli@uscatholicmission.org to update your record.

2. Education is the development, implementation, and assessment of programs and resources that prepare people for mission, sustain them in mission, and foster their leadership of mission.
 - a. Currently, the major vehicle for mission education is the USCMA annual conference. The 2016 conference in **Cincinnati** was a major success and introduced the “associate” participant program as well as a special outreach to college students. The 2017 annual conference will be in **San Antonio** and feature the associate participant program and the involvement of college students. The 2018 annual conference will be in **Boston**.
 - b. USCMA is now offering webinars. The first one focused on the **USCMA Strategic Plan**. USCMA partnered with the Catholic Extension Society to sponsor a webinar on engaging **Hispanic Young Adults**. The third webinar, in partnership with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, focused on the **Executive Order on Immigration**. Upcoming webinars will be on the **More of Mission** and **Diocesan / Parish Mission Councils**.
 - c. Third Wave of Mission Institute is a loose confederation of organizations and individuals dedicated to the preparation of missionaries for short-term mission trips. USCMA hosts the webpage and is an active participant in its meetings and gatherings. The Third Wave of Mission Institute, with the support of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers and USCMA, is hosting a “conversation on best practices in preparation” on October 26-27, 2017 in San Antonio; the day before the USCMA Annual Conference begins. The “conversation” flyer is available with the Membership Meeting Materials.
 - d. There is a small group of members talking about Mission Education. One question facing the membership is whether or not it would be good to form affinity groups within USCMA – so people with similar responsibilities could engage one another for mutual support, professional enrichment, and collaboration.
3. Research is digging out information on people, organizations, missiology, and best practices, to produce a “Wikipedia” on mission.
 - a. USCMA gathered considerable information from its members about missionaries; where they served, the type of ministry they provided, their home diocese, etc. This effort was taxing to both the members and the office staff. The last **Mission Handbook** was published in 2010 and is still a good source of basic data.
 - b. The USCMA Executive Board envisions a **Mission Hub** that gathers information about missionaries, mission sites, missiology, and best practices. USCMA is currently seeking funding partners to build the “hub.”
 - c. USCMA is currently studying short-term mission trips. It has two questions as part of the National Parish Inventory currently being conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). These results may be available by the USCMA annual conference.

- d. USCMA is exploring with the Catholic Health Association and Catholic Relief Services building the mission sites database. Should USCMA identify all mission sites in the world in order to build bridges of solidarity between faith communities in the United States of America and missions all over the world?
4. Networking is forming partnerships or alliances to advance the vision of USCMA.
 - a. USCMA is an active member, and convener, of the **Catholic Mission Forum**. The Forum sponsors the Mission Congress. The last congress was held in October 2015. The next Congress would take place in 2020. The members of the Catholic Mission Forum need to renew their participation in the Forum and decide if it wants to move forward with sponsoring a 2020 Mission Congress.
 - b. USCMA is developing a working relationship with the **USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis**.
 - c. As part of that relationship, USCMA was invited to form a delegation for the **Convocation of Catholic Leaders – The Joy of the Gospel in America**, sponsored by the USCCB (July 1-4, 2017 in Orlando, FL). Members of the USCMA delegation served on the breakout session on “international mission work,” convened a “what’s next” strategy session, and sponsored an exhibit.
 - d. USCMA is also forming a delegation to participate in the 2017 **Missio Congress** (September 5-7, 2017 in Orlando, FL) sponsored by the Pontifical Mission Societies in preparation for CAM V in Santa Cruz, Bolivia (July 10-14, 2017).
 5. Stewardship is developing, sustaining, and growing the necessary resources – financial, governance, and operations – USCMA needs to accomplish its mission.
 - a. USCMA operated at a deficit in 2016 of \$49,238 or 15% of total expenses. Like many religious orders, USCMA is drawing down its reserves. This strategy is unsustainable.
 - b. The complete picture of USCMA’s finances can be found in the **2016 Audit** and **2016 990 Pro Forma**. These documents are available with the Membership Meeting Materials.
 - c. USCMA must explore ways to increase income and build the endowment. If every member contributed \$72.00 it would eliminate last year’s deficit. Membership dues have not increased in years. Alternatively, if USCMA members recruited, on average, three “associate members” at \$25 each, that would also eliminate last year’s deficit.
 - d. The USCMA Office has reduced expenses; cutting back phone service by one line, re-negotiating a lower maintenance agreement for the copier, and cutting the annual database expenses in half. Staff has been reduced from 3.5 to 3; the part-time bookkeeper position was replaced with a less expensive bookkeeping service.
 - e. Increasing potential donors – by building USCMA’s database with people who are interested in mission – also has the potential for raising crucial funds.
 - f. Grants. USCMA continues to submit grant requests to support its operations and initiatives. Several grants are under consideration.

Deliberation

1. The **2017 Annual Conference** is October 27-29, 2017. Members are encouraged to come and bring a delegation with them; especially of young adults and, if possible, college students.

2. USCMA must consider how to reach out, engage, and connect with the variety of **cohorts** in mission active in the United States of America. See the white paper on “Cohorts.”
3. Will USCMA members promote the **Associate Membership** program? Please see the description of the Associate Membership Program in the Membership Materials.
4. Should USCMA begin **affinity groups**? See the white paper on “Roles in Mission.”
5. The **More of Mission** is an upcoming webinar that members could encourage their constituents to participate in.
6. Should USCMA expend energy in 2018 connecting with mission offices and groups across America – reaching out to our brothers and sisters in mission in Canada, Mexico, Central America, and South America – by sponsoring a delegation to **CAM V** or should we focus on sponsoring a delegation to **Encuentro V**; the USCCB sponsored engagement of the Hispanic Community in the United States?
7. These, and other agenda items surfaced by our members, will be part of the deliberation at the 2017 Membership Meeting. Be sure to register – just like registering for a webinar.

Concluding Remarks

I am reminded of St. Paul and his notion of “principalities and powers.” There are huge forces at work in our world and in our Church. These forces are having an impact on how Catholics understand, and participate in, mission. These forces challenge us to “read the signs of the times” and respond as missionary disciples.

Sometimes, we bemoan about “the church” stuck in “maintenance” rather than being vibrant about mission. Are we being vibrant about mission? Are we engaging, encouraging, and inviting people to be involved in mission. Are we affirming the many ways people are, or have already been, involved in mission? Are we helping them take the next step?

The 2017 USCMA Membership Meeting is an opportunity for us to stop, scan our environment, test our assumptions, identify problems, and envision a better future. We can draw strength and inspiration from each other. Plan now to participate in one of the two “live” membership meetings:

Tuesday, September 19, 2017 at 2:00 pm ET

Thursday, September 21, 2017 at 7:00 pm ET

Jesus continues to send us “to all nations” and, through us, Jesus calls others to discipleship and mission. Mission is the full flowering of a faith community and responsibility of every disciple. What is our next step as an association?

Dr. Donald R. McCrabb
Executive Director
August 31, 2017