



MARIANIST LAY COMMUNITY OF NORTH AMERICA

Strategic Plan: 2022-2026

Ratified: February, 2022

Part I: Introduction

Since its formation in 1993, the Marianist Lay Community of North America (MLC-NA) has engaged in multiple strategic planning processes. The most recent strategic plan, entitled “Living the Mission,” was ratified and published in May, 2014. That plan provided a framework for our association, known at that time as the Marianist Lay Network of North America (MLNNA), to more boldly assume responsibility for its role in the Marianist movement. It invited its members to deepen their identity and commitment as Marianist Laity, and it set out practical goals that would increase our institutional capacity to effectively operate as an association of the faithful.

Today, many of the broad goals of this strategic plan have been met. MLC-NA has aligned its goals more closely with the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities, and has found various means of greater collaboration with the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (Marianist Sisters) and Society of Mary (Marianist Brothers and Priests). Moreover, it has reorganized its internal structure according to the “Three Offices” model of Fr. William Joseph Chaminade: the Office of Spirituality, the Office of Education, and the Office of Temporalities. As a result of this restructuring process, MLC-NA has built a much more solid foundation to support the Marianist lay communities (MLCs) and Marianist Family as a whole.

Moving forward from the momentum gained from working within the framework of “Living in Mission,” the Leadership Council of MLC-NA initiated another strategic planning process. The most basic goal of this process was to find ways to continue developing the capacity of the association in accordance with the insight symbolized in our organization’s name change from MLNNA to MLC-NA. That insight is that the Marianist Laity living in North America should not act as a loose affiliation of individuals and disconnected communities. Rather, the Marianist mission calls our Lay Marianists and MLCs to be united as a larger community that does not replace the essential nature of the smaller MLCs, but rather allows for all Lay Marianists and MLCs to build a common life and mission together. This key insight is what drove the change in our name from identifying as a “network” to a “community.” While both names say

something true, the emphasis has shifted in such a way as to promote greater harmony in the life and mission of Lay Marianists throughout North America. The next step in our collective history is, therefore, to put our increased institutional capacities to work on the task of animating the MLC-NA in a way that will advance our shared life and common mission across the entire US and Canada.

After substantial discernment, the Leadership Council chose to develop this new strategic plan through a collaborative process known as the Year of Shared Discernment. The Year of Shared Discernment took place from August, 2019 – August, 2020 and invited all MLCs and individual Lay Marianists to participate in discussions with each other, organized in 5 modules. Through a series of surveys and virtual discussion groups, a volunteer task force collected insights cultivated in each of those 5 modules on a wide range of topics pertaining to how Lay Marianists feel called to know, commit to, and live the charism today. The Leadership Council listened intently to its membership directly and through the synthesizing efforts of the volunteer task force. Then, in response to what it heard, the Leadership Council developed both the overarching vision and many of the specific initiatives found in this strategic plan.

Some of the initiatives in this strategic plan are intended to be carried out primarily by the Leadership Council; however, there were 5 initiatives designed specifically through the Year of Shared Discernment process that require the participation of a volunteer group of Marianist Laity. These initiatives in particular are intended to help build a shared life in MLC-NA as a community of communities. For these 5 specific initiatives, the Leadership Council will attempt to gain buy-in from the necessary number of volunteers and will only be committed to proceeding with these initiatives if the required number of volunteers is reached.

The future of MLC-NA belongs to all Lay Marianists, in alliance with Mary and guided by the Holy Spirit. May this vision serve as a source of inspiration, renewal, and ownership of the Marianist charism and mission for all Lay Marianists in the years to come.

Part II: MLC-NA's Strategic Plan

In order to advance the vision of MLC-NA as a community with a common life and shared mission across all Lay Marianists and MLCs in North America, this strategic plan targets five areas for continued development:

- I. Formation
- II. Collaboration and Communication
- III. Promotion of Social and Ecological Justice
- IV. Resources for Lay Marianist Life
- V. Institutional Capacity and Development

Initiatives designed through the Year of Shared Discernment (YSD) process have been marked accordingly. The Leadership Council is committed to advertising and promoting these initiatives among Lay Marianists and, if enough Lay Marianists commit to participating, to supporting their further development and implementation.

I. Formation

The MLC-NA Leadership Council will promote both the initial and ongoing formation of Lay Marianists and MLCs into the Marianist charism, mission, spirituality, and life. As outlined in the *Guide to Life in the MLC-NA*, formation efforts range from more formal programs to a variety of means by which individuals and communities seek to deepen their knowledge of, commitment to, and life in the Marianist charism and mission. The Leadership Council will build its capacity to lead, facilitate, and promote both the formal and informal means of initial and ongoing formation of Lay Marianists and MLCs through the following six goals.

Goal 1: Develop an official Formation Guide that outlines the Leadership Council's policies and processes related to:

- (a) the formal programs that will be led, facilitated, or recommended by the Leadership Council for the initial formation of individuals who aspire to become a Lay Marianist or, alternatively, groups who wish to become a Marianist Lay Community,
- (b) a means for the Leadership Council to officially recognize and validate informal processes of initial formation for individuals who aspire to become a Lay Marianist or groups who wish to become a Marianist Lay Community, and a means for the Leadership Council to welcome new Lay Marianists and MLCs into MLC-NA.

- (c) the formal program(s) that will be led, facilitated, or recommended by the Leadership Council for the ongoing formation of Lay Marianists and MLCs,
- (d) a means for promoting, encouraging, and sharing other resources for the ongoing formation of Lay Marianists and MLCs that already exist, emerge organically, or are produced by other communities or institutions in the Marianist Family,
- (e) definitions of a Lay Marianist spiritual director, mentor, and formator; a means to encourage the requisite training of each; and a means to connect Lay Marianists and MLCs to each as needed,
- (f) a means to implement, oversee, and regularly update this Formation Guide, including the role that of each of the Leadership Council's Offices and Heads of Office plays in the formation of Lay Marianists and MLCs.

Goal 2: Update the *Guide to Life* to include any new information contained in the Formation Guide (see Goal 1) pertaining to the meaning and spirit of Lay Marianist formation or the "minimum threshold" of formation required for official recognition of an individual as a Lay Marianist.

Goal 3: Continue to conduct virtual formation programs for individuals who are discerning or aspire to become a Lay Marianist.

Goal 4: Develop programs to lead or facilitate the in-person, initial formation of individuals. Develop virtual and in-person programs to lead or facilitate the in-person, initial formation of groups who aspire to become an MLC together.

Goal 5: Promote the ongoing formation of Lay Marianists and MLCs through:

- (a) Directly supporting individual Lay Marianists and MLCs according to the unique needs, capacities, and situation of each
- (b) Facilitating a new initiative to develop and publish Marianist Insights Podcast, which will be a recorded series in which Lay Marianists and other Marianist thought leaders give a short talk or presentation from their own perspective about some aspect of the Marianist charism, spirituality, or mission. **[YSD Initiative]**
- (c) Facilitating the development of a Structured Dialogue initiative. Structured Dialogue Sessions will be small gatherings in which a group gets together to discuss important topics from a Marianist perspective, ranging from social justice issues to family life and more. These sessions

will be run by trained facilitators, and will serve as occasions for Lay Marianists to practice the arts of dialogue and community building. **[YSD Initiative]**

(d) Facilitating a new Lay Marianist Retreat that will bring together Lay Marianists from different communities, no community, or who are discerning becoming a Lay Marianist. **[YSD Initiative]**

(e) Continuing to find creative means of collaborating with NACMS, MSJC, Marianist Centers, retreat centers, SM and FMI persons and institutions, and other Marianist Family persons and institutions to develop resources and methods for the ongoing formation of Marianist Laity.

Goal 6: Implement the process developed in the Formation Guide to recognize and/or train spiritual directors, mentors, and formators.

II. Collaboration and Communication

To promote communal relationships and empower collaborative efforts on our common mission, the Leadership Council will develop and promote additional means of communication to connect Lay Marianists and MLCs across the United States and Canada. In so doing, the Leadership Council will be particularly attentive not only to the expanse of MLC-NA's geography, but also to differences in age and social location. Moreover, the Leadership Council will be intentional of the fact that virtual and physical spaces are increasingly interwoven. Rather than treat the coming-together of Lay Marianists in virtual and physical spaces as separate realities, the Leadership Council will meet its membership in the hybrid of physical and virtual spaces that is the reality of our times.

Goal 1: Bring the designated community contacts for all MLCs together for regular meetings, at least annually, in order to better know one another and share pertinent information about their respective communities.

Goal 2: Publish and maintain a "live" Membership Directory of all recognized Lay Marianists and MLCs that is synced with information in MLC-NA's official database. This directory is to be accessible only to Lay Marianists, other members of MLCs, and other members of the Marianist Family to whom the Leadership Council has given explicit permission for specified purposes.

Goal 3: Coordinate a group of Lay Marianists for the purposes of designing, developing, launching, supporting, and maintaining a virtual communication platform for all Lay Marianists and other members of an MLC. **[YSD Initiative]**

Goal 4: Establish more regular channels of communication with MLCs, Marianist Family Councils, other branches of the Marianist Family, and Marianist schools, institutions, and sponsored ministries. Be a catalyst and partner with these respective groups to creatively advance the participation of Marianist Laity in our common charism and mission.

Goal 5: More clearly identify individual Lay Marianists who are without an MLC, and develop inviting and inclusive means for these persons to participate more fully in the life of MLC-NA.

III. Promotion of Social and Ecological Justice

In order to deepen the engagement of MLC-NA with social justice efforts, the Leadership Council will continue to connect Lay Marianists and MLCs to the work of Marianist institutions and initiatives, as well as recent collaborative efforts led by the Holy See.

Goal 1: The Leadership Council will commit to the [Laudato Si Action Platform](#) (LSAP), as promoted by the Holy See's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. As part of this commitment, the Leadership Council will collaborate with the Mission of Mary Cooperative to facilitate an LSAP task force. This task force will follow the general guidelines published by the Holy See to discern, implement, and celebrate a means of broadly engaging Lay Marianists and MLCs in the task of ecological conversion. **[YSD Initiative]**

Goal 2: The Leadership Council will send two representatives of MLC-NA to a special working group of the Marianist Family Council of North America committed to carrying out actions in line with the Vatican's Laudato Si Action Platform and Global Compact on Education. These representatives will be tasked with:

- (a) Representing the cares, concerns, and unique perspective of the Lay Marianists to this working group;
- (b) Sharing the progress of MLC-NA's LSAP task force with the Marianist Family's working group, finding areas of common interest for potential collaboration, and collecting suggestions or feedback that will be of interest to MLC-NA's LSAP task force;
- (c) Building relationships with participating branches and institutions of the Marianist Family on issues pertaining to the Laudato Si Action Platform and Global Compact on Education;

- (d) Communicating and encouraging the participation of Lay Marianists and MLCs in the initiatives discerned by this working group; and
- (e) Reporting progress of the working group to the Leadership Council, and formally presenting the Leadership Council with any additional requests for resources or increased levels of participation.

Goal 3: Leverage the Lay Marianist virtual communication platform (Section II – Goal 3) and other communication tools to further promote the activities and resources of the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative's (MSJC) issue teams.

IV. Resources for Lay Marianist Life

In order to support the formation and unity of its membership, MLC-NA needs to clearly articulate the expectations and institutional aspects of what it means to belong to MLC-NA as the national territory of its international association of the faithful. Building on past efforts, the Leadership Council will oversee the production of documents, written for a broad public audience, that clearly delineate such expectations and institutional aspects. These documents are not intended to serve as primary formation materials; replace other written materials on the Marianist charism, mission, or spirituality; or circumvent the official documents of the IO-MLC or MLC-NA. Rather, their purpose will be to provide additional clarity on issues of structural and organizational importance within MLC-NA.

Goal 1: Assemble a cohesive compilation of public resources intended to orient aspiring Lay Marianists and provide clarity for existing Lay Marianists on the identity and nature of Lay Marianists, the Marianist Lay Communities as an association of the faithful, and the broader Marianist Family. This compilation will include:

- (a) An updated *Guide to Life in the MLC-NA* that clearly defines the identity and process of becoming a Lay Marianist
- (b) A template that can be used for the initial commitment or annual re-commitment of an MLC
- (c) A short primer on associations of the faithful
- (d) A document describing the place of MLC-NA in the broader Marianist Family, especially including
 - i. The structure of the International Organization of MLCs, its regions, national entities, etc.

- ii. The structure of MLC-NA's Leadership Council, elections, area representatives, etc.
 - iii. The nature of Marianist Family Councils
 - iv. A short description of all 4 branches of the Marianist Family
 - v. The types of Marianist institutions, organizations, and programs and their relationship to each of the branches
- (e) An Outreach Assessment Guide to help MLCs develop, focus, or renew their community's mission

V. Institutional Capacity and Development

In order to support the lay branch of the Marianist Family in living its charism and spirituality, as well as carrying out the missionary dynamic of its charism, MLC-NA must increase its institutional capacities and resources. In order to build the institutional capacity of the association in a manner authentic to its charism, MLC-NA's Leadership Council will intentionally seek ways to develop resources in and through the context of mission. In other words, the Leadership Council will primarily seek to build its capacities and resources – whether in the form of relationships, fiscal revenue, volunteer time, or otherwise – in the context of the association's mission to the church and world.

Goal 1: Implement a Development Plan to cultivate the necessary donations of time, talent, and treasure necessary to support both the volunteer and professional staff roles within MLC-NA and achieve fiscal solvency for the organization.

Goal 2: Design and implement a new program in accordance with the Marianist charism that will both advance the Marianist mission to the church and world and also generate sufficient financial support in the form of grants and donations to make a substantive, positive contribution to MLC-NA's financial solvency.

Goal 3: Develop working relationships with other associations of the faithful, ecclesial movements, religious congregations and societies, etc., in North America, and seek opportunities to share and collaborate on topics relevant to the Marianist charism and mission.

Goal 4: Provide technological support to the International Organization of MLCs (IO-MLC) in order to advance the ability of Marianist Laity to communicate and collaborate internationally. Specific endeavors include the design, launch, and maintenance of a new website for the IO-MLC and technological support in communicating the proceedings of the 2022 International Assembly.

Goal 5: Continue to listen attentively to both the needs and interests of all Lay Marianists and MLCs, and then meet those needs and interests with the highest degree of support possible. More specifically, this means that the Leadership Council will remain actively attentive to the needs and interests of its membership and regularly look for opportunities to respond creatively to those needs and interests through the use of its existing resources, its ability to build relationships, and its ability to develop new resources and capacities.