

Mid-Atlantic Member Area Meeting Minutes

October 25, 2023, 12n-3pm

Location: Franciscan Friar Residence
1359 Monroe Street, NE Washington, DC 20017



Attendees: Sister Fran Gorsuch, CBS, Sister Jean Rhoads, DC, Father Manny Vasconcelos, OFM, and Sister Ruby Sampang, RMI,
Via Zoom: Chris Swain, (Director of Vocation Ministry, Christian Brothers), Sister Carol Jean Dust, SSND, Sister Josita Colbert, SNDdeN, Sister Pat Dowling, CBS, Sister Marcia Hall, OSP, and Lisa Schneider (Assistant to DC Vocation Directors)

Opening Blessing: Led by Sr. Jean Rhoads, D.C. with readers from in-person members.

Presentation: ***Technology & Social Media, Trends and Techniques for Vocation Directors*** by Chris Swain, Director, Office of Lasallian Vocation Ministry at Christian Brothers Conf.

Highlights

- The Spirit is at work in our ministry and social media strategies.
 - The primary role of vocation directors is assessment, accompaniment, promotion, animation of our congregational members, and presence.
 - Social media is a tool to invite people from the anonymous space of the internet into a relationship and invite them to consider discernment to consecrated life.
 - Plan social media so the next generation and generation after may know the love of God and the witness of religious communities in the life of the Church.
 - Focus on these questions: *Who am I trying to reach? For whom am I doing this?*
 - TikTok is the fastest-growing social media. Instagram is currently the most used and should be where we focus more time and energy.
 - Instagram and Facebook are owned by Meta. It's easy to post in both of those places because they are connected. Reuse and repost!
 - Due to algorithms, more frequent postings receive greater visibility on platforms.
 - 80% of posts should be focused on the people who might be discerning. 20% of our content should be "hard" sells, i.e., "Come and experience our life as a brother."
 - Directly link your website as much as possible to Facebook, "X" (i.e., Twitter) and Instagram. It gives more information to persons interested. N.B. Many people have disengaged from Twitter due to anger and polarization in that space.
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- Reels, Stories, Videos
 - Video elements of Instagram are called reels – quick video clips. and these are up-to-a-minute quick videos. You can parcel a video and post multiple reels from one video. Instagram will transcribe and caption a video for you.
 - Instagram has an element called "stories" (i.e., videos, photos or words). Stories have a temporary lifespan of 24 hours and then they disappear.
 - Go live either on Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube. For example, you can video a vow profession ceremony and invite people to join live. Then you have a recorded video to be able to share with others afterwards.
 - Young adults value authentic experiences of praying together or serving in ministry.

- Tell people what you want them to do – for example, *Check out our website, “like” our post, ask us a question, share a comment*, etc.
- Faces and quotes are effective and receive more likes.
- Evaluate what social media posts are successful and those that are not effective. Review social media analytics. Have conversations with discerners to better tailor how you’re posting on social media.
- TikTok is growing dramatically. Young people are lessening their time on Snapchat and Instagram.
- TikTok takes more time and energy resources and requires more people who have that skill set to be able to show community rather than individuality.
- All social media platforms have some concerns with security and privacy and some of the things related to the “dark” side of the Internet. This challenges our ethics and morals so we must discern how to be a positive face of the Community and the Church. Or are we just another voice in the space?
- Having 2 separate Instagram channels has benefits and challenges. With more than one Instagram channel, you can be more focused on different aspects of the congregation and may reach a wider audience.

NRVC – Member Area Coordinator Meeting Updates: Sister Jean Rhoads, DC

1. This is the 35th anniversary of NRVC and special memories were shared including themes from past convocations.
2. Intercultural Development: A significant part of the meeting flowed from Pope Francis’ statement from June 3, 2020, on diversity:
We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.

Using grant funds from the Hilton Foundation, NRVC had consultant, Mylon Kirksy, introduce and guide the MACs in a process called *Intercultural Development Inventory* (IDI). It is a part of Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) but goes deeper.

We completed an individual assessment and an interview with the consultant to review our assessment. Now we each will do a development plan based on the results of that assessment and integrate that in the NRVC ministry. NRVC has a 3-year program grant for interculturality humility, and anti-racism as a life-long pursuit and plans to gradually integrate the process into the NRVC organization.

3. NRVC Efforts and Support:
Database – Marge Argyelan

She is trying to update the database and extract topics that are not as popular and prioritize topics that are more relevant. Keeping the membership data up to date continues to be a challenge.

Board – Len Uhal, Vice Chair (also national lay vocation director for Divine Word)
NRVC had kept its membership fees the same through Covid but they decided to raise the membership fees by 2.5% this year. There has been a recent transition on the board: Terms expired for Sister Mindy Welding, IHM, Fr. Adam McDonald, SVD, and Sister Belinda Monaghan, OSB. Sister Nicole Straham, FML is now the chair and Len is vice chair. Sister Belinda will continue as vice chair through December.

Finance -- Maureen Cetera

Maureen is back in Chicago and gave detailed ways NRVC could contain its expenses and make good use of its investments. We received a \$500,000 anonymous donation in 2022.

Programs -- Sister Debbie Borneman, SS.CM

The next Convocation will be in Minneapolis from October 31st through November 4th, 2024, at the Double Tree Hotel and will be hosted by the Upper Midwest Region. There are different levels of sponsorship from \$500 to \$25,000. Please remember that NRVC has a Misericordia fund to assist religious congregations who need money to subsidize educational events like this.

Sister Dina Bato, S.P.

The 2024 Summer Institute is going to be in Leavenworth at the Marillac Center beginning July 10 - 29, 2024. Outlines for these excellent programs are on the NRVC website.

Development – Phil Loftus

The NFCRV continues building up funds towards alleviating educational debt of applicants to religious life. They have awarded over a million dollars in grants since 2014 (51 grants to 31 active communities).

Member Area Vocation Events: Members present shared events

Vocation events included having community groups serve with various congregations both in the USA as well as on the international level. *Pray, Walk, Eat* at Catholic University on September 25th was a success. Ten congregations were represented and there were 44 who walked with us and prayed the rosary. About 70 young adults attended Mass at St. Vincent's Chapel and stayed afterward to visit communities at the nearby tables and share pizza and desserts.

Upcoming large events include NCYC in Indianapolis from November 16-18, 2023, and SEEK24 in St. Louis from January 1-5, 2024. Information is online.

The members were encouraged to share other vocation events with the group so the information could be shared with members in our Member Area.

Next Meeting Date in Spring 2024:

Please send ideas for topics for the Spring meeting to Sister Kathleen Persson or Sister Jean Rhoads.

A doodle poll will go out in the next few weeks to determine best date for next meeting.