



Istituto dei
FRATELLI DELLE SCUOLE CRISTIANE
Segretari per l'Associazione

This month's reflection on the realities of Association comes from Ms. Kerry Conroy for the District of Eastern North America (DENA). Kerry is the Associate Director for the Office for Mission and Ministry. Part of her responsibilities include accompanying various Associative Groups in the District. These groups of Brothers and Partners create intentional communities from various ministries in geographical areas or from other groups of Lasallians who seek to build community and share in spirituality and mission. Here is what Kerry has to say about their experience.

"The District of Eastern North America is blessed to have a number of Associative Groups. These are groups made of Lasallians (Brothers and Partners) who are joined together in association for the mission. Associative Groups in the District help to strengthen the experience of belonging so critical to the journey of association. They are non-residential communities that create spaces for Lasallians to share spirituality, mission, and vocation. Some of them are organized by geographic regions. Others are organized by specific groups or activities.



The origin of our Associative Groups was very organic. They were created in response to grassroots efforts to create creative models of association. After

experiences of formation and networking, there was a desire from Brothers and Partners to make connections beyond the educational communities in ministries. There was a desire to live the idea of "Together and by Association." Formation programs helped fan the flame for Associative Groups as Lasallians learned the gift there was in connecting with other like-minded people sharing in the Lasallian Mission. As Auxiliary Visitor, Br. Thomas Casey, says "They (the groups) sprout up like weeds....And then bloom into flowers!"

Some of the groups pre-date the formation of DENA (formed in 2009). When DENA was formed, these organizations already in existence wrote a letter to the Institute (at the behest of Br. Charles Kitson, former Coordinating Secretary for Association and the Lasallian Family) to appeal for recognition. What resulted was the formation of the Association for Lasallian Mission Committee (ALMC). This is a group of representatives from each of the Association Groups. ALMC meets three times per year to discuss what is happening in each of the groups, make plans for future activities, and joins in prayer and fellowship.

Today, each of the Associative Groups has formed their own unique identity. They are organized and run by Brothers and Partners. The groups are not run by the District office. They are open and

welcoming of all who are interested in joining. The Associative Groups meet with varied frequency and for different purposes. Gatherings include prayer, service opportunities or projects, formation, and fellowship. They help create a deep sense of community and belonging. The greatest lessons that groups have learned is to keep it simple, meaningful, and focused on building communities for mission. Associate Executive Director for the Office for Mission and Ministry, Maryann Donohue Lynch says that “the opportunity for Lasallians to gather around the principles of faith, service and community and to determine how that is expressed via inter-ministry gatherings is indeed the gift that the Associative Groups bring to the lived experience of the Lasallian mission in DENA.”

An example of inter-ministry relationships is organizing a gathering around an already scheduled event. For example, the Philadelphia Area Lasallian Ministries (PALM) group attends an annual Advent event hosted at La Salle University. The group then meets for a social with the Brothers of the University afterwards. Other



groups, such as the Lasallian Association of Metropolitan Ministries (LAMM), do annual service activities together. They will combine the service/volunteering event with a shared prayer and meal. RILAG (Rhode Island Lasallian Association Groups) members hold an annual commissioning ceremony in which they make a commitment to remain active and present to the group for the upcoming school year.

These groups are inspiring, energizing, and fun. They are beneficial on so many levels. Individuals are touched by their attendance, ministries build a sense of community, and the District is strengthened as a whole by the formation that takes place. They are truly a gift to DENA.”

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We invite you to consider the following questions as we discern together as a Lasallian Family the role of community in association and mission:

1. What have been your most profound experiences of Lasallian Community outside your ministry? What role has community played on your journey of Association?
2. *Circular 461* calls on the creation of new and creative forms of community to sustain mission (6.9). How can we be protagonist in creating intentional community as called for in *Circular 461*?



Live Jesus in our Hearts!

Rome, 15 June 2019

Mrs. Heather Ruple Gilson and Brother Paco Chiva

Co-Secretaries for Association