

## 2023 U.S. Regional Assembly and Convention Report

The five members of the 2023 Regional Assembly Preparatory Committee, Cynthia Gonzalez, Genevieve Jordan Laskey (facilitator), Bob Mosher (chair), Jeff Norton and Brendan O'Sullivan, have written up this report on the Assembly, and included the notes of George Da Roza (secretary) from the Convention, with the hopes of being accurate and faithful to the spirit of the process.

This document includes the U.S. Regional planning framework and notes from key conversations that took place during the Stage Two Regional Assembly and Convention.

Sincerely,

Bob Mosher



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# U.S. REGIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 2023 - 2026

Timeline: 2023 - 2026

To be reviewed end of 2026 to be updated for 3 more years

Organized by key priorities under three areas:

## **Development & Mission Promotion**

Communication & development, with emphasis on education and invitation to mission

## **Mission Wisdom**

Holistic care for the elderly and receptivity to their contributions to Regional life and mission

## **Mission Engagement**

Pastoral ministry and Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) ministries

Suggested accountability measures:

- Identify 1 co-worker and 1 Columban from Regional Council who are accountable for each area and its key priorities
- Use Zoom to have Regional Council members each have a geographical group they meet with and hear from/get input from



# DEVELOPMENT & MISSION PROMOTION

## 2023 - 2026 PRIORITIES

### 1 Increased (frequency and variety) of mission-specific communication in web and print.

<b>RESOURCES NEEDED</b>	Columbans & Columban Lay Missioners to write 2 stories per year; Commitment to translation of stories
<b>POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS</b>	Language barriers, fear, permissions for photographs; magazines aren't read as much in some parishes and Columbanos not as effective on border;
<b>LEADS</b>	Communications department, Members, Columban Lay Missioners

### 2 Bridge the generational gap/personal relationships with benefactors.

<b>RESOURCES NEEDED</b>	Members, Columban Lay Missioners holdign events in various communities including invited young and older benefactors or possible benefactors.  Use relationships to draw others in.  Continued contact with those who attend mission exposure and JPIC interns.
<b>POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS</b>	Language gap (Korean, Hispanic, Filipino, etc.); Fewer members available; bias against certain countries we work in
<b>LEADS</b>	Members, Columban Lay Missioners, Development officers

# MISSION WISDOM

## 2023 - 2026 PRIORITIES

### 1 Keep the Community together without downgrading the healthcare they are currently receiving.

#### RESOURCES NEEDED

- Keep staffing as needed /resident ratio

#### POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS

- Declining residents

#### LEADS

Fr. Chris Saenz, Fr. John Brannigan, Pam Serbst, Alda Barboza

#### CONSIDERATIONS

- Keep the residents involved in the decision and process of discerning.
- Make the decisions realistic and attainable.
- Use the Bristol home as a resource for others in the community. Currently happening ie meetings, grounds, confessions, visitations, retreats, picnics, assisting parishes, sick calls to local nursing/veterans homes. Nursing home visits to both Columban Priests and other residents as well as celebrating weekly Mass at the nursing home and Veterans home.
- Share mission wisdom/discussion that Fr. Bob could interview guys and get their stories on video.

### 2 Explore combining with other Religious groups.

#### RESOURCES NEEDED

Dialogue with Sisters of St. Dorothy / possibility of them moving into Bristol / Keeping them together in one wing/ utilizing the services already available (nursing/kitchen/housekeeping/administration)

#### POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS

At some point in time we would be back to square 1.  
\*This joining of 2 entities could keep both religious groups in Community for a longer period of time with assistance.

#### LEADS

Fr. Chris Saenz, Fr. John Brannigan, Pam Serbst, Alda Barboza

### 3 Find alternative housing.

#### RESOURCES NEEDED

- Dialogue with the diocese / new Bishop - Fr. Chris
- Look into St. Claires - Pam/Alda/Fr. Brannigan
- Dialogue with Franklin Ct. -Pam/Alda/Fr. Brannigan
- Look at alternative properties /when number of residents becomes smaller.
- Discussion suggestions / leasing apartments together/convents/rectories no longer in use or used minimally -
- Invite New Bishop back to Bristol residence and then begin dialogue.

#### POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS

- Cost
- Proper facilities
- Location
- Chapel needed

#### LEADS

Fr. Chris Saenz, Fr. John Brannigan, Pam Serbst, Alda Barboza

#### CONSIDERATIONS

- Looking at 3 years depending on the number in the house
- Number of remaining residents to be determined

# MISSION ENGAGEMENT

## 2023 - 2026 PRIORITIES

### 1 Born out of love for our migrant sisters and brothers, we are committed to accompanying them on their journey to a better life.

#### RESOURCES NEEDED

CBMT: Columban Border Ministry Team:

- Juarez Migrant Ministry: Columban Migrant Welcome Center at Cathedral. Casa San Columbano. Casa Acogida. Migrant Ministry Team. Corpus Christi Parish, Anapra.
- The CMC (Columban Mission Center) is a well-established space in El Paso to facilitate local gatherings related to the accompaniment of migrants and refugees, advocate for immigration-related issues (JPE), educate the local and broader communities, recruit and form volunteers, raise funds and awareness, and engage with SSC benefactors.

Annunciation House/Ruben Garcia, El Paso, principal collaborators with SSC for decades

CLINIC (Catholic Legal Immigration Network), Immigration Lawyer, Tania Guerrero

Columban GMO (General Mission Office), Bellevue, NE

- Columban Mission, Misión Columbana
- Columban.org and Columbanos.org
- Other media, fund-raising appeals, Calendars, Prayer Cards/Booklets, etc.
- Videos, podcasts, etc.

Omaha Area Collaborators: Omaha Welcomes Strangers, Women Refugees Rising, Heartland Workers Center, Sisters of Mercy and other religious communities. Possible Collaborators: St. Mary's Catholic Church, Archdiocese of Omaha, Catholic Charities.

Other Collaborators in Juarez, El Paso and points north such as Dallas, Denver, Chicago.

#### POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS

- A general reluctance by the U.S. Catholic Church to recognize migration and challenge its underlying causes.
- Resistance by many U.S. Catholics to follow the scriptural mandate and Pope Francis' command to "welcome the stranger."

#### LEADS

Fr. Bill Morton, Cristina Coronado, Jeff Norton, Fr. Bob Mosher (Co-collaborators; Juan Carlos Garcia and Fr. Chris Saenz, US Region Director)

## 2 Focus on relevant JPE issues, particularly migration of peoples and climate change/action.

### RESOURCES NEEDED

- Explore prior advocacy successes of CCAO and JPIC in the two priority areas.
- Update JPE Coordinator job description to reflect Society and Region priorities.
- Consult with Amy Woolam-Echeverria and draw on her prior experience and her current role as Society JPIC Coordinator.
- Seek opportunities for greater collaboration with like-minded organizations that share our priorities, spirit and willingness

### POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS

- Socio-economic and political influences that are counter to our central JPE mission and purpose.
- The magnitude of some issues can be overwhelming and urgent

### LEADS

Cynthia Gonzalez and Kate Kenny

## 3 Engage with youth and young adults in the mission of Jesus.

### RESOURCES NEEDED

- Evaluate current marketing and communication methods, particularly E-channel and social media to ensure we are reaching youth with our message..
- Conduct focus groups or utilize other mechanisms that help us to understand the issues that motivate and interest youth/young adults.
- Create experiential opportunities for youth/young adults to live their faith through action.
- Seek to better understand how to bridge and sustain the interest and passion of youth and young adults as they mature into older adults.

### POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS

- Gaining access to youth that are willing to engage with us.
- Building a sense of community among diverse groups of youth.
- Keeping pace with the energy and enthusiasm of youth so that their level of engagement is sustained.

### LEADS

Juan Carlos Garcia and Fr. Al Utzig



# STAGE ONE AREA ASSEMBLY THEMES

Stage One Area Assemblies took place through four Area Assemblies across the U.S. Region.

Repeated themes across the U.S. Region included calls to:

**Clarify Columban mission and identity for today.**

**Commit to co-responsibility (between co-workers, collaborators, and Columban Fathers)**

**Embrace being small.**

**Look to youth.**

**Follow the Holy Spirit and practice synodality.**

These themes were used as the foundation for the design of the topics and conversations in the Stage Two assembly. They are explained in further detail here.

# CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE 2024 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Participants at the 2023 Stage Two General Assembly brainstormed areas of contribution to the 2024 General Assembly. These were discussed at the Convention of Columbans following the Regional Assembly. These ideas rose to the top of the list for consideration to be discussed at the General Assembly:

- Aging of the Society
- Ethical issue of inviting possible candidates to membership
- Closing of Regions and/or Mission Unit
- Issues and problems with lack of adequate personnel roles for leadership
- Charism, spirituality and identity of Columbans
- The U.S. as a place for Mission, not a sending but receiving

# COMMIT TO CO-RESPONSIBILITY

Participants participated in “Spiritual Conversations” about co-responsibility. They were then asked to brainstorm ideas that were easy to implement and more challenging to implement for how to commit to co-responsibility. The ideas with the most votes included having some training for co-workers as they assume more responsibility, to do just one thing outside of your comfort zone, and to have Columbans commit to writing 1-2 articles each year. Other ideas are grouped by theme and are for consideration by the U.S. Regional Council:

## **Make structural commitments to co-responsibility.**

- Columban co-responsibility in Society structures
- Create structures that strengthen co-responsibility in Columban society
- Structural change
- Develop mechanism of mutual work, collaboration and co-responsibilities

## **Bring co-responsibility into decision making.**

- Decision making- committed co-responsibility
- Identify, contact, dialogue, reach an agreement with a group in Omaha about effectively accompanying migrants
- Be sure everyone on team clearly understand the task, what their role is and makes a commitment before the whole group and accepts timelines
- Balancing co-responsibility with someone has to make a final decision

## **Strengthen internal communications.**

- Improve (internal) communication
- Developing structures of dialogue
- Organize an effective communications on the region
- Regular meetings about Columban issues for all Columbans
- Increased intentional communication
- Share with the community of Columbans in a simple way

## **Have a clear and shared understanding of co-responsibility.**

- Have a concrete and clear definition of co-responsibility-- rationale, so we all have a clear understanding of what we mean by co-responsibility
- Have a clear, shared working definition of co-responsibility
- Working definition of co-responsibility in Columban society

# COMMIT TO CO-RESPONSIBILITY

## **Plan for increased collaboration between coworkers and members now and with the future in mind.**

- Support and working together as we get smaller
- To cohesively bring the responsibilities of columban and coworkers together and determine what can be shared in responsibility
- Do an analysis of the work of the Omaha office and make a plan about how each task will be handled 10 years from now
- Increased intentional collaboration
- To maintain sustainability with less Columbans and higher expense and dues to greater need from co-workers
- Continuity or sustainability of accepting the responsibilities assigned

## **Do something out of the norm for you.**

- Three times each year do something outside your particular ministry or job that supports another columban or co-worker
- Do just one thing out of your comfort zone or area of responsibilities
- Once a month, take a half day to assist or show support for another Columban or coworker

## **Take part in staff/team development.**

- Staff meetings - maybe have more idea time and less "my department did/does this." Get people thinking about co-responsibility instead of isolation.
- Agree to spend time being formed on what it is to be a team. Have some discussions, goals, to achieve together before beginning to be a exercise in co-responsibility
- Clear delineation of assignments/responsibility

## **Help one another!**

- Mechanism to check on each other and support each other. Priests, lay missionaries and co-workers
- Ensure that our present coworkers are more supported in their ministries
- Ask someone to help you with a task

# EXPLORING SMALLNESS IN THE SOCIETY

As we discussed the stage one theme, “embracing being small,” one small group noted that we might not all agree about what smallness is and isn’t. Participants brainstormed that:

## Smallness is:

- “The mustard seed is the smallest of seeds, but it brings about the greatest of faith.” One should not fear smallness but embrace the possibility of great faith.
- Challenging all to develop talents in mission.
- Focused
- A way to focus on the most important things
- Efficient use of available resources.
- Using our resources as well as we can.
- About relying on others who can give strengths in your areas of weakness
- Awareness that ALL of us need each other.
- Smallness is about working together.

Just like the ants or the small fish in the ocean:  
sticking together makes them stronger.



## Smallness isn't:

- About excluding others
- Being narrow minded
- About the numbers or size but rather about being restricted to the perimeters of one's own thinking
- About number of people
- Taking a “woe is me” attitude and assuming nothing big or even worthwhile is possible
- Avoiding challenges
- Giving up because we no longer have the resources or personnel of past



# 2023 U.S. REGIONAL CONVENTION

Held immediately after the Stage two Regional Assembly, on October 27, 2023, in Bellevue, Nebraska.

Election of chairperson and secretary: Bob Mosher and George Da Roza, respectively.

## **List of attendees with voting privileges:**

- Arturo Aguilar
- John Brannigan
- John Burger
- John Comisky
- Tom Cusack
- George Da Roza
- Gerry Dunne
- Bill Morton
- Robert Mosher
- Brendan O’Sullivan
- Chris Saenz
- Al Utzig

Also in attendance: Tim Mulroy (Society Leader)

## **Agenda:**

1. Proposed changes to the Society’s Constitution and Directory.
2. What do we wish to bring to the General Assembly?

# VOTES ON THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE SOCIETY OF ST. COLUMBAN'S CONSTITUTION AND DIRECTORY:

## Out of 12 valid votes:

1. 0 approve, 10 disapprove, 2 abstentions.
2. 0 approve, 10 disapprove, 2 abstentions.
3. 0 approve, 12 disapprove, 0 abstention.
4. 0 approve, 11 disapprove, 1 abstention.
5. 0 approve, 12 disapprove, 0 abstention.
6. 0 approve, 11 disapprove, 1 abstention.
7. 0 approve, 11 disapprove, 1 abstention.
8. 12 approve, 0 disapprove, 0 abstention.
9. 11 approve, 0 disapprove, 1 abstentions.
10. 1 approve, 11 disapprove, 0 abstention.
11. 0 approve, 12 disapprove, 0 abstention.
12. 1 approve, 10 disapprove, 1 abstention
13. Convention agreed to delete this item from consideration (item 8 makes it irrelevant).
14. 0 approve, 12 disapprove, 0 abstention.
15. 4 approve, 5 disapprove, 3 abstentions.
16. 7 approve, 0 disapprove, 5 abstentions.
17. 11 approve, 0 disapprove, 1 abstention.
18. 0 approve, 12 disapprove, 0 abstention.
19. 10 approve, 0 disapprove, 2 abstentions.
20. 3 approve, 7 disapprove, 2 abstentions.
21. 0 approve, 12 disapprove, 0 abstention.
22. 0 approve, 10 disapprove, 2 abstentions.
23. 0 approve, 10 disapprove, 2 abstentions.
24. Convention agreed that this item is no longer relevant (see item 8)
25. 0 approve, 12 disapprove, 0 abstention.
26. 11 approve, 0 disapprove, 1 abstention.
27. Already discussed on item 7 and voted upon
28. 1 approve, 2 disapprove, 9 abstentions.
29. 2 approve, 2 disapprove, 8 abstentions.
30. 0 approve, 1 disapprove, 11 abstentions.
31. 0 approve, 0 disapprove, 12 abstentions.
32. 0 approve, 0 disapprove, 12 abstentions.
33. 0 approve, 0 disapprove, 12 abstentions.
34. 0 approve, 1 disapprove, 11 abstentions.
35. 0 approve, 2 disapprove, 10 abstentions.
36. 0 approve, 4 disapprove, 8 abstentions.
37. 0 approve, 4 disapprove, 8 abstentions.
38. 1 approve, 3 disapprove, 8 abstentions.
39. 0 approve, 0 disapprove, 12 abstentions.
40. 2 approve, 1 disapprove, 9 abstentions.
41. 0 approve, 1 disapprove, 11 abstentions.
42. 0 approve, 3 disapprove, 9 abstentions.
43. 1 approve, 1 disapprove, 10 abstentions.
44. 0 approve, 0 disapprove, 12 abstentions
45. 0 approve, 1 disapprove, 11 abstentions.
46. 1 approve, 1 disapprove, 10 abstentions.
47. Not relevant as it us dealt with in item 8.
48. 0 approve, 2 disapprove, 10 abstentions.
49. 0 approve, 1 disapprove, 11 abstentions.
50. 0 approve, 1 disapprove, 11 abstentions.
51. 0 approve, 1 disapprove, 11 abstentions.
52. 0 approve, 1 disapprove, 11 abstentions.
53. 0 approve, 1 disapprove, 11 abstentions.
54. 1 approve, 0 disapprove, 11 abstentions.
55. 0 approve, 0 disapprove, 12 abstentions.
56. 0 approve, 1 disapprove, 11 abstentions.
57. 1 approve, 1 disapprove, 10 abstentions.
58. 2 approve, 0 disapprove, 10 abstentions.

After the votes were taken, the chair asked if there were any further comments or discussions on the proposed changes. Hearing none, the chair in consultation with the group agreed to meet in the afternoon at 1:00 for an hour to discuss what the US Region wanted to bring to the General Assembly. Brendan O'Sullivan agreed to have copies made of some of the potential ideas brought up at the Regional Assembly for this session.

### **Afternoon session - Concerns raised and discussed:**

- Aging of the Society
- Ethical issue of inviting possible candidates to membership
- Closing of Regions and/or Mission Unit
- Issues and problems with lack of adequate personnel roles for leadership
- Charism, spirituality and identity of Columbans
- The U.S. as a place for Mission, not a sending but receiving

**The meeting concluded at 2pm as agreed with a blessing of the delegates to the General Assembly.**