

CHINA MISSION UNIT (CMU) PRE-G.A. 2024 ASSEMBLY REPORT

CMU FEEDBACK ON IRMU RECOMMENDATIONS

IRMU RECOMMENDATION 1: *To create a culture of accountability supported by rigorous policy procedures and ongoing monitoring.*

The Society places great value on accountability and recognizes the importance of establishing structures to promote it among its priests, lay missionaries, students and co-workers. However, like any organization, there may be challenges that can hinder the implementation of these structures. Among the challenges faced by the Society in creating a culture of accountability are clericalism, lack of understanding among leaders of what accountability entails, and an individualistic approach to the Society's mission.

It is essential to emphasize the value of accountability and to encourage its internalization among its priests, lay missionaries, students and co-workers. One way to achieve this is by instilling the importance of accountability early on in the formation of students, orientation of lay missionaries and induction of co-workers. Effective mentoring is a crucial tool to cultivate accountability as a core value within the Society. Columbans must understand that they have a responsibility to the Society, and along with their rights as members come their responsibilities.

We acknowledge that accountability is a continuous process, and everyone in the Society needs to be continuously encouraged to strive towards accountability in their actions and decisions. By promoting a culture of accountability, the Society can operate with transparency and integrity, and everyone can be held accountable for their actions.

IRMU RECOMMENDATION 2: *To conduct a strategic independent review of the Columban Society in the light of mission priorities (JPIC/IRD, etc.) and to create a strategic plan of action based on the review.*

We affirm in Dr. Evans's report the need to address the sustainability of Columban structures because we are spread too thinly over too many places and we have too many people involved in leadership roles. We affirm the valued experience of lay missionaries and co-workers and their taking on further leadership and administration into the future. Throughout Columban history, it has been shown that we are able to change so long as there is a willingness to do so. This has led to fresh expressions of mission.

We affirm the section in Dr. Evans's report that speaks of the need to "focus on ministries that make clearly evident the characteristic Columban mission and what this brings to the world." We also agree with the report when it highlights the serious questions about sustainability. In light of this, we see the need to avoid going beyond what the report refers to as "the point of no return".

Appointments to positions of leadership are important decisions in the life of the Society and need to be done wisely. We also see that the missionary spirit is important, something that can shine through even when smaller numbers of Columbans are involved.

We believe the 75% response rate to Dr. Evans's survey is very positive. It is an indication that the survey results reflect the thinking of the Missionary Society of St. Columban at this time. If the survey had given the collated feedback of younger Columbans, it would allow us to be clearer about the viewpoint of this group within the Society.

We understand that in the process of necessary restructuring, we may need to let go of many things. However, it is essential to recognize the missionary dimension of vocations ministry, leadership, and formation. We also see the need for a change in language, which can manifest in subtle ways throughout Columban life. For instance, referring to certain Columbans as being involved in the "coalface of mission" is an inadequate expression that assumes others are less involved in the Society's mission.

Leadership is an important responsibility in the Society's life. While it may be challenging for many Columbans to accept leadership roles, it is also crucial that some people need to let go to create space for younger people to engage in new ways of mission.

As the Society facilitates a change in structures, there will likely be greater involvement of lay people in decision-making processes. With such changes, parts of our Constitutions may need to be revised to facilitate this development.

IRMU RECOMMENDATION 3: *To facilitate an independent review and assessment of the vocation programs based on internal and external data, trends, and other congregational plans with a view to creating a strategic plan based on the outcomes.*

We hope that Dr. Evans's final report will explore the contents of this IRMU recommendation, and thus assist the Society and RMUs in creating a strategic plan for the Society's vocation programs for students and lay missionaries.

In response to the review of the Manila International Formation Programme, our overall opinion is that we support the Manila International Formation Programme. It is good that students have the opportunity to express their views, even when difficulties arise. A concern for us is that even with the best of intentions, the seeds of clericalism can be planted during the early years of Columban formation. It can happen when particular differences and advantages exist within the formation programme among staff and students.

Despite this concern, we recognize that Columban formation provides good opportunities for our students, and we wish to continue providing them with the best possible formation.

It would be helpful if we could promote a greater Society-wide understanding and appreciation of the important role that formators have within the Society. The positive experience of Columban formators and the experience of some who have benefitted from Columban formation could be used to highlight this through webinars or video presentations. If we have a greater awareness of these important roles in the Society, it might encourage a greater openness among Columbans to take up the roles when the needs arise.

There would be benefits if we could have a pool of formators available for the formation roles. In this scenario, they would have acquired the skills a few years in advance of needing to take up the roles. Emotional preparation is also needed before Columbans take on these roles.

It does not seem viable to move to a situation which would see Columban seminarians living in houses of formation that are not Columban. In order to ensure that younger Columbans receive a good number of years in a cross cultural setting, could we move to a situation where Columbans who are over 60 years of age would be appointed to formation roles?

IRMU RECOMMENDATION 4: *To grow our partnerships with Columban lay missionaries and co-workers as an integral part of Columban mission and gospel witness to the universal Church.*

The Society has undergone significant changes over the years to include not only priests but also lay missionaries and co-workers in our mission. This evolution has brought new perspectives, skills, and expertise to our mission, and we acknowledge the value that this diversity brings. We recommend that lay missionaries and co-workers be given greater opportunities to contribute to our efforts. We believe that this will require active engagement from all members of the Society, as well as a willingness to explore creative structures that allow for fuller participation of lay missionaries and co-workers in the life of the Society within the framework of Canon Law.

We believe that it is essential to move beyond the idea of working for "my mission" and instead embrace the concept of working towards God's mission together. This approach will require a shift in mindset, as well as a willingness to let go of any obstacles that may be standing in the way.

We also recognize the value of continued recruitment efforts by lay missionaries. With their help, we can sustain our partnership in mission and continue to expand our contribution to God's mission. The future of the Society lies in the hands of all Columbans, priests, lay missionaries, students and co-workers, and we must work together to ensure that the mission entrusted to us endures.

IRMU RECOMMENDATION 5: *To create a culture of mentoring and support for leadership that is shared and sustainable and includes co-workers.*

To create a culture of mentoring and support for leadership, there needs to be a structured approach. It is important to focus on team building for people in leadership and pay attention to the relationship between leaders and others in the RMU.

As we see people from other cultures, lay people, and women take up roles, we need to be mindful of our attitudes and emotions towards them. Each RMU can learn from the mentoring and leadership experiences of other RMUs. Early experiences in leadership should be provided in various settings to build confidence in people and allow them to take up more substantial roles in leadership.

Processes that foster trust and ownership of roles should be established. Humility is required among Columbans in leadership, especially when working with people who have professional skills in leadership. Sometimes leaders need to learn to let go and trust in the abilities of others to take on leadership roles, thereby exploring new possibilities.

IRMU RECOMMENDATION 6: *To explore and define a new expression of Columban missionaries: identity, language, image, etc.*

Columbans share a collective spirit that is often challenging to define, yet unmistakably shines through due to our strong sense of belonging. This inclusive identity is shared among priests, students, lay missionaries, and co-workers, and continues to evolve over time.

The phrase "Columban Pilgrim" has become a way to describe this shared identity because many individuals in countries where Columbans work self-identify as Columbans, despite not being affiliated with the Society officially. It is essential for Columbans to respond to those who identify as such, including former students, benefactors, and those who grew up knowing Columbans. Responding to their situation by facilitating their inclusion in a new structure that recognizes their connection with the Society is one way to respond to their needs. Celebrating their self-identification as Columbans by providing creative responses, such as days of recollection and pilgrimages, is another way to acknowledge their contribution.

The diverse ways in which individuals are attracted to the Columbans are manifold. Columbans are widely recognized as being approachable and welcoming, which further contributes to our inclusive identity.

Columban benefactors, mission partners, and companions in mission are further examples of inclusivity expressed through Columban identity. These groups form their communities and gather for retreats and other activities on a regular basis, some organizing their own annual general meetings. Their commitment to the Columban identity is evident, with some even travelling long distances to attend meetings, which is an inspiring witness of commitment.

Language that helps explore and define this kind of Columban identity speaks of inclusiveness, belonging, welcoming, openness, expansiveness, all-embracing, diverse, different flavours, solidarity and the often heard phrase from those among whom we live and serve, "I will always be a Columban at heart."

CMU FURTHER PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION AT GA2024

1. Laudato Si Action Platform (LSAP): where is the Society up to with regard to the implementation of our Society LSAP at both central and RMU levels.
2. How best to continue to emphasise and promote that which is distinctive about Columban mission, namely, JPIC, IRD and partnership, and how to continue to emphasise and promote this in our vocations ministry both for Columban students and Columban lay missionaries.

CMU FEEDBACK ON PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTIONS AND DIRECTORY

A. Submitted by C.Saenz

- C.313.3(b): Do not support
- C.313.3(c): Do not support
- C.313.3(e): Do not support
- C.330: Do not support

B. Submitted by M.Gormly

- Do not support

C. Submitted by E.O'Brien

- C.101: Do not support

D. Submitted by J.Hargaden

- C.210: Do not support
- D.212.(c): Do not support
- C.219: Do not support
- D.219: Do not support
- D.223: Do not support
- D.230.1: Keep D.230.1 as is, then include Joe Hargaden's proposed amendment as a new directory article: D.230.4.
- D.303.1: Do not support
- C.308.2: Do not support
- D.308: Do not support
- D.309.3: Do not support
- D.313.1: Do not support. We support Sr Mary Wright's suggested amendment: "The President of the General Assembly shall appoint two scrutineers and a secretary from among the members of the Assembly, in accordance with c. 173 (CIC)."
- C.315: Do not support
- C.319.1: Do not support. We support Sr Mary Wright's suggested amendment: "The General council is made up of the Vicar General and two other Councillors."
- C.319.2: Do not support
- D.319: Do not support
- D.321.3: Do not support
- D.323: Do not support
- C.328: Do not support

D.330: Do not support
D.332.1: Do not support
D.341.3: Do not support
D.342.2: Do not support
D.342.3: Do not support
D.405.1: Do not support
D.405.7: Do not support
D.405.8: Do not support
D.406: Support
C.407.1: Do not support
C.407.2: Support

E. Submitted by N.O'Neill (Korea)

C.314.1: Do not support

F. Submitted by P.O'Neill (Oceania)

D.206.1: Support
D.330: Support
C: 338: Support (D.338.2 ensures that there will always be at least two Councillors, that is, the vicar and one other Councillor. D.338.2 states: '*A Councillor who ceases to hold office will be replaced in accordance with the prescriptions of the Regional Conventions.*')
D.405.1: Do not support
D.405.3: Support
C.410.3: Support
Appendix 2, Articles of Procedure #12: Support
Appendix 2, Articles of Procedure #1: Support
Appendix 3: Support

G. Submitted by Taiwan Mission Unit

C.310: Support
C.311.2: Do not support due to canonical restrictions.
C.311.3: Do not support due to canonical restrictions. Lay Missionaries can participate fully in the discernment process for the election of the General Assembly delegate/s.
D.311.1: Do not support due to canonical restrictions.
D.311.3: Support. However change 'her/him' to read 'Regional Director or Mission Unit Coordinator'.
C.330: Do not support

H. Submitted by Pakistan Mission Unit

Page 1, Luke 4:18: Support
C.111.2: Support
C.204.2: Support provided it is under the provision of Canon Law.
C.207: Do not support. At present all Columban students at the time of their temporary membership are already assigned to the Region of the Philippines. Therefore, it is the Regional Director of the Philippines, with the consent of his Council, who takes decisions concerning temporary membership of students of completion of the period of probation.
C.208: Do not support. Ibid.
C.211: Do not support. Ibid.
C.212.1: Do not support. Ibid.
D.233.1: Support

D.233.2: Support
D.330: Do not support
C.407.2: Support provided it is under the provision of Canon Law.

I. Submitted by P.Woodruff
Two proposals: Do not support

J. Submitted by General Council
D.330: Do not support
D.404.3: Support

K. Submitted by Chris Baker
C.109: Support

Andrei Paz
CMU Delegate to GA2024