

A Grace Filled Future

USCMA Town Hall Notes
September 27, 2022

Start: This, the third of five Town Hall Meetings, was attended by 27 people and 32 registered. The meeting opened with a prayer to the Holy Spirit written for these meetings.

Dr. Antoinette Mensah convened the meeting. She reviewed the work of the board, the changes in mission, the value of USCMA, the new mission statement, and restructuring.

USCMA is a community of faith leaders engaged in networking, formation, and advocacy for God's mission.

The focus of this Town Hall was program and services. The two questions discussed were: 1) What would be helpful to you spiritually and professionally as you lead mission? 2) What program or service format do you find helpful? Below is a summary of each group's report, building on each other. The full reports are in the appendix to this summary.

Group 1

The content suggested included the changing role of mission in the Catholic Church. What is our role today? Developing standards for mission appeals and educating bishops and pastors on the ecclesial importance of the MCP. Human Development was noted as a significant source of content, as too was the material from Guesthouse. A recommended text is *Personal Spiritual Development for Lay People* by Barbara Hughes, published by NCEA.

Formats suggested included a book club, webinars, members resourcing members, in person conferences, networking sessions based on topic, regional meetings, a "bio book" of members giving expertise as well as the networks they engage.

Group 2

The group, through introductions, recognized the dropping numbers in USCMA, how much the world has shifted, and the need to make deep changes.

We want members to be able to share best practices with other members. Do we need training in how to be engaged and stay engaged? Do we need formation in an identity as a member of a community of practice? Do we need training and testimonials for new members? Formation for mission trips and mission appeals? Information on who is near us – city, state, region. Formation for youth ministers who are working on a mission.

What are the technologies available to share best practices? Is there a platform where materials can be shared. Would affinity groups be a helpful way to gather and share best practices? How can we improve our website? Zoom is a tool we can use for programs. Is there a way we can engage parishes more, to build on or complement their efforts? Do we need a process or procedure to gather information from the members about their needs, discern how to address those needs, and promote those efforts? The affinity groups could be a way forward for some of these needs. The

newsletter could be another way to share tips, advice, and testimonials. The website could be more interactive and more appealing to the younger generation.

Group 3

Focused on the importance of both advocacy and formation. What does it really mean to have missions in the 21st century? How do we “offer Christ” in the most appropriate, inclusive, and healthy way? How do we recognize, and respond to, the diversity within the group (professional, personal, spiritual differences)? Content that focuses on the needs of domestic missions. Also, programs that address foreign missions. How to promote and amplify the call to mission; it is not just for the “select?” Mission is a sacramental duty. It is not an option. How can we spread this message?

We have opportunities for networking, but they do not seem to be effective. Are there new and creative approaches we can attempt? Does USCMA have the capacity to respond quickly to the formation needs of mission leaders? Perhaps we need to offer mission retreats. What about mission connection teams? The national meetings are very important, and promote networking, but they can be expensive. If they are the only way to network, then a person must choose between networking or not networking?

Group 4

Prayer and mission spirituality are essential for formation for mission. Mission leaders also need appreciation of the differences in culture. We also need to know how mission leaders from other parts of the world view mission. Do we have ways to connect people returning from mission to access other ways, locally, to continue mission? Formation is essential before, during, and after mission experiences.

What would it be like to offer a mission retreat? Perhaps there are ways to offer a cultural exchange? Perhaps a mission leader to mission leader short-term mission trip? We need new “wineskins” for our programs that are easy and accessible to our members such as podcasts, or the webpage, that does not require a lot of time. Something along the line of a “digital mission.” Ways to share our stories.

Group 5

There is an intimate connection between our call to holiness and mission. This connection, made clear by Pope Francis, did not gain momentum. What are we really called to do in this age? We need formation in networking, formation itself, and advocacy. How can we engage people, so they think about people outside of their own neighborhood? Can we connect with mission leaders from different cultures? Some of the needs of other countries, like Tanzania and some South American countries, are the same. Mission leaders need to share their experiences with other mission leaders. How do we raise awareness of what is happening in other countries? How do we excite young and emerging mission leaders? Some of the programming done by From Mission to Mission is very helpful. We need to address the need for money to fuel mission. Do we need a formation program for mission leaders rooted in missiology? What is the skill sets we need for the mission? Should we develop credentials for mission leaders?

Zoom has opened a lot of possibilities for networking and formation. Facilitating interactions among missionaries using dialogue energizes people. How do we build on and improve USCMA's ability to network mission leaders?

Group 6

Formation classes. Perhaps leading to certification. Catholic social doctrine. Cultural awareness and sensitivity. A general understanding of the Church's teaching on the purpose of mission. How do we do "mission?" How does that relate to evangelization? Access to spiritual directors. Mentors for mission. Mission support groups. How do we inform and train new missionaries? How do we share advice with those in administrative roles? What is the training we need to offer to people before, during, and after a mission experience?

Don McCrabb
October 19, 2022

September 27, 2022 Town Hall Meeting Notes – Group 1

Books for discussion – Barbara Hughes, Published by NCEA, Personal Spiritual Development for Lay People - Ministry

Magazine: Human Development Magazine, Guesthouse,

Book Club -

Audience, Focus, of USCMA – from members to members –

Networking by Topic: Example - CHA hosts regular networking calls for those interested in Global Health and

Potential Topic for a discussion, webinar: The changing role of mission in the Catholic Church. What is our role today?

National Guidelines for reassuring the messages of Missionary Appeals – especially for when non-ordained missionaries are there.

- Educating the Priests and Bishops regarding the Mission Coop Appeals and their needs.
- Agreeing upon standards

Preserving in-person conferences which provide great opportunities for networking with others with similar interests even if with differing focus.

Regional Meetings – may allow for more networking without the larger travel costs.

Opportunity to share resources of the group: maybe a bio book of members, with areas of expertise, regions they are knowledgeable about have networks. Use two or three questions and give word limits.

Introduction

- We are redefining USCMA because in the duration of its existence it has shifted due to numbers dropping, ages, etc.
- Where do we go from here?
- Bob McCarty is a consultant who is supporting us to help missioners and become a community of faith leaders. Together we will embrace and do our best to fulfill God's mission.
- We are recognizing how much our world has shifted and how USCMA has to make deep changes.

What Would Be Helpful from USCMA?

- When you start with the idea of a community of leaders, we are talking about ourselves. What can we share among ourselves that can be mutually beneficial in our own professional roles?
 - Do we have an effective way to share best practices?
 - What kind of vehicle can we use (technology) where we can access one another's best practices?
- How can we help our members become more engaged?
 - About two years ago we had personal calls with everyone, and they saw the USCMA as an association where they can get something. What Bob is proposing means that we are all responsible and members are not there to solely receive.
- We need a change in understanding of our roles as members, we are a community and need to be contributors and take ownership for our identity as USCMA. We need to be able to give and receive versus just thinking about what we can get from USCMA. It should be about how can I contribute to the materials, programs, services etc., and receive.
 - This could look like more contributing and helping with the newsletter, a platform where we can put material that worked etc.
- Training or testimonies for new members- how do we continue what was done in the past and grow it further?
 - Some get a lot of questions about mission trips and they mainly focus on mission appeals.
 - How do we build something that mission trips can be part of our offices specifically for mission trips.
 - It would be helpful to have a list of partners and groups in one area.
 - Training in the sense of mission trips and appeals.
- The Diocese of Joliet does have mission trips through the diocese- this is rare in the US.
 - People have to go through a formation, etc.
- Is it necessary to create affinity groups?
 - What if there are youth ministers who want to work with mission?

What program or service format would be helpful?

- Putting things on the website, making them accessible to others.
- Zoom can be helpful to connect with others and speak while being far away.

- We can reach farther out than when we have in-house meetings.
 - Allows us to work with technology better and reaches out to the younger generation.
- Regarding training, we do have parishes that do mission trips, but could we pair with mission groups? How can we get mission trips more involved?
- Regarding the program, is there a need that we are hearing that people would like us to respond to? What is the need we need to respond to?
 - Listen, discover, then mission (programs).
 - We need to dialogue with our members and participate so that we can organize accordingly and so that we can truly address needs.
 - It is important for USCMA to gather these affinity groups to create these training formation programs.
- Could we have a newsletter that has tips/advice or testimonies of those currently working in mission offices.
 - What has led them to where they are today?
- Website- can we make this more interactive and more appealed to the younger generation?

September 27, 2022 Town Hall Meeting Notes – Group 3

1. Personally: Website for USCMA is outstanding but doesn't seem that people really go there. USCMA needs to be about advocacy and formation.

Institutional learning of knowledge of organizations, relationships, charism- how does this match the history of the organization?

What does it really mean to have missions in the 21st century? Does USCMA and their members offer Christ in the most appropriate, inclusive and healthy way?

Professionally: always have opportunities to network but it doesn't seem to be really effective. Does USCMA have a better way to

make this happen with creative ways to approach all challenges? Does USCMA have the ability to address these things right away? Many Directors aren't in the same place personally, professionally, spiritually, professionally... so how do we make connections?

2. We need to consider doing and providing unique opportunities for domestic and foreign mission.

Our call to mission is not for the select; it is a sacramental duty, not an option and we all need to help spread this reality.

Opportunities could be mission retreats; mission connection teams.

Networking is very important at these meetings but the national meetings are just too expensive to attend and then we are having to make the choice to network or not.

What would be helpful for you spiritually and professionally as you lead mission?

- It's important to have a connection with God to animate your own mission work. Prayer is vital personally and professionally. Hosting retreats would be a helpful way to reenergize missionaries and help them find their specific vocation in response to their missionary call.
- Being on mission in relationship with others, especially those from a different culture, can also serve as a retreat for missionaries. Cultural exchange is one specific way we can connect with God.

What program or services format do you find helpful?

- We need new wineskins when it comes to delivering programs. Can there be formats that are easy and accessible for members to use? Formats like podcasts or the website or zoom gatherings that don't require a large time commitment. Digital mission is a phrase that comes to mind.
- New formats should be open to US mission leaders but also mission leaders in other countries. How do we facilitate a mutually supportive exchange between mission leaders across the Church?
- How do we hear from people who have been on mission so they can share their stories?

Facilitator question: Are there any “gaps” in your mission work that you wish you could fill?

- It should be easier for people who come back from a mission experience to be connected with the appropriate person for the ministry they want to serve in. For example, how do people get easily connected with local Catholic Charities or the person who leads the Diaconate program, etc?
- Oftentime missionaries train on the job. We need programs that train them before they leave for mission and once they return as well, especially those who don't have the backing of a religious congregation.

USCMA Townhall Meeting Notes

What would be helpful for you as you lead mission?

- The Pope's says that you have to live a holy life and that is a mission call- THIS IS EXCITING
 - It did not gain the momentum that it should have
 - Can we grab that and just go with it?
 - What are we really being called to do in this day in age?

There is a book ([. Gaudete et Exsultate](#)) that came out after the joy of the gospel regarding how to live the beatitudes and how to put your life on the Gospel lines

- The convention is focused on the Joy of the Gospel
 - How does this allow us to look at formation advocacy and networking?
- In 2014, USCMA allowed members to connect with those serving abroad. This reinforced my understanding of the global mission of the church and the tools that help me help others to find their place, specifically on a global scale rather than just local.
- How do I get others to think about people outside of our neighborhood?
- Archbishop ListECKI acknowledges the importance of looking outward.
- USCMA can help missionaries be aware of how others are working, what similarities are there between missionaries in different countries? How is their work applicable to where I am?
 - A lot can be done through Zoom conferences and communication like Zoom.
 - Ex. Some of the needs in Tanzania are similar to South American needs.
- It is so nice to connect and encounter such as asking people what you did, where are you from, etc. This relationship sharing brings energy!
- Sometimes it is too expensive to travel so Zoom is nice.
- A lot of people look for a network through USCMA and a share of experiences.
- USCMA is a process of us being able to connect and interact with each other.
- USCMA can help in professional ways too especially through networking.
 - USCMA is like an umbrella with all mission activity, and these are the things that should be given to us (newsletter, web page, etc.).
 - Maybe missionaries can send things to the USCMA and they can publish them on the website.
 - There is not a lot of money so Zoom is helpful.
- We need to raise awareness of the work of others in other countries through Zoom, conferences, having facilitated interactions between and among missioners so that we are sharing our spiritual and professional work together.
 - Conversations and dialogue that energize people.
- Design programs that excite the young faith leader or missionary to join and be on board to bring the next realm of the people.
- The mission-to-mission organization program was valuable
- Is there a way for people to develop credentials or a skillset with one of the missiological programs to help us further engage and understand the opportunities before us as well?
- We need to be mindful that money does not grow on trees.

- Religious institutes are suffering in regard to money.

What Programs are Focused on the Development of a Person?

- Is there a way to do fundraising so those who want to go to a convention can go?
- We could have a campaign that all of us are missionaries through our baptism and hold the responsibility of living that encounter with Christ.

September 27, 2022 Town Hall Meeting Notes – Group 6

Formation classes which might lead to a certificate on: Catholic social justice teaching, cultural awareness/sensitivity, and general understanding of Church teaching on the purpose, and how-to of Mission, including the topic of evangelization.

Access to online spiritual directors/mentors/support groups who understand mission challenges and can provide regional discussion and exchange on mission topics.

Possible sharing from those with mission experience helping to inform and train new missionaries and share advice with those in admin roles.

Training offered before, during and after mission experiences, especially for those going as lay missionaries who may not receive regular formation.