

# **Dare to Be Disciples: A Future Not Our Own**

Principles for Planning the Future of ERCBNA Ministries  
Succession Planning and Sponsorship

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## A Prayer for Those Who Minister

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.

The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts;  
it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction  
of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.  
Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying  
that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.  
No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
No confession brings perfection.  
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
No program accomplishes the church's mission.  
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.  
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.  
We water seeds already planted,  
knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.  
We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation  
in realizing that. This enables us to do something,  
and to do it very well. It may be incomplete,  
but it is a beginning, a step along the way,  
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference  
between the master builder and the worker.

We are ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets of a future not our own.

*It has been thought that these were the words of Oscar Romero, but they were penned by Ken Untener, [1937-2004], when he was secretary to John Cardinal Dearden for a homily for deceased priests. Kenneth Untener served as Bishop of Saginaw, Michigan, from 1980 until 2004.*

## I. Introduction

In the spring of 1996, 70 elected delegates from the various provinces and regions of the Congregation gathered in Esselen Park, Johannesburg, South Africa. There in a landmark General Chapter the document, *New Beginnings with Edmund*, emerged. The writings found in the document represent the spirit-led stories and directions of the congregation in which aging issues, successes, failures, sexual abuse violations and new ventures around the world were shared.

The Chapter embraced as its' theme; *"I call heaven and earth to witness against you today: I set before you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live..."* [Deuteronomy 30:19]. In framing the outcome of the chapter in this Old Testament passage, the four directions articulated by the Chapter were to move the congregation towards new life. These four directions were:

- **Internationality:** We as a Congregation pledge ourselves to internationality
- **Call to People at the margins of society:** We call all brothers to move to ministry with people at the margins.
- **Growth Through Fragility:** We as brothers acknowledge and share our brokenness and fragility and claim the growth that God's healing brings to us.
- **The Edmund Rice Family** We as Brothers acclaim the Edmund Rice Family as a gift for the Church and the world, and work in partnership with all authentic expressions of Edmund's charisma.

For the next six years the Brothers of North America shared their stories, dreams and actions, being driven by these four directions. Decisions for ministry, community and financial matters were made in accord with these four directions. The Congregation Chapter gave hope and new life to Christian Brothers around the world.

In the spring of 2002, delegates gathered in Rome for the 29<sup>th</sup> Congregation Chapter. This chapter marked the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Edmund Rice laying the corner stone of the monastery at Mt. Sion. A theological framework began to emerge centered on one of the resurrection gospels, the Emmaus Journey. It was applied to the congregation's 200 year journey, with its successes and failures, expansions and diminishment, life and death experiences.

From this chapter seven insights were developed that gave guidance to the Brothers of North America. These seven insights were:

- Deepening the Spirituality of Being Brother
- Healing and Reconciliation—A Need and A Call
- Seeking New Brothers
- Educating the Minds and Hearts of the Young
- The Edmund Rice Network—The Unfolding Story
- A Prophetic Call to a Quest for Justice
- New Wineskins for New Wine

Each of the seven insights was followed by the statement—“What are our Heart Decisions?” With each insight several action strategies were laid out for clarity when each province sought direction and decisions over the next six years. In the insight—New Wineskins for New Wine, it was stated

*“Restructuring is an urgent call to transform minds and hearts. It facilitates new life in mission and ministry, promotes prophetic religious living and ensures a redistribution of resources in a spirit of fraternity.”*

It was this insight that prompted the three leadership teams of North America to come together to strategize how a new beginning could happen and what it would look like. In 2001 each province held their chapter in Cornwall, Ontario, Canada followed by the first North American Assembly. This assembly allowed Brothers to see commonalities among the provinces since the split in the 1960s.

The next assembly followed the Congregation Chapter in the summer of 2002. A committee of six Brothers (Kieran Murphy, Mark Murphy, Dave Lucas, Gerry Gremely, Kevin Cawley and Paul Hennessy) was commissioned to study the viability and steps needed to come together as one province in North America. In July 2004, the Brothers gathered in Cornwall to hear the findings. The *Declaration for a Common Future*, agreed “to dissolve no later than July 1, 2005, our current provinces in North America and take the necessary steps to create one province to unite us for mission in Edmund’s charism in service to the Church and to the world.”

In this *Declaration for a Common Future* document the Brothers endorsed four Foundational Assembly Statements:

- On Spirituality and Renewal
- On Mission and Ministries
- On Structures
- On the Edmund Rice Network

The third statement (Structures) requested that:

*“the new Leadership Team, in collaboration with the Brothers of North America, [to] conduct an apostolic...audit of all ministry sites for the purpose of optimizing human and financial resources to better serve the poor and marginalized. Results and an action plan will be presented to the Brothers of North America when completed.”*

The PLT engaged the services of the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University to conduct an audit during the 2006-2007 academic years. These results were shared with the Brothers at a Cornwall Assembly in 2007. During this gathering the Brothers in attendance elected a writing committee to develop and write an Apostolic Action Plan for the use of the Province Leadership Team. The committee was comprised of Brothers John W. Casey, R. Joachim DeMaria, P. Sean Moffett, Michael M. Segvich and Raymond J. Vercruysse with A. Mark Murphy as the PLT liaison to the committee. That committee submitted a draft document to the PLT.

## II. ERCBNA Today and Tomorrow

In order to plan, one must begin by realistically forecasting our membership in the future.

There will be approximately 31 brothers under the age of 60 in five years in North America if current trends continue. This does not include the nine brothers who would be under 60 in five years who are presently on exlaustration.

Based upon the information available in January 2008, the following chart shows the number of brothers less than 60 years of age who would be working in various ministries if they were assigned to the same kind of ministry in which they are presently working.

<b>Brothers under the age of 60 in five years</b>	
Incorporated schools	10
Diocesan Placements:	
Elementary schools	3
Secondary schools	9
Outreach ministries	4
Higher Education	3
Internal Province Ministries	
Leadership	1
Formation	2
Congregation [International] Ministry	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	31

We recognize the following:

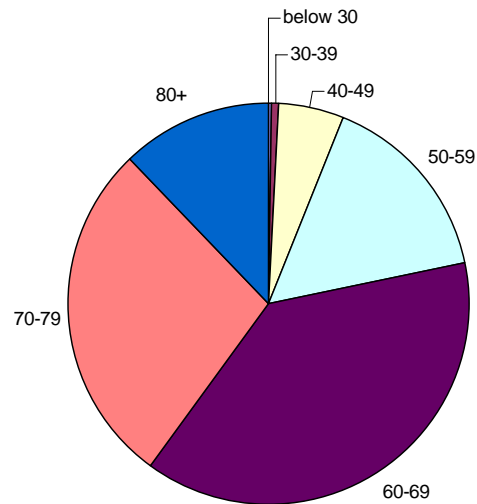
1. The chart above brings us face-to face with the reality of our situation in five years. While acknowledging the fact that many men continue into their 70's in full-time ministry, we note with concern the possibility that there will be so few Brothers under 60 years of age. Thus, we see the critical need for succession planning and sponsorship planning for our current ministerial responsibilities.
2. As we grow older, the care for the elderly and infirm will draw on personnel and financial resources.
3. Not all Brothers will wish to assume school or institutional leadership roles. Not all of the Brothers will be qualified.
4. Training future non-vowed members the in charism, history, traditions, and governance models particular to Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North American sponsored institutions will require deliberate planning and accompaniment by experienced leaders from the community.
5. Future governance of schools which are incorporated or preserve a relationship with ERCBNA will require personnel to be involved with local and national Church organizations which can provide support and context for the future

6. ERCBNA now has tremendous resources at its disposal. For example:

- a. The Brothers;
- b. Networks of functioning and trained board members;
- c. Lay administrators who have certification and have participated in retreats and leadership formation programs;
- d. Resources [human and financial] committed to development, advancement and public relations;
- e. Vowed members in positions of responsibility and leadership involved in formation of future leaders of Catholic education;
- f. Vowed members and lay colleagues in responsible national Catholic educational association.

**ERCBNA as of October 01, 2007:**

AGE	# Brothers	% of Total
below 30	1	0.38%
30-39	1	0.38%
40-49	14	5.32%
50-59	41	15.59%
60-69	101	38.40%
70-79	73	27.76%
80+	32	12.17%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Note:**

Does not include Latin American Region,  
 Does not include men on exclaustation,  
 Age was based on year of birth, not exact date.

### **III. Collaborative Building of the Church for a Future Not Our Own**

Our Constitutions, written and rewritten through two centuries by the Brothers in Chapter, have called us individually and collectively to a reflective spirituality. Our Founder and the Church gifted us with an (Ignatian) tradition encouraging members to make daily, monthly and annual examines of consciousness attending to every aspect of our personal growth, prayer, community, and ministry. We pray daily “Thy will be done” and regularly examine our faithfulness to God’s will.

So too, as communities in mission, as a Province and as a Congregation, we engage in regular discernment seeking to remain:

- faithful to the men and women of our times
  - faithful to Jesus Christ and the Gospel
  - faithful to the Church and her Mission
  - faithful to the Charism of the Founder and of the Congregation.
- (see *Perfectae Caritatis, Vita Consecrata, Start Afresh in Christ*)

Like Edmund and his companions, as well as each successive generation of Brothers, we struggle with the apparent contrast of the virtues of practicality and trust. We pride ourselves on being realistic and conscious of the bounds of our personal and collective resources. And we hear the echoes of Edmund’s assurance: *Providence is our inheritance.*

Following are the principles that are particularly significant for the personal and collective discernment that will accompany the opening years of the new North American Province

#### **Apostolic Mobility**

Apostolic mobility can take two forms: geographical mobility and ministerial mobility.

*Geographic mobility* has punctuated the history of our Province. We began as a mission with Brothers from Ireland. In a powerful manifestation of faith and of their understanding of the scope of the mission, Brothers were soon on their way to St. John’s, Newfoundland; New York, New York; Seattle, Washington; Butte, Montana; and Chicago, Illinois. At that time the membership of the North American Mission consisted of expatriates and a few native vocations. In the successive decades, missions to British Columbia, California, New Jersey, Michigan, Hawaii, Ontario, the West Indies, Africa, South America, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas redefined the bounds of the Provinces.

At the same time our history manifests faithfulness to the people we are privileged to serve. Centennial commitments in St. John’s and New York City and an enduring presence in Chicago have helped to shape the identity of our brotherhood for ourselves, for the Congregation, and for the larger Church.

*Ministerial mobility* (responsiveness to the movement of the Spirit revealing in a current mission new expressions of our call to discipleship) has also punctuated the history of our Province. Schools we established took on new forms with increasing engagement of others in ministerial collaboration, sustaining and often expanding the scope of the evangelization.

Today, faith formation of the laity and sharing of the Charism of Edmund Rice have taken on new urgency. Replacement of one brother in a given ministry by another is no longer assured. In fact, numbers alone now suggest a presumption of non-replacement with respect to any ministerial position.

Our Apostolic Mobility, both geographic and ministerial continues. Moving within and beyond existing structures, we seek ever fresh expressions of the core mission of the education and evangelization of youth. We are called to consider new missions, to review our commitment to current missions and to be mindful of our responsibility to empower others to take our place. Each move requires personal and communal discernment.

This plan proposes principles that might guide such decisions<sup>1</sup>

### **Principles for Establishing New Foundations**

It is our recommendation that, in discerning possibilities for new foundations, the Brothers adopt the following four guiding principles:

1. The call emerges from the needs of the People of God.
2. The ministries primarily concern the evangelization of youth, especially the materially poor.
3. We have a community of brothers able to accept the mission.
4. The mission will be collaborative and its continuity grounded in the local church through the empowerment of the laity.

***Needs of the People of God:*** Any new foundation is a response to the needs of the People of God. The call is often first heard by an individual brother. The source of that call may be those in need of ministry, “the cry of the poor”, or perhaps individuals or authorities whose positions make them particularly aware of a pressing need. Occasionally the call comes through research<sup>2</sup>.

#### ***Evangelization of youth especially the materially poor:***

*“We Christian Brothers are called by God as religious in consecrated brotherhood for the evangelization of youth within the mission of the Church” (Constitution 1).*

*“As apostolic religious we are missioned by the Church for the evangelization of youth, and especially for the education and care of the materially poor” (Constitution 24).*

Schools have been a primary tool in the response of the brothers to the needs of youth. Many of the brothers have particular expertise that is greatly needed in the development of new schools, in the renewal of schools that have drifted from their mission of evangelization and in the formation of teachers and administrators. Other Brothers have demonstrated the potential for adult education, community formation, social action and eco-justice as well as ministry through personal service, presence or accompaniment for those in need – all means of building up the community to nurture the faith of youth

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<sup>1</sup> In all that follows the focus is on Province level commitments to mission sites as distinct from the call of individual members of the Province to particular ministries.

<sup>2</sup> For example, demographic and sociological studies in North America clearly identify the challenge of the Church in the evangelization of a growing migrant population, in serving black and Hispanic youth, and in addressing the loss of faith and family values in an increasingly secularized society.

### ***Community in mission:***

*“Attentive to the word and open to the power of the Spirit, we are called as brothers to form gospel communities which are our principal means of evangelization” (Constitution 25).*

We understand our ministry to be one of building communities in which our coworkers and the youth we serve experience Jesus Christ manifest in the love of God and love of neighbor. Our capacity for community building is nourished by our sense of belonging within our brotherhood on a global and a local level.

In establishing missions we seek to assure that each brother will have the support of a local community of brothers. To the extent possible we seek to establish communities of at least three brothers who share a common residence and are blessed with the possibility of being physically together for mutual support, affirmation, discernment, prayer, Eucharist, meals and recreation.<sup>3</sup>

***Empowering others:*** Opportunities for collaboration with the local church and the formation of others in mission will inform our discernment as we seek to assure a continuity that reaches beyond the service to which we can realistically commit. We welcome and encourage lay members of the church to assume an ever more significant leadership role in the administration of the mission and of planning for a future that might not involve the direct participation of any member of the Congregation of Christian Brothers.

### **Principles for Continuing Engagement**

The same four principles for evaluating the appropriateness of a new mission can also serve as the guiding principles in deciding to continue our engagement in an existing ministry. Brothers individually and collectively are encouraged to review and plan with respect to his and their continuing engagement. They would ask themselves: What will be the age and health of the members of the present community? What are the conditions that suggest continuity? Whom are we serving? How? What are the parameters of sustained engagement? What needs to be in place to carry forward the mission and the various ministries of the local Brothers' community? What are the opportunities for formation, for attracting both new vowed members and collaborators? What are my/our plans for this year, for next year and for the foreseeable future? Assuming non-replacement of current brothers in the mission, what preparations need to be made?

### **Principles for Moving On**

It is inevitable that the time will come when the Brothers will no longer be available to staff many of the ministries where they now find themselves. Aging, newly identified needs, the gifts and talents of particular men, and other factors will confront individuals, the communities and leadership. Again, the same four principles for evaluating the appropriateness of a new mission can serve as the guiding principles for eventual disengagement.

A systemic perspective on any proposed withdrawal may reveal a complicated network of personal and interpersonal relationships with respect to the “ownership” of the mission. The more that stakeholders are participants in the process of decision making the more opportunity they have to work through their

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<sup>3</sup> Two brothers might constitute a local community. Occasionally a brother may need to live and minister at some distance from his “local community”.

own need for closure. At the same time pre-mature revelations of a possible withdrawal of Brothers can precipitate an unnecessarily painful conclusion.

This is not the first time in the history of the Brothers in North America that we have had to radically change our relationship with some ministries. Our past experience will help us to plan for changes in the future. While some of our withdrawals have been traumatic for various stakeholders, most have simply been a gradual recognition of conditions that emerged over time. Long term planning probably would not have altered the conclusion, but it might have rendered the whole process more helpful and healthful for both the individuals and the mission.

True collaboration serves as a route to more effective initiations, joyful service and smoother transitions.

### **The Role of Ritual**

Studies of the human response to death and dying sensitize us to the great variation of individual differences with respect to dealing with profound change.

Rituals marking new initiatives, renewed commitments, and withdrawals are opportunities for offering praise and thanks to the Lord of the harvest, for acknowledging fragility, seeking forgiveness and for evoking a blessing on those who respond to the spirit by continuing the mission and those who do so by moving on.

## IV: Planning for the future

### A. What is in process?

Forward looking decisions and actions during the past three decades have prepared the Brothers to respond wisely to the situation in which we currently find ourselves. For example:

- 1) We have shared ministry with our lay collaborators in the schools, encouraging educators to do advanced studies and to move into positions of increasing responsibility as department chairs, program directors, vice principals, principals and presidents. We have sought faith-filled persons to share our ministries.
- 2) We have collaborated with the larger church in responding to a variety of needs: including conducting diocesan schools, supplying personnel for diocesan offices, and taking leadership roles in national educational associations.
- 3) We have fostered local accountability through the incorporation of schools, giving boards of directors increasing responsibility with respect to educational, fiscal and legal issues.
- 4) We have invested great energy in identifying, articulating and implementing *The Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Christian Brother Education*. This document now serves as a fundamental tool in the evaluation of our schools and in the development of sponsorship models.
- 5) We have established the *Office of Educational Services* with responsibility for coordination of programs serving our educational ministries:
  - a. Essential Elements evaluation and implementation;
  - b. ACTION [student leadership];
  - c. Called and Gifted I and II [faculty and board spiritual formation];
  - d. Faculty retreats and in-service programs;
  - e. New teacher orientation;
  - f. Workshops for vice principals, deans, athletic directors, department chairs, campus ministers, advancement personnel and business managers;
  - g. Summer Academy [preparing future leaders];
  - h. Search Committees for Heads of School;
  - i. Mentoring of Newly Hired Administrators;
  - j. Annual meetings and retreats for heads of schools [including presidents, principals, and board chairs];
  - k. Evaluation of school leaders;
  - l. Board Membership
  - m. Board in-service programs;
  - n. Pilgrims in Peru [an immersion experience in the Third World for faculty]
- 6) While celebrating such achievements we are also conscious of how much more needs to be done to offer future generations of youth an education imbued with the spirit and charism of Edmund Rice and the Christian Brothers.

Reviewing the paths that have brought us to today we note that since the 2002 General Chapter, and long before, our brothers have engaged in a cyclic process of discernment involving four interdependent phases of **broad consultation, focused synthesis, consensus seeking and community commitment**. In this section we will review where we see ourselves in this discernment process and propose where we go from here.

## **Broad Consultation**

The Province Leadership Team adapted a process by which it has asked the membership to participate in the developing of an Apostolic Plan. This process involves the discernment of the membership at numerous points in the conversation. This was done, not because it is considered contemporary best practice to attain “ownership” by the membership, but because it takes seriously Jesus’ promise that: “where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I.” It is a religious conviction that our plan will be guided by the Holy Spirit if it is not simply the work of one person or a small group of persons but involves the whole membership as much as is feasible.

The Province Leadership Team began this process by funding a study to know the thinking and preferences on questions related to ministry of the Brothers and of those who are associated with them in ministry. By arranging with CARA of Georgetown University to conduct this research, the Province chose the gold-standard and has good reason to believe that it now knows the thinking of its membership. The results of that study and the responses of the brothers at Cornwall III provided the starting point of this plan. This input guaranteed that the process began with the discernment by the Province membership

## **Focused Synthesis**

The Province Leadership Team asked all those brothers attending the Cornwall III Assembly to nominate five persons to develop a plan based upon this data. The five most nominated accepted this invitation. It happened that the recent assignments of those nominated had given them a broad and diversified perspective on the educational needs of the Church within and beyond North America. The presence of a member of the PLT at their meetings in the role of liaison insures that discernment between leadership and the writing team took place.

Because all the members of the writing committee have very demanding full time positions, finding dates on which to meet proved difficult. However, the immediate sense of accord and shared principles among the members enabled the team to make early progress without the need for a long process of orientation. The members of the writing committee quickly learned that they shared the following key convictions:

- a. that we needed a plan based upon conservative projections of resources;
- b. that we should identify and plan on the use of the often-unidentified resources which the province has at its disposal.
- c. That our role would be to prepare a white paper which the Province Leadership Team would use in its role of creating a plan to present to the Province Chapter in July 2008.

The committee met during the final days of Cornwall II and then again for an intense weekend in early September producing an outline and distributing research and writing responsibilities. A conference call in October afforded an opportunity for group review of draft texts that had been circulated by e-mail. The result of this conversation was a first draft of the plan to send to the PLT for review.

In January, 2008, the team met in New Orleans. Based upon many emails and discussion, the writing team clarified its understanding of its role. It recommended to the PLT a proposal for continued consultation with the Brothers. The PLT in turn modified this proposal for continued consultation and

will present the modified proposal to the Brothers in Cornwall in 2008. That proposal will be modified by the Chapter in Cornwall and then be implemented in 2008-9.

### **Consensus Seeking**

At every step of the process, we reminded ourselves that our goal was not to write the Province's plan, but rather to prepare a document which the PLT could use in preparing a document which would be helpful to the Brothers gathered in Chapter. The PLT will come to the brothers assembled with what it believes is a well-critiqued document whose purpose is to generate thought and discussion. It expects that the proposal will be modified at the Chapter, so that the final proposal reflects the discernment of the past year and becomes a clear community commitment.

### **A Plan to continue the discernment**

Some will be disappointed that the writing team is proposing a method of continued collaboration rather than a plan for new initiatives, continuations or disengagements. It is the conviction of the writing team that this could not be done without further consultation with the brothers and with local communities. Although the Province did seek to find the thoughts of the Brothers through the CARA study, this does not provide the very necessary input of individual brothers and local communities about the future of **their** present ministry. This is a critical need in the discernment process. It is our proposal that individual brothers be asked to answer questions about how they see themselves in 1, 3, and 5 years and bring this information to a community discussion in which the community asks itself what it foresees as the nature of their ministry in 1, 3 5 years. Suggested questions are given in the Appendix to this document.

The PLT can then monitor this process during 2008-9, making use of the visitation time.

The results of these visitations will help the PLT to develop a five year strategic plan.

As in all strategic planning, the process is cyclical. Each year, the PLT reviews the plan and modifies it based upon the experience of the past year. It is assumed that the PLT will ask for input from the membership concerning this and will take responses into account as it modifies its plan.

In summary, the initial five year strategic plan when completed in 2010 will be based on all of the following:

- the initial input of the membership of the Province (CARA),
- the thought of the elected writing team,
- the experience and knowledge of the PLT,
- the Spirit-guided discernment of those gathered in Chapter

## B. What needs to be done?

We propose the following action steps be part of the strategic five year plan:

1. Continue our commitment to the poor and marginalized through the commitment of our Brothers, our most valuable resource.

While we recognize ERCBNA can no longer finance institutions, we encourage the Province Leadership Team to seek ways to cover living expenses of brothers directly serving the poor and marginalized in existing or new ministries in situations where there is no income to cover living expenses.

2. Honor our commitment to our various ministries by developing succession plans and sponsorship options for all of them.
  - a. Given the current realities we assume the responsibility as individuals and as communities, to participate in planning for the future.
  - b. Suggested reflection questions can be found in the appendix of this document to assist us in our discernment process.
  - c. Succession planning is especially important in ministries-where we have traditionally provided administrative leadership.
  - d. Discernment of the future includes the local community and is coordinated by the Province Leadership Team.
  - e. Recognizing that at present there is no single model of sponsorship that has been identified by experts as ideal, the *Office of Educational Services* should continue exploring new concepts of sponsorship that we can apply to different ministries.
3. Provide for the on-going formation of Brothers and their colleagues
  - a. through programs developed by the *Office of Educational Services* and the *Province Renewal Team*, and
  - b. through other national and international programs imbued with the spirit of Edmund Rice and the Christian Brothers.
4. The scenarios found in section five, will exemplify the application of these principles and processes.

## **V: Scenarios and Biographies**

The future we envision is based on a process of careful succession planning to ensure the future of the educational ministries for which we have been responsible.

It assumes that many institutions will continue to have the participation of Brothers in the classroom, or administration or board service. It also assumes that some ministries, both current and new, will enter into sponsorship relations with ERCBNA. We will have many choices for service in the immediate future.

Although it may be that some ministries will cease to exist in their current form due to population shifts, or economic or social realities, there may still be ways for us to honor the ministry, but in a different fashion.

Two principles are reflected in the scenarios and the biographies that follow.

1. Succession planning is our responsibility in fidelity to our mission as apostolic religious concerned primarily with education, and;
2. Formation of our successors [both Brothers and others] is an urgent need and will be the focus of personnel planning and financial expenditure during the next six years.
3. Sponsorship provides an opportunity for the charism of Edmund to continue to enliven the Church for the future.

The scenarios and the biographies which follow are all set in the year 2014, the year in which the next leadership team is preparing to assume office.

The reader is invited to envision his own biography, dated 2014. The reader may see some similarity between his situation [projected out six years] and one of the scenarios or one of the biographies; that is intended.

## **Three Scenarios: North America in 2014**

### **Scenario One: RICE OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES – 2014:**

Dottie van Blarkum, head of the Rice Office of Educational Services [ROES] since 2012, is responsible to the PLT of ERCBNA, and is preparing for the first full audit of the office since her hiring. Having worked in a similar office for another order of men, she came with a real appreciation of the complexities of her work. It also helped that her uncle had been a Christian Brother for a number of years—she knew some of the legends already.

She heads a complex office that responds to many different needs with a staff that includes Brothers and other men and women chosen for their expertise and dedication to the mission of education in the tradition of Edmund Rice and the Christian Brothers.

The office is responsible for the relationships of ERCBNA with separately incorporated schools and educational programs, diocesan and parish schools, education offices, and national Catholic offices. They have frequent communication with members of the Edmund Rice family, Brothers and colleagues, in leadership roles on the national and university level in order to serve the interests of all those associated with ERCBNA in its educational mission. The Congregation's Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation is involved in all formation programs of the office. The technology staff has become critical since the ROES now serves as a center for the world wide communication network of Christian Brother schools set up in the 2008 General Chapter.

The major work of the office is the recruitment and formation of school leadership. "Mission drift" will not happen on her watch. The office has relationships with leading academic programs for the advancement of Catholic schools. These include the ICCEL Program at the University of San Francisco [school governance and leadership], Loyola Chicago's Catholic Leadership Program [curriculum and instruction], and St. Louis University [Catholic school finance].

In the last five years the ROES worked to ease the transition to new forms of sponsorship and governance at schools where ERCBNA no longer maintains a physical presence on the faculty or in the administration. While the transition is sometimes made necessary simply due to lack of personnel, in other cases Brothers were transferred because they were needed in offices such as this one to lend their knowledge and expertise. Brothers have also opted to work in new areas of need, leaving where they were wanted but could be replaced, for places where new challenges needed men of faith who could devote themselves to tasks others could not afford to do.

In her weekly meetings and phone conversations with her liaison and the Province Leader, she has been able to share her concerns and hopes. An advisory board includes Brothers and others who bring support and expertise to ROES endeavors. She has been especially appreciative, in her visits to the schools, of the welcome given to her by both the school personnel, and the Brothers communities still associated with the schools.

## **Scenario two: Jefferson Catholic High School—2014**

One of the separately incorporated schools in North America grounded in the tradition of Edmund Rice and the Christian Brothers, Jefferson Catholic High School, [JCHS], is celebrating its “Diamond Jubilee” in 2015. Governed by a Board of Trustees [that includes two Christian Brothers] and a Board of Directors with limited jurisdiction, the school has a sponsorship relation with ROES, the educational office of ERCBNA.

As with the other incorporated schools, and a number of diocesan schools staffed or administered by Brothers, JCHS relies on its relationship to ROES and the Christian Brothers for a clear sense of mission, for a link with its tradition, a framework for planning for the future, and a bridge to the larger world, especially with the worldwide network of Christian Brother schools. Students and faculty from JCHS have been able to travel the world and the school has welcomed students and faculty from East Africa, Papua New Guinea, India and Ireland through the network of Christian Brother schools.

For board members, administrators, faculty and students, the formation programs provided by ROES have provided a clear sense of mission and focus. This intentional approach to formation became necessary as the number of Christian Brothers involved in the school declined, and especially when the chief school administrator was not a Brother.

The student leadership and social action programs begun years ago continue to flourish. The school’s participation in national and international programs relating to peace, justice and the integrity of creation has captured the imagination of younger faculty members as well as the students. All of these are intentionally named and related to Edmund Rice and while lay staff moderates them, each has a Brother as co-moderator. During the year the lay moderators and student leaders regularly and frequently come to the Brothers residence for a prayer, a meal and a chat.

The school community still has the presence of four Brothers. Harry Reardon, 75, works in the Development Office and his encyclopedic knowledge of graduates and school customs is matched by his gracious and cheerful demeanor which the President and Principal delight in. Tom Gianelli, at 70, teaches AP science classes with an enthusiasm and energy that belies his years. He is a great help to new teachers, who are assigned to his classroom “just to watch a master and his craft—‘Watch and learn.’” Frank Loftus, 68, and Tim Cleary, 83, are limited by physical infirmity, but tutor students. This has allowed the school to better serve students with special needs who have been accepted but who will need a lot of support to thrive in the rigorous academic program the school maintains. The School has accepted the offer of the community of brothers to mentor the Board Members, the administration and new teachers in the history and traditions of the Christian Brothers.

Dottie van Blarkum sat in Tim Cleary’s seat in chapel the first time she visited the Brothers in the spacious private house they live in across the street from the school. When Harry Reardon quipped that it was a ‘hostile takeover attempt by the women’s movement’ everyone laughed, the ice was broken, and the evening was a success. Dottie later sent Tim a rather elegant brocade cushion for his chair. Harry, Tom and Frank have broadcast the news far and wide.

### **Scenario three: The Waterford Project--2014:**

This after – school tutorial program for inner-city middle school students is affiliated with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Sheboygan. The mission of the program is to provide students who have academic and social potential with the skills necessary to participate in the academic track of local public schools and to identify students who can succeed in the Catholic, private, charter and academic public high school programs. The program provides tutoring, life skills classes and athletic and cultural activities for the students. Classes in religion are offered to those children whose parents request it. (Perhaps the affiliation with BGCBS and the reception of federal grants prevent this?) It also encourages participation of parents in parenting classes and shares the cultural and social programs of the students with participating parents.

The Waterford Project was set-up after Sheboygan Central Catholic High School had to close in 2009. Declining enrollment, deferred maintenance concerns, staffing problems and limited resources led to the closure. The sale of the property repaid the unfunded retirement liability to the Brothers and the Sisters who had staffed the school, and satisfied outstanding debts. The money remaining, almost \$4 million dollars, enabled ERCBNA to continue a ministry to those on the margins in the area. There was the purchase of a home for three Christian Brothers [with two guest rooms for potential volunteers and handicapped facilities for the aging community] in the neighborhood. . A storefront classroom with space for an office, lavatory facilities and two classrooms was provided by the Boys and Girls Clubs. The rooms were outfitted with grant money from federal and state sources. A \$3 million endowment was created to underwrite the costs of a director and a secretary responsible both for running the center and applying for foundation and government grants. It also provides for the living expenses of the three brothers who work in the ministry. The Center has attracted other financial support, and volunteer staffing by college students and retirees.

Br. Matt Collins, at 56 years of age, teaches in the program and is secretary. He was very upset by the closure of Sheboygan Central Catholic to which he had invested all of his energy to keeping open. Even several years on, he regrets the closure, but managed to save many of the artifacts of the school which are either in the archives, the new residence or in the school. Tom DiGiovanni, 72, is a volunteer tutor, and shakes his head frequently at the lack of discipline and seeming aimlessness of so many of the students whose attendance patterns, manner of dress and limited language skills is a cause of concern. However, he perseveres, encouraged by Matt's dedication and the gratitude of the folks at the Girls and Boys Club. Mike Schumacher, in his 40's and a late vocation, completes the community. Quiet to the point of inarticulateness, he is brilliant but subtle in the classroom. He is demanding, consistent, reasoned and fair — the kids love him even though he is strict. Tom thinks he knows the key. Mike is always saying, quietly but firmly, "Yes, you can—and I will show you how." Amazingly, it seems, the kids believe him!

In community, they err on the side of too much activity, and not enough time for reflection and private time. They do try to eat meals together; it is Tom's job to rein Matt in and remind him that it is not always "the kids"—brotherhood is more than that—it is also a commitment to each other. When they do have one of their quarterly weekends away, they do enjoy each others' company and share at a pretty deep level.

# Biographies of three brothers in 2014

## Robert David Farmer

As Robert David Farmer, soon to turn 65, meets in his office in July 2014 with his fellow team members, they worry that he may be asked to assume one of the two full-time positions on the ERCBNA leadership team and leave the program he now directs.

Robert, [don't call him "Bob"], entered the Brothers from a suburban high school, and spent much of his early teaching ministry in long established Brothers' schools. A successful teacher, he became an equally successful administrator serving in a number of schools and in provincial and diocesan roles of service to education. He came to his current ministry, an educational outreach and teacher-training program in the West, three years ago. It was a difficult transition for him, but has been good for him and the program he now directs.

His view of the future was focused at a province event, seven years ago. As he went home from the 2007 Jubilee ceremonies in New Rochelle, he noted the number of men who had celebrated 50 years in the Congregation. There were 107 men listed, out of 263 in the province. The median age of the province was advancing and he along with it! Now in 2014 with only 31 men under the age of 60 in the Province, Robert felt he was witnessing the passing of an age.

He remembered how surprised he was the year that 10 Brothers died—and no one entered the community. While the schools continued, for the most part to thrive, the Brothers now helped staff only a handful. The largest communities were of retired men.

It was not clear where it all was headed. And so he continued to pray that God's will be done, in this and in everything, and continued to discern, with the community, what God wanted him to do. He continued to work as an educational administrator, a teacher-trainer, and a facilitator. He tried to keep in mind that his greatest contribution would be to train the next generation of Catholic teachers and administrators, and he tried to trust that he was doing the best he could with what he had.

While religious life as he had known it seemed to pass away, he felt that the charism of Edmund flourished both in ERCBNA and overseas. Schools in Canada, the United States and the Caribbean chose to continue in the tradition of the Christian Brothers. Lay leaders and the Brothers worked with the Edmund Rice Network Office in Miami to develop the charism, in-service boards and faculties, and interact with Edmund Rice schools and ministries throughout the world. Surprisingly, when lay colleagues assumed increased responsibility for leadership in articulating and sharing the charism, new insights and understandings developed. Still, folks loved the stories that Brothers and others told about the "old days." Embedded in them were values like practicality, integrity, determination, belief in the ability of all students to learn, and a devotion to the less fortunate that had always characterized the work of the Brothers. And faith that providence is our inheritance. Robert felt good about what lay in the future.

## Nicholas Ignatius Gordon

At 77 years of age, Nicholas Ignatius Gordon is not only the senior member of the community by age; he also feels he is the slowest and creakiest. Slowed down by cardiac woes, arthritis and emphysema, he sometimes feels his apostolate is to the receptionist in the doctors' offices he must visit regularly. Still able to drive, having passed the province mandated evaluation that he thought such a good idea when he was younger, he realizes he won't be able to do so fairly soon, and he does not want to become dependent on others. He does not fear going to either of the retirement community houses but he values the ability to make decisions for himself. In prayer and reflection he realizes he resents the condescension and paternalism of the younger and healthier—and fears he was guilty of it himself in years past.

With Robert and Adlar, he forms the community in this Southwestern city community and, with the room on the first floor reserved for him, and a mercifully adapted bathroom adjacent, he is sort of the Dad. He keeps the place neat, [he picks up after Adlar], does most of the grocery shopping [paying attention to Robert's rather refined tastes] and does some simple cooking—thank God for 'Rachel Ray.'

He has happily found a niche at the educational outreach program for street kids that Robert heads. With his long experience in the classroom, where he taught science and math with incredible success, he knows how kids learn and how to organize a classroom. The idealistic young folks who come to work in the program haven't a clue about teaching even the dozen or so kids in the afternoon life skills classes. When Robert came to the center as director, he recognized the problem. At first "Br. Ignatius" [he still used his religious name, even if he wore an open-necked shirt with a cross on it and not his Roman collar] sat in and despaired of the ineffectual if sincere attempts by the young staff members to teach. When Tiffany and Brad, the two young folks there when he first arrived, finally asked for help, he took them through principles of classroom management and he quickly became a part of the program — volunteers now take a three-day program with him on "Classroom Fundamentals" and then meet weekly with him to refine their teaching strategies. It has been fun for him and he enjoys learning from his young colleagues about uses of technology, and about the popular culture.

Nicholas and his two closest friends in novitiate, Simeon and Paul, were never assigned to the same community. And yet, the bond between them deepened as they moved from mission to mission. On occasional years they managed to spend some vacation time together. Recently their connectedness has intensified as e-mail facilitates their exchange of observations, insights and experiences.

Simeon is at St. Joseph's where he coordinates a prayer group of fellow residents. Each keeps in touch with the brothers in a particular mission and brings their intentions to the prayer meetings. Labeled by the brothers as "Simeon's Presentation Circle" these gatherings afford an interesting perspective on the state of the Congregation. Simeon, having spent many years in Peru, monitors the development of the Congregation in South America. He comes to the sessions with a wealth of additional news from Paul and Nicholas. Paul, who works in the central offices for the African Provinces, advises Simeon on the houses of formation throughout Africa. Nicholas reports on his efforts to promote vocations among the students and volunteers at the outreach center and on how these young people delight in knowing that their ministry is the subject of powerful prayer among holy men in New Rochelle.

Nicholas' limited hours at the center are, he knows, all he can do anymore. He appreciates the time to read and reflect—and, to be honest, to nap in the afternoon. He is grateful that his talents are both

appreciated and put to good use by Robert; and Adlar's energy and commitment to ministry and community are wonderful to be a part of. He is rather fond of Adlar, who reminds him of his younger days. Ignatius wonders at the changes in his lifetime; from "running schools" with 35 men in a house to sponsoring schools which still celebrate their association with Edmund Rice and the congregation. A number of his buddies still live near some of the schools, and like him, many relish opportunities to spend time there. The seeds they had sown did appear to have grown up later on—the harvest was different than they expected, but good, nonetheless.

## Adlar Jose Garcia

Adlar Garcia, at age 32, has been in the community for four years. His parents came across the border from Mexico to obtain treatment for an older sibling with a heart condition. She died, but by that time Adlar and his sister, Sheila had been born. His Dad, Javier, worked in a bank in Mexico City, and then worked in a foundry in Texas before being hired by one of the Brothers in Brownsville to do maintenance work in the school. The Brothers placed great trust in his Dad, who ended up managing several properties, and eventually owning them. Adlar did well in school, and went on to graduate school in social work. He was involved in a serious relationship in college, but also became involved in a Catholic social action network. It was through a volunteer project that he was reintroduced to the Brothers. While disappointed that he chose not to marry, his parents seemed resigned to it; his younger brother, Javier, was already well on his way to perpetuating the Garcia name.

Adlar's entrance into the congregation was not without difficulty. His strong family ties, his deep affinity for his native land and culture, his previous intimate relationship, and his resistance to a school assignment, seemed to be great obstacles to his acceptance by many. Despite talk about welcoming new members it seemed a contingent hospitality—you are welcome to do it our way, to live the way we want, to eat, sleep, pray and work in our "tradition." At least the community he now lived in, with Robert [Adlar loved to call him Roberto] and Ignatius, was more open than most; they lived with a good deal of humor and mutual respect. Robert was pretty open to things, and Ignatius, who seemed quite traditional, was quite defensive about their "Hermano Campesino". Early on, Ignatius' humor seemed abrasive, until Roberto spoke to Adlar and said: "Which part of 'Ignatius is crazy about you' don't you understand. His affection for you is expressed in his humorous challenges—he just is not a hugger! Try to take him where he is coming from—as he does you." The community really came together when Roberto and Ignatius came to bail him out after the sit-in to protest the latest wave of xenophobic detentions in their southwestern city. Adlar was astonished when they both showed up, Roberto in his most pompous administrators' guise, and Ignatius looking like the Anglican bishop of Butte. The police and lawyers had difficulty getting their heads around the image of the two whitest clerics they ever met coming to bail out their "brother"—a swarthy, young Hispanic who really did not seem likely to be related to a Farmer and a Gordon. When they went back to the house and started talking about it, Adlar over a beer, Roberto with his glass of Merlot, and Ignatius with a Scotch, what became real was that all of the theory about social justice only became real when it involved one of your own.

The next day, Ignatius called him aside after morning prayer and breakfast and, shuffling his feet a bit, said: "I want you to know you always have my support." Of course, he immediately added: "But please try not to get arrested. I'm too old for these late nights."

## **Appendix:**

### **Reflection Questions for Community Discussion**

In preparation for answering the following questions in community, each brother prayerfully reflects on these questions as they apply to himself in the context of his current ministry and community. In order for the community discussion to be valid each brother should be prepared to contribute his estimate of his own future. It will be helpful to engage a facilitator to lead this community process so that all may fully participate.

- 1) What will be the ages of the brothers in the present community in one year, in three years, and in seven years?
- 2) What will be the health of the brothers in the present community in one year, in three years, and in seven years?
- 3) What facilities in the community residence need to be changed in order for the present members of the community to continue to live in this residence: in one year, in three years and in seven years?
- 4) What will it cost the local community to implement the changes to the community residence as named in question number three?
- 5) What types of ministries will the brothers in the present community be interested and able to undertake in one year, in three years and in seven years?
- 6) How does the ministry of this community contribute to the education of the poor and marginalized?
- 7) Given the answers to questions one through six, what could be the nature of the relationship of the province to this ministry? [consult the scenarios in part five of this document]