

NACAR Member Meeting
March 30, 2021

SMALL GROUP NOTES

Question 1 – Name 1 or 2 things from your experiences of NACAR that have been most helpful that you want to carry forward

- The Lead with the Spirit guidebook has been a godsend
- The support that NACAR has offered
- NACAR has been a great resource and a way of networking
- The opportunities for Professional Development
- The availability of the courses at University of Dayton
- The research done through CARA
- The power of more than 55,000 associates
- Associate relationship is increasing, and is strong, even though the number of religious is declining
- Being able to answer the question, “What are other people doing?”
- Awareness of the distinct needs for male associates
- Sharing experiences
- the value of the resources offered through NACAR and the sense of community that we experienced
- We believe that NACAR enabled us (Associate Communities) to stand on our own feet.
- All of these are great resources and provide useful information and/or a sense of community and a ‘presence’ for associate leaders and associates:
 - NACAR Manual
 - Creative Conversations
 - Rookies Rock
 - Regional Groups
 - Retreats
 - Virtual offerings
 - The Associate
- Meetings allowed connection and ability to connect and learn from one another through sharing experiences and resources.
- NACAR allowed others to see the broader picture of Associates when not directly from the United States.
- All appreciated the Zoom Meetings, Website and all the information that was readily available.
- Conversations with other directors with more experience helped teach those of us new or with less experience.
- Relationships are forged

- Connectedness
- Networking and information sharing
- Resources (Newsletter, Handbook, Leadership manual, annual retreats)
- “As a new director of Associates, I couldn’t have done my job without NACAR,” without the relationships that I made across congregations, without the support that I received from other Associates
- NACAR is similar to LCWR - it is a leadership group that connects Associates and vowed members internationally; and collaborates around present and future planning;
- It is Educational and Formational
- The Leadership Guide
- Creative Conversations: Content – Breakout Rooms allowing discussions and networking
- Regional Groups such as BACAR with such wonderful speakers as Sr. Simone Campbell
- NACAR Retreats
- NACAR published articles and data found in surveys
- Variety of Relationships formed from experience at NACAR events, regional groups, experts available to educate members, community to community, one on one, outside partners.
- Venue for members to support one another by sharing ideas on leading current associates as well as an opportunity to look to the future of associates as our communities’ decline in number.
- Wealth of NACAR resources, i.e., web site, Lead With The Spirit Manual, emails.
- NACAR membership connecting United States and Canada
- Significance of professional CARA Study and all that it showed about NACAR and association. Association is a movement in the Church and not just a moment.
- Importance of NACAR and association history and how it began and has grown.
- COVID-19 has disrupted connecting with others. NACAR and its use of zoom to connect members has shown us that there are opportunities for connecting us.
- Creative conversations
- Webinars
- Retreats
- Allowed us to connect with others
- Venue for sharing our challenges and lessons learned
- Stay up to date with trends and valuable information
- expressed gratitude to board
- enriched by retreats and meeting other directors
- developing a language to speak about association
- lead with the spirit
- All of the workshops as a new leader; creative conversations and other opportunities to learn; getting to know individual leaders in associate leadership, to receive support

and to collaboration. Appreciated the meetings the camaraderie and sharing experience with one another.

- No personal experience because new in the role of liaison. Believe it is important to have an association that focused on associate life. Appreciated the support offered. It was a good place to go for new ideas.
- Getting to know other associates and see what worked for others; the trainings were great.
- Deeper connections with different charism families and different congregations. Different expressions of the call and different ways of living it out.

Questions 2 – Where might the seeds of your experience find fertile ground for future growth?

- Small regional groups will continue
- The resources won't be as extensive, but there is still a possibility to meet and support one another
- The connections we've made will impel us to create links, and provide opportunities to gather and share
- We need to share addresses
- Gatherings bring support and energy
- We discussed what the future of the Associate Movement would look like.
- We asked if we, as Associates of different congregations, were getting the Associate Movement message out.
- We asked if there was a way to get young people involved.
- We also discussed funding for an organization like this.
- Regional Groups offer the experience of NACAR locally – they are the SEED. They fill a vital spot – can carry on the tradition of NACAR,
- There was discussion about the ability for NACAR to continue some sort of website, blog, or other social media connection so that knowledge, information and questions could be shared or remain available.
- There was discussion of beginning federations of communities where memberships such as Midwest Kindred Spirits, Tri-State, BACAR (Bay Area Associate and Religious) are not yet available.
- Sharing our current resources of retreats, retreat centers, etc. that other Associate Communities might share.
- Finding ways to stay connected as part of the Associate Movement globally – what are we being called to?
- There is a confidence and deep hope that NACAR would morph into something new - the need for connectedness and collaboration is great
- Need for an identified leadership group - maybe connections can be simpler, Associate led
- Associates will carry on the charism
- Associates will evolve along with religious communities

- Associates bring energy and nurture the religious life of vowed members
- Associate movement is of God; it will continue to give birth to new forms of a committed religious life.
- Young people are much more technologically prepared; they are drawn to immediate and short-term social justice actions (like offering service for disaster relief or traumatic situations)
- Congregations carrying the NACAR experience forward
- Leadership guide used in assisting associate formation programs and structures
- Networking
- Gathering associates from other communities near and far
- New world of inclusion/ecumenism / interfaith
- Involvement with more groups like Faith in Action to be not only aware but involved in the social, political and cultural life of this new world – new normal which is emerging after this pandemic and 4 years of unique politics
- Nones/Nuns more study of this for the future??!!
- Need to involve ourselves with young dynamic and committed people
- The demographics of the religious sisters is aging and many religious congregations have closed their institutions – schools, hospitals, universities, missions , etc. so what had been the places that had attracted individuals to become associates because of their relationships with the sisters /brothers/priests is slowly disappearing – we need to start not only personally inviting people to become associates – treasure in the field – but also network with others for ideas, prayers, gatherings etc.!!
- The NACAR letter spoke of this structure which gave many of us a ray of hope that this structure like a seed must die to bloom –new life in another structure such as: making known the regional groups such as: BAYCAR (WEST) OPAL (Ohio/Pennsylvania). CARMA (Midwest)
- Sharing names of leaders, speakers, resources
- Sharing the names and contact information of the people who wish to continue to remain in contact/network with one another.
- Create a list/videos, share prayer, topics of interest, copy of creative conversations of the past and publications for enrichment.
- Many associates are in ministries different from vowed members. These will continue.
- Continuing relationships which have been cultivated
- Continuing regional groups and cross pollinating
- We are asking What is next? We are drawing on our individual and collective hope that the work of NACAR and associates will have a rebirth in some form.
- Expansion of Regional Groups (MKS, BCAR, CARMA)
- Organic organization – we all have zoom accounts....
- Continue website
- Have it available at least for two years
- Transfer webinars and creative conversations onto you tube

- Have connections to all regional groups possible by sending leader and name of regional group
- Have leadership manual available to all communities
- We long for the day when people will come up to us and say, “You must be an Associate!”
- maintain some kind of digital place to continue collaboration and communication
- facilitate associate leaders gaining access to education and formation offered by LCWR and RFC
- maximize various congregational federations and regional groups
- Regional Groups share information where they are and who to contact
- share membership list and contact info, perhaps a group willing to be a sounding board for directors as questions arise
- continue to make creative conversations available beyond 2022, perhaps funds could be used to maintain website
- Many gifts, many skills, huge sense of charism within the groups. Need to deeply listen to what each believe and is hoping for.
- Need to collaborate with other associate communities (one community with another). Move from I to We to ONE. Why redundancy? Let’s work together, as a result of coming together there is more collaboration among congregational groups.
- If there is not a national group, strong regional groups could be grounds for further growth.
- Perhaps a national organization that is not a corporate structure.
- There is wisdom around the country ... strength at that national level that can’t as easily be done at the regional level.
- Need to stay connect to various associate communities
- There has to be a way to stay in-tune and in-touch; need this way (associate relationship) to develop
- Charism family groups is another opportunity for sharing more broadly (i.e., Women of Providence, etc.)
- Create safe place to explore what might emerge

Questions--

- How will we congregate and find information? The free sharing of ideas is a seedbed for others
- We have to figure out a way to keep connected?
- Could there be an e-Mail list so that we could offer retreats, events, sessions...?
- The question came up as to whether or not NACAR had a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization status.
- Could a NACAR Library be housed with a congregation or some regional groups that could be accessed by associate communities?
- How can we keep this connectedness without NACAR?

- Could some of the remaining funds from the dissolving of NACAR be utilized to start a website or other communication link and if so, who would maintain it?
- Could NACAR be minimized to the website only and the membership cost go towards maintaining such?
- Could another regional group save the resources from the website and make it available to former members?
- How can we best share all our contact information and other vital information on the website with the members before it is dissolved in 2022?
- How can the current website including all of its wonderful resources be saved in ways that can be referenced long term?
- permission to translate Lead with the spirit into Spanish??
- Can NACAR send out a list of the regional groups, who is in them and how to contact them?
- Are there areas where there is a “hole” without a regional group?
 - Perhaps some congregations have associate communities within those “hole” locales that could meet with other nearby associate communities
- Can the recorded Creative Conversations be made available – with the reports from them as well?
- Could NACAR provide a list of similar congregations: i.e. all Franciscans, Dominicans, Charity etc. so that perhaps another satellite group could be formed?
- Could a list of unaffiliated communities be made available so that they could join or start a regional group?

Note: One person in our group expressed disappointment that the opening of the member meeting didn't include more “backdrop” on the decision. I asked if there were questions not answered in the FAQ's and it was acknowledged that the FAQ's may not have been read thoroughly. I invited additional questions to be sent in after the FAQ's were reviewed.

(Not sure what the statements below meant so I copied them as is.)

- **NACAR as an entity along with the congregations and associates involved be part of a CARA research??**
- **Show how these congregations are showing peace to the world.**
- **Of course the practical concern was how long can we responsibly believe CARA will be functioning??**

Comments:

- All were sorry to see NACAR dissolving, especially in light of how valuable Zoom has become during covid. Also, it seems to be a difficult time when some religious orders

are closing yet Associates are agreeing to go forward and could use the support and knowledge of the combined group.

- We seemed to have a mix of directors who have been with NACAR for years and others who are newer so they don't have the full experience of participation in what NACAR has offered. With that said, it might be a good idea to think about offering a tutorial of the website so members can find resources before they are taken away. I'm coming from the vantage point of not assuming that all members have sense of offerings and what's available because they might have just joined recently and now just finding out about dissolution.
- Lastly, I feel like a missed question was maybe something about how NACAR can help members in the coming year. Our discussion turned more towards questions than answers to the specific breakout questions.
- We thank the board members and all of their hard work and time over the years but especially in this most difficult time of decisions. Blessings on you all.
- Beautiful sharing of how appropriate this meeting was held during Holy Week.
- The announcement was Good Friday – loss
- Now we are at Holy Saturday – a period of waiting and reflection
- The future will be Easter Sunday – living in HOPE / resurrection – new growth.
- ***Hope you see how much NACAR meant to so many today! Thank you for all your hard work for us!!***

Additional Notes from Group 9

Notes from NACAR Member Meeting – Group 9

Several 'newer' (2-3 years) associates in roles as leaders, much of the work and resources of NACAR are just being discovered by them. We have found the resources to be very valuable as we discover them and begin to utilize them

Change and loss of association feels abrupt and sudden to several, feelings of loss just as one begins to discover the connections

Important to have access to resources and connections with others, question about how maintaining a website with the resources could be possible, is there a cost, could members continue to pay a small fee to help maintain the website for a longer period of time, is there another way for leaders to 'save' the resources for later use, questions about how long it will be available

Some members have connection to Regional Groups, an invitation was extended to connect with BACAR (even if not within the Region), they are doing more regular online events and would help others develop,

Great benefit from the conferences was experienced by those who had participated,

The networking with others, online and personal- vital to several. Hopes that this can be maintained

Programs such as CC, and others were important and would like to be able to share with future leaders in local groups,

Leadership Manual was very helpful, big benefit as a guide to new leaders and for those revising/updating their programs as well

Desire for regional groups to continue and expand as possible as some areas are not connected, some could be but some don't 'fit' the geography of the group and don't have a large number of connections in what would be their geographic region, it would be helpful to have those continuing to share this and invite others if that is possible, also could they assist other areas to set up a group,

Great deal of appreciation for NACAR Board and Director for their work over the years with appreciation for the difficulty this decision is,

Thank You!!

A note from Fr. John Lee

My Friends at NACAR,
My apologies! I miscalculated the time of the ZOOM Meeting here in Berkeley, CA - I added three hours when I should have subtracted...

It had been my hope to express my gratitude and appreciation for the heroic work many of you have done for so many years to promote the reality of Associate Membership. It has been a joy to watch from the edges - but still supporting our local Associates in NYC - these past many years.

Now I am wondering what new births might your current decisions nurture?

Blessings on all of you.
Fraternally,
John M Lee, cp
Former NACAR Board Member

FOR FUTURE BOARD DISCUSSION:

We are paid for VLCFF until December 30, 2021. Their services will be available beyond our June deadline.

VLCFF requested some access to our data to continue connection to associates.