

District of Great Britain

Lasallian Assembly

Kintbury 30th March – 1st April 2007

Report by [Br Benet](#)

46 Lasallians attended the assembly in Kintbury. There were 10 apologies.

Friday Evening: Session 1: Introductions

At the first session Sean welcomed everyone to the weekend of reflection. He gave the wide context in which this Assembly was placed: European and World which would help to feed into the General Chapter due to begin in May. The cross section to those present revealed those who help to 'deliver' things Lasallian. Each was invited to consider what might be the way ahead and how this might be planned. The weekend offered the chance to recapture some of the inspiration of De La Salle and to live again a re-founding. He handed over to Terry Collins who drew attention to the Lasallian trait of believing in and effecting change. Terry also set in motion the round robin that gave Lasallians an opportunity to introduce themselves, to offer an insight into how Lasallian Association influences their lives and to express their hopes for the weekend and the future. It was an immensely rich session.

This is a cross-section of the Lasallian groups represented: Former Brothers, Brothers, Governors, LAMB, LDWP, former Kintbury Team, current Kintbury Team, LACE, Formation Group, Lasallian Education Mission Council, Headteachers, Teachers, Care Communities, ELANICO, Lasallians GB-Malta, Young Lasallians.

Saturday: Session 2:

Saturday March 31st was a very full day. The morning was given over to considering the work and proposals of the Formation Group. Morning prayer on the topic was led by Owen. Then Ben Foy gave a presentation using PowerPoint on behalf of the Formation Group, offering an overview of the work done and outlining the suggestions for the way ahead. The Formation Group was proposing a 5-element programme called Lasallian Formation Services. This would be offered initially to schools within the network, but could be expanded. It was designed to respond to expressed needs. The five elements are:

1. Induction: The aim is to deepen the Christian ethos, culture of the school and to help provide spiritual and pedagogical insight into the education offered. It would help to integrate education and ministry. It would be directed at new teach-

ers to the school, introducing them to things Lasallian, as well as NQTs.

2. On-going Formation: The LACE sessions contribute to this, but it was recognised that a whole-school session would have a greater impact. The programme would be geared to the needs of each school.

3. Inset: It would help schools respond to the Bishops' request that one inset day be devoted to the spiritual life of the school. The aim would be to integrate subject with ethos so that Lasallian pedagogy and spirituality informs all subjects. A 3-year programme offering Lasallian pedagogy (especially relationships and correction), Lasallian spirituality (integrated into the life of the educator and the school), and staff development (through reflection and action) would give coherence, One-off session would be an option.

4. Leadership and Management: The Australian on-line formation programme was given a thorough introduction via interactive presentations (tasters of the actual on-line sessions). While in Australia the programme leads to an MA, the excitement for us was the opportunity it offered for personal formation and development for those already in or aspiring to positions of leadership. We would have to negotiate further should this be offered as part of an MA. The District would also have to make arrangements for training for those who would act as on-line tutors for the programme. The Australian team had already offered to provide this training. [A fuller explanation of this programme is given in the April edition of Lasallians GB&Malta].

5. Formation for All Lasallian Groups: It was recognised that all of the above is directed at schools, colleges and the staff in them, but Lasallian association involves a rich diversity of groups, each with its own formation needs, but also with a contribution to make to formation, reflection and development. For this reason, this element of the formation programme is "a work in progress". Each Lasallian is invited to consider what she/he might be able to offer by way of formation to other Lasallians.

At the end of the presentation, small groups considered their reaction to the Lasallian Formation Services leaflet (draft provided), to assess how it responded to their needs and to consider what suggestions it might offer for resources, personnel and other insights. These were presented at a forum and on flip-chart sheets.

Session 3: Reporting Back from the Small Groups

From the flip charts:

Reactions:

- Good to have concrete proposals
- Keen for action as well as talk
- Include all groups e.g. Chaplains
- Australian programme great – relevant, covered primary and secondary phases – unifying concept.
- Mustn't neglect the rest of formation programme in the excitement.

Assessment of needs:

- Groups other than teachers mustn't be neglected e.g. Chaplains, former Team, primary/secondary advisors, diocesan.
- Promotion of programmes – ask all groups what their needs are with real follow up.
- Promote at chaplains' conferences.

What can be offered:

- Insight from our own experiences (knowledge, practicalities, impact).
- LAMB has loads of practical workshops. PowerPoints, assemblies, plays to offer.
- Community centred on prayer
- Community for mission
- Sharing Lasallian resources both inside and outside the Lasallian family.. Particularly to be shared on line.
- Positive response – resources look excellent
- Marketing – start on small scale; if it works and has a positive effect people will ask for it.
- Small pilot making use of existing links according to geographical area may be helpful
- Gradually broaden to include non-Lasallian schools
- Would be helpful to start with an audit of what people are willing and able to offer.
- A formal organised Lasallian response to needs (not ad hoc)
- Organised not piecemeal: publish and advertise
- Wide: e.g. Foundation Governors
- Respond to post-experience groups – Kintbury Team, LDWP, Heads...
- Wider than RE. Heads of Pastoral, tutors etc
- On-line programme: for mature practitioners, personally motivated, already grounded.

Reaction to proposals:

- Seems to satisfy a felt need for teacher formation
- Great opportunity also for lay-directed schools
- Working in partnership with Brothers, rather than just because Brothers are no longer present
- De La Salle is rich in educational resources

- Invitation – priority – declared from Rome assembly – worldwide initiatives
- Development – Lasallian schools even in wholly non-Christian populations
- So few Catholic teacher training colleges – this is an alternative
- In particular – don't forget the primary schools. Invite specifically to LACE
- 5th proposal least fleshed out – groups need to express their own needs to LFS
- Governors hold cash – need convincing
- Potential for individuals to work in parishes with good resources

Felt needs of group:

- Spiritual resources PowerPoint
- Access to the electronic language youth culture uses
- Genuineness of our witness – own inner spirituality – need to develop
- Practical, easy to use, flexible resources
- Community – develop models of Association form occasional meetings like this to electronic contact, prayer
- Different electronic possible models

What we can give:

- Everyone has something – be generous in offering
- Female input, non-Brother input (Formation group proposals interesting)
- Is launch this year over-ambitious? Necessary not to wait – but need to put a lot in place – NQT induction in October; LACE – develop vocations and direction of LACE; Australian project to begin
- 2 want to do the course (don't feel capable of being mentor/tutor yet)

The programme seems to have a good mix of fun and meaningful content. Lasallian education has positively impacted us as educators offering something unique, special and extra. We should discover ways of offering this to schools.

We also need a library of resources for our own work and spiritual development.

Session 4: Reports from those who had attended recent significant Lasallian events; and insights into some of the Lasallian groups present:

International Assembly: Partners for the Educational Mission

Conrad Bannon spoke of the common experience of all the Lasallians in Rome for the meeting, reflecting on Brother Álvaro's welcome which stressed communion of service, zeal for the work and revisiting our mission (especially for the service

and evangelisation of the poor). In the new circumstances we are invited to revisit the contemporary needs of the young. The group was invited to present a plan of action to the General Chapter and the process for doing this was:

1. Orientation to the different cultural ways of being Lasallian, 2. Sharing Experience, 3. Discernment and 4. Action proposed.

A presentation on the Criteria for (Lasallian) Discernment was given by Brother Miguel Campos which focused on different forms for the individual, the community and the tensions that exist in putting mission before self. The assembly identified formation as a key area, as well as a re-focusing on the needs of the young and the poor.

All documents from this assembly are available on the Internet.

Lasallian Association for Mission in Bristol (and Trowbridge) L.A.M.B.

Owen outlined the foundation and development of L.A.M.B., the current practice of meeting regularly for prayer, sharing, a meal and outreach, and the work of the residential community in Clevedon. The L.A.M.B. family is in evolution at present, reflecting on its wider mission, trying to foster closer community and responding to the needs of young people and of staff. It has been impressive how the young people themselves have taken responsibility for peer ministry: "We are junior L.A.M.B." They have been trained in leadership and have "caught" the spirit of De La Salle. We would like to encourage our colleagues to participate in the support and sense of community which the L.A.M.B. family provides. The initiative was begun by local Lasallians and has provided support for young people and staff, and was instrumental in the setting up of the residential community in Clevedon. This last group goes into 4 schools, offers parishes support in catechetics and sacramental programmes, helps with staff in-service and training and provides insights into the ethos of the Catholic school.

Lasallian Youth Gathering: Young Lasallians

Fran Wright, Maria Wall, Ruth Corless and Ben Foy were our representatives at this gathering.

The group came away with an over-riding sense of the same mission and a wild enthusiasm! This is what we are doing! We are alive and it's happening on a global scale! It was a real, not a virtual experience. The Young Lasallians organised their own meetings and shared their experience of being Lasallian. It generated zeal! It proved the validity of meeting face-to-face! There was a follow-up with two young Lasallians from Malta; Joe (from Malta) is on the council for Young Lasallians in Rome.

To further this in GB the Young Lasallians are organising a picnic lunch and Emmaus Walk

(Kintbury style) and small group time on Port Meadow, Oxford, on **Saturday June 16th**. Keep yourselves informed and come along. This event is organised by Young Lasallians but is for ALL members of the Lasallian Family. Further information in *Lasallians GB&Malta*.

Lasallian Developing World Projects L.D.W.P.

John Deeney spoke of the work of the L.D.W.P. and the approach he takes. Initially they are not signed up as Lasallians, rather they are invited to the mission/work because Lasallian is not what you are called but what you do. If the volunteers live the project they live the Lasallian reality. Of the 70 volunteers this year, only 6 are from Lasallian schools; 30 are from Scotland where there are no Lasallian schools.

The volunteers are given formation before they go out on the projects. They meet on three occasions to consider practical things and to get to know each other before beginning 5 weeks living and working together. Previous volunteers become leaders of projects and help to effect continuity of practice and spirit. The whole experience is of practical living not theory. The community aspect is very important offering strength and support through common ideals. The community and mission experience is also based on Lasallian premises: Faith, Service and Community. Following the projects there is an evaluation weekend which is usually lively and a time to share experiences as well as consider world and personal issues.

To maintain on-going contact and present a coherent Lasallian vision, there is a regular Newsletter, and regional groups will organise reunions. The projects are significant because they are directly relevant to what appears regularly in the news; they influence how we live our lives. They are enriching, life-changing, educational and a challenge, and offer the chance to meet people from a different culture in *their* world.

Sisters of the Christian Schools

Sisters Helen and Magdalena were invited to explain the relationship between the two Institutes. After the French Revolution Mary Magdalen Postel set up Dame Schools along the lines of De La Salle, adopting and adapting his Rule, and initially taking the name the Sisters of the Christian Schools. Later they changed to the Sisters of St Mary Magdalen Postel. The Sisters have worked together with the Brothers in Ireland (mainly with the elderly and young people) and in South Africa. The Sisters regularly brought staff from Reading to the LACE weekends at Kintbury. The Sisters affirmed the suggestion of the Lasallian Formation Services.

Saturday evening:

Session 5: Continuation of reports from those who had attended recent significant Lasallian events and insights into some of the Lasallian groups present:

St Cassian's Centre, Kintbury

Chanel, Director of the Centre, captivated the group by beginning with a *Liverpool Lullaby* which highlighted ministry which is from the heart and is directed to the poor who live a richness within their poverty. Lasallian spirituality does something special with and for the poor, and so does Kintbury. We welcome the poor because they are gifted and of God. We recognise that today there are many kinds of poverty, not least spiritual poverty, and that young people don't know what it is they are rejecting. Chanel related a number of different moving experiences shared by retreatants, and introduced De Mello's story of the fisherman who saves many from drowning. Eventually he addresses the fundamental question of why they were drowning in the river in the first place. Causes need to be addressed not just solutions. He suggested that L.A.M.B. is at this preliminary stage, trying to prevent the need for rescues. Kintbury works, he acknowledged: I just look after it. He spoke warmly of the team which offers the retreats and of their sense of community and what it involves. He recognised that Kintbury is heavily subsidised by the Brothers and recognised that with the Management Committee they needed to address fundraising. The former stable area was being re-developed to allow for day groups to come in. John Caherty has been appointed as Deputy Director of the Centre and as a consequence a vacancy at Senior Team will be advertised.

The General Chapter

Michael Curran outlined the lengthy process the Brothers have been going through in preparation for the 44th General Chapter. The Brothers have been reflecting on what it means to be Brother today in a world quite different from when they first joined. Using contemporary vocabulary and imagery, they were invited to reflect on who and what have been "icons" in their lives. They have been encouraged to respond creatively to the current situation where statistically the Brothers in Europe are in decline, and to help the (newly envisioned) Lasallian Family to become a reality, helping with spiritual development, formation and passing on the heritage as a living entity. The definition of a District (Brothers only in the care of the Visitor) will change and be much more inclusive of all those Lasallians involved in mission and ministry.

Just as the Brothers' reflections will feed into the General Chapter, so will the considerations of this Assembly and the other meeting referred to above.

Vocations:

Ben Foy outlined his work as vocations promoter and invited everyone to be involved in the promotion of vocation. He has tried a number of avenues to try and obtain vocations to the Brothers but finds that advertisements and communications with Catholic Chaplaincies in universities and colleges produce nothing. It seems that small, credit-card sized invitation and pieces of information work best with young people. So Ben has produced several thousand which he invited us to take and pass on or leave lying around in strategic places.

He also advertised a retreat for Brothers at Worth during the summer, and a study session "The Church in 2027".

Mass of Palm Sunday was celebrated with some style. We thank the Kintbury Team for organising the liturgy, procession, readings and music.

Saturday: After supper, Session 6:

General Discussion and Reflection:

Following the extensive input during the day, the participants were now able to ask further questions for clarification or to offer insights and comments. A number of issues were raised: What is the purpose of our Charitable Trust? If our resources are entrusted to us, they are for those in need.

In an Assembly such as this, what real voice do Associates have? Can they influence policy and direction of Lasallian mission?

Vocations fostering seems to be coming too late. A much younger start would seem more productive.

There is a thirst for good vocations material in schools as a normal part of the programme.

(Thanks to Fran Wright for recording this session)

Sunday session 7:

The Formation Group provided the wording of a proposal in response to the presentation on Saturday morning and the reporting back from the groups. It read: "This Assembly proposes a phased establishment of the 5-element Lasallian Formation Services Programme".

Proposed: Bernard Westcott, Seconded: Vincent Kingston.

"Phased" is deliberate for we recognise the need for training, especially for the web programme. Inset and Induction have already begun and the next L.A.C.E. session will be run by the Formation Group. We hope to take 12 months to be able to offer the whole Formation programme to schools. The leadership programme might be able to begin in the New Year since the Australian team had offered to come to England to train the tutors.

The contact person for the programmes would be Ben Foy and contact would be by e-mail. Members of the Assembly and other Lasallians were encouraged to put their names forward if they were willing to support the different elements of the LFS programme.

Concern was expressed about the MA element of the internet formation programme. It was recognised that this is currently accredited by the Catholic University of Australia, Melbourne and that validation in this country would need to be properly structured. The statement in the leaflet could be misleading and would be modified to make it a formation programme without any formal qualification. The programme stands in its own right as a means of Lasallian formation and the Formation Group were happy to promote it at this level.

The status of the Assembly was raised: whether it would be able to make decisions that have ramifications for the District – financial, personnel and property, for example. It seems that at the Rome Assembly all those responsible for mission were considered involved in the decision-making about formation.

In the context of the above considerations and discussion, the proposal was put to the vote.

For: 25, Against: 0, Abstention: 1. The proposal was carried nem. con.

Final Session 8:

It was suggested that the Formation Group take note of Main Orientation 7 in the publication: Associated for the Lasallian Educational Mission, towards the 44th General Chapter, Document 4 (issued to a wide number of associates). This orientation (see page 38) stressed the importance of initial and ongoing formation for Mission and Association. It was in two main areas: **Formation and Accompaniment, and Responding to the needs of today**. It was recognised that the service of the poor was integral to any Lasallian mission and formation.

Each of the Lasallian groups was invited to be clear as to how they see themselves as Lasallian and learn how to describe themselves for others to recognise. It would mean the development of a Lasallian language. The Miguel schools in the USA were praised for their creative response to the poor. The Lasallian Education Mission Council was also encouraged to study the **8 Main Orientations** to see what we need to do about them, since LEM has oversight of Association. They have met on a number of occasions, discussed a District Centre, met with Young Lasallians, set up the Formation Group, and helped arrange the celebration of the 150 year, including the book "Hotline to God". LEM

works in tandem with the District Council and is the first stage in the recognition of new structures that are needed in the present context of Association.

Accessibility to Lasallian information is essential. Currently this is difficult as there is no place or person which brings this together. We need to say where the information is, who administers it, what the skills audit of the Association is. It may mean a secretariat is needed. The phasing of the formation programme might help to clarify some of the questions.

For the next assembly a new system is needed to make the invitations really open. The date needs to be given well in advance, as well as an actual agenda. This should be the remit of LEM. For this to happen, more information is needed about Associates and how they can be contacted.

The development of the Lasallian Family (the preferred term now for all those in Association) is now critical and it was suggested that formation should be part of the Assembly itself. The Heads have requested this for their own Conference.

Dates already on the calendar:

1st Weekend in October 2007.

1st Weekend in May 2008

Heads' Conference: January 2008

Next Assembly: Palm Sunday weekend March 2008.

Members of the Family were invited to volunteer their services to help with Lasallian Formation and for the proposed LFS elements.

The Assembly was brought to a close and we were invited to "Go from this place with a real trust in the Lord, like De La Salle."