

Passionist Companions Pilot Program

Passionist Alumni Council
Office of Mission Effectiveness

The Passionist Companions Pilot Program

Background:

At the original inception of the Passionist Alumni Council, Alumni members proposed a committee to research and explore the feasibility of some form of Passionist Lay Association. Over the past three years, Passionist Alumni Council members Carl Middleton and Mark Brockman explored lay association websites of a number of religious congregations, as well as interviewed persons that have been involved in the Holy Cross Province's "Community of Passionist Partners" and other Passionist/lay activities.

As part of our research, the committee interviewed the members of the Passionist Alumni Council as well as other Passionist Alumni, including professed. A number of men have been living the Passionist charism for many years and wanted a mechanism to continue to grow in their faith and the Passionist Charism, and more closely contribute to the mission and activities of the Passionist Province of Holy Cross. These dedicated alumni suggested that the Passionist Alumni Council's Lay Association Committee organize what we now call the Passionist Companions.

A conceptual model was developed, and it was decided to launch a pilot program to assess and grow the model. The term "lay association" was too confusing and the term "Passionist Companions" was chosen.

Passionist Companions Pilot Program:

The Passionist Companions Pilot Program will eventually be open to all, but will begin initially with Passionist alumni, spouses/partners, and family members. The first cohort will start with ten alumni plus their spouses/ partners and family members. This would be a new resource group to serve in Holy Cross Province.

The purpose of the pilot program is to form faith sharing communities that meet virtually each month to a) pray together, b) to share, c) to study the spiritual life, d) to participate in on-going formation with special emphasis on the spirit of the Passionist Charism. The pilot would also provide participants with an opportunity for socializing and celebrating Passionist feast days, as well as volunteering to serve at Passionist retreat centers, Passionist parishes, schools, and its Mission Outreach.

On-going formation would be guided by the Passionist Way document (from the 2022 Province Assembly), and formation materials and other formation opportunities in conjunction with the Province Office of Mission Effectiveness.

Guidelines for Participation in the Passionist Companions Pilot Program:

The participant:

1. Demonstrates a spirit and willingness to serve Holy Cross Province as a Passionist Alumni. A Passionist Alumni is any lay, professed and/or ordained person who attended minor seminary, novitiate, college, major seminary, and/or theological studies in formation for membership in Holy Cross Province, or other Passionist Provinces. The pilot will include Passionist alumni, their spouses/partners, and other family members.
2. Recognizes and embraces the Passionist charism, mission, and values.
3. Demonstrates an active spirituality that strives to give meaning and purpose to their own life, situation, and circumstance.
4. Follows the Catholic faith tradition as often as possible. Non-Catholic alumni and their family members who wish to participate will also be included.
5. Demonstrates current involvement or willingness to participate in Passionist-sponsored activities, especially on-going formation.
6. Committed to teamwork and collaboration with others.

Passionist Provincial Council:

The Passionist Lay Association Committee sought and received approval and support from the Provincial Council to initiate a Passionist Companions Pilot Program starting with alumni and their families; if successful, to then open it to all. Passionist Companions will be self-sustaining and will not require the allocation of budget resources, other than the Passionist Alumni. The Passionist Alumni Council has been most effective in fund raising for Passionist ministries. Financially, the Passionist Companions will be independent and, if the pilot is successful, might organize as a Nonprofit Organization if deemed necessary.

Accountability and Guidance:

The Passionist Companions are best served by having joint accountability and guidance under the Office of Mission Effectiveness Board, and the Passionist Alumni Council vowed liaison who would then serve as interim liaison to the Passionist Companions Pilot Program.

Success/Outcomes:

The pilot program will hopefully enable a participant to experience these outcomes:

- A spirit of inclusion and friendship among the participants, forming a faith-sharing community of participants who care for you as a person and provide you with opportunities for study and reflection.
- Enrichment from continued formation in the Passionist history, spirituality and charism that enables one to grow in one's faith and the Passionist Way.

- Excitement in participating with vowed and lay Passionists in ministries at the local Passionist retreat centers, Passionist parishes, schools, in Mission Outreach – feeling a sense of fulfillment in ministering and serving others.
- A spirit of celebration and community through participation in major Passionist feasts and social activities.

Possible Next Steps:

- Follow-up with the 13 alumni who at the Alumni virtual reunion in 2021 already expressed a desire to learn more about the Passionist Companions Pilot Program.
- Give a brief explanation of the Passionist Companions Pilot Program at the Passionist Alumni Reunion in Louisville, September 16-18, 2022, and meet those interested alumni during the Saturday afternoon break-out session.
- Provide a brief orientation to the Passionist Companions Pilot Program for members of the Association of Local Superiors (ALS) and the Province Retreat Center Board (PRCB) at their upcoming meetings.
- If the recruitment of 10 alumni and family members is successful, the monthly virtual meetings will start in October 2022. The identification and organization of participants to serve in Passionist projects and activities will begin.
- 12 months after its inception, the pilot will be evaluated, and if successful will be replicated and open to all. An interim report will be made at the 2023 Provincial Chapter.

“Steeping our hearts in the Passion of Christ daily by living the Passionist Way fills each of us with a love that overflows in action. We find a way to express this love in our varied ministries and service to all and to creation...Living the Passionist Way is not easy. The nails on our Passionist Sign proclaim this reality. Yet, we embrace this reality, accept this invitation to live the Passionist Way, and boldly stand together in our world.” (The Passionist Way)

Carl Middleton, Mark Brockman, and Phil Jackson

