

The Alexians

The Love of Christ Compels Us

*Immaculate Conception
Province of the Congregation
of Alexian Brothers*

Mission Statement

Strengthened by community, prayer, commitment to the poor and the legacy of our founders, and in partnership with others, we Alexian Brothers witness the Healing Christ by a holistic approach to promoting health and caring for the sick, dying, aged and unwanted of all socioeconomic levels.

Values

*Compassion
Dignity of the Person
Care of the Poor
Holism
Partnership*

Brothers eye reorganization, expansion of St. Louis ministry

The Alexian Brothers have announced plans to reorganize and to expand their St. Louis ministry, renewing a commitment to the city that dates back more than 150 years.

The plans call for the Brothers to sell their St. Louis residence to St. Alexius Hospital (formerly known as Alexian Brothers Hospital) for conversion into a residential treatment facility for people suffering from chemical dependency.

“Taking this step is very consistent with the Brothers’ history of caring for the marginalized,” said Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers. “It also reflects our continuing commitment to the hospital and its mission.”

In 2016, the Brothers made a similar decision, selling their longtime residence in Elk Grove Village, Illinois, so it could be converted into a residential treatment center for people



With Novice Brother Joe Pense looking on, Brother Steve Fogt, C.F.A., (left), and Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., (right), discuss plans for reorganizing and expanding the Alexian Brothers’ ministry in St. Louis.

with obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety and addictions. The Foglia Family Foundation Residential Treatment Center opened in 2017 on the campus of AMITA Health Alexian Brothers

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Brothers, friends gather for blessing of new homeless center in Philippines

Friends of the Alexian Brothers in the Philippines joined the Brothers recently for the blessing and dedication of their new center for the homeless in Davao City.

Father Allan Rodriguez, D.C.D., performed the blessing and dedication during a ceremony



(Top photo) Members of the Alexian Brothers Bajada and Matina communities in the Philippines join Father Allan Rodriguez, D.C.D., (middle), for a photo after he blessed and dedicated the new Alexian Brothers center for the homeless in Davao City. A plaque on the wall behind Father Allan dedicates the center “to those who merit our care and those in need of help, especially the poor.” (Bottom photo) The Brothers have named the center Dalangpanan ni San Alejo, or the Refuge of Saint Alexius.

witnessed by all of the members of the Alexian Brothers communities in the Bajada and Matina sections of Davao City. Sisters from the Pious Disciples of the Divine Master and neighborhood friends of the Brothers also attended the Dec. 8 event, which concluded with a banquet featuring Filipino food.

The Brothers scheduled the blessing and dedication for December expecting construction of the facility to be completed by the end of 2019. But construction delays have pushed back the projected completion date to March 2020.

Located near the Brothers’ Bajada residence, the center will be known as Dalangpanan ni San Alejo, or the Refuge of Saint Alexius. It will function as a drop-in facility where the homeless can shower, wash their clothes, eat meals, receive medical care, and access social services. The

center will not offer overnight accommodations, but the Brothers have designed it so it can be expanded at minimal cost to accommodate overnight guests in the future.

“The center will be a much-needed social

ministry, providing ongoing outreach to the homeless,” said Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers. Conservative estimates place the

number of homeless children in Davao City at 35,000, and “the need grows exponentially when you add parents and adult siblings to that number,” Brother Dan said.

During the blessing and dedication ceremony, the Brothers unveiled a dedication plaque with a message from Brother Dan saying that the ministry is an expression of the Alexian Brothers’ motto, “The Love of Christ Compels Us.”

“It also embodies our long history of caring and serving others, feeding the poor and meeting their needs,” the message said. “The Filipino Brothers continued this expression and living out of the Alexian Charism and legacy of concern. On this site, we acknowledge that we are channels of God’s Love.” The message concluded by saying the Brothers in the Philippines “dedicate this ministry to those who merit our care and those in need of help, especially the poor.”

The Brothers purchased a house and had it demolished to make way for the center. Construction began after a November 2018 groundbreaking ceremony, creating numerous jobs for poor workers, many of whom traveled from the countryside outside Davao City to build the center.

The Brothers provided shelter for the workers and purchased a commercial-size rice cooker and water heater to feed them. “We also have made sure to have hard hats and appropriate footwear for those working at the site,” Brother Dan said. “That always has been our interest in the Philippines – to lend a helping hand to those in need.”

Brother Dan praised the Brothers of the Philippines for proposing the center and planning and overseeing construction of the facility. “They identified the need and developed a plan to address it,” he said. “They intuitively understand that as Alexian Brothers, we are called to a life of service, and they are continually looking for new ways to extend our healing mission.”



Provincial's Letter

Dear Alexian Friends:

When I was a relatively new Alexian Brother, I heard a veteran Brother say that our shrinking ranks reflected God's will that we should disappear as a religious order. He said we ought to roll over and accept the inevitable.

I disagreed, and I told him he was absolutely wrong. If we died, we died, I said, but we should die fighting. We should not roll over, and we should not give up.

In hindsight, I recognize my response was disrespectful and poorly timed, especially because it occurred at our annual Extended General Chapter Meeting, which includes the General Council (the governing body of the worldwide Congregation of Alexian Brothers) and the leaders of our provinces and regions. To say I left a bad impression would be a massive understatement.

But more than 20 years later, I still believe strongly that the Alexian Brothers must not adopt a defeatist attitude simply because of a long-term decline in religious vocations. Our 800-year history supports this belief. When the Black Death swept Europe in the 1300s, some Alexian Brothers communities in Belgium and Germany shrank to as few as two Brothers. Yet we bounced back and have continued our caring work for centuries.

The reason the Brothers have survived is that we always have been committed to doing the next right thing to help those in need. We look at what's in front of us, and we take action to make a difference. We subscribe fully to Mother Teresa's exhortation to "help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you."

By embracing this philosophy, the Brothers of the Immaculate Conception Province in recent years have established new ministries after moving on from our longtime hospital roles. Not coincidentally, we have enjoyed greater success than many religious orders

in recruiting new men, despite a continuing decline in religious vocations overall. We have refused to adopt a defeatist attitude, and men with religious vocations have taken note and joined our ranks, wanting to be part of our efforts to do the next right thing.

These efforts now include plans to reorganize and expand our 150-year-old St. Louis ministry by creating new ministries to care for those in need. (See article on page 1.) We have not determined exactly what those ministries will be, but it's likely they will focus on serving the city's large population of poor and homeless people. We intend to study the community's needs, consider partnership opportunities, and determine where our efforts can have the greatest impact.

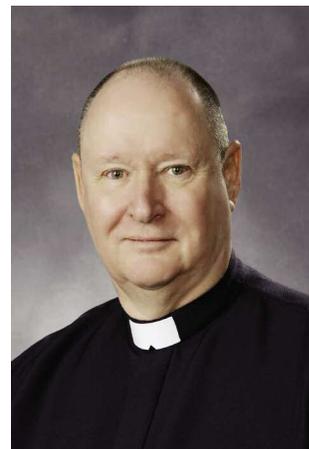
Our plans call for assigning new Brothers to St. Louis as they join us and pursue their formation. They will have the opportunity to experience ministry-building at the grass-roots level, working with our current St. Louis Brothers to identify new opportunities to help one person at a time.

While doing so, they will enjoy considerable autonomy, just as the earliest Brothers did as they cared for victims of the Black Death. It will be hard work. Our new Brothers will be challenged and stretched, but they will learn and grow from the experience. In the process, our St. Louis Brothers will provide a beacon for other men who yearn to make a difference by serving those in need. I'm confident their efforts will fuel our vocations efforts, demonstrating again that the Brothers have no intention of giving up – and that we are committed for the long haul to perpetuating our healing mission.

May God Bless You and Yours,



Brother Daniel McCormick, C.F.A.
Provincial
Immaculate Conception Province of the Alexian Brothers



Business manager gains valuable insights at conference for religious

Keeping the books for a religious order can involve some complex issues. For example, because members of religious orders typically take a vow of poverty and don't earn wages, managing Social Security and Medicare payroll computations can be tricky.

"That's always been a gray area," said Adeline Dzierozynski, business manager for Alexian Brothers Communities and Ministries, the nonprofit organization of the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of

Alexian Brothers.

Dzierozynski gained valuable insights on the Social Security and Medicare issue and others topics when she attended the annual conference of The Resource Center for Religious Institutes (RCRI) in Dallas last October. Based in Silver Spring, Maryland, RCRI provides advice and resources for member religious orders, helping them

navigate complexities related to taxes, tax exemption, corporate structure, finance, administration and canon law.

"It was an awesome experience," said Dzierozynski, who attended the conference for the first time. "The rules can be very different for religious orders, and it can be hard to find people who can give you guidance. But the conference offered guidance on many issues, as well as opportunities for personal growth and networking."

Dzierozynski attended a workshop that specifically addressed the Social Security and Medicare issue, enabling her later to put in place new accounting practices that she said will bene-

fit the Alexian Brothers and their ministries.

She also attended a workshop about recommended processes and policies for members of religious orders and volunteers to follow when they are providing charitable care and encounter people in crisis situations. Another workshop she attended focused on liability insurance for volunteers and how to make sure they are covered appropriately.

Both of those workshops were particularly relevant to St. Alexius Outreach Ministries (SAOM), an Alexian Brothers ministry that serves isolated and vulnerable older adults in Chattanooga, Tennessee. After the conference, Dzierozynski shared information from the workshops with the ministry so its leaders can ensure they are following best practices.

She also forwarded to SAOM recommendations from a workshop about fundraising for religious ministries. "The speaker provided some great pointers on how to approach grantors or donors, which I thought could be useful for the ministry as it pursues grants and develops fundraising strategies," Dzierozynski said.

Other workshops offered opportunities for personal growth. Dzierozynski was especially impressed by a workshop entitled "Neuroscience and Well-Being: How Spirituality Affects Our Health and DNA." "The speaker explained how prayer and meditation affect our brains and aging, and we practiced meditation," said Dzierozynski, who since has been working to practice prayer and meditation daily. "I'm absolutely benefiting from it. I've always been a busy person, always doing something and moving forward. I learned that sometimes I need to sit back, let things be and relax. I don't have to be doing something all the time."

While networking at the conference, Dzierozynski met several people in positions similar to hers. "We exchanged business cards, and now we write each other when we have questions about different issues," she said.



Adeline Dzierozynski, business manager for Alexian Brothers Communities and Ministries, says the annual conference of The Resource Center for Religious Institutes offered guidance on many issues, as well as opportunities for personal growth and networking.

Mission in Hungary plans online strategy for recruiting new Brothers

The Alexian Brothers mission in Hungary in 2020 plans to develop an online strategy for recruiting men with religious vocations to join the Brothers as they work to expand the mission.

For years, the Brothers have employed traditional recruitment methods in Hungary, such as putting posters up in Catholic churches and delivering presentations about the Brothers to religious organizations and youth groups. These efforts have generated limited success, and the Alexian Brothers Community in Győrújbarát, Hungary, continues to include only two Brothers, even though the Brothers' primary ministry there, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Home for the Elderly, operates at capacity and is slated for expansion.

Brother Dan McCormick, C.F.A., provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province of the Congregation of Alexian Brothers, and Brother Alexis Siska, C.F.A., director of the Alexian Brothers Community in Győrújbarát, discussed recruitment strategies during Brother Dan's annual visitation to the mission last November. They agreed the mission should expand its online recruitment efforts and connect them with the Congregation's efforts to establish a worldwide Alexian Brothers website to be known as Alexian Brothers International.

Brother Dan invited Brother Alexis to attend a discussion about the website at the Alexian Brothers' annual Extended General Council Meeting in Aachen, Germany, in April. The Brothers intend to use the website and a strong social media presence to increase awareness of the Congregation and to enhance the recruitment efforts of its individual provinces, regions and missions.

"Alexian Brothers International will serve as one resource center, tying together our ministries in Hungary, the Philippines, the United States, England, Ireland and Germany," Brother Dan said. "We recognize that the old

days of everyone operating in their own silo will not work in the world we live in today. The advantages the Internet can offer surpass what we can accomplish only by recruiting locally."

The Immaculate Conception Province has used an attractive website and a strong social media presence to achieve greater vocations success than many religious orders. Last September, the General Council, the Congregation's governing body, asked Brother Zeke Mapa, C.F.A., U.S. director of vocations and the primary architect of the province's online strategies, to develop plans for Alexian Brothers International and to present them at this year's Extended General Council Meeting. (The meeting, which includes the General Council and provincial/regional leaders, is the only time each year that the Congregation's major superiors get together for discussions.) Brother Zeke and Brother Patrick McCabe, C.F.A., U.S. assistant director of vocations, plan to travel to Aachen for the presentation, and Brother Dan will participate in the Extended General Council Meeting in his capacity as provincial.

During Brother Dan's visitation to the mission in Hungary, he met individually with Brother Alexis and Brother Leó Vendrey, C.F.A., to discuss the mission's operations as well as the two Brothers' thoughts about their lives and work as Alexian Brothers.

Brother Dan returned from his visitation filled with confidence about the mission's future. "Brother Alexis and Brother Leó both are excellent Alexian Brothers, and I am committed to helping them find other similar men with whom they can build the mission's future," Brother Dan said.



Brother Alexis Siska, C.F.A., director of the Alexian Brothers Community in Győrújbarát, Hungary, plans to attend a discussion about establishing a worldwide Alexian Brothers website at the annual Extended General Council Meeting in Aachen, Germany, this April. Brother Alexis, who is developing an online strategy for recruiting men to join the Brothers in Hungary, hopes to capitalize on synergies with the new worldwide site, which will be known as Alexian Brothers International.

Brothers help volunteers make a difference at skilled nursing facility

Continuing a long-standing tradition, the Alexian Brothers teamed with associates from AMITA Health St. Alexius Medical Center Hoffman Estates to provide a day of fun and entertainment for residents of a local skilled nursing and rehabilitation facility.

The event at Alden Poplar Creek, located next-door to the hospital, was held Oct. 25 in conjunction with national Make A Difference Day the following day. Make A Difference Day is an annual community service day that celebrates neighbors helping neighbors.

Hospital volunteers led a singalong for resi-

dents, polished their nails, provided hand massages, and visited with them individually. Brother Torch Acosta, C.F.A., represented the Alexian Brothers at the event, greeting and talking with residents and leading them through a two-hour game of bingo that featured prizes donated

by hospital associates. Surplus prizes were given to other residents as gifts.

“Our residents just loved it,” said Savannah Krafft, activity director at Alden Poplar Creek. “Every time they get done with Make A Difference Day, they immediately ask, ‘When are they coming back?’ They get so excited when they come.”

Although Alden Poplar Creek sponsors various outings for residents, they spend much of their time at the facility and see the same people every day, Krafft said. “So it is a great thing for them when they see new people who come in and are willing to talk with them and to listen as they share their stories,” she said.

Make A Difference Day is especially meaningful for residents without family members to

visit them. “It’s a big deal for them knowing a volunteer wants to come in and do things to help them,” Krafft said. “They realize they’re still important and people do still care about them.”

Helen Flynn, an associate in the Patient Access Department at AMITA Health St. Alexius, launched the Make A Difference Day tradition 17 years ago and has continued to lead the effort as it has grown in popularity among Alden Poplar Creek residents and hospital associates. More than 35 volunteers from the hospital helped Flynn organize the 2019 event, and about 10 volunteers, along with Brother Torch, joined Flynn at Alden Poplar Creek. More than 60 residents took part in the activities.

The Alexian Brothers have been a constant presence at the event through the years, adding a special dimension to the tradition, Flynn said. The event reflects the Brothers’ core values of compassion, partnership, dignity of the person, care of the poor and holism, and the volunteers’ efforts, coupled with the Brothers’ continued participation, bring those values to life, she said. “You want to share your love and emphasize the dignity of each resident, and the Brothers help us do that,” she said.

Brother Torch “was wonderful,” Krafft said. “He didn’t just call the bingo game. He added some fun jokes or told a story. He really got the residents engaged. If he noticed people were getting tired, he’d say, ‘OK, let’s stop and sing a song,’ and they’d sing a piece of a song.” Added Flynn: “He was making them feel good and bringing up their spirits. His presence made a big difference.”

Residents later sent a thank you note to Flynn, calling everyone who participated in Make A Difference Day “a huge blessing” to Alden Poplar Creek. “We’re truly blessed to have this relationship with St. Alexius, AMITA and the Alexian Brothers,” Krafft said. “It’s something that we hopefully will continue for many years to come.”



Brother Torch Acosta, C.F.A., speaks to Alden Poplar Creek residents while calling a bingo game during Make A Difference Day.

Brothers eye reorganization, expansion of St. Louis ministry

(continued from page 1)

Medical Center Elk Grove Village.

Under the St. Louis plans, the Brothers there will move into converted space at Ascension Living Sherbrooke Village, a St. Louis assisted living and skilled nursing facility that was part of Alexian Brothers Health System (ABHS) before Ascension, one of the nation's leading nonprofit and Catholic health systems, acquired ABHS in 2012.

The move will be synergistic for the Brothers, who regularly minister to Sherbrooke residents, supporting the facility's Catholic identity. Relocating to Sherbrooke also will give the Brothers immediate access to medical care, an important consideration because three of the four Brothers now assigned to St. Louis are older adults, Brother Dan said.

While continuing their work at Sherbrooke, the Brothers intend to expand their presence in St. Louis by establishing new ministries to care for those in need. "St. Louis has a vibrant Catholic community that has been open to the Alexian Brothers for more than 150 years, and we are firmly committed to growing our presence in the city," Brother Dan said.

The Brothers have not determined exactly what their new St. Louis ministries will be, but it's likely they will focus on serving the city's large population of poor and homeless people, Brother Dan said. "Before developing specifics, we will study the community's needs and discern where we can have the biggest impact," he said.

As the Brothers move forward with their expansion plans, a key objective will be building ministries not dependent on one or two Brothers. In 2011, the Brothers launched the Loaves and Fishes Ministry, a successful effort that involved distributing bread and other foods to soup kitchens, food pantries and individual homeless people in St. Louis. Two Brothers spearheaded the ministry, but when they accepted new assignments, it ceased operations.

"We have to avoid that scenario in the future," Brother Dan said. To do so, he intends to assign additional Brothers to St. Louis as new men join the Congregation. The residential space for the Brothers at Sherbrooke will include extra bedrooms to accommodate new Brothers, he said.

The Brothers have been working with St. Alexius Hospital and Ascension Living to finalize the details of selling their residence and moving

"St. Louis has a vibrant Catholic community that has been open to the Alexian Brothers for more than 150 years, and we are firmly committed to growing our presence in the city."

into Sherbrooke. The Brothers' quarters at Sherbrooke might not be ready until late 2020, which might mean they will have to rent space elsewhere on a short-term basis, depending on the hospital's schedule for converting the Brothers' current residence into a residential treatment facility.

Brother Dan has asked Brother Steve Fogt, C.F.A., director of the Alexian Brothers Community in St. Louis and comptroller of Alexian Brothers Communities and Ministries, to lead the reorganization and expansion effort, and they have been working together closely on the project.

With Brother Steve's leadership and the many years of combined leadership and ministry experience of the other three members of the St. Louis community (Brother Edward Walsh, C.F.A., Brother Thomas Keusenkothen, C.F.A., and Brother Jeffrey Callander, C.F.A.), the Brothers "have the building blocks for creating a wonderful beacon of light in a city that is very much in need of help for the poor," Brother Dan said.

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The Alexians

The Love of Christ Compels Us

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Donated goods bring joy, relief to disadvantaged in Philippines

The Alexian Brothers in the Philippines distributed thousands of Alexian Brothers branded items to charitable organizations before Christmas, bringing joy and relief to many disadvantaged children and adults.

The Alexian Brothers in Elk Grove Village, Illinois, collaborated with AMITA Health St. Alexius Medical Center Hoffman Estates to ship the surplus marketing and promotional items, which included jackets, robes, dolls, clipboards and other goods that had been designated for removal from a warehouse.

Children screamed with delight when they received the dolls and clipboards, said Brother John of God Oblina, C.F.A., director of the Alexian Brothers Matina Community in Davao City. "They gave their dolls names right away and embraced them," he said. The Alexian Brothers Health & Wellness Center purchased many robes as gifts, and the Brothers used the proceeds to buy 45 sacks of rice that they



Brother Ignatius Gonzales, C.F.A., presents donated items to Jeanette Laurel of Talikala, Inc., a non-government organization that helps prostituted women and children in Davao City.

donated to local parishes to feed the hungry.

"It was a joy to see everybody receiving the gifts ... their eyes radiating with happiness and a big smile on their faces," said Brother John of God, who expressed deep gratitude to everyone involved in shipping the items to the Philippines.