Soon after becoming the new executive director for Maryknoll Lay Missioners, I received a note from a missioner that said, "God has invited you to come forth, has special work for you, special places for you to go, special things to do rooted in deep love. And God will be with you in all of this."

Isn’t this the first step to renewal? To trust in God’s invitation to each one of us, to trust that in this mission of love we can indeed step out in faith, knowing all the time that we do not go it alone?

And oh, how God celebrates when we give our “Yes”! Our missioners and the individuals and communities whom they accompany are living examples of the renewal inherent in mission: the constant re-opening of ourselves to God’s call, the rekindling cooperation with the Spirit and others in the face of adversity, and the ongoing recommitment to the journey of transformation.

Each time we seek justice, love tenderly, walk humbly and treat each person as though she were ourself, we respond to God’s invitation to break through the invisibility of poverty, brokenness, inequality and despair, and stand for justice and in solidarity amidst the harsh realities of the world. You will see glimpses of that good news throughout this report.

Thank you for the many ways you respond to God’s invitation to mission, especially through your support of Maryknoll Lay Missioners. Your partnership, generosity, kindness and prayers help to transform the lives of our global sisters and brothers alongside whom we live and serve.

Yours in mission
Ted Miles
Executive Director

In El Salvador, Maryknoll lay missioners like Larry Porr (second from left) are helping to create a better future and more opportunities for people, addressing some of the root causes of the emigration of Salvadorans—like gang violence and a lack of educational and economic opportunities.

A YEAR OF RENEWAL
In January 2018, Maryknoll Lay Missioners began a new mission in the war-torn country of South Sudan. Gabe Hurrish, a veteran lay missioner who has served overseas for 27 years, started teaching social studies, computer classes, religious education and English, while also helping to administer the Solidarity Teacher Training College (STTC) in Yambio.

“I feel it is what I’m called to do,” says Gabe. “Every teacher we put out there makes that much difference in the country, fostering education and growth.”

According to a UNESCO report, fewer than one third of primary-school age children attend school in South Sudan, making the country the world’s worst in this category. For those who do attend, classes are often held in dilapidated buildings, with 100 or 125 students crammed into tiny, overcrowded classrooms with no desks and few chairs.

Teachers are paid as little as $1.50 per week. “Becoming a teacher in South Sudan is like signing your name in the book of poverty,” Gabe says.

Against these overwhelming odds, Gabe and Solidarity with South Sudan, the unique joint international initiative of religious orders that runs the teacher training college, provide a new vision. That vision promotes qualified and trained teachers as respected role models who are key to a better future of their country.

In addition to learning how to teach, the college’s students also learn other lessons that are crucial for the country’s future. “We have students who come from all over the country,” Gabe explains. They don’t speak the same languages and come from different ethnic groups that have been at war with each other. “Part of what we’re trying to do is bring them together to show that everybody is equal, and that they can have peace among the different ethnic groups. They are the future, and God willing, they will be the agents of change.”

The world’s youngest country, South Sudan has seen little peace since it gained its independence in 2011. The armed struggle of the preceding 50 years has just continued with an on-again, off-again civil war, ethnic cleansing and high levels of violence.

As he walks around the STTC campus, Gabe says, he wonders about the future of the students there. “Will they be able to overcome the incredible odds stacked against them? Seeds have been planted by the Holy Spirit. Now we need to let them grow. By the grace of God, I am privileged to be a part of the foundation that is being built by Solidarity in this country.”
After several years of exploration, discernment and groundwork, Maryknoll Lay Missioners in October 2018 planted its first seeds for a new mission commitment in northern Haiti. Since then, lay missioner Sami Scott, who previously served with Maryknoll Lay Missioners in Cambodia and Venezuela, has been developing her new ministry at the Jean Marie Vincent Agricultural Center in Gros Morne, a project of the Religious of Jesus and Mary.

Sami is applying her expertise in finance, management and administration to help the center expand into new areas of environmental stewardship and service to the community. She likes that much of her work in Haiti is hands-on. "I like getting back to more physical labor," she says, adding that that was something she had missed during her recent ministry in Cambodia. "I actually find the physical labor more prayerful. Working side by side with the people helps me make better and closer connections with them through the labor."

Among the many projects she helps tackle are reforestation program, erosion control measures, composting, good animal husbandry, organic pest control, and the planning and management for a new block factory and a new bakery.

Once a week she also makes a two-hour walk each way to help manage the Father Jim Bretl Agricultural Center in Boucan Richard, which is focused on showing that agriculture can be done without cutting down trees and solving agricultural and environmental problems identified by the community.

One of the first large new projects Sami has been working on is a new hen house to help provide the town of Gros Morne with a more stable, economic and safe supply of eggs. Until now, women have had to travel five hours to the Dominican Republic, cross over the border, buy eggs and then pay to get them shipped back. “Just recently, the country was rocked again by demonstrations for about 10 days to 2 weeks,” Sami says. “The interruption in the supply route underscored the need for local production of eggs. After things quieted down again, the eggs imported from the Dominican Republic were mainly rotten.”

Sami prepared the budget and business plans and secured grant funding for the financing. The hen house is scheduled to start operation with 1,000 hens in the summer of 2019.

While starting her new ministry, Sami also prepared the way for other Maryknoll lay missioners to come to Haiti. In early January 2019, Abby Belt joined Sami to teach, consult and develop sports programs at the Lekòl Jezi Mari (Jesus Mary School), the Catholic grade school in Gros Morne. Other new missioners are expected to arrive in early 2020.

Inch by inch, row by row, please bless these seeds we sow
Helping migrants and refugees and improving life in the country of origin

As immigration, refugee and border concerns continued to heat up in 2018, Maryknoll Lay Missioners prepared an additional new mission commitment with newly minted attorney Heidi Cerneka at the U.S.-Mexico border, while continuing to strengthen its considerable presence in El Salvador.

Heidi officially began her new ministry as an immigration attorney in early January 2019, but most of the groundwork was laid in 2018. Heidi is now serving with community agencies in El Paso, spending most of her time at Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center. She helps serve the legal needs of immigrants, including refugees and asylum seekers.

“It is important for us to be here at the border,” Heidi says, “because it is a flashpoint where national and international politics, ministry, church and economic issues meet.” In opening this new ministry, Heidi is continuing a previous Maryknoll Lay Missioners presence at the border that lasted until 2007.

Meanwhile, Maryknoll Lay Missioners’ El Salvador region has continued to wrestle with the many push factors that have been driving Salvadorans, Hondurans and Guatemalans (the people of Central America’s northern triangle) to leave their country.

After living and working with poor people in El Salvador, Peter Altman, Maryknoll Lay Missioners’ regional director in El Salvador, says that one thing he knows is that “Salvadorans love El Salvador. In a perfect world, they would want to live, work and raise their families in El Salvador. When I see stories on the news about Salvadorans immigrating to the United States, it is very clear to me that this isn’t just a quest for better economic opportunities. Most of the time, people have no choice to stay in their homes. They are running for their lives.”

Gang murders, shootings, violence, extortion and threats are common in many of the communities where Maryknoll lay missioners work.

Altman accompanies and serves internally displaced Salvadorans at two secret church-run shelters, while his wife, Melissa, helps to develop marketing and business opportunities for a women’s cooperative. Other lay missioners are engaged in educational programs with at-risk youth and in programs with small farmers in the countryside; they are providing educational assistance in urban areas, working with nutritional programs, accompanying small Christian communities and reaching out to people who are homeless—including a significant number of Salvadorans who have been deported from the U.S.

Altman sees support for the work of Maryknoll lay missioners in El Salvador as another way for U.S. Catholics to make a difference in the current border and refugee situation—just as important as welcoming and embracing migrants and asylum seekers in the United States.
2018 MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Bolivia

Since moving to Bolivia in 2018, Juan Gomez has been teaching computer classes, coaching sports teams and leading critical-thinking and life skills workshops and a youth ministry. He works at Colegio San Juan Bosco in Tacopaya, a rural indigenous community in the Bolivian Andes.

Brazil

After serving as director of mission services for Maryknoll Lay Missioners, Joanne Blaney in 2018 returned to her ministry of popular education and restorative justice in São Paulo. She works with marginalized populations, including homeless and incarcerated women and men and trains educators, community leaders and church groups in restorative justice practices and violence prevention. In 2018 she led courses and was a presenter at international conferences in Finland, Kenya and Rwanda.

Kenya

In 2018 Dee Dungy (left), who had been serving in Cambodia, relocated to Kenya to begin a new ministry with Jesuit Refugee Service in Nairobi. She is now advocating for refugees from neighboring African countries.

Cambodia

Kylene Fremling began working as a physiotherapist assistant at LaValla School in Phnom Penh in 2018. LaValla is the only school in Cambodia offering a full primary education to children and young people with disabilities.

Tanzania

At the Rosemiriam Dagg Center in Musoma, Tanzania, Angelica Ruppe is serving young women who have a disability or are otherwise at risk. She started her service as a lay missioner there in 2018 and also leads activities at the nearby St. Justin Centre for Children with Disabilities.
2018 MILESTONES

With 12 new people joining Maryknoll Lay Missioners, the Class of 2018 was tied for being the largest since 2005. Their Sending Ceremony took place December 8.

After 33 years of service in many different capacities with Maryknoll Lay Missioners, we bade farewell to long-time executive director Sam Stanton on November 6.

At the end of 2018, Maryknoll Lay Missioners began a new strategic planning process, “Preparing Mission for the 21st Century.”

MISSION STATEMENT
Maryknoll Lay Missioners is a Catholic organization inspired by the mission of Jesus to live and work with poor communities in Africa, Asia and the Americas, responding to basic needs and helping to create a more just and compassionate world.

2018 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:

Ted Miles
Executive Director, Maryknoll Lay Missioners, Maryknoll, New York

Marj Humphrey *
Director of Missions, Maryknoll Lay Missioners, Maryknoll, New York

* Maryknoll lay missioner  ** Returned Maryknoll lay missioner
FINANCES

2018 Operating Income and Expenses

Total support and income
- Charitable donations and other public support: $3,204,033
- Grants from trust: $2,060,654
- Investment return: ($100,647)
- Other income and gains: $1,443

REVENUE TOTAL: $5,165,483

Program and support services expenses
- Mission work: $3,057,002
- Education and recruitment: 1,152,678
- Support services: $972,217

SUBTOTAL: $4,209,680

Support services
- Fundraising: $285,210
- Administration: 687,007

SUBTOTAL: $972,217

EXPENSES TOTAL: $5,181,897

NET INCOME FROM OPERATIONS: ($16,414)

Actuarial gain (loss) on pension liability: 19,401
Change in net assets: $2,987
Net asset balance: ($842,992)

Uses of Funds
- Mission work: $3,057,002 (59%)
- Education & recruitment: $1,152,678 (22.2%)
- Support services: $972,217 (18.8%)

Sources of Funds
- Charitable donations and other public support: $3,204,033 (62%)
- Grants from trust: $2,060,654 (39.9%)
- Investment return: ($100,647) (1.9%)

2018 Support by Region
- Tanzania: 23.7%
- Brazil: 24.6%
- Bolivia: 14.6%
- Kenya (and South Sudan): 13.5%
- El Salvador (and Haiti): 14.3%
- Cambodia: 9.3%

2018 by the Numbers
- 74 LAY MISSIONERS served during the year 2018 (plus 15 children in missioner families)
- They directly affected MORE THAN 10,000 LIVES.
- They served in 9 COUNTRIES in 5 MINISTRY AREAS (education and leadership development, faith formation and pastoral care, healthcare and health promotion, justice and peace, sustainable development).
- Of the active lay missioners, 11 were under 30; 14 were 30 - 44; 19 were 45 - 59; and 30 were 60 and older.
- In 2018 we recruited, trained and sent into mission 12 NEW LAY MISSIONERS.
- Since 1975, we have recruited, trained and sent into mission MORE THAN 700 MARYKNOLL LAY MISSIONERS.
“Every man and woman is a mission; that is the reason for our life on this earth. To be attracted and to be sent are two movements that our hearts feel as interior forces of love.... To live out joyfully our responsibility for the world is a great challenge.”

—Pope Francis, Message for World Mission Day 2018

Coralis Salvador (right), the coordinator of HOPE (Helping Orphans Pursue Education) Project in Mombasa, Kenya, and her colleague, Floriana Mwandoe (left), pay a home visit to Anna Charo in the Mululongu neighborhood. Anna has been an active member of HOPE since 1997 and is raising her deceased brother’s two children as well as a grandchild, all three of them AIDS orphans. Photo by Jerry Fleury.