



FOOTSTEPS FOR THE FUTURE

A RECOMMITMENT TO THE MISSION OF THE MARIST BROTHERS CENTER AT ESOPUS

Our Mission

The Marist Brothers Center at Esopus-Mid-Hudson Valley Camp is where a Marist approach to ministry, formation, and service works together to evangelize young people and adults.

Our Vision

The Marist Brothers Center at Esopus-Mid-Hudson Valley Camp is devoted to Christian evangelization. Here, the presence of God is discovered in a new way by young people and adults alike. Hearts are touched, lives are changed, and “Jesus is made known and loved.”

Founded and administered by the Marist Brothers, a Roman Catholic religious order established for the Christian education of youth with special concern for the poor and marginalized, the Center offers experiences of community, service, and spiritual formation in a setting of great natural beauty. “In this sacred space, on this holy ground, God’s grace touched people in many different ways.”

The Marist values of welcome and acceptance, joyful service to others, community, simplicity, humility and love of God mark the programs offered by the Center as well as the approach of all who live and serve there.

The Marist Brothers Center at Esopus-Mid Hudson Vally Camp has had young people as its focus since the Marist Brothers acquired the property in the 1940's.

First utilized as a preparatory school for those interested in religious life, the property was later re-imagined as a retreat center which also hosted summer camps for the marginalized and disabled.

In 2011, the Provincial and his Council engaged Guerin Management to create a strategic plan which was adopted and utilized. Building upon the depth of living history and relationships that both vowed and lay Marists have when it comes to the Esopus campus, the strategic plan served as a guiding light for moving into the future.

Today, the MBCE-MHVC brings together all Marists of Champagnat, both vowed and lay, united in the belief that the time to plan for a preferred future is now. Our choice is intentional.

The MBCE-MHVC presently operates as an integrated entity with an overall mission focused on young people. Programs seek to maximize impact and scholarship funding have been allocated to ensure continued access for all program participants. Additional steps can be taken to increase sustainability.

The objective of this Vision Exercise is the re-vitalization, strengthening and expansion of the potential that lies in the MBCE-MHVC as a center for evangelization in the United States. As resilient as the Center is, the Marist charism can be vulnerable if it does not remain an intentional part of the property's mission.

Our hope is to affirm the MBCE's mission as well as to determine and prioritize capital and operational needs, in order to plan more comprehensively for the future. We will also address the resources and personnel necessary to sustain it.

Goals preparing the MBCE to successfully plan operational improvement and implement action plans are also presented.

Finances

Historically, the fragility of sustaining mission at the MBCE-MHVC has been perennially threatened by the scarcity of financial resources. The property in Esopus started on a shoestring budget, with financial resources being subsidized by the Marist Brothers. In early years the property was run wholly by the Brothers and volunteers. Over the past decade, the Center has successfully integrated the salaries of lay people, while at the same time maintaining a balanced budget. Future long-range planning involves hiring more personnel while remaining fiscally sound.

Financial management has improved significantly and can be further strengthened. An external audit is conducted annually, and budgets are submitted for approval. The integration of development and accounting software (Little Green Light CRM database and QuickBooks) further streamline operations and improve financial reporting. Investments have been diligently safeguarded and diversified by the Investment Committee of the MBCE Board, which includes certified wealth managers. Prudent financial management guarantees value for money, while responsible spending enhances accountability. All are necessary if the mission of the MBCE-MHVC is to thrive and remain an affordable option for its constituents.

The unexpected is always the inevitable. Because of aging facilities, the nature of hospitality, seasonal fluctuations and unforeseen/emergency expenditures, a contingency fund is planned as a strategic tool to keep operations resilient in the face of uncertainty.

Having achieved fiscal solvency, we have been recently able to direct attention to the beginnings of an endowment.

Under the leadership of the MBCE Board, a foundation was created as a separate legal entity to safeguard Esopus's future. Formed in 2023, the Marist Brothers Center at Esopus Foundation supports the initiatives and programs of the Marist Brothers Center at Esopus, New York. It is a public, 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization completely independent of the MBCE-MHVC and the Marist Brothers USA Province.

The foundation has greatly benefited from the patrimonies of many Marist Brothers, who continually show their commitment to the center's future. The corpus has also grown through memorial gifts, individual donations and identified advancement activities. In the 18-month interval since its inception, the corpus has grown to 1 million dollars. Disbursements supporting the MBCE-MHVC will begin in 2025.

Careful stewarding is vital to the allocation of resources to meet the diverse needs of the property's mission.

Goal: To increase the corpus of the MBCE Foundation to ensure future Marist life and vitality.

Action: To increase funds annually, culminating in a corpus of \$1.5M.

Person(s) Responsible: Executive Director and MBCE Foundation Board

Goal: To allocate funds to cover unforeseen costs or changes in expenditures within the operating budget without compromising operational integrity.

Action: To allocate 5% of the annual budget for a contingency fund designated for emergency operating expenditures.

Person(s) Responsible: Executive Director and MBCE Board Finance Committee

Goal: Ensure timely, accurate and transparent financial reporting

Action: Earn and Publicize a GuideStar Seal of Transparency by end of fiscal 2025.

Person(s) Responsible: Director of Advancement, Board Development Committee, Executive Director

Advancement

There is a palpable power in the strength of connection that so many people feel with Esopus. There is an established culture of giving that is strong and rich. The depth of this legacy provides a strong foundation for advancement.

A culture of philanthropy was initiated with the establishment of a development office in 2016. An advancement data base now manages communication, solicitation and gift recording for a growing constituent body. In addition to a structured plan for special events (Esopus Runners, Century Ride, Hall of Fame Dinners), advancement initiatives now include an Annual Giving Appeal and a strengthened Day of Giving. Constituent relations have been cultivated and nurtured. All gifts are acknowledged in a timely fashion and recognized in the MBCE's annual report and honor roll of donors. The integration of LGL with QuickBooks further streamlines operations and improve financial recording.

The search for additional sources of income offers opportunities to strengthen sustainability for the future. While the case for support is strong, the story needs to be told more often and to a wider audience. Social media presence is limited. Program activities, property improvements, future planning need to be better communicated.

Goal: Coordinate and align the many groups who regularly raise money on behalf of Center activities.

Action : Create and publish a comprehensive 12 month phased solicitation calendar by next September 2025.

Person(s) Responsible: Executive Director, MBCE Staff, Director of Advancement

Timeline: September 2025 and ongoing

Goal: Separate the Advancement Operations and Marketing and Communications responsibilities

Action: Provide for orderly transition from current ministry role of Director of Advancement by delineating clear Job descriptions and responsibilities for both Advancement Operations and Marketing/Communications by September 2025

Person(s) Responsible: Executive Director, Board Marketing and Development Committees with input from Director of Communications

Timeline: September 2025

Action: Hiring of additional personnel

Person(s) Responsible: Executive Director Board Marketing and Development Committees with input from Director of Communications

Timeline: December 2025

Goal: Implement a strategic communication plan to tell the story of Esopus highlighting challenges, accomplishments and program activities by fiscal year 2025-2026

Action: Increase social media presence with specific strategies and goals

Person(s) Responsible: Exec. Director with Advancement/Communications Staff

Action: By September 2026, develop a stronger giving section on the MBCE website reinforcing the major impact of giving with a bold, declarative and transformative case for support

Person(s) Responsible: Exec. Director with Advancement/Communications Staff

Action: Increase “asks” for Esopus Fund to include both a Fall and Spring cycle for solicitation mailings and online appeals

Person(s) Responsible: Exec. Director with Advancement/Communications Staff

Action: By September 2026, build out a specific major gift program cultivating a major gift prospect pool

Person(s) Responsible: Exec. Director with Advancement/Communications Staff

COMMUNICATIONS AND VISIBILITY

To understand where we are going, we need to know our history and where we are at this present juncture in time. The incredible story about Esopus needs to be told to a wider group of people. Information that clearly articulates the mission of the Center is vital to the on-going interest of all stakeholders and should be disseminated on a consistent basis.

Communication needs to be timely and relevant. Information regarding transparent decision making, special programs and events, as well as program usage and property improvements need to be conveyed to all constituents.

Goal: Develop and implement an integrated set of communication platforms that may include a revamped website, social media channels, newsletters and a mobile app. These platforms should be tailored to meet the Center's diverse needs.

Action: By September 2026, seek professional assistance in creating a strategy, case statement and support materials to further advance fundraising efforts, seek grants and where possible partner with other agencies.

Persons responsible: Exec. Director with Advancement/Communications Staff

Action: By December 2025, establish guidelines to ensure consistency and professionalism in all communications

Persons responsible: Exec. Director with Advancement/Communications Staff

Goal: By September 2025 develop a schedule that keeps all stakeholders informed of projects and progress initiatives in a timely manner. Regular updates can be communicated via social media, website, displays and printed communications.

Action: Increase engagement of all constituents with content that is frequent, engaging and informational regarding all activities at the Center.

Persons responsible: Exec. Director with Advancement/Communications Staff

Action: *What's Coming?* bulletin Board increasing visibility of future visioning Pictures along Retreat Center Hallway

Persons responsible: Advancement/Communications Staff

Action: Brochures, Quarterly Newsletters and Annual Report (printed for older brothers and communities, and distributed in Retreat Center Hallways.

Persons responsible: Advancement/Communications Staff

Action: By December 2025 produce monthly and/or event reporting highlighting data management and gift entries that will improve transparency in constituent relations.

Persons responsible: Exec. Director with Advancement/Communications Staff

VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF MARIST LIFE

Each of us finds in Esopus a legacy to be treasured. This heritage is the fruit of the work of many generations of Brothers and lay people, built with hard work and dedication. Any vision for ensuring the future of Marist life and mission implies that we manage this inheritance responsibly. This is a priority.

Ensuring that mission remains sustainable depends on a unified vision and everyone's commitment to achieve it. In order to address the multiple challenges facing the mission of the MBCE-MHVC, those in leadership and management need to be able to identify, articulate, practice and promote the Marist charism's attitudes of responsibility, transparency and trust. Marist leaders are needed who have the ability to invite, embody, articulate and inspire young people in the Marist spirituality style. It is important, therefore, that leadership and staff are trained and understand their roles as keepers of the Marist charism.

People have always come first, and solidarity is a core element of the Marist charism. Vigilance is needed to ensure the vitality and the viability of Marist life in the present and in the future. The exercise of leadership is called to be inclusive, communicative and encouraging of efforts to follow ethical and socially responsible criteria. Action plans for the best execution of long-term planning need to be implemented and a clear planning process will ensure continuity in leadership.

Goal: Develop the leadership skills of Board Members and Lay Staff Administrators to enhance knowledge transfer of the Center's charismatic culture.

Action: Schedule Board retreat and workshops to ensure the charism remains strong and is passed on to future generations.

Persons Responsible: Exec. Director and Board Chair

Timeline: Ongoing

Action: Review membership of Board to assure access to those with program expertise, property knowledge, financial clout, legal acumen, and commitment to the mission and values of the Marist Brothers.

Person(s) Responsible: Exec. Director and Board Chair

Timeline: Ongoing

Action: Renew and facilitate regular staff meetings to ensure all remain constant and consistent in the promotion of the values and culture for which Esopus is renowned, as well as prioritize needs, tasks and schedules for efficient operation.

Person(s) Responsible: Exec. Director

Timeline: Ongoing

Action: Provide Board members and committees with direction on how they can adequately provide for the Center. Provide timely appraisals Board members to help to envision and plan for future needs and sustainability of Esopus Community and mission.

Person(s) Responsible: Exec. Director and Board Chair

Timeline: Ongoing

Action: Develop staff performance goals and review periodically to determine growth

Person(s) Responsible: Exec. Director and Board Chair

Timeline: Ongoing

MISSION

The Mission Statement must remain grounded in the Marist charism. All Staff members and volunteers need to be able to identify, articulate and promote what makes the mission of the Center unique and distinct.

Our unique Marist spirituality is what makes Esopus “home:” to those we serve. Hospitality, warmth, and acceptance are the priorities which make the Marist Brothers Center a vital Marist ministry. Efforts to convey these values must be constant and sincere.

As volunteers have a better understanding of the mission and the importance of their work, they are empowered to be disciples of Marcellin Champagnat.

Goal: Create a Community of Belonging where individuals are empowered to live out our Marist values in their daily lives. Ensure inclusivity, appreciate diversity and foster an authentic sense of community.

Action: Annually review Center policies and codes of conduct to assure adherence to values of inclusivity, diversity and equity.

Persons responsible: Exec. Director, Director of Operations

Action: Schedule and provide training as needed for staff and volunteers so all constituents value and respect each other.

Persons responsible: Director of Operations

Action: By September 2025, create a page on website for Community of Belonging that promotes a culture of acceptance and inclusivity.

Persons responsible: Director of Operations, Communications Staff

Action: By September 2025, post Community of Belonging Statement in prominent places throughout the Center.

Persons responsible: Director of Operations, Staff, Board

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Priority must be given to the recruitment and training of volunteers who embody the core Marist values of the Center.

As volunteers have a better understanding of the Marist mission and the importance of their work, they are empowered to take ownership. Many young people will attest to the fact that good volunteer experiences can be transformative, meaningful and liberating. Many continue to volunteer because their Esopus experiences have helped them in their own search for the meaning of life and challenged them to contribute to the building of a better world as they chose life vocations. In doing so, we invite young people to acquire learning, competence and values through discovering the world, others, themselves and God.

Goal: Revitalize a robust long term volunteer program to contribute to the work of the center while providing exposure to the Marist charism.

Action: By September 2025, identify person responsible for accompanying full-time volunteers and implementing a structured program focused on the individual volunteer's growth.

Persons responsible: Exec. Director

Action: By September 2025, update and expand training materials for staff and all volunteers to provide formation and guidance on the practices that result in the special character of programs at the Marist Brothers Center at Esopus

Persons responsible: Director of Operations

Action: Participate in USA Province volunteer program offering spiritual guidance and emotional support to volunteers navigating personal challenges.

Persons responsible: MBCE Staff

Timeline: Ongoing

Action: Train volunteers in safety and maintenance protocols as well as child protection policies.

Persons responsible: MBCE Staff

Timeline: Ongoing

ECOLOGY and SUSTAINABILITY

Our ministry in Esopus is committed to the principles of Laudato Si and that a growing awareness of care for our common home is vital for the formation of young people. As Marists, we seek to embody what St. Marcellin Champagnat called a “simple and down-to-earth spirituality” grounded in the Four Pillars of Presence, Simplicity, Family Spirit, and Love of Work (WFR, n.23).

Care of Creation is important to the MBCE because the Earth is our common home and caring for it means caring for all the people, plants, and animals within it. At the MBCE, we seek justice for all, especially the marginalized, and caring for all creation ensures the problems and challenges of all people are addressed.

Province Leadership calls all USA Marist ministries and communities to ensure they develop local Laudato Si’ Action Plans. These plans articulate how each community, in its own context and with God’s people, plans to pursue the Seven Goals of Laudato Si’ in simple and profound ways. Commitment to making Care for Creation a part of the MBCE-MHVC Vision will ensure a sacred space for all members of our Province who utilize the Center each year.

Goal: The MBCE-MHVC will realize its commitment to the Marist Brothers USA Province Laudate Si Action Plan by 2029 as identified below

Laudate Si Goal 1: Response to the Cry of the Earth

- **Action:** To continue to offset the carbon crisis through the strategic planning of new trees on an annual basis
 - *Timeframe:* Annually
 - *Person or Group Responsible:* Exec. Director, Director of Operations

Laudate Si Goal 2: Response to the Cry of the Poor

- **Action:** To continue to provide week-long camps for each of the marginalized communities that are served each summer
 - *Timeframe:* Ongoing
 - *Person or Group Responsible:* MBCE Team, Mid-Hudson Valley Camp Directors
- **Action:** To provide continued opportunities for students from All Marist Schools to volunteer at the Mid-Hudson Valley Camps in Esopus which serves many of our most marginalized populations including children, young adults and adults with mental and physical disabilities, children with cancer, and inner-city children
 - *Timeframe:* Each Summer
 - *Person or Group Responsible:* MBCE Team, Mid-Hudson Valley Camp Directors

Laudate Si Goal 3: Ecological Economics

- **Action:** The MBCE's Endowment Fund and Investments will continue to be in line with Catholic Social Teaching guidelines
 - *Timeframe:* Ongoing
 - *Person or Group Responsible:* MBCE Finance and Investment Teams

Laudate Si Goal 4: Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles

- **Action:** The MBCE will continue to upgrade its facilities with ecological friendly heating and cooling systems and move away from the long standing oil based system
 - *Timeframe:* Ongoing
 - *Person or Group Responsible:* Exec. Director, MBCE Building and Grounds Committee.
- **Action:** The MBCE will continue to ensure that LED Lighting is utilized throughout the entire MBCE Facilities
 - *Timeframe:* Ongoing
 - *Person or Group Responsible:* Exec. Director, Building and Grounds Committee.
- **Action:** The MBCE will continue to expand its usage of solar based energy when possible and practical
 - *Timeframe:* Ongoing
 - *Person or Group Responsible:* Exec. Director, Building and Grounds Committee.
- **Action:** The MBCE will commit to expand the use of Water refilling stations throughout the entire MBCE Facilities
 - *Timeframe:* Ongoing
 - *Person or Group Responsible:* Exec. Director, Building and Grounds Committee.
- **Action:** The MBCE will commit to expand its recycling efforts and seek a more sustainable way to utilize food waste

- *Timeframe:* Ongoing
- *Person or Group Responsible:* Director of Operations, MBCE Team
- **Action:** The MBCE will continue to utilize unused food from retreat groups or camps and share with local homeless shelters on a timely basis
Timeframe: Ongoing
Person or Group Responsible: Director of Operations, MBCE Team

Laudate Si Goal 5: Ecological Education

- **Action:** The MBCE will commit to hosting an annual Earth Day weekend in Esopus to inspire young people from our ten USA Marist Schools to become leaders in our USA Marist Ecology efforts. Mr. Sam King as the Province-wide Ecology Coordinator and to utilize his gifts and deep passion and knowledge in the area of Ecology as a resource to all USA Marist Ministries.
Timeframe: Ongoing
Person or Group Responsible: Director of Operations, MBCE Team
- **Action:** The Province Coordinator of Ecology will work with our other USA Marist Ministries to assist them in developing ways they can promote ecological learning to the young people each of those ministries serve
Timeframe: Ongoing
Person or Group Responsible: Director of Operations, MBCE Team

Laudate Si Goal 6: Ecological Spirituality

- **Action:** The MBCE will grow its efforts to ensure all retreat participants gain greater appreciation of the sacred grounds of the MBCE and wider connection to our Common Home
 - *Timeframe:* Ongoing
 - *Person or Group Responsible:* Director of Operations, MBCE Team
- **Action:** The MBCE will ensure reflective books and materials on Ecological Spirituality as well as other Spirituality topics are readily available to individuals on retreats
 - *Timeframe:* Ongoing
 - *Person or Group Responsible:* Director of Operations, MBCE Team

Laudate Si Goal 7: Community Resilience and Empowerment

- **Action:** The MBCE will continue to host the annual Province Earth Day weekend as a means of empowering young people to become servant leaders in this most needed area
Timeframe: Annually
Person or Group Responsible: MBCE Team and Province Green Team

- **Action:** The MBCE will commit to participating in and actively promote events that support ROAR
Timeframe: Ongoing
Person or Group Responsible: MBCE Team

Goal: The MBCE-MHVC will commit to ROAR, a network of religious congregations and organizations concerned with the sustainable and regenerative use of land in the Hudson Valley Bioregion.

Action: Initiate participation and actively promote events that support ROAR (<http://www.roarhvb.com/>) using the land under our care with respect for its integrity, revelatory nature and beauty and collaborating with regional environmentalists and organizations.

Persons responsible: Exec. Director and Director of Operations

Timeline: September 2025 and Ongoing

BUILDING AND GROUNDS

Maintaining an aging infrastructure is a perennial challenge. The facilities of the MBCE-MHVC encompass 9 buildings, a swimming pool, cemetery and acres of natural beauty. Regular upkeep is crucial and diligent care is needed to safeguard the facilities for the future. Preventative maintenance helps identify and address structural issues, preventing deterioration and preserving the integrity of buildings over time. Professional Facility Services can ensure safety, extend asset lifespan, boost efficiency and maintain property values, ultimately creating a positive environment for tenants and visitors. Proper maintenance is key to safeguarding safety, presentability and functionality.

Goal: Identify and prioritize needed staff positions and then hire in a fiscally responsible manner to balance the diverse responsibilities of the mission. (i.e., maintenance, communications, kitchen, etc).

Action: Review operations and increase staff to ensure operational needs (kitchen/scullery, cleaning, equipment maintenance, laundry, etc.) are being effectively managed and functioning at optimal levels. Hire as needed.

Persons responsible: Exec. Director, Director of Operations and Property Management Staff

Timeline: Ongoing

Goal: Strategically plan for facility upgrades and implement measures to create a sustainable and high functioning environment.

Action: Develop a five year MBCE 2030 renovation/renewal/preventative maintenance plan to refresh and update facilities. Plan for budgeting and staging of work.

Persons responsible: Exec. Director, Property Management Staff and Buildings and Grounds and Finance Board Committees

Action: As part of the MBCE 2030 plan, engage outside professionals to perform a Facilities Audit to review and update plans for maintaining all property buildings and facilities into the future.

Persons responsible: Exec. Director, Director of Operations, and Property Management Staff

Action: As part of the MBCE 2030 plan, create a facilities knowledge database to centralize information about property assets and maintenance schedules.

Persons responsible: Exec. Director, Property Management Staff

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood...

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

Robert Frost



The Marist Brothers Center at Esopus remains the primary center for evangelization for the USA Province.

We affirm that Esopus will continue to be a place that creates space for evangelization and authentic spirituality making Jesus Known and Loved.

We maintain a primary focus on the experiences of young people.

We promote a Community of Belonging.

We reiterate our commitment to creating and sustaining a culture of faith, solidarity and service. The challenges of those who are marginalized because of limited ability, race, financial status, or sexual orientation are met with an embrace of inclusion and acceptance.

We exemplify the Marist values of welcome, hospitality and joyful service in the way we live and act.

We choose to walk the road less traveled.