

PARTNERSHIP FOR MISSION

12th June 2015

Objectives:

- To chart the evolution of partnership for mission in the Congregation's history;
- To introduce the elements of partnership for mission: mutuality, trust, relationship, co-responsibility, commitment together, sustainability, values, heritage;
- To celebrate and highlight the involvement of lay partners in GS mission in various roles and at various levels - a tapestry of interwoven contribution;
- To envision the next steps for the development of partnership for mission in the Congregation.

The Beginnings

Partnership for mission had its beginnings in **the founding vision and involvement of lay persons** from the time of St. John Eudes and Madeleine Lamy.

This continued to be reflected, during the time of St. Mary Euphrasia, through Count de Neuville and Mme d'Andigné, two lay partners who were involved in **the founding of Angers**, the growth of the mission in Angers and the Generalate.

Another lay partner was Mme Laurance Gitaud, whom SME trusted with the mission and gave her the Constitutions, so that she could begin working "in the Good Shepherd Spirit". SME recognized in her the same charism, but a different life vocation.

20th Century

In the 1960s, during the Second Vatican Council, there was a **renewal of consecrated life** and the realisation that the **call to holiness was for everyone, including the laity**. A significant person was Mother Thomas Aquinas Lee, the Congregational Leader at that time. Religious life evolved from **semi-monastic to apostolic**.

That brought about a great amount of reflection, as well as the examination of every aspect of religious life. It still continues. Mother Thomas Aquinas Lee felt touched that holiness was the call of all in the Church and advised the sisters to find qualified laity to help in administration, finance and much more. She also said that the **gift of charism was found in many people** - they were drawn to the sisters and the sisters to them.

Melinda Stricklen was employed at Maryhurst Good Shepherd, in the Province of Mid-North America, as the first lay person to work directly with the programme participants in the 1970s. She went into a role that was managed by the sisters from the beginning. The initial response to "*we pay her... and therefore she is different from us*" developed into a **trusting relationship** between the sisters and Melinda. The relationship was built on conversations that mattered and on guidance through the process of being more effective at work. Eventually, for Melinda, there was a **shift** from a simple employee to a **trusted partner** with a charism.

Heidy shared that the sisters in Latin America started to collaborate with the laity about 14 or 15 years ago, seeking **new ways** of working with those who had received the Good Shepherd spirituality. Lay

persons, apostolic and contemplative, take part in different ways in the mission. They are beginning to **commit** themselves with the Good Shepherd and its Mission. The love of the Good Shepherd has **touched them** and they are falling in love with its Mission.

In South Africa, Zelna shared that partnership was **present from the beginning**, when sisters worked with lay partners. Exposure at ICA gave the partners a broader impression of the GS experience: for example, that it was international and much wider than their current mission area. This energized the lay partners to be more committed and involved in GS mission.

In Kenya, Florence shared that combined efforts, shared talents and giftedness, perceptions and exchange of wisdom had led to the **centralisation of management structures and administrative functions**, in order to enable sisters to find time for capacity building. The lay partners had built the Province of Kenya with total self-giving in the midst of challenges, difficulties and joys. The past had shaped today's system!

Melinda continued to share that she is the Director of the Office of Mission Effectiveness in the Province of Mid-North America, serving with Sr. Barbara Beasley and Lizzie Tschida. The purpose of the office is to **support, encourage, educate and inspire** partners for mission; to provide optimal care in service and sustain a vibrant GS presence in the world. They draw on the lives and work of SJE and SME. Core values are: individual worth, mercy, reconciliation and zeal.

Barbara shared on the formation of the **Visioning Commission** across North America in the late 90s. The Commission was very inspired about the urgency of authentic partnership for mission. It developed a process for the communities of sisters to reflect on the **role of lay collaborators** - they read, reflected, had conversations and provided feedback to the Commission. The preparation paved the way for a process of formation of both sisters and lay partners on mission partnership. It did not happen overnight, but over a **period of time**.

Maureen McGowan shared about Good Shepherd Volunteers (GSV), an initiative in the city of New York which started 20 years ago, where university graduates spend a year to volunteer in GS missions locally and internationally. These volunteers have gone on to live the GS values in their families and work places. Maureen also spoke of the Trading Circle, Handcrafting Justice and Sharing Fair, and how partnerships with lay persons have helped in the **development of economic justice projects** in the areas of design, production, marketing and business management. Many women in need have benefited from these partnerships.

Elaine Basinger and Evelyn Fergus shared on the formulation of the COR Commission Statement on Partnership, that arose out of the 2003 Congregational Chapter Direction Statement on partnership. There was a reflection on the document "*Passion for Christ and Passion for humanity*", where the sisters were asked to express important things on the life of the Congregation and on where they see the Congregation moving. This is the COR Commission statement on partnership:

Partnerships create pathways for developing new ministries.

'We have made progress in this area, but feel that we need to continue to strengthen relationships and communion, i.e.: to create networks, associations and more prophetic ministries, etc. This commitment to share our mission with the laity allows us to see a future in which the Good Shepherd charism that we share will continue to develop new forms of service.'

In establishing relationships with lay persons, there were different terms used, e.g.: associates, friends and more recently, **mission partners**, in other words **sisters and lay persons collaborating** together.

Susan Chia and Pamela Molony shared that the development of partnership in Asia-Pacific began in 2006, three years after the passing of the 2003 Congregational Chapter Direction Statement and the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Circle (APC) of Leaders. The Circle realised that nothing much had been done. With the resource support from GSANZ, an Asia-Pacific Good Shepherd Partnership Gathering was planned for 2008 in Kuala Lumpur. It had the following features to **reflect on with regard to partnership in action**:

- the Planning Committee, which eventually became the Asia-Pacific Partnership Team, included 8 people - 4 sisters and 4 lay persons;
- the nine provinces in Asia-Pacific, which were invited to send an **equal** number of sisters and lay mission partners to the Gathering. There were 72 participants - 30 sisters (including 6 of the 9 Province Leaders) and 42 lay persons;
- The themes of the Gathering, which were:
 - Our experience of Partnership draws us together;*
 - The strength of our Partnership propels us out for Mission.*
- The keynote speakers, who were:
 - Michael Yore, from Australia, who spoke on St. Mary Euphrasia and the **power of the shared commitment** to the Good Shepherd Mission;
 - Susan Chia, who spoke on the change required from the sisters being at the centre to the **Mission being at the centre**.

Partnership for mission was endorsed as a Priority for Asia-Pacific at the Asia-Pacific ICA in Pattaya, Thailand, in October 2008. All Units **contributed funds** according to their own means. Two link persons were appointed from each Unit to work with the GSAPP team and animate the Units. Annual reports were submitted to the APC.

Subsequent initiatives were: a workshop for Link Persons, in 2011, and the development of the Good Shepherd AP website, in March 2014. The website includes the stories of projects and the people who are involved in them - sisters and lay mission partners.

Quotes on partnership:

'Co-responsibility in action means that more people are thinking about issues, worrying about problems, finding solutions, sharing ideas, participating in decision-making - together! And new pathways for the mission will be created.' (Pamela Molony at the AP Link Persons Gathering)

'The pathways for partnership that will propel us out for mission require direction setting, strategic planning, resource allocation, personnel development, ongoing formation programmes and regular reviews.' (Susan Chia at the AP Partnership Gathering)

Rhonda Cumberland shared on **co-responsibility for mission** as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Good Shepherd Australia/New Zealand. Co-responsibility for mission is alive every day in the Province. She is one mission partner, among many, who comes to work each day not to do a job, but to serve the

GS mission. Leading in co-responsibility is normal, as there are few sisters in leadership roles in the Province. This encompasses the programmes, as well as the sisters' well-being and care.

Sisters are present and engaged at the highest level of guidance and direction. They focus on **mission, values and governance**, instead of tasks, management and policies.

All staff and volunteers participate in some forms of **formation**. We encourage women in leadership roles. Men are an important part of the team and equally share a desire for **gender equality**. The essential prerequisite at the Good Shepherd is a **passion for mission**.

Co-responsibility is a risk. But the bigger risk would be taking co-responsibility away or diluting it. We are relevant to our present and preparing for our positive future. Co-responsibility means that sisters trust mission partners to take decisions and mission partners are self-confident with this responsibility. Together, with equality and respect, we put our mission into action.

Theresa Symons shared on her experience of being on the Chapter Planning Committee. The CLT was serious on being inclusive, to reflect on partnership and co-responsibility for mission at the Chapter. They were serious about **walking the talk!** It was co-responsibility at its highest level. Right from the beginning, Theresa felt welcomed and valued. Information and views - sometimes sensitive - were freely shared; there was a **sense of trust and awareness** that all were together in a discernment process and planning for the mission going forward. In conceptualising the Chapter Theme, amongst other important priorities, there was also the urgency to see how lay partners could be more involved at **leadership levels in the mission**; what risks needed to be taken for this aspect to evolve.

Theresa's role eventually expanded so that she has become the liaison person for the lay partners attending the Congregational Chapter; they are organized in such a way that they are able to share the **gifts** that each brought to the discernment of the new Direction Statement for mission. There is hope for the future.

Hubert shared that he was involved in 3 spiritual journeys in the past 14 months, i.e.: the Province Chapter, the Europe/RIMOA ICA and the Congregational Chapter. He felt privileged to be at the ICA, to meet all the sisters and mission partners from RIMOA, Europe and the Isles. The **diversity, the talents and the quality of mission partners** struck him. *"In some way, we are present everywhere and we are very much engaged in the mission of the Congregation which is God's mission. We have become aware of the growing unity among us and we are becoming more and more the **covenant community** we have always tried to be."* He is grateful for that.

Heidi shared that the ICA was a very beautiful experience, in the sense that it was nice to see an international Congregation of sisters speaking various languages, as well as partners from different places living an experience of exchange. *"Before the ICA, I saw the mission of the Good Shepherd and my own mission. But now I look at the mission of God at the centre of things. I have taken into consideration the vision of the sisters and the mission of the Congregation. We have decided to work for our Good Shepherd mission. The sisters have invited partners to talk about our Good Shepherd mission: to have a world with more justice and inclusion. I'm here to say to the sisters that we, **the mission partners, are ready to be together, to commit together** and to start looking at the Good Shepherd mission with the eyes of God in order to have a society where people suffer less."*

Jude Ellen shared on partnership with the Contemplatives: *“Thank you for this invitation. At our 2008 meeting, one of the recommendations was that the contemplatives would be encouraged to have contemplative associates. Since then, they have been flourishing around the world. In Peru, the sisters and contemplative associates built a chapel so that the people of the area would have a place to worship. In the Province of Mid-North America, we have a group of associates who are unique. They continue to be a source of prayer for the Congregation, they have their own constitutions, and they make commitments. The other group is a group of professional people who have learned contemplative prayer and they’re a source of inspiration for their families. In Italy and Costa Rica we have associates. They are primarily helping us, as a prayer presence, to further the mission and be in union with the apostolic ministries that are flourishing. We are excited about this development.”*

Panel Discussion with Lay Mission Partners

12th June 2015

1. Partnership continues to evolve; lay leadership continues to evolve. How would you like to see lay leadership evolve? What are the possibilities?

“From the statistics of professed sisters by age group, we note that only 31% of the sisters are below the age of 60 years, with the majority being in Asia-Pacific. This includes sisters with leadership roles within congregational roles, as well as sisters in mission.

I see a future where mission leaders, including both sisters and lay people, work together to shape the direction to take and focus on the GS mission. Both would take up roles in which they would feel more comfortable, respecting, at the same time, the diversity and richness in each others' way of life. I'd like to believe that the charism, which is present in each one of us, and the passion for the mission will be the uniting factor.

It is therefore important to begin looking at existing structures to prepare for lay leadership, if we are serious about mission sustainability. It takes time to change authority, governance and accountability structures that would allow lay leaders to take up their roles. Human resource policies, that cover both sisters and lay people,-would need to be put in place. It also takes time to source for suitable persons and for these persons to fully assume their roles based on the Good Shepherd ethos and philosophy.

There would be lay leaders who would stay and those who would leave; it is all part of a dynamic organisation. Over time, if we get our formula right, there would be more leaders with the right fit remaining in their position rather than leaving.” (Theresa Symons, Executive Director, Good Shepherd Services Malaysia)

“In La Paz, I see many partners and leaders taking on responsibilities in various programmes. It is a living example that we can follow. I feel that the partners take on the charism as a mission, with a lot of responsibility and they take the voice of the Good Shepherd further. For the future, we are going towards partners and sisters dreaming of the mission together for a better mission development. We use our personal gifts and talents for the mission, respecting each one’s abilities, working for God and for the mission. Since we are working as partners,

how can we go further along our path and build it together? It's a path of learning. We see the invitation to work with the partners. We have to build this partnership together. We have to listen and be honest, because there are fears on both sides. Partners and sisters have to change their mentalities. This is the mission. We have to build a new future. It's important to have clarity. This invitation has to become a call to build partnership together." (Heidy Hochstaetter, Mission Development Office, Fundación "Levántate Mujer", Latin America)

2. In terms of co-responsibility, what has been the gift for the mission partnership between the laity and the religious partners?

"This deeply excites me. I guess it equally excites all mission partners. We are confident that, as a Congregation, we may have answers to many questions that are hard to be answered by each Unit. It was after spending a wonderful time in Costa Rica, where we spoke of the possibility of developing microfinance and microcredit, that I had an idea. It happened by accident that I had the vision of a Mission Development Office being established in Australia. Since I was going to come to the Chapter, many sisters said to me that they were interested in microcredit and microfinance. It's difficult to see where this idea will take us next. It will probably be carried out by following a process of innovation to the realization of which we would all have contributed and which we are all going to share. For us as a Congregation, this would be one of the most exciting possibilities in the future." (Rhonda Cumberland, Chief Executive Officer of the Good Shepherd Australia/New Zealand)

3. What questions are emerging for you with regard to lay leadership?

"I am participating in leadership on different levels in the Congregation. I execute the tasks normally entrusted to the local leader of our Dutch community. I participate in the leadership team for Belgium and Netherlands (together) and I am member of the Board of Directors of the MDO/GSIF in Rome.

I would like the sisters to please reflect on some questions by taking into consideration the specific context they live in, because we are all aware of the differences between countries all over the world.

- 1) When do you think the time is right to start to integrate (not just to employ only) mission partners into your missions?*
- 2) And for those who have integrated mission partners into their missions, because many already have, when do you think the time is right to take the next step and integrate mission partners in all levels of leadership?*

After you have reflected on these questions and shared your thoughts, I would like to ask you, as a Chapter participant, to give us clear focused directions on the future of Mission Partnership in our Congregation." (Hubert Janssen, Director of Klooster Euphrasia - Bloemendaal, Netherlands; Board Member of MDO/GSIF Rome)