We widened our circle as we welcomed with great joy and excitement the twenty nine mission partners (seventeen lay and twelve sisters) from Asia Pacific. Josita Corera and Elaine Basinger reminded us that partnership was part of our beginnings. Lay mission partners in the persons of Madeleine Lamy, Count de Neuville and Countess D’Andigne were very much part of our founding vision and the growth of the Congregation from the time of our founders.

Elaine recalled that St. John Eudes and St. Mary Euphrasia followed God’s movement in their hearts as they moved out of the familiar to risk for mission. Today, the same vision is alive, vibrant and evolving. She encouraged us to be midwives to one another in the process of birthing something new, to reflect on what was not enough and what was the more that we were being asked, particularly in the area of partnership.

In the stories of Jane Kendi (Congo), Patricia Barasik (Malaysia), Susan Montano (Philippines) and Anastasia Sunarni (Indonesia), we witnessed the Spirit at work as they shared how mission partners contributed to the growth of the mission. The presentation of the different units on their growth process of mission partnership enabled us to see that we were in different levels of development. While some Units are just beginning, others have already made good progress. Our diversity became an opportunity for co-learning as we gained insights from one another's experience and took note of what could be applicable to our Unit.
We were challenged by Singapore Malaysia’s move to change structures of governance in 2006 to effect mission partnership for mission sustainability in the light of aging and diminishment of sisters. This has brought about vibrancy and expansion in mission. On the other hand, with the absence of vocations to religious life, Australia New Zealand developed a vibrant partnership to ensure the continuity of the Good Shepherd mission. We were also happy to note the crossing of borders within the region in sharing of resources on partnership.

The conversation of Chin Poh Choo and Helena Vytailingam of their experience in Malaysia revealed the joys and struggles brought about by the change in structures undertaken by the Unit. Their desire for the mission to be vibrant and effective enabled them to face the challenge of changing the hierarchical mindset in the sisters, staff and the Church. The strength of their present partnership is founded on a relationship of equals and the development of friendship as they worked together for mission.

Noelene White took us on a “journey to partnership” as she traced the key steps taken by mission partners in the development of partnership for mission in the Asia Pacific region since 2003. Teresa Symons clarified that now, the term mission partners include Good Shepherd sisters and lay people working in our ministries in different levels of engagement whether as a paid staff or as a volunteer. The focus of partnership and co-responsibility is the development of the Good Shepherd mission. This calls for a shift in our mindset: from hierarchical to participative model, from “we” and “they” to “us” and “ours”.

How happy are we, who are co-workers with Christ in his mission of love and friendship for each person.

- St Mary Euphrasia
We identified the following changes necessary for co-responsibility to be a reality:

- There has to be a shift of mind set among the mission partners, both sisters and lay.
- The need for the sisters to let go and to create an environment of trust.
- We must move from “knowing everything” to an attitude of “learning”.
- The need to be more inclusive in our relationships.
- Mission is to be at the center not the sisters.
- The need of the lay to grow in their sense of belonging and ownership of the mission.
- A change of heart.

In the sharing on the experience of the mission partners in the Congregational Chapter, we appreciated the impact of their presence in the direction the Congregation has taken for the coming years. Their passion for mission enriched the sisters as they experienced the beauty of oneness, co-learning and collaboration for the mission. It was a significant moment of shaping the future of the Good Shepherd mission together. There is now a directive for the “Leadership Team to establish an international working group to pursue the full engagement of partners.”

Australia New Zealand’s sharing of resource materials such as the Good Shepherd Credo which identified our core values (reconciliation, the value of each person, justice, zeal, audacity), their Good Shepherd Mission Office Programs and Mission Integration Framework enriched us. We were inspired to dream for the growth and formation of mission partners to keep alive and vibrant the Good Shepherd Mission.

In our units, we prepared action plans to ensure that the Good Shepherd charism, values and heritage remain at the heart of mission; and to develop formation, education and leadership programs which equip people to work in a partnership for mission.
Concrete action plans pertaining to what can be done by us personally in our workplace and those that need to be presented to the Province Leadership Team were identified. We noted common elements when we shared our dreams, the highlights of which are:

- To conduct echo of this session in the Unit for a better understanding of mission partnership
- To have a partnership core team in the Unit, with sisters and lay in equal number
- To formulate common vision, mission and core values of the Good Shepherd
- To change structures, giving attention to what is relevant and life giving for the mission. The role of the Province Leadership Team is crucial in this area.
- To set aside a day to celebrate Good Shepherd Mission Partnership
- Common formation for sisters and lay on spirituality, capacity building and leadership training
- To invest resources for formation and leadership training for both lay and sisters and to share resources across the borders
- To produce resource materials adapted to our respective contexts and languages
- Setting up of mission effectiveness office, developing new programs
- Strengthening of linkages and networks for sharing of resources

Through the session with our mission partners, the something new that God was asking of us became clear. Our worldview in interrelationships and networking in order to bring about a new approach for partnership for mission has widened.

The mandala painting on co-responsibility (which had at the core our spirituality, philosophy, values, spirit and passion for the mission which united us) beautifully symbolized our oneness. Energized by the Spirit, we will work together in co-responsibility as mission partners and risk for mission.