I. Implementation of the Chapter
for the Congregation, the Congregation must offer some social covering.

- Some lay people regard themselves as ‘Spiritans’, others say this is not correct. There are some divisions among Lay Spiritans/Lay Associates themselves: some want their commitment to be more definitive, others want it to be left unclear.

The 3 lay people present at Torre d’Aguilha stated clearly that they were not anxious about the formal dimension of their relationship with the Congregation: “We are not at the end of the journey of reflection regarding our identity and our place in the heart of the Congregation” (TA 11.3).

3.4.4 2008-2012: Lay Spiritans / Lay Associates Towards a More Unified Vision

From the EGC/2008, it became clear that what the Congregation is called to do in the next four years concerning the association of lay people with our charism, is to appreciate the rich inheritance we have, and to manage its diversity in such a way as to arrive at a unified vision

Different Forms of Association

To respond today to the pressing needs of our mission, many hands are needed. Collaboration in mission is the way we respond to this situation through complementarity of diverse calls and mutual responsibility for the mission of Christ.

This suggests that we invest in the creation of associations/groups inspired by Spiritan Spirituality. We note with joy the existence of many groups/associations (youth, adults, missionary volunteers, Spiritan alumni …) with whom the Congregation shares a spiritual bond, the fruit of
commitment. And the particular spirituality underlying these commitments remains solid and sure; namely, a desire for “practical union” with God, expressed through prayer, personal and communal, in a fraternal life in the spirit of our Founders.

International/Inter-cultural Community

These mission commitments, and their alignment with lives of prayer and fraternity, are not without challenges for us. We note that our Congregation has become deeply “international” and “intercultural,” a source of joy for us and a witness to evangelical mission. At the same time, these trends bring with them difficulties in living together, coming to agreement on style and approach to mission, formation, and theological vision. We see this difficulty often played out in the lives of confreres on “first appointment” in the Congregation. The participants at the Enlarged General Council in Ariccia noted the need for a renewed “passion for mission” in tandem with a clear understanding of the meaning and practical life of the evangelical counsels today that we all share. A commitment to continue dialogue and interpersonal respect within our Congregation was named as an important factor in our common life together.

Finance and Authority

Financial matters worry us in the Congregation. Communicating in new and effective ways is a consistent challenge for our members. Understanding the implications of justice and peace in countries torn by civil strife or where such ministries are unwelcome is a serious difficulty. The roles of superiors are sometimes unclear – and are certainly demanding and often unrewarding. We strive to continually understand the dynamic of the common life and the life of such as moral/spiritual contracts, letters sending on mission, civil contracts or work contracts.

- To look at the legal and canonical implications of having Associates; there have always been many groups linked to our Congregation and inspired by our spirituality but the crucial point is: can a lay person be a member of the Congregation without making profession?

- A ‘Contract of Association’ implies a spiritual link focused on mission with no canonical or legal implications; but what does ‘definitive commitment’ imply? In this case it is necessary to take into consideration the legal implications in each country.

- In some Provinces they are running important missionary projects and without them they would fail; the time is coming when they will want to participate in decision-making and voting also.

- For the moment it is better to remain as we are and wait to see what guidelines the General Council will be able to put together. However, it is urgent to clarify the different meanings of belonging, to insist on a formation programme (in the case of Lay Associates insisting also on a period of probation) and to aim at a more uniform terminology.

- To work up a document for submission at a General Chapter so that it can be included in the Directory for the Organisation of the Congregation and/or SRL. The Spiritual Rule of Life will need to be changed if Associates are to be considered as members of the Congregation. Only a General Chapter can do this.

- A question of social justice supposes that the conditions of work of Lay Associates are specified: if he/she works
have spiritual links with its mission. Collaborators without such a relationship could ask whether their manner of collaboration is somehow less valued than those with “contract of association”.

Torre d’Aguilha No.11 came to a sort of compromise by recognising various forms of association of lay people with the Congregation and members associated by formal and written contract.

**Some other concerns expressed at the EGC 2008**

- To encourage the creativity of the different forms of association and belonging to the Congregation, namely in the circumscriptions where the initiatives are very few. To have some inspiring guidelines from the General Council
- It is still too early to come out with a General Directory as we are still not clear what we are talking about; let circumscriptions develop their groups, otherwise we may stifle the Spirit. Perhaps we could put together two documents: on the different kinds of collaboration with the Congregation and something more precise on contracts for those in a more formal situation vis-à-vis the Congregation.
- To present a Directory of Association to the Congregation, where the multiple and varied ways in which so many lay people have been linked with the Congregation for so many years, are officially recognised as authentically Spiritan. This is a question of justice as many have done excellent work concerning Spiritan mission. This Directory would greatly help circumscriptions to see the difference between different types of association

the vows in an international Congregation – and to resolve conflicts effectively and honestly.

**Individualism as a Special Challenge**

A special challenge, noted with some frequency by circumscriptions and discussed at the Enlarged General Council, was a growing tendency towards “individualism” in the Congregation. This trait manifests itself in decision-making, regarding choice of ministry, use of money, or other factors important to religious life, apart from the Congregation and its legitimate authorities. A renewed effort towards recommitment to the common life – as well as pastoral outreach to those confreres living and working apart – was recommended as a remedy to this troubling tendency.

**Conclusion**

In particular, our attention will be given in the next years to reflection upon the vows of poverty and obedience, to new and expert ways to manage finances effectively, and to an organisational revision that will focus on collaboration in “Unions of Circumscriptions,” emphasising cooperation and communion in all aspects of our lives, including the important area of formation. We will continue to emphasise the particularity of our “Spiritan” legacy – the study of our Founders and our Charism – and the unique formation of “Spiritan” formators for our younger members. And, as always, the cultivation of our “passion for mission” and search for new areas of mission for the poorest will be our goal and inspiration.

**Practical Orientations – an agenda for 2008-2012**

In its discussion of the general responses of circumscriptions to the implementation of the General Chapter decisions (2004), the participants at the Enlarged General Council
noted the following specific tasks to be accomplished during the next four years:

1. The promotion of dialogue (by the General Council) between younger and older members of the Congregation, between circumscriptions of the North and the South, and particularly regarding matters of conflict.

2. The communication (by the General Council) of a common vision of the vows; specifically, on the use of money, the sense of entitlement, and the meaning today of the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience.

3. The composition of a document on the vow of obedience.

4. The promotion of new ways of communicating Spiritan documents to the membership.

5. The composition of a “more clear” definition of the meaning of a “sabbatical” and post-sabbatical appointments.

6. The composition of a “Customary for Superiors.”

1.2 JUSTICE, PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

The Torre d’Aguilha General Chapter documents (3.1 to 3.6) lists six directives for Spiritans in the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) area. We are reminded there that JPIC is a central element in mission in today’s ‘Areopagus’ (Acts 17: 22-31). Well in advance of the Enlarged General Council (EGC) of Ariccia all participants received a document reporting on progress made and difficulties encountered in each of these areas since the last General Chapter. A set of questions following the report of each of the areas was included to help participants undertake personal reflection and consult the Spiritans they represented in

manent contract? In some circumscriptions, yes, after six years. But what does this mean? Take an example; one lady is on mission \textit{ad extra}, living in a Spiritan community. With a definitive contract, what is her relationship with the circumscription of origin when she returns there for good? There is also the case of associates who receive a salary from the circumscription. Could there be a possibility of confusion? And how about the cases of lay people who have administrative functions (bursars of circumscriptions or communities, provincial commissions of JPIC, members of formation communities ...) and by inherence are or should be part of juridical instances of the Congregation?

3.4.3 EGC 2008 – ECHOES

At present, concerning Lay in the Congregation, we have on the one hand a valuable inheritance, and on the other a diversity of understandings that somehow need to be brought together. In fact from the EGC we got more material for reflection rather than clear orientations.

Presently we have 105 Lay Associates registered at the General Secretariat who have a written contract with their circumscription. Many Spiritan Professed and Lay Spiritans do not feel comfortable with the fact the great richness and diversity of lay people sharing in the life and mission of the Congregation, is reduced to this number. On the other hand some would say that we should not be hindered by this diversity of forms of association, but only take into consideration what is foreseen in SRL 24.3, that is, a specific closer personal bond between individuals and the Congregation, through the local circumscription. But immediately a good number of people will object to this, saying that it is very unjust to alienate dozens of people, who have for many years experienced the Spiritan tradition and charism, and
There is a multiplicity of forms of association within the life of the Congregation, diversity with regard to formation programs and deepening of spirituality, relationship with the communities and participation in concrete missionary programs.

One evident discovery is that it is, primarily, the older circumscriptions that are involved in this partnership with lay people in various forms. However, the General Council, through its contacts, knows that new experiences are taking place in various younger circumscriptions but these did not respond to the questionnaire, apart from some exceptions.

Torre d’Aguilha (11.2.) recognises and the questionnaire confirms that there are different levels of belonging to the “Spiritan Family”, depending on the lay person’s spiritual closeness and missionary commitment. If to this diversity we add the different terminology used we understand how difficult it is to classify the results or even to draw conclusions.

Names and numbers do not always point to the same reality except in the case of Lay Associates, that is, those who have a signed contract with the circumscriptions. But even then, there are lay people with a signed pledge (not a contract) and who do not consider themselves to be, and really are not, Lay Associates. There are circumscriptions which really have Lay Associates with a formation program and assignment to a mission but without a written contract. Others have all the requisites of Lay Associates but do not accept that term, preferring Lay Spiritans. Others think that to speak of Lay Spiritans is to usurp the status of Spiritan Brothers.

As for the Lay Associates, there are contracts made for one, two or three years, renewable. Is it possible to make a per-

Ariccia. During the EGC a very generous amount of time – two entire sessions, was devoted to reflection on Spiritan-linked JPIC questions.

In much of the reflection the term “Aeropagus” could easily summarise the direction that the discussion on JPIC took. In a world speedily becoming more and more complex, we are being called to new frontiers and situations of mission. Our JPIC commitment both helps us to read such challenging situations and to make a meaningful missionary response. Examples of such new areas of mission and ministry include peacebuilding, reconciliation, lobbying and advocacy, just to mention a few. There was general agreement in Ariccia that this is indeed a call of the Spirit and to answer it we need both courage and preparation. It was felt that as a Congregation we have indeed made progress in many such areas.

An example of Spiritan advance into today’s Aeropagus was seen to be our recent increased involvement in advocacy and lobbying. A consensus was obvious in the assembly that this is a direction we need to follow. Support for our involvement in VIVAT, which lobbies in our name at the United Nations, was very apparent. Many of the serious issues we encounter in situations of mission are larger than our resources or capacities; for this reason our collaboration with others – church or non church groups, was seen to be central to our methodology – our active participation in the Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) was seen as a clear example.

Health ministry, responding frequently as it does to poverty-provoked illnesses, was also an area where we were encouraged to advance. The General Council was encour-
aged to advance in their reflection regarding the possibility of appointing a part-time coordinator of Spiritan Health Ministry.

If mission in today’s Aeropagus was seen to be complex, the Spiritans assembled in Ariccia recalled the importance of being well prepared and organised for JPIC engagement in mission. Even though Torre d’Aguilh called on each circumscription to prepare a JPIC plan by 2008 (3.2), relatively few have done so. In evaluating this, the consensus at the EGC was that it is important that all circumscriptions draw up a plan as soon as possible. Such a plan helps to animate circumscriptions, to choose priorities and directions, to set aside the resources necessary, and to courageously undertake challenges in mission. To facilitate JPIC animation in general in each circumscription the importance of appointing a coordinator was stressed.

Preparation was seen to be necessary also in formation – both initial and ongoing. It was recalled that in all our General Chapters since Itaicí (1992) we have been called upon to engage in an apprentice style of formation geared to preparing young Spiritans for the complex situations of mission today. Frequently our initial formation is overly theoretical and academic, while frequently it lacks appropriate courses in areas defined as essential by recent General Chapters. More emphasis needs to be placed on acquiring pastoral methodologies throughout the entire formation period appropriate for mission today; here the social sciences are very important. That the Congregation should invest in “distance learning” via the internet to supplement this deficit was seen as a good initiative in Ariccia.

Another area calling for our attention was seen to be that of Spiritans working in difficult situations. Torre d’Aguilhha 3.6

those who sign a formal contract with the circumscription which receives them “(T.A.11.2).

3.4.2 Lay Spiritans – Questionnaire November 2007

A questionnaire, about Lay Spiritans¹, dated November 15th 2007, was sent to Superiors along with a letter. Among objectives outlined were: to organise a data base with up to date information regarding Lay Spiritans; allow the EGC 2008 to analyse and reflect on the actual situation of Lay Spiritans in the Congregation; provide an opportunity for the circumscriptions to take note of the present situation as regards the question of Lay Spiritans; send out a challenge to circumscriptions still far from realising that “Lay Spiritans are a branch of the Spiritan tree” (TA 11.2); avail of the more detailed knowledge about Lay Spiritans so as to find there inspiration to reinforce, solidify, evaluate, invent or initiate ways for lay people to take part in the life of the Congregation, in the belief that this would bring unexpected and fruitful insights of some aspects of our charism and awaken new apostolic dynamism.

Sixteen circumscriptions replied to the questionnaire.

From the debate during EGC 2008 it became clear, once more, that the presence and participation of the laity in Spiritan life is part of the patrimony of the Congregation. It is a richness marked by reciprocity in giving and receiving and by the diversity of its expressions. Lay Spiritans participated as invitees in the last three General Chapters. The acceptance on the part of conferees and of our communities of “Lay Spiritans as a branch of the Spiritan tree”, does not seem to have met with significant disagreement.

¹ See Document 27 of EGG 2008 - Ariccia.
ITEMS PRESENTED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE EGC 2008

3.4.1 A New Direction in Church and In Congregation

- Mission is not an activity of the Church. It is its essence.
- The laity lives its mission in the world (Evangelii Nuntiandi and Christifideles Laici (1988).
- Mission is the way to holiness.
- At the start of the XXI century the Spirit of the Lord is about to open new ways of sharing the mission of the Church with the laity. “A new chapter, full of hope, is opened in the story of the relationship between religious and laity” (V.C.56).
- Formation, a challenge for Religious and Laity.
- “Lay Spiritans are a branch of the Spiritan tree” (TA 11.2).
- “The laity bring to the Spiritan community, an energy which comes from their presence in and understanding of the world.” (T.A.11.1).
- In accordance with the degree of spiritual proximity and missionary commitment, we can distinguish:
  · friends of the Spiritans who, in various ways, collaborate in our mission;
  · lay people who feel attracted by the spirituality of our founders and by our mission and belong to prayer and reflection groups;
  · “lay associates” who desire a deeper commitment in the Congregation and who, after a time and a course of specific formation, sign a contract of association.
- “In certain contexts, the laity prefer to be called ‘Lay Spiritans’ in general, while reserving the title ‘Lay Associates’ for

II. CONSOLIDATION OF THE CONGREGATION

2.1 MISSION APPOINTMENTS

The question of First Appointment elicited animated discussion on the part of the confreres at the EGC and many felt more time could have been given to it to enable them thrash out more this very important matter that concerns all. There was a felt need that with the number that we get annually for first appointment we could organise their appointment better and in a more equitable way to assist the circumscriptions most in need of personnel especially the small groups, the fragile circumscriptions and the aging provinces.

- There seems to have been a general agreement that the question of First Appointment needs to be taken very seriously by all the parties concerned to make sure that First Appointments work.