



The Validations

describing the essential elements of *Our Way
Into The Future*

CONGREGATION OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERS

VALIDATION
of the
PROPOSITION

*Carried out by the
Spark Group
and
developed with
feedback from
the Brothers*



22 APRIL 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
Everyone to Play a Part Proposition: Paragraph 1	5
Vibrant, Cohesive Group of People Proposition: Paragraph 2	7
Brothers in the Developed World Proposition: Paragraph 3	12
Spirituality Proposition: Paragraph 4	15
Religious within the Catholic Church Proposition: Paragraph 5	19
Engaging in Advocacy Proposition: Paragraph 6	22
Mutual Engagement Proposition: Paragraph 7	26
The Brothers' Presence as a Catalyst Proposition: Paragraph 8	29
Community Engagement Proposition: Paragraph 9	31
When do Brothers Leave a Project? Proposition: Paragraph 10	34
Preparation for Ministry Proposition: Paragraph 11	37
15-20 Communities Creating a Critical Mass Proposition: Paragraph 12	42
Movement of Brothers between Provinces Proposition: Paragraph 13	46
The Spiritual Search Proposition: Paragraph 14	50

Joyful in the Challenges of Living Together Proposition: Paragraph 15	53
Simplicity and Beauty Proposition: Paragraph 16	58
Sustainability Proposition: Paragraph 17	62
Hubs in the Developing World Proposition: Paragraph 18	66
Spirituality Centres in the Developed World Proposition: Paragraph 19	70
Common Enterprise Proposition: Paragraph 20	72
Evaluation Processes Proposition: Paragraph 21	76
Attracting New Members Proposition: Paragraph 22	80
Edmund Rice Network & Volunteers Proposition: Paragraph 23	85
Transition Support Team Proposition: Paragraph 24	90
Funding Proposition: Paragraph 25	93
Development Offices Proposition: Paragraph 26	96

INTRODUCTION

The five Spark Groups undertook to validate each paragraph of the Proposition from the perspective of their own specific area of experience and competence. So, for example, the Governance and Administration Spark Group reviewed paragraphs relevant to present or anticipated governance structures arising from the implementation of the Proposition.

Each individual paragraph in the Proposition is presented as follows:

- Statement of the Paragraph text
- Key Elements identified by the Spark Group as significant with an explanation of their significance
- A brief presentation of the reasons why and how we believe what is proposed in the Paragraph is feasible
- Finally, some contemporary exemplars of what is proposed are reviewed. We call these exemplars Comparators.

The Validations were further developed and modified in the light of the feedback received from the Brothers of the Congregation.

EVERYONE TO PLAY A PART

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 1

The CLT offers the following Proposition to the **whole Congregation** and hopes that **everyone will play a part** in bringing it to fruition. Every Brother will be affected and many will find the challenge inspiring.

whole Congregation

Why we are saying this

The proposition is addressed to the whole Congregation, and includes every Brother in every Province and Region, irrespective of age and circumstance.

Every Brother is invited to engage with the elements of the Proposition to the best of his ability, using his skills and experience as called forth by his particular situation.

We believe that this involvement and engagement will bring to bear the enormous wisdom and experience within the Brothers of the Congregation in choosing the direction for the future. Such involvement is intrinsic to the call to be a Brother in and for today's world. It will also enhance the quality of life among our Brothers, and positively impact the whole Congregation.

everyone will play a part

Why we are saying this

Brothers now have a vast range of skills – probably more than at any time in the history of the Congregation – which will be directly relevant to the implementation of the Proposition. But the most important way each Brother will play a part is to support the direction in his mind and heart.

When NASA was harnessed to put a man on the moon, it used the energy of everyone, from the people who made the rockets, to those who trained the astronauts, to physicists, to politicians, to the enthusiasm of ordinary citizens and the imagination of a whole country.

Why we think this will work

We believe this will work because the history of our Congregation has shown a generous spirit among our Brothers and a willingness to participate in a direction articulated by Chapters and Congregation leadership.

The Chapters since 1984 have shown a large number of Brothers making significant responses to the calls of the time.

In the Catholic tradition, Religious Life among men and women has always responded to shifts demanded by the “signs of the times”. Whenever this has been generously undertaken, new energies have been released.

Comparators

[Renewal of Religious Life](#)

This Proposition represents a shift in our understanding of how we live our lives as Brothers as significant as that which took place following the Second Vatican Council. In response to the invitation of the Council to Congregations to return to the Jesus of the Gospels and to the spirit of their Founders, Religious, particularly women Religious, underwent a massive shift in their understanding and living of Religious Life. This response to a genuine call has never been wanting among Congregations.

VIBRANT, COHESIVE GROUP OF PEOPLE

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 2

By 2020, the Christian Brothers will be a **vibrant, cohesive group**, living and working in **areas of the world where there is great need**. The **main areas of involvement in the initial phase will be in the developing world**.

By 2020

Why we are saying this

This Proposition is an initial step to bring about fundamental change in our Congregation's narrative and paradigm and has declared the year 2020 as the intended end-date for the initial implementation phase.

The Proposition is setting out a way of life, not simply a course of action to be completed by a certain date. In referring to "the initial phase", we expect that actions initiated and in place by a particular date can then be evaluated, developed and built on. We believe that this initiative will acquire a life of its own, and evolve in ways we cannot even imagine now.

Naming a definite date gives a sense of purpose to the whole initiative and says to everyone: "We are serious about what is proposed".

During the coming two years (2012-2014), Brothers will have time to understand, assimilate, and respond to the Proposition. Others will need time to disengage from their present ministries, and engage in a period of preparation and training for the new communities. Leadership at different levels will also need time to consider the implications of the new direction on present ministries and ministry sites and on resource allocation.

Why we think this will work

Our experience of implementing Chapter initiatives has shown that a six-year period (2014-2020) is a sufficient and appropriate amount of time for the initial implementation of a major development within the Congregation. Within this time-frame it is also possible to carry out an initial evaluation with a view to fine-tuning the implementation.

vibrant, cohesive group

Why we are saying this

In a world where a consumerist and radical individualism has become dominant, the example of a cohesive group which shares values and acts for the common good offers a radical, necessary and alternative vision.

Why we think this will work

Throughout the history of humankind and the Church, it is well recognised that significant actions that had profound positive social effects were those of initially small cohesive groups of men and women who were inspired by a common vision. Among such small groups were those associated with Jesus of Nazareth, Benedict of Nursia, Francis of Assisi, Edmund Rice, John Wesley, and in our own time, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Jean Vanier and Wangari Maathai.

areas of the world where there is great need

Why we are saying this

The message and mission of Jesus of Nazareth centred on the poor people of his day. Edmund Rice was inspired by the example of Jesus to respond in a similar way to the acute needs of the people of Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. We Christian Brothers, as followers of Jesus and Edmund, and in fidelity to our Constitutions, see it as an imperative dimension of our mission to respond in our day to the needs and the cry of poor people.

The Proposition asks us to identify with people in areas of the world where the needs are great. Certainly, there are needy people in all parts of the world and, if circumstances were different, we would be willing to support all suffering people. However, the reality is that some parts of the Congregation are ageing and have few members in active ministry. Other parts of the Congregation are flourishing with increased membership, year on year. There is also a recognition that the more developed parts of the world do provide social services and organisations to help people who are in great economic stress and hardship. Unfortunately, this is not the case in many countries of the developing world.

International agencies such as the World Bank, the United Nations and Irish Aid have established that 1.4 billion people in our world live in acute

poverty and need. They lack the ability to meet basic needs, whether it means eating only one bowl of rice a day or foregoing urgent health care because of lack of resources. It is where these basic human needs are not being provided for, that we will be attracted to approach the communities to work with them.

The Proposition identifies that our future engagement in partnership with the wider locality will be done initially through a community of Brothers, and, when possible also, volunteers in long or short-term assignments.

A growing awareness of our interconnectedness as people obliges us to recognise people everywhere as our brothers and sisters. This means that we cannot remain indifferent to situations where people are made poor and vulnerable because of injustice, corruption, violence and natural disasters. It is equally a fundamental element of our identity as Brothers to act generously and radically in this way wherever human needs are discerned.

Why we think this will work

We believe that we can respond to the urgent and acute needs of poor people because we see it happening already in certain areas. Among the examples that can be cited are the Ruben Centre in Mukuru Slum in Nairobi, in Sangram, India, Callan Services in Papua New Guinea and the Star Project in Yambio, South Sudan.

The main areas of involvement in the initial phase will be in the developing world.

Why we are saying this

The choice of the developing world as the area for the initial phase of the project follows from our aim to be in radical solidarity with poor people in areas of the world where the need is great.

There are 50 countries listed in the United Nations comparative analysis of poverty: 34 African countries, 10 Asian countries, 5 Pacific Island nations and one Caribbean nation (Haiti). Given our present Congregation presence, we believe our choice of future focus fits with what we will be able to do within our resources.

Our choice is also limited by our present demographics. The Proposition sets out a model for the future where we have four or five communities working in close proximity round a “Hub”. Given the present Brother

resources in Europe, Oceania and North America, we cannot see this sort of configuration developing in these areas.

Why we think this will work

Given our present geographical spread and the growth of our numbers, we are ministering in many of these areas already.

Comparators

[Millennium Development Goals](#)

When the *Millennium Development Goals* were decided upon, a definite implementation timescale, beginning in 2002 with the intention of completion by 2015, was put in place. This was to ensure that the global community would have a yardstick by which it could measure progress. To further focus both the goals and the timescale, international conferences of relevant stakeholders were held every two to three years.

[Sant'Egidio Community](#)

The Sant'Egidio is a movement of some 50,000 lay people, which is very active in responding to the needs of poor people in the spirit of the Gospel. It has a clear mission statement based on prayer, communicating the Gospel, solidarity with poor people, ecumenism, and dialogue. It is a vibrant, cohesive group which attracts many young people. The Community of Sant'Egidio meets daily for prayer and weekly for a Community Eucharist. Members work together on common projects and maintain a very high level of internal communication so that everyone is aware of what others are doing. The organisation is alert to the changing needs of society and can mobilise quickly in situations which require immediate assistance. Many members have been with the Community since it was founded more than 40 years ago.

[The Ruben Centre, Nairobi](#)

This project works with, and for, the local community to provide a range of services such as: a primary education initiative and a feeding programme for 1,800 children; vocational training programmes in tailoring and carpentry for those who cannot access secondary schools; a wide range of medical and health care services for 27,000 people a year and a micro-finance scheme for parents of children and others so as to

generate income for their families. There is also a Community Engagement programme to address other issues in the community.

BROTHERS IN THE DEVELOPED WORLD

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 3

Brothers in the developed world are invited to participate fully in this direction.

Brothers in the developed world

Why we are saying this

The Proposition invites a whole-Congregation response to what we see as the call of the Mystery called God to us at this time. It is a radical call to respond to God, taking into account all that we have learnt from our history, the present situation in our world, and our deepest sense of what faithfulness as a whole Congregation of Brothers calls us to at this time.

For reasons of age, health and other factors, many Brothers in the developed world will not be able to be considered for the new communities, even if they were open to the possibility. However, all of us can look at the spirituality that is sustaining us in our lives as Brothers, can look at the quality of our own community living and the community's openness to the involvement of others in its life. It is a new way of *thinking* and *living* that all Brothers are being invited to undertake. We need the support and encouragement of one another, whatever our current circumstances.

All Brothers are being invited:

- to deepen their spirituality in line with the spirituality articulated in “The Message”;
- to look at how they live in community;
- to pray constantly for wisdom and courage, and in support of the new communities;
- to take part in training and formation opportunities;
- to engage with poor people in their area;
- to seek membership of the new communities, if able to do so;
- to make their expertise available on periodic or consultative basis;
- to support the sharing of the resources of the developed world Provinces;
- to look at twinning of their communities with the new Hubs and communities.

Brothers in developed world Provinces have much experience, wisdom, expertise, and relevant qualifications. The sharing of these resources will be an essential element in the implementation of the Proposition.

The new Spirituality Centres to be set up in the developed world Provinces will be one channel for these resources to be shared.

Why we think this will work

The Congregation is a living system or organism. As conditions change, some *parts* increase while other parts decrease. There is an interchange of energy *across the* areas to allow the new life to emerge.

The new communities will require enormous amounts of the energies of faith, love, courage, and wisdom if they are to thrive. These energies are abundantly present among Brothers in the developed world. This enables the whole system to flourish.

Our history makes abundantly clear that Brothers have extraordinary commitment and tenacity when they hear a call and work passionately towards a goal. We believe that this current invitation into the future is the most important call since Edmund founded the Congregation. The Spirit of God is at work in our gifts, and perhaps especially in our weaknesses, to show us that we have to walk in new paths. We have heard many Brothers say that they wish to walk these new paths in whatever way they can.

The initial response of Brothers in the developed world to the Proposition has been very positive. This is entirely in keeping with the whole-heartedness of Brothers over the whole of our Congregation story.

Given the ingenuity of the Brothers, creative ways of engaging in and supporting the Congregation response will be found. Brothers in the developed world will be key players in determining how enthusiastically the whole Congregation takes up the call and the challenge.

Comparators

[Setting up of new Provinces and Regions in the Congregation](#)

It was the moving out of their home areas into new parts of the world that enabled foundations of the Congregation to begin in Australia, India, North America and in more recent times in different parts of Africa, Asia-

Pacific and Latin America. It is in our Congregation blood to move beyond where we are presently capable and effective, into new places where the need is great. We draw confidence that we are making a similar choice in new circumstances and in response to today's needs. Those Brothers who were not part of the new ventures provided support in so many other ways in brotherhood. We are at our best when we are taking on new challenges.

SPIRITUALITY

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 4

The spirituality of the Brothers will be inspired by the **unfolding story of the Universe, a contemporary understanding of Jesus, and the example of Edmund Rice.**

the unfolding story of the Universe, a contemporary understanding of Jesus and the example of Edmund Rice

Why we are saying this

The *Universe Story* is the story of the evolution of the entire universe starting some 13.7 billion years ago. This story suggests that all life, including human life, comes from the same source. So all Creation is part of a single community of life and is interconnected in profound ways. Within that community, humans have evolved a unique consciousness which enables them to respond to the needs of the whole of Creation. For Christians, this action is the Spirit of God working from within Creation and bringing about ever more complex life.

The historical life of Jesus is a unique moment in this evolutionary story whereby divine consciousness within the human attains new heights. Thus Jesus of Nazareth evolves into a “Cosmic Christ” present for all time moving, inspiring and transforming humanity. Only in union with this Christ will Brothers be enabled to join in the transformation of the Earth and its marginalised people.

This Jesus, in his humanity and as he constantly searches out God’s ways, goes beyond and challenges his own Jewish tradition. His was a road of gradual enlightenment and transformation. He was led to question the unjust structures of religion and state. He becomes a radically disturbing presence.

Edmund Rice is most fundamentally an example because of his openness to his experience of God. The “Charism Statement” (1982) describes it: “Deeply aware of the Father’s providential presence in his life, Edmund Rice was moved by the Holy Spirit to open his whole heart to Christ, present and appealing to him in the poor”. He challenged the injustices of his time by not only founding a Brotherhood who focused on providing education for poor boys but also by challenging the prejudiced mindsets in church and society.

The Universe Story allows a glimpse of the evolutionary process of which everyone is a part. It opens up the possibility of a new consciousness about what it means to be human within a cosmic community. Thomas Berry describes this as the “Great Work” for humanity and a particular vocation for Religious Sisters and Brothers.

Brothers will need to live out of this new understanding because it is the only one which, in the post-modern world, makes sense of their life choice of following Jesus’ way. It also inspires the vibrancy and cohesion needed to face a world in crisis. Like Jesus, the Brothers turn to God, present in all of life and Creation. They choose to be present to poor people, listening and learning from them every day, hearing their cries and those of Creation. Brothers experience some of their pain and ask why they suffer. Then, alongside poor people and aware of the destruction occurring in Creation, they will be enabled to challenge closed mindsets and unjust structures as Jesus did. It is only through attentiveness to contemplation and silence that these understandings will emerge for Brothers.

The focus on the unfolding Universe Story, a contemporary understanding of Jesus and the example of Edmund Rice does not deny the validity of our traditional forms of spirituality in any way – e.g. our living of Eucharist, our attentiveness to Mary as a model of discipleship, and our reading of scripture – but calls us to a new way of Brotherhood as outlined in *The Message to the Proposition*.

A key element in the spirituality of Brothers will be the practice of contemplative prayer where Brothers deepen their consciousness of the presence of God in the whole of creation. Such practices in meditation and contemplation will continue to expand our awareness of the divine in-breaking into the whole universe.

Why we think this will work

The Spirit present at the 2008 Congregation Chapter began to bring about these new understandings among the Brothers. It found expression in “the vision which invites us to explore in wonderment the presence of Divine Mystery in all of Creation”. It spoke of being “enflamed with the Spirit of Jesus and Edmund, daring to be different,” and called Brothers “to reflect on the Jesus Story in the light of our evolving understandings of the Cosmos”.

The urgency of the crises in our world requires and prompts a new understanding of Jesus. The growing awareness of, and emphasis on, the human Jesus emerging in scripture scholarship today is not by chance. It is the understanding most relevant to a world becoming dehumanised by technology and anonymity. In these times Brothers, as others, need to root their faith in Jesus as the man of compassion so that they can learn compassion for those marginalised by the modern world. In so doing, common humanity is rediscovered and all can experience what Jesus experienced – a common Father in God.

Edmund has become much more of an example for Brothers in recent years than ever before. His deep spiritual search and focus on poor people have become clear through recent scholarship and indeed inspire many today. The large lay presence at Edmund's Beatification in 1996 signalled a growing interest in Edmund Rice as an exemplar for Christian discipleship.

Comparators

[Bru Na Cruinna Community, Carrick-on-Suir, Ireland](#)

This community of Brothers tries to live in awareness of God present within all Creation. They are involved in a search that seeks to integrate the wisdom of recent study in cosmology with insights of emerging spirituality. This spiritual search is shared with the wider community, including those from other faith backgrounds, who are made welcome on a daily basis. Inspired by a genuine care for the Earth and the plight of the marginalised, they endeavour to live sustainably and reach out to improve the lot of poor people.

[The Archer Ecology & Spirituality Centre, Australia](#)

The community at the Archer Ecology and Spirituality Centre consists of men and women committed to the care of the Earth who seek to deepen an awareness of the interconnectedness of all of life. They try to live with a consciousness that they are participating in the divine evolutionary process for the Sacred Universe. They aim to live simply, and with a light footprint, by engaging in environmentally friendly and sustainable practices. They are a community of Brothers and Sisters committed to prayer and contemplation that are heavily influenced by an unfolding understanding of Cosmology. The community is organised organically and does not have a designated leader.

African Province Renewal Team Community, Lusaka

Here, community life is focused on the Directions of the 2008 Congregation Chapter; in particular, “to be ever open to exploring the Mystery of God in all of Creation” and “to reflect on the Jesus Story in the light of our evolving understandings of the Cosmos”. The Team Vision Statement endorses a similar commitment: “Conscious of the oneness of all Creation, we seek to nurture life in all its fullness”. They have tried to live this out by:

- Continuing to study the Universe Story;
- Centring community prayer life creatively on the Universe Story;
- Sharing books, articles and resources as they prepare together for ministry to the different communities of the Province;
- Living sustainably and in an environmentally friendly manner by gardening and doing their own cooking.

RELIGIOUS WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 5

The Christian Brothers live their **particular vocation as Religious within the Catholic Church.**

particular vocation as Religious within the Catholic Church

Why we are saying this

Jesus had a unique experience of God; this experience shaped his life and mission. Religious Life began as an inspired movement of Christian believers who sought to live as radical disciples of Jesus. They sought to “keep alive the dangerous memory of Jesus” for Church and society. Their lifestyle highlighted the values of Jesus and challenged the practices of the times, including promiscuity, hierarchical abuse of power, consumerism and individualism.

A Brother publicly aligns his life with Jesus’ search for God and his mission to spread the Reign of God. “Brother” is essentially a relational identity rather than a title, and so the Brother works within society and Church relationally, rather than hierarchically. To be a Brother is to engage with and be present to all people with humility, empathy, and an open heart.

Taking the “search for God” honestly and seriously is a particular gift a Brother offers the Church. It can lead a Brother to a thoughtful and critical understanding of the Catholic faith. The fruits of this understanding, when shared are often an inspiration to the faith of other Church members searching to deepen their own faith.

Within Religious Life, the Brother’s vocation is complete and internally coherent; it expresses a particular identity and mission in the Catholic Church. It is also a way of life lived in freedom from clericalism. As a man, a Brother can show to others, especially women, a face of Christ that does not seek to dominate but to remain gently present.

This Proposition enhances a vision of Catholic Church as “Church of the Poor” and as open to all people. Hence our desire to be present with people in great need, and to do so from our Catholic tradition, as

brothers. The Brothers' choice to be present with poor people is an inspiration and encouragement to the Church and wider humanity.

Our involvement in the "New Evangelisation" is largely through our communities being "good news" wherever we are living. Brothers have always shown great hospitality but more recently they are beginning to share their spiritual lives with colleagues, neighbours and friends.

Brothers have set up Spirituality Centres where guests are encouraged to experience the Mystery of God present in prayer and silence, in scripture, in creation, and in understanding the universe.

Why we think this will work

The recent election of Pope Francis has highlighted for the Church that those made poor in our world are the ones whose lives show the gospel most starkly. The Brothers, in promoting the Proposition, are joining many allies, within and outside the institutional Church. There is a spiritual energy emerging for simpler and more human Christian living, for a more ecologically aware Christian lifestyle and for a more contemplative way of being.

Brothers have grown in heart-centred spirituality in recent years, and are now living in a far more caring and sensitive way with each other. These gains cannot be taken back, and show that, when Brothers choose and learn to live in a new way, they can indeed do so.

We know that this transformed way of living has something essential to contribute to the full life of the Church. We believe that Brothers will be open in new ways to expressing this brotherhood in these times.

Comparators

[Relationship with the Vatican Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life \(CICLSAL\)](#)

Our Catholic identity as a Congregation is given Catholic Church sanction through the approval of the initial brief sought by Blessed Edmund Rice and the subsequent approval of the 1832 Constitutions. The renewal of the Constitutions on a regular basis by Congregation Chapters and their approval by CICLSAL is an on-going indication of our affiliation with and commitment to our Catholic heritage. If we are living our religious life

authentically, we will, from time to time, challenge the structures in our institutional Church which have become embedded and need to be changed to enable the gospel to “fly free”.

[Brothers Congregations Gathering in Rome](#)

In September 2012, forty Brothers from eight Congregations of Brothers spent a month in Rome together. They shared what they had learned of brotherhood, coming from their different histories and traditions. They received input from other Members of their Congregations and people reflecting on Religious Life today. They enjoyed one another’s company. The dominant learning from the month was how much they had in common as men, living a form of life integral to the Catholic Church, with a renewed understanding and commitment to creative living in brotherhood into the future. This Proposition has been shared with the organising committee for this September event, and the response has been positive.

[The Congregation of Franciscans of the Renewal](#)

Emerging from the Capuchins, the Congregation of Franciscans of the Renewal, approved in 1986, number more than eighty friars and a dozen sisters. Founded by a group led by Fr Benedict Groeschel, they are attempting to return to the Franciscan ideal of poverty and service, working with the poor and the young, with a particular apostolate towards personal renewal. This Comparator shows that there are new groups of Religious in the Catholic Church constantly being formed to respond to new needs.

ENGAGING IN ADVOCACY

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 6

The Brothers will actively engage in **advocacy** as they live in **radical solidarity with the Earth and with people made poor**. Advocacy moves beyond service to address systemic injustice.

advocacy

Why we are saying this

The complexity and interconnectedness of the post-modern world demands a systematic response to address the causes of poverty and marginalisation. At the local level, the Christian Brothers' consistent presence among disadvantaged people gives them insights into real situations and the causes of poverty and injustice. This creates the opportunity for the Brothers to live and work together with local communities and other groups to create or support campaigns for justice. Such campaigns often take the form of engaging in advocacy at the local level, challenging the systemic causes of poverty and injustice from the first hand experience of living with people made poor.

As a global organisation, the Brothers cannot ignore the global realities that create such suffering to countless people. These people are, in reality, "people made poor" by the structures imposed by those holding global power.

Why we think this will work

Edmund Rice International (ERI) has been established to promote advocacy at the global level. In recent years, local issues have been amplified to provide baseline data for the drafting of submissions to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in Geneva, assisted by the ERI Geneva team. This has resulted in policy reviews of issues such as: young people at risk within the Irish welfare system, young people in detention within the Irish juvenile justice system and the situation of asylum seekers in the United Kingdom.

Local initiatives such as "Nine is Mine" in India have been shown already to have had an impact. In the European Province the *Hidden Quarters* and *Hidden Voices* media advocacy exhibitions mounted by homeless

young people from the Westcourt Centre in Belfast have been influential in highlighting a local issue.

radical solidarity with the Earth and with people made poor

Why we are saying this

The Brothers are present with people in the decision to live among them, in the experience of relational presence, and in sharing the struggles of life. This presence expresses itself in the service the Brothers provide, according to their gifts and training. Whatever the work, it is given in the context of a relationship with the people of the local host community. This relationship is grounded in, and calls for, a spirituality of radical solidarity, not only with the people, but also with the local eco-system, as any damage to the eco-system affects the quality of life for all.

Religious carry a passion for Jesus' stance of solidarity with those at the margins, including poor people, people who suffer gender discrimination and those whose participation in leadership and worship is restricted by hierarchical power structures. "Religious Life must be the thorn, the restlessness, the constant impetus, forbidding the Church to make its peace with the powers of the world" (Zechmeister, 2012). This stance brings Religious inevitably into conflict with the hierarchical Church and secular power structures.

Why we think this will work

There has been a deeply grounded response to the "option for poor people" among Christian Brothers since it was adopted at the 1984 Chapter. Every Province has initiated new mission openings in areas of social disadvantage. A significant cohort of Brothers has moved to live in marginalised areas of cities or remote villages. The Congregation has chosen to move to countries struggling in poverty such as South Sudan, Bolivia and the Philippines. The experience and learnings of this movement are carried within the body of the Brothers of the Congregation, making future steps in this direction possible.

The 2008 Christian Brothers' Congregation Chapter invites the Brothers "to be ever open to exploring the Mystery of God in all of Creation". Some Brothers experience this Mystery in the relationship with marginalised poor people and in the pain of the Earth; it is often the case that God's poor people suffer with the Earth. This experience "changes

everything” and calls Brothers into a new relationship with people made poor and the Earth. They are profoundly affected and become aware and open to new ways of seeing and living.

Centres for eco-spirituality have been established in Australia and Ireland to support and deepen our experience of this new relationship with poor people and the Earth..

Comparators

[Franciscans International](#)

“Franciscans International” is the organisation set up by the Franciscan Congregations around the world to be its central advocacy body, especially with the United Nations. The office in Geneva uses the experience of Franciscans in many global situations, is very informed in regard to United Nations Policy, and engages in the process of Universal Periodic Review of the different nations to link what is happening in countries to the needs of those who are made poor by international and local policies.

[Edmund Rice International](#)

The Edmund Rice International office in Geneva works to engage with local people world-wide in the struggle for justice. It runs educational/ training programs both in Geneva and around the world in the skills needed for advocacy, both for the human and environmental situations. It works diligently to articulate the connection between advocacy for people who suffer from lack of basic needs, and the role of environment as it impacts on the lives of these people.

[Christian Brothers in Rural India](#)

Christian Brothers are already living in such radical solidarity with villagers in rural India. The following quotes from Br Ralph Sequeira, *A Battle with Dignity*, 2009, indicate the extent of their work:

“The year since we first ‘set up camp’ here has been spent primarily as explorers. It drew us like fireflies around the hearths of homes, into gossip-mongering, legends, song and local beer. Be it as curious spectators at local festivals and sacrifices, or as ‘miracle workers’ in times of fear, sickness and crises, the discernment goes on.”

“Some local communities of Brothers are already engaged in advocacy. In Sangram, India, the Christian Brothers community describes the effects of advocacy: ‘We are accused by local landlords and authorities as *traditional missionaries*, with an eye on *conversions*. This (inaccurate and inflammatory) accusation can be expected when we dare to challenge the existing oppressive social and economic systems.’”

“The stance of solidarity with the earth is taken seriously by some Brothers’ communities which are located among the poor. A village community of Brothers in Sangram, Arunachal Pradesh, India, observes and writes: ‘The predominant agricultural pattern is *jhuming* (slash and burn). Such agricultural practices ... take their toll on nature. Already one notices the increase in frequency of flash-floods and landslides. Every village elder recounts with remorse the changing pattern of climate and seasons.’”

[The Taize Brothers](#)

The experience of Brothers living within poorer neighbourhoods has been well tried and tested by the Taize Community. One of their communities in Dakar, Senegal, describes its experience:

“In 1983 the Brothers set up home in a large working class neighbourhood. The house is open every day to children from the neighbourhood for activities that complement what they do in school. ... But the most essential aspect is the Brothers’ presence in the neighbourhood, listening and occasionally helping out with so many recurrent problems: health, work, and even survival. The prayer together is nourished and stimulated by the fact of its being rooted in the life of the neighbourhood”.

This sort of community is replicated in Kenya, Brazil, Bangladesh and Korea.

MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 7

At the heart of the Brothers' work will be a **mutual engagement** with poor people, focused on **spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, and economic well-being**.

mutual engagement

Why we are saying this

Community, or mutual, engagement is the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. The heart of the approach is that it involves the particular group of people in every step of the process and nothing is done without their input and approval. The Community Engagement approach at local, national and international levels requires a clear articulation of the nature and principles of engagement leading to relevant action. This allows for greater flexibility than adopting any one particular model of community development.

As Pope Francis (then Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio) said in 2009: "We cannot truly respond to the challenge of eradicating exclusion and poverty if the poor are an object, the target of paternalist and charitable action by the state and other organisations, and not subjects, for whom the state and society create conditions that promote and protect their rights and allow them to build their own future."

This understanding of Community Engagement helps us see more clearly the mutuality of our relationships, and invites us to deeper expressions of our shared humanity. The people in a particular host community lead us to deepen our sense of our purpose as Brothers. They "evangelise" the Brothers.

Why we think this will work

We are aware that the ways in which we have worked with people in the promotion of human well-being and the common good have evolved over the course of our history. In recent times, we are also aware that the Community Engagement approach in its various forms is an effective and appropriate way of being in mission today.

We have also learned from the experience of other groups (ATD Fourth World, Trócaire, L'Arche) and from inspiring people like Joseph Cardijn, Jean Vanier, Edmund Rice, Mother Teresa, Helder Camara and Oscar Romero that authentic human development takes place when people are willing to enter into a mutually transforming relationship with others.

spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical and economic well-being

Why we are saying this

In the last twenty years there has emerged a strong critique of the reliance on exclusively economic criteria for the measurement of human well-being. Nobel prize-winner Amartya Sen has contributed significantly to a holistic understanding of human development. His Capability Approach puts people rather than material things at the Centre of the international development agenda. Poverty, inequality and well-being are analysed in terms of the capability or the freedom of people to achieve what they value. This approach has been adopted by, among others, the UN *Human Development Index*.

Standing with marginalised groups requires us to understand human development in this holistic and multi-faceted way.

Why we think this will work

Over the past twenty years many Brothers have developed their skills of being with marginalised people and supporting them in their struggle for justice. Physical presence and mutual relationship have been priorities.

In our living with poor people, we have opportunities to support them in their struggle for a better, more holistic life. We have learned through this experience that by helping them strengthen their capacities, they can challenge the way they are forced to live, and move to transform their social reality. In the process our own ways of seeing the world are transformed.

Comparators

[L'Arche Communities](#)

L'Arche is the community founded by Jean Vanier and two friends with developmental disabilities in France in 1964. Jean Vanier discerned a pressing social and humanitarian need in his local situation in Canada. He responded to it with exceptional generosity and established communities that included persons with disability. This dimension of community was fundamental to his way of acting and was a radical response to social needs. Essential values in his approach were respect for the uniqueness of the individual and a radical inclusiveness that placed persons with disability at the heart of the community and its actions.

[Callan Services, PNG](#)

This service for people with disabilities was pioneered by the Christian Brothers in Papua New Guinea in the 1990s. It has developed a network of services that involve the local communities in outreach to particularly marginalised groups of people. In recent years the project has adopted a rights-based and advocacy approach to its work.

[Teach a Man to Fish](#)

The Teach a Man to Fish movement in Africa is an interesting model for helping people to help themselves. It works to support schools and education programmes in developing countries to offer a better quality, financially sustainable education to the most needy.

THE BROTHERS' PRESENCE AS A CATALYST

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 8

The Brothers' presence in local areas will seek to be a **catalyst** among the people so that all recognise their own power, resilience, and giftedness as they together engage with poverty and injustice.

catalyst

Why we are saying this

Our tradition in the past has relied heavily on our institutional presence to mediate our effectiveness in mission. We now acknowledge that the challenge that confronts us and the gift which is given us as Brothers requires us to be relational in our presence and to be in compassionate kinship as Brothers with struggling humanity. When we position ourselves on the edges of society and work at transformation with poor people we will experience an extraordinary presence in our lives.

To live in radical solidarity with others can only be authentic if the Brothers are committed to a heartfelt engagement and identification with the people among whom they live.

In proposing that the groups of Brothers can be catalysts for change, we also recognise that there are always other actors at work such as the local community itself, the changing world around us, and the Holy Spirit. There is always the risk that we might inhibit the local transformation that may already be taking place.

In so far as is possible and safe to do so, Brothers will live among the people so as to share fully in their lives. Every community of Brothers will have to consult with its host community on what is advisable to create a safe place for a Brothers' community to live.

Why we think this will work

Recent examples of the presence of Brothers in marginalised areas are: Brownsville and New Orleans (USA), Yambio (South Sudan), Timor Leste, most of the new communities established since the year 2000, Maasin and Kabankalan in the Philippines, Sangram and Wahrinong in north-east India, and Kabwe in Zambia. All of these communities have engaged in a relational way with the local people.

In opting to describe ourselves as “catalysts”, we need to be aware of issues that the metaphor of “catalyst” raises in the context of our engagement as a presence at the margins.

In our understanding of a scientific reaction, the catalyst itself is not changed or transformed by involvement in the scientific experiment. However, in liberation theologies and in all contextual theologies, there is the awareness that the agent is radically transformed through engagement with poor people, through action for justice and through praxis.

Secondly, according to the *Training for Transformation* process (Kenya), the local community itself is viewed as the primary catalyst.

Comparators

[ATD \(Agir Tous pour la Dignité\) Fourth World](#)

ATD Fourth World began in France as a movement to be a presence with poor people in situations of extreme poverty. They are known for their consistent efforts to listen to and project the voices of poor people among the powerful.

[Training for Transformation](#)

This training programme highlights the importance of how Brothers need to be “present” in a local host community, bringing their own gifts while recognising the gifts and skills already in existence in the local people.

[Kabwe, Zambia](#)

Brother Stephen Chewe graduated from Tangaza College in Nairobi with a degree in Social Ministry. He was assigned to Kabwe, a town about 140km from Lusaka, where a community of student Brothers already existed. Making contact with the local people in a nearby compound, he spent a period of time engaging with them in relation to their needs and experience of life. Arising from this encounter, they developed a range of services for vulnerable and marginalised groups in the area. *Misean Cara* supports the project with financial aid.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 9

The Brothers' approach to working with people will be based on **Community Engagement**, which empowers people to recognise and respond to their needs and those of the environment in a spirit of collaboration and collective responsibility.

Community Engagement

Why we are saying this

The concept of Community Engagement has been explained in the Proposition: Paragraph 7 under the heading "Mutual Engagement". This indicates a new and more holistic approach. It expresses human and spiritual values that are consistent with the Gospel and with the new understanding of our mutual connectedness within the unfolding story of the Universe. Our involvement with poor people is leading us to see and understand that there are ways of working with them that are more respectful, effective and mutually enriching.

Adopting "Community Engagement" promotes human development through building the capacity of a local community to provide the solutions for its problems and situation, both human and environmental. It is based on the Gospel insight that the fundamental dignity of each human person is central to Jesus' way of seeing the world. This approach explicitly seeks the empowerment of people through extensive mutual dialogue that has as an outcome the avoidance of co-dependency. It is in harmony with recent thinking on development and seeks to align actions with the UN Millennium Development Goals. This alignment also enhances the attractiveness of enterprises for donor funding and forms the basis for much of the strategic planning that is currently in place.

Authentic Community Engagement enables people to state the needs of their communities, both human and environmental. It is highly likely that education, the primary skill we bring to the conversation, would be one of the main needs of poor people in developing countries. But the request for an educational institution has to come from the people first, and not from our prior decision. We believe that we will be called on to educate in an expanded way, more focused on the local context. Brothers will be using other social skills that we have or will need to develop. So,

education becomes part of Community Engagement, and not a separate focus.

Why we think this will work

We have learned from the experience of other groups that authentic human development takes place when people are willing to enter into a mutually transforming relationship with others.

We are aware that through the course of our history, our ways of engaging with people have developed and changed according to circumstances. More recently, the Community Engagement approach has emerged as the most appropriate way of being present with poor people.

Comparators

These Comparators add to those provided in Proposition: Paragraph 7:

[Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education, Sydney](#)

The Centre has placed engagement with people and communities at the centre of its methodologies and approaches rather than adopting any one particular model of development. In so doing, it has been shown to be effective with those with whom the Centre works.

[ATD \(Agir Tous pour la Dignité\) Fourth World](#)

ATD Fourth World has been working in Europe and in other regions of the world to enable people living in extreme poverty to gain access to their fundamental rights, to a voice in society and to opportunities to contribute to the decision-making process on issues that directly affect them as well as on wider issues for society.

From a strong grass-roots presence, ATD Fourth World works in partnership with governments and NGOs to create the conditions necessary for people in extreme poverty to become active partners in the development of modern society.

[Servol](#)

The Servol project is also worth examining in its approach to engaging in practical action to provide suitable education for poor people of an area.

It is an empowerment model that responds to local needs, providing opportunities for people to escape from the poverty trap.

WHEN DO BROTHERS LEAVE A PROJECT?

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 10

Once people are **confident** of their ability to maintain **mutually agreed goals**, the **need for the continued presence of the Brothers will be subject to dialogue**.

confident **mutually agreed goals**

Why we are saying this

Respect for people and a genuine commitment to growth means that we engage in adult-to-adult relationships with one another. This involves a constant effort to ensure that dependency in any form is not unduly created.

The relationship between the community of Brothers and the neighbourhood people is one of partnership and reciprocity from the very beginning and runs through all the stages of design, implementation and transition (*The Way Forward*, African Province, 2010). It covers all the different aspects of the relationship and practical actions that emerge: the needs assessment, the governance, the financing, the monitoring, the human resources available, ownership, and so on. It also includes the values that are needed to uphold the relationship: mutuality, respect, conversation, inclusion of all the parties involved, sensitivity, and accountability, as well as how these values can be maintained.

The knowledge and skills that the host community acquires and develops within this process builds a mutual confidence that agreed goals can be achieved and maintained.

need for the continued presence of the Brothers will be subject to dialogue

Why we are saying this

Once the host community is confident that it has the skills and expertise to work towards its goals, the future presence of the Brothers will be open for discussion. Criteria will be in place which will help both the Brothers and the community decide when it is time for the Brothers to move to another initiative or a new community location.

There are significant emotional factors at work here. When relationships have been developed, not only professionally but also through personal friendship, there is possibility that the idea of “moving on” may be downplayed. It is important that all understand from the outset that the presence of the Brothers’ community is time-limited, but with sufficient flexibility to take account of the circumstances in each situation.

Why we think this will work

Such involvement with people has worked well with groups using a Community Engagement model. From the start of any partnership, the intention is to facilitate people to take on the management of their own lives and that of their community. So from the outset this will be well explained to the host community so that they fully understand the implications, when the time is mutually agreed, Brothers will be free to move to a new initiative within that community or to another geographical area.

Comparators

[African Province Strategic Plan: ‘The Way Forward’](#)

The African Province of the Christian Brothers has developed a detailed plan of mission that has been worked on collaboratively and with assistance over a number of years. An Exit Strategy is the final element of six stages in their process: Pre-start, Start, Develop, Sustain, Maintain, and Exit. They have outlined detailed ways in which the Exit Strategy can be undertaken, always in collaboration with the host community, and ensuring that the host community is capable and confident of moving on without the need for the Brothers’ presence. (cf. African Strategic Plan 2010)

[C-SAFE](#)

C-SAFE is a Consortium of three international NGO's (CARE, Catholic Relief Services, and World Vision) working in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Lesotho. C-SAFE applies a “developmental relief” approach to its programming efforts, addressing emergency food security needs, while simultaneously building productive community assets. This is intended ultimately to improve community resilience to future food security shortages. In the article in the web reference, the former C-SAFE Manager speaks of their learnings around Exit Strategies. It is an

important consideration, and needs insight, sensitivity and quality relationships between all people.

[World Vision Ireland](#)

World Vision Ireland has found the best way to help a local people to become self-reliant is to set in place Area Development Programmes. World Vision national staff work in partnership with local people and empower them as they plan, prioritise and implement actions to meet their needs – all critical to their self-reliance and self-confidence.

[Trócaire](#)

The Irish Charity “Trócaire” works in Africa, Latin America and Asia. This is how it describes itself:

“No matter where we work in the world, one factor is common; people want to have control over their own lives and the decisions affecting them. That’s why we work in partnership with local organisations around the world to carry out our work. Partnership means that we use our experience, funding and staff to support people in changing their communities. We don’t do the work for them. But we’re there every step of the way to guide, advise and make sure they have the skills and tools to reach their goals. The beauty of this is the lasting difference it brings; change that’s owned by local people, that enhances their skills and that encourages dignity and self-belief within people who have all the potential in the world”.

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 11

An orientation process for the new communities will identify and critique existing attitudes and behaviours as well as presenting appropriate attitudes and behaviours. Orientation is **essential to prepare Brothers spiritually, psychologically, attitudinally, and professionally for respectful engagement with people.** Such preparation will involve **learning the language and customs of the people among whom they live.**

An orientation process ... is essential to prepare Brothers

Why we are saying this

As Brothers, we recognise that we are engaged in “a lifelong process of growing to full human maturity as we seek to realise more clearly that God is the centre and source of integration in our lives” (Constitution 48). The orientation process has to be seen as initial and ongoing where “initial” refers to new membership at postulancy, novitiate and annual profession stages and “ongoing” refers to post final profession. This ongoing formation will mean identifying and discarding approaches and attitudes that will not be helpful in the implementation of the Proposition, and learning needed attitudes and behaviours which will support implementation.

It is essential that young men entering into this process of orientation and preparation for a way of life and a mission, that draws them into engagement with poor people, have the necessary intellectual capacity to carry out this mission. They should also have experienced life to the extent that they have a good sense of their own personality, sexuality, and relational style and show themselves to be responsible and strongly disposed to a life of service, through advocacy. It is expected too that they would be proficient in the language that is used at this stage of formation and preparation.

Ongoing formation of the Brothers requires each taking responsibility in seeking opportunities for personal, spiritual and ministerial development. They will be encouraged to seek opportunities to “foster and develop other gifts and creatively seek new outlets for mission appropriate to their age and energy” (Constitution 65).

For these reasons, all Brothers who will be members of the new communities will need to undertake an intensive orientation process, if the necessary changes in behaviour and practice are to occur.

spiritually

Why we are saying this

A mission that is going to draw Brothers into a deep and active engagement with poor people will need the solid foundation of personal prayer and time for quiet reflection. It is imperative therefore in the orientation to provide the necessary skills that allow for theological reflection, and for scripture study to occupy a place at the centre of our lives. This initiative will encourage the nurturing of a contemplative stance on life, or what Fr Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ describes as “mysticism in the marketplace”.

psychologically

Why we are saying this

When working in a marginal situation, a key element of any preparation is our capacity to integrate the various dimensions of our lives. This will lead to greater self-awareness and understanding. Brothers’ awareness of themselves and their capacity to address personal issues will enable them to deal with what may arise when working in close proximity with people in dislocating situations. It will create in them the need for, and appreciation of, personal counselling and spiritual direction as regular requirements of their lives.

professionally

Why we are saying this

It is essential that the Brothers are skilled, competent and confident in their mission and ministry. Being professional also includes having knowledge of professional ethics and boundaries, child protection policies, and availing of supervision and regular evaluation.

attitudinally

Why we are saying this

Engaging with poor people as a disciple of Jesus demands an openness of mind and heart and a listening ear. Relating to people as Brothers requires an attitude of reverence, respect and trust. Brothers relate, not from a position of power, knowing all the answers, but rather from a position of “not knowing” but fully committed to helping those made poor find the solutions to their problems among themselves. Brothers have an attitude of humility, realising that they have much to learn from poor people.

learning the language and customs of the people among whom they live

Why we are saying this

If Brothers are serious about relating closely with poor people then the learning of their language, even at a very basic level, is non-negotiable. There is no better way of showing reverence and respect and, of course, it offers a pathway into the lives of the people with whom they work. In fact, it would simply be repeating former models of colonialism if Brothers were not continually developing their language skills, and they should not engage in ministry until they have some confidence in language.

Why we think this will work

Our recent experiences of moving to new missions have taught us that it is essential that Brothers be well prepared and trained to be effective both in their own communities as Brothers and in the wider community as agents of change.

Professionally, we would be more competent and confident. Spiritually, we would be more grounded in our faith and scriptures, open to the God who calls us each day to listen like a disciple. Psychologically, we would be more grounded, balanced and integrated in ourselves and in our relationships. Attitudinally, we would be more open, respectful and trusting of that which is unfamiliar and unknown, and therefore more willing to learn, accept and challenge where and when necessary.

Anthony Gittins, a Spiritan priest, highlights respect for the human person and human cultures; commitment to a search for truth through respectful dialogue; cultivation of a learning posture; learning “downward mobility”

and accepting marginality; and cultivation of an ecumenical approach as essentials for respectful engagement with poor people. He names patience, tolerance, humility, commitment to ongoing conversion, trustworthiness and having a trusting heart as necessary virtues.

Comparators

[Missionaries of Africa](#)

Missionary Congregations such as the Comboni Missionaries and the Missionaries of Africa lay particular importance to learning a language for real engagement with people in another culture.

Br Amani Bulambo Dieudonne of the Missionaries of Africa is a young man from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He entered the one year preparatory year in 2002 in DRC. Following this year, he studied philosophy for three years. This was followed with a year's novitiate in Burkina Faso. He was then missioned to Ghana where following a month long programme in Tamale, he spent two years in a village in north Ghana immersed among the people ministering to them, learning their language and getting acquainted with their customs and culture. He is now doing his four-year theology studies in South Africa.

[VSO / Peace Corps](#)

Both [Peace Corps](#) and [VSO](#) call on their volunteers to immerse fully in the lives of the people with whom they will be working. This usually means that the volunteers live among the people, get acquainted with their language, customs and food habits, and live on an allowance that enables them to live in a manner similar to the local people in the community.

VSO emphasises language and cultural awareness training that can last anything between two weeks to three months. The purpose of this is to understand the culture and history of the people and to allow fellow volunteers to bond. They also speak of resettlement which involves returning to one's own country, the need for counselling and debriefing, and a need for a returned volunteers training programme.

[Other Congregations and Organisations](#)

Congregations who engage in such preparation of people are the [Maryknoll Missionaries](#), Columban Fathers, and Medical Missionaries of

Mary. Each of these groups runs training programmes for their own members and volunteers, sometimes using their own resources, and sometimes engaging the expertise of other groups. For example, the [Medical Missionaries of Mary](#) engage groups such as VMM (Volunteer Missionary Movement) or Viatores Christi to run programmes and engage other training professionals on themes such as conflict resolution, tribalism and ethnic issues.

15-20 COMMUNITIES CREATING A CRITICAL MASS

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 12

The Congregation will initially create **15 to 20 new communities in the developing world**. This provides for a **critical mass** of Christian Brother communities in order for the Proposition **to be viable**.

15 to 20 new communities in the developing world

Why we are saying this

A later element of the Proposition argues for forming communities in groups around a “Hub” for reasons of mutual support and in-servicing. A Hub and four or five communities in, say, four areas of the developing world would give us 20 communities in the initial phase. Having the communities around each “Hub” relatively close together is important to provide a sense of mutual encouragement and practical cooperation. It will also enable more frequent pastoral visits by leadership, gathering communities together from time to time, and more meaningful accompaniment and spiritual direction. As explained earlier, the developing world has been chosen because of the great needs in many countries, and most of our new Brothers are coming from developing world areas.

critical mass

Why we are saying this

Critical mass is a socio-dynamic term to describe the existence of a sufficient amount of adopters of an innovation in a social system, so that the rate of adoption becomes self-sustaining and creates further growth. It is an aspect of the theory of Diffusion of Innovations, written on extensively by Everett Rogers.

The One-Third Hypothesis is a socio-dynamic idea advanced by Hugo Engelmann that asserts that a group’s prominence increases as it approaches one-third of the population and diminishes when it exceeds or falls below one-third of the population. As the One-Third Hypothesis was stated originally by Engelmann in a letter to the *American Sociologist* in 1967:

“...we would expect that the most persistent subgroups in any group would be those which approximate one-third or, by similar reasoning, a multiple of one-third of the total group. Being the most persistent, these groups also should be the ones most significantly implicated in ongoing sociocultural transformation. This does not mean that these groups need to be dominant, but they play prominent roles”.

While critical mass and the One-Third Hypothesis are not the same thing, they do seem to be related. To enable a system that can be self-sustaining into the future, we need at least one-third of Brothers actively involved in the implementation of the Proposition. Many of the active members will be in the developing Provinces, but much energy, wisdom and experience will come from the Brothers in the developed world as well.

to be viable

Why we are saying this

One dictionary meaning of “to be viable” is “capable of becoming actual”, that is, self-sustainable in having an inner core of energy to produce its own life without help from outside sources. This viability is for the Congregation as a whole, not only for one particular part of it. We are deeply convinced that this Proposition offers the Congregation the best chance of viability into the future in a manner which is based on Gospel values and deeply respectful of the people to whom and with whom we will minister.

If the Congregation is to respond to the urgent needs of this time, the Proposition describes the direction we believe it should take. The Proposition invites the whole Congregation to engage in a Way of Listening which is a form of the traditional vow of Obedience. Many will engage physically with the Proposition and allow themselves to be uprooted and displaced in order to serve where the needs are great; others may not be able to do this, but all are called to give it acceptance and support forming what Judy Cannato would call a “morphogenic field” (term originally coined by Rupert Sheldrake) that will influence both energy and behaviour in a positive and life-giving way.

At the heart of the Proposition is an invitation to put the search for God at the Centre of our lives as Brothers, and this extends from the oldest to

the youngest Brother, irrespective of race or culture. All will be enriched as we share our spiritual journeys together.

A study of the latest figures of the Membership Profile of the Congregation into the future contains the following estimates for 2021.

By 2021:

- Europe will have 18 Brothers under seventy, and 148 over seventy;
- North America will have 38 Brothers under seventy, and 127 over seventy;
- Latin America will have 21 Brothers under seventy, and 13 over seventy;
- Oceania will have 43 Brothers under seventy, and 190 over seventy;
- India will have 103 Brothers under seventy, and 14 over seventy;
- Africa will have 182 Brothers under seventy, and 31 over seventy.

The projected number of Brothers in the Congregation is 928 - 405 under seventy and 523 over seventy. Of the 405 under seventy, Africa, India and Latin America account for 306, most of whom are well under seventy.

If we take the projected figures for North America, Oceania and Europe, by 2021 there will only be 28 Brothers under sixty in these Provinces. The reality is that some Province structures will not be viable into the future.

Why we think this will work

From what has been said above, it is obvious that there is a basic link between the three highlighted phrases of the Proposition Paragraph above: “15 to 20 communities”, “critical mass” and “to be viable”. The implementation of the Proposition must be convincing. Fewer communities would run the risk of being insufficient to enable the new vision to be launched vigorously in the whole Congregation.

The fundamental challenge facing all of us is: “We can allow the flame to flicker out through preserving the status quo, or we can choose to move in trust to the Spirit’s invitation” (*The Message*). The Proposition with its emphasis on the spiritual search and its call to be engaged closely with poor people is a truly authentic way into the future for Religious Life.

Comparators

[The Marist Ad Gentes Programme](#)

We can learn a lot from the Marists and their *Ad Gentes* Programme, both from their successes and their mistakes. They have fifteen communities scattered over seven countries in Asia-Pacific. They are struggling because of the geographical spread, but are very convinced about the rightness of their initiative.

[The Community of the Lamb](#)

Founded in France on 6 February 1983 by Monsignor Jean Chabbert, Archbishop of Perpignan, the “Community of the Lamb” is a new branch on the tree of the Order of Preachers. It was recognized on the 16 July 1983 as “belonging as such to the Family of saint Dominic” by Father Vincent de Couesnongle, the Master of the Order of Preachers at that time. From a small beginning, today the Community is made up of more than one hundred and thirty little sisters and around thirty little brothers from various countries. The little brothers and little sisters have a common purpose of life and can gather together for liturgical prayer. Their daily life, however, is separate. This Comparator shows that a small number can form a Critical Mass where there is commitment, energy and passion.

[New Life in Mission Communities in the European Province](#)

We can also learn something about “critical mass” from examining the *New Life in Mission* initiative in the European Province. The current five communities have formed a strong bond and mutual support. Something very good is happening, but a few more communities would be needed before we could say that there was a critical mass impacting the whole Province in a significant way.

[Irish Aid](#)

Since its inception in 1974, the Irish Aid programme has had a strong geographic focus on Sub-Saharan Africa. Approximately 80% of Ireland’s Overseas Development Aid goes to Africa. Under the bilateral part of its programme, Irish Aid operates intensive and wide-ranging programmes in seven countries in Africa. Keeping a closer geographic focus enables the programmes to operate with more support and hence more effectively.

MOVEMENT OF BROTHERS BETWEEN PROVINCES

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 13

Brothers joining the new communities may be drawn from **different Provinces**. In this way, the Brothers deliberately choose to become an intercultural Congregation to facilitate the **necessary movement of Brothers** in meeting the most pressing needs of people made poor.

different Provinces

Why we are saying this

The desire to form creative communities in places of the world where there is real poverty and need requires that the people forming the communities have a variety of personal gifts, developed skills and professional expertise. Given that such people will not be necessarily be found in any one current Province, the Proposition suggests that members may be drawn from different Provinces. This will add richness of background and experience and open up more possibilities. We note Scott Peck's comments that difference is an importance element of true community, so that people must work at living together rather than simply forming communities with those who think alike. We affirm this element of the Proposition as a necessary and realistic one for future ministry across the Congregation, and there are major implications in doing so.

Drawing Brothers from different geographical areas highlights again the crucial nature of the preparation which such members will need if they are to form a living community. The assumption is that the members are individually mature people and take their own commitment to Religious Life seriously. Criteria for choosing such members need to be established, but once people are selected as potential community members, it is imperative that they have facilitated time together to explore what it means to come from different cultures with the assumptions, expectations, insights and blind-spots that each one brings. This preparation has an individual and a collective component.

There are strong implications here for formation, given that it is realistic to imagine that anyone joining the Congregation now will need to assume that their ministry may well be in another culture. Equally, there is need for strong preparation for volunteers who are living in the community and working in ministry in a different culture.

There are very real practical challenges that have to be addressed. The experience of the Marist Brothers in their *Ad Gentes* programme that many older men have great difficulty in settling into a new culture and learning a new language, with quite a number giving up and going back home after a year or two, indicates that there are likely to be smaller numbers of men from the developed world available to physically engage with the Proposition. Most of our Brothers will continue to live out their lives in deep commitment in their home Provinces. However, as these men live out their “autumn” years in the Congregation, they will find themselves called by the Proposition to embrace this wider vision, continue to engage in the spiritual search and share the riches of that search, both with community members and others beyond the community.

The Proposition is challenging all available Brothers to be willing to go where the needs are great, to go beyond boundaries of home and country, building communities that serve poor people, and whose members are committed to the spiritual search.

the necessary movement of Brothers

Why we are saying this

The movement of Brothers into Africa is possible, but there are challenges: learning to live in intercultural situations in one’s sixties is not easy; learning a new language in the later stages of life is virtually impossible. Tropical diseases and health issues may pose problems.

At the present time, moving foreign Brothers into India on a long-term basis is not possible for visa reasons. Unfortunately, this means that India is restricting the sharing of riches that comes from a variety of races and cultures and the cross-fertilisation that occurs when people from different spiritual backgrounds come together.

While it is probable that in Africa and in India indigenous Brothers will form the “Hubs” and the new communities, nonetheless an openness to the possibility of Brothers from elsewhere being involved should be encouraged. The Hub and communities in Latin America could be enriched by the presence of Brothers from Africa and India.

PNG also holds possibilities of developing a Hub and associated communities, with close ties eventually with new foundations in East Timor and The Philippines. Future communities in South-East Asia would be a mix of new Brothers from there together with Africans and Indians.

One particular aspect of this “necessary movement of Brothers” would be the hope that experienced Brothers from Europe, North America and Oceania would make themselves available to be part of the “Hub” communities as companions, spiritual directors, or other support people. They would need to be chosen carefully and would have to be given opportunities to familiarise themselves with the culture and at least the basics of language. Anyone going into Latin America would have to learn Spanish which may prove a challenge to many.

Apart from these “specialist Brothers” moving into the “Hubs”, we feel that most of the movement of Brothers across Provinces will involve Brothers in the developing world. It is obvious that changing the culture of the Congregation will have huge implications for formation. Young people joining this “new” Congregation will need to be clear on what they are committing to.

Why we think this will work

We recognise that we are trying to do something new for our Congregation, but the learnings from other groups show us that, with proper training and structures, many things are possible. The biggest factor, however, is always the desire, commitment and deep belief of the Brothers themselves to make this work because they believe that they are being called by the Holy Spirit to do something new! We recognise there are still 45 Marist Brothers continuing in the *Ad Gentes* program, and many other Congregations, including Medical Missionaries of Mary, Maryknoll and Comboni Congregations, who insist on living in intercultural communities in far-flung places across the planet! This gives us much hope.

The overall thrust of the Proposition is to have the Brothers living and working with poor people and engaged in sharing the spiritual search that is part of the experience. The Congregation Chapter of 1996 called us to Internationality. This Proposition is calling us to take a further step and live in intercultural communities. Unity in diversity is a huge challenge for the reasons mentioned above. But the rewards are also great: an enriching of background and experience which opens up new possibilities, and an example to the whole world that people from different racial and cultural backgrounds can truly live and work together. This is a huge need for today’s world, and we have confidence in our Brothers’ ability, in living with host communities, to bring this vision to life.

Comparators

[Marist Brothers Ad Gentes Programme](#)

The Marist *Ad Gentes* Programme works up to a point. They have difficulty in moving Brothers around to different parts of the world but this has not stopped them from trying. Currently they have fifteen communities in seven different countries mainly in the Asia-Pacific. The *Ad Gentes* Programme offers a very detailed Preparatory Programme for Brothers going on mission which would be useful as a guide towards preparing Brothers for intercultural living.

[Medical Missionaries of Mary](#)

The Medical Missionaries of Mary engage groups such as [VMM](#) (Volunteer Missionary Movement) or [Viatores Christi](#) to run preparation programs, and they engage other training professionals for particular areas of preparation, or working with communities on themes such as conflict resolution, tribalism and ethnic issues.

[PALMS Australia](#)

“PALMS Australia” is another organisation which conducts similar training programmes.

[U.S. Study of People Working in Other Countries](#)

Another helpful indicator of the preparation needed for people living and working in intercultural settings is a study of U.S. people working in 156 countries and their learnings (Shung J. Shin et al., “What You Do Depends on Where You Are: Understanding How Domestic and Expatriate Work Requirements Depend upon the Cultural Context”, *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 64-83, 2007). The need for proper preparation is strongly reinforced in this article, which has no specific religious connections at all.

THE SPIRITUAL SEARCH

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 14

The Brothers in these new communities will be committed to **share the spiritual search** both within and beyond the community. People of all backgrounds will be welcome to engage with the community in this search.

share the spiritual search

Why we are saying this

The community is the context for our shared spiritual search. This is the dynamic context for experiencing the Mystery we call God in the everyday realities of life. Following Jesus in the spirit of Edmund Rice is the desire of all members. The community will only be genuine if the members are open to being led to a deeper humanity.

What does sharing our spiritual search mean? It means that we will share our personal and communal lives, including our deepening understanding of ourselves, of others, of Creation and of God. It also means that we share with one another what is happening in our relationships, especially what we are learning through our mutual friendship with poor people which connects us more deeply with our own vulnerability and humanity. It is especially in these friendships with people made poor that the Brothers nurture a presence which touches people's spirits and a curiosity about the world that values mystery, transcendence and beauty.

Sharing the spiritual search involves personal and community spiritual practice. This will include meditation, daily prayer together, ritual celebrations, including Eucharist and Reconciliation, reflection on daily life and ministry experience with people made poor, exploring together the Universe Story. The community undertakes facilitation to help deal with community dynamics.

Our Catholic Christian tradition, which we seek to deepen, is the context for sharing our spiritual search. We are also open to the wisdom of other traditions as we embark on this journey.

Widespread dissatisfaction with contemporary traditional religious belief is moving people to engage in the spiritual search in new ways.

Why we think this will work

From their experience with Brothers around the Congregation, the CLT believes that there is a thirst among many Brothers for a form of community living that offers a counter-cultural witness in a consumerist world. Such a community counters the sense of isolation felt by many, and offers support to celibate living in a joyful way.

We believe that many Brothers desire to live this kind of community, but past practices and formation have often not given them the skills to do it with confidence. New opportunities will be attractive to a significant number. The *New Life in Mission* Comparator shows what can happen when good preparation and skilling join with deep desire.

The American sociologist [Robert Bellah](#), an eminent social and religious researcher, names trends which he sees as essential for the future of humankind, and which we believe are closely related to a community's sharing of its spiritual search. He is hopeful that humankind's religious evolution may be on the threshold of a new "Axial Age". It promises to be an era in which science, a growing belief in universal human rights, and other features of modernity will lead religious believers to an acceptance that religious pluralism is our common destiny. He says:

"I think one must have one religious home from which one gets one's most basic orientation, but I see no reason why one can't also learn a great deal from other traditions that perhaps see some things to which your home tradition has not always attended".

This broad understanding of the spiritual search is what the Proposition intends.

Comparators

[New Life in Mission Communities in the European Province](#)

The stated aim of these communities is to share the spiritual search with others. Key aspects of creating a community in which the spiritual search can be shared are referred to as: Community Development, Personal Development, Community Spiritual Search, Making a Home, Ecological Living, and Establishing Centres of Spirituality. Each of these areas is

spelled out in detail and in the preparation needed for the community to grow in these areas (*To Share Our Spiritual Search With Others – Goals, Objectives, Actions*, 2006). The experience of the communities would give confidence that such a mode of living is effective in “sharing the spiritual search”, and being attractive to others.

[Intentional Communities](#)

There are over four million Google entries for “Creating Intentional Communities”. The Australian National Intentional Communities Conferences & South East Australia Communities Gatherings published the first edition of the *Intentional Communities Manual* in 2001. It highlights many features of community life and offers learnings from the experience of a variety of intentional communities. Areas such as the following are addressed: community vision, size, preparation, facilitation, evaluation, regular meetings, conflict resolution, collaborative decision-making, sharing power, rituals and communication. Jack Gibb, in setting up hundreds of TORI communities (Trusting, Opening, Realising, Interdepending) says that quality of life is enhanced when a deep sense of community exists.

This Comparator indicates that there is a marked desire for the kind of living that a more individually-focused society does not provide. Our belief is that this awareness and searching are likely to increase into the future as people seek to explore further meaning in their lives.

[Charter for Compassion](#)

Religious researcher Karen Armstrong highlights the *Golden Rule* as the key element in all religious traditions, and advocates a “Charter for Compassion” for the development of all life. Her work has attracted the following of many people and groups who see in the Charter for Compassion a way of joining with others to share the values which they hold to be both essentially human and deeply spiritual.

Christian Brother communities which invite others to join them in the spiritual search are a sign of hope at a time of much upheaval. Many young people continually express a deep desire for new forms of spirituality. This spiritual search is done in the context of living with and for people made poor.

JOYFUL IN THE CHALLENGES OF LIVING TOGETHER

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 15

The new communities will be **joyful places**, where members trust and support one another in the daily **challenges of living together**. It is in such communities that the expression of **vowed living** will be clearly visible.

joyful places

Why we are saying this

According to one dictionary definition, “to be joyful” suggests being full of joy in one’s heart. It involves showing or expressing joy through how we look, act, or speak. Such a disposition is congruent with the Christian call to “be the ‘good news’”. A joyful attitude encourages not only a community but those around it. If Christian Brother communities are visibly joyful places, they will be an encouraging presence that lifts the hearts of people with whom they live and work. “Joy is the surest sign of the presence of God” (Teresa of Avila).

However, for any community to be a joyful place it must first of all be an authentic community that embraces all aspects of human experience, including people’s vulnerability and woundedness. It would be naive to suggest that a community will always and inevitably be joyful.

Community life can be difficult. However, “the most common emotional response to the spirit of community is the feeling of joy” (Scott Peck, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*), and it is this experience of joy that should be at the heart of a community.

challenges of living together

Why we are saying this

There are going to be challenges to living together that can provoke anger, frustration or hurt. An openness and acceptance of these emotions is necessary. Rituals of reconciliation and other methods of addressing difference are important and will have to be developed if the community is to grow and relationships deepen. Intensive preparation for this new kind of community living is essential, and facilitation will be needed at times once the community moves into its place of living.

For a community to be a joyful place, it must seek authenticity. Masks must drop and members must see and recognise the individuality and dignity of each person. This is at the heart of vowed living. The Charter for “New Life in Mission” states: “There is no place in such a community for silent, hidden suffering which can alienate and make us strangers to each other” (*To Share Our Spiritual Search*). Members must feel accepted, cherished and supported, and seek to intimately share their lives together.

The Proposition suggests that members of communities may be drawn from different Provinces, which will add to the richness and life of the community. We note Scott Peck’s comments that difference is an important element of true community. However, this also brings its own intercultural challenge. It is vital that communities have facilitated time together in their orientation stage to explore the reality of coming from different cultures with the assumptions, expectations, insights and blind-spots that each member brings.

Another challenge to community living can be a strong work ethic born out of modern society that promotes individualism and an over-reliance on digital technologies. New digital media can be utilised to the benefit of all without Brothers becoming too preoccupied with them.

For communities to be joyful places, good leadership is essential. Our experience suggests that while there are pros and cons for all forms of leadership, shared leadership does work when people are adequately committed and prepared. We believe that it is the best form of leadership for the kind of community envisaged in the Proposition. To live shared leadership effectively, Brothers need to have both personal freedom and a sense of responsibility and initiative. Help will be needed in developing the skills to live this form of leadership well. Such skills include studies of the different functions of leadership and how the community will embody them. Evaluation on an annual basis is important to determine the effectiveness of the leadership model.

The importance of preparation for people who are forming such a community cannot be overstated, and lack of proper preparation – both in content and in time allotment – can make the difference between a group that comes together as planned, or loses its way when difficulties and challenges come. This is especially the case when members are dealing with the dynamics of intercultural community living. Effective structural supports are necessary for healthy growth and in addressing the challenges that will come.

vowed living

Why we are saying this

The Constitutions say very clearly that our vowed living only makes sense when we live as genuine Brothers in community: “We need genuine support within our community in order to live our consecrated chastity in fidelity, joy and hope” (Constitution 10); “As members of a community vowing poverty and living in a spirit of detachment from possessions, we find fulfilment of our material needs in a simple style of life” (Constitution 34); “Radical obedience to God’s will demands attentive listening to the voice of the Spirit speaking to us both in the community and in the world around us” (Constitution 36).

The presence of authentic Christian Brother communities that are joyful and have the necessary skills to develop more intimate relationships between members will be a witness in the wider community to what is integral to vowed living. The aspects of vowed living that will be visible will include: how Brothers engage in the spiritual search; how the community shares possessions and lives simply; how Brothers relate honestly with love for one another and reach out to those who are marginalised in society.

The process of community building needs to be a core aspect of formation for Brothers of the future. Community building is a process involving theoretical knowledge, practical skills and a willingness to engage if progress is to be made. The Proposition is not calling us to something new – the ideal is described in our Constitutions. It is, however, spelling out what is involved in true community living and challenging us to engage at levels not experienced by many Brothers in the past.

Why we think this will work

We believe that there are many Brothers who have wished to live in communities as proposed in the Proposition, but a range of circumstances – personality factors, formation, personal history, lack of training – have made such communities less common than we might have hoped. Yet, the example of the “New Life in Mission” Communities in the European Province shows what can happen when men commit themselves to the hard work of preparing for this kind of authentic community with enthusiasm and even delight.

At our deepest level we are yearning for connection; we are not meant to be alone; we long to be known and loved for who we are. When we begin to experience that kind of depth in our community relationships, we will be nourished and energised and be able to go forth into ministry as warm compassionate people just as Jesus did.

To get to this point will demand significant investment of time and resources and the ability to take risks. Erickson puts two alternatives before us in his stages of Human Development: Intimacy or Isolation. Our clear choice is for intimacy!

Comparators

[Religious Congregations of Brothers](#)

Most Religious Congregations of Brothers and Sisters speak in their documents of the importance of community life, as they know that their members' ability to live their commitment authentically depends on the quality of support which they receive from their fellow community members. A happy and healthy community enables Religious Life to be the presence which it is meant to be. Our impression is that we are also looking at new forms of community living beyond what most Congregations have lived thus far.

Some examples of such focus on community support in Brothers' Congregations can be found in the [Marist Brothers Constitutions](#) (especially Chapter 3 on Marist Community), in the statements of the [Brothers of Christian Instruction](#) (which express its understandings in more traditional style), and on the website of the [CMM](#) Brothers, (Congregatio Fratrum Beatae Mariae Virginis, Mater Misericordiae), an international Congregation of Brothers founded in The Netherlands and working in many countries in the fields of education, youth work and building up the Church community.

[New Life in Mission](#)

The 'New Life in Mission' initiative within the Christian Brothers states:

“As a life choice, religious community living that lacks intimacy has no attraction and makes no sense. Intimacy comes when we have the courage and trust to share and explore together our personal feelings and emotions. We found that professional training and

facilitation was needed to nurture intimacy in community. Engaging with this kind of facilitation honours the call in our Constitutions to a process of formation that is life-long. Experiences arising out of such facilitation create a climate of freedom, equality, respect and love” (*To Share Our Spiritual Search*, p. 13).

“New Life in Mission” communities have shown that the type of community proposed can and has been formed already in recent years in our Congregation.

[L’Arche Communities](#)

At the heart of L’Arche communities are relationships between people with and without intellectual disabilities. Central to their community life are mutual relationships which foster the acceptance of each person as a unique and valuable individual, whatever his or her abilities or disabilities. According to L’Arche, people are transformed in their encounters within such a community. The joy comes from the deep understanding that each person is gifted, has personal deficits and has a unique contribution to make to the community – all aspects to be celebrated!

SIMPLICITY AND BEAUTY

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 16

Simplicity and beauty will be the hallmarks of the community house and lifestyle.

Simplicity and beauty

Why we are saying this

Our Constitutions say:

- “Poor in spirit and in fact, we manifest by the simplicity of our lives our solidarity with the poor“ (Constitution 14)
- “In seeking first the Reign of God, we are continually called to conversion lest we become a community which, with no discerning heart, accepts comforts, security and affluence” (Constitution 15).

These statements reflect a long spiritual belief held by many traditions. As [Duane Elgin](#) says, “Simplicity has deep roots in history and finds expression in all of the world’s wisdom traditions”. In the present world, living simply is required if the resources of the planet are to be sustainable for the future. It is a radical, counter-cultural stance to the philosophy of consumerism. It can be argued that simplicity and beauty reflect our stance towards God, are environmentally sustainable, and allow for more effective living as a human being without the trappings of a more affluent lifestyle.

What does this mean in practice? Firstly, that the house is not cluttered. What is there is needed for the comfortable, but not lavish, living of the community, and is not a stockpile of every requirement for every imagined future need, or a storage of junk from the past. We recognise that many of our current communities are cluttered, and with clutter often comes lack of cleanliness. Men are generally less good than women in dealing with these realities, so attention to this aspect of living is part of the formation of the community.

We recognise that the community house needs to have accommodation that offers sufficient personal space and privacy with good spaces for communal interaction. The house is well-maintained and cared for, and is inviting for visitors.

Beauty and simplicity often go together, so that such features as garden (if possible), plants, colour, pictures or hangings, prayer spaces, all stand out so much more without the distraction of clutter. While beauty might be regarded as being in the mind of the beholder, a helpful guide is that the kinds of choices made by the community in these areas should be made to enhance their own spirits and be attractive to others. Efforts at recycling, being conscious of energy use and sustainable living are elements here too.

A practical consideration is what is appropriate in terms of culture and modern life. To have every electric and electronic device available in the community house may be at odds with the neighbourhood community. Any major disparity means that the house has to consider extra security to protect its assets and the effect is to make it less accessible to the local people. Most places today seem to have access to mobile phones, so communication seems largely assured. Use of computers is becoming more standard too, although each situation needs to be evaluated on its merits. These considerations remind us of the importance of the “Hub” for the community as a source of access to resources which may not be so available in their place of living. They also highlight the sharing of goods among community members as a value which the community espouses.

A further aspect of beauty is in the actual living practices of the community. Such areas as the type and style of food preparation and meals, the way in which the community prays, the rituals the community engages in, the personal practices of hospitality and the way in which each community member nourishes his own spirit, all add to the beauty of the place, even when it is in a very poor area.

Why we think this will work

It is clear to us that attentiveness to living simply and with attention to beauty is not easy. While many, and perhaps an increasing number in the developed world, believe in this kind of living, the constant message found in many countries of the developing world is that having more is an important part of becoming a person. The hunger for simplicity in particular is not universal. So we are saying very clearly that we are articulating an ideal which will be a challenge to many in all parts of our Congregation. The ideal encourages us to stop an acquisitiveness, and to highlight the centrality of the Spirit in our living.

A religious community attempting to live this way of life is not only faithful to a long spiritual tradition, and in keeping with its own best expressions (as per its Constitutions), but also making a clear statement of global priorities for our world at the moment. The hunger for simplicity and beauty is growing, and places where it can be shown to be real offer inspiration to many, particularly the people living close by. The way in which the community house is set up is central to the community's way of living.

The Comparators below show that simplicity lived in community is an attractive value for many people, and that beauty may be seen in people as well as in materials and structures.

Comparators

[Taize](#)

The ecumenical community of monks in France, with establishments in other parts of the world, is an excellent example of how a community is attractive to many people and touches their spirits in powerful ways.

Brother Roger, the founder of Taize, said:

“Since my youth, I think that I have never lost the intuition that community life could be a sign that God is love, and love alone. Gradually the conviction took shape in me that it was essential to create a community with men determined to give their whole life and who would always try to understand one another and be reconciled, a community where kindness of heart and simplicity would be at the Centre of everything”.

The existence and development of the community over 70 years, with its attraction to people of all ages, is testament to its commitment to living simply and with beauty.

[L'Arche](#)

The community founded by Jean Vanier and two friends with developmental disabilities in France in 1964, has spread around the world. L'Arche (Canada) states about itself:

“L'Arche exists in many different countries but everywhere the same spirit of community can be found and the same discovery made that beauty exists in

every person. Community forms when we discover that we are interdependent and that every person has gifts to contribute to us and we to them”.

[PachaMama Alliance](#)

PachaMama is an alternative community in Costa Rica and a unique melting point of diverse personal and cultural backgrounds. It is at once an experimental village, a spiritual commune, and a centre of transformation. It has matured over eleven years into a stable and well-organised intentional community. The village constantly evolves and explores new angles of healthy, spiritual sustainable living, always with a wild and alternative flavour. In all its beauty and imperfection, PachaMama is firmly rooted in the simplicity of being.

SUSTAINABILITY

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 17

The new communities and their associated activities will **work to become resilient and self-sustaining**, both **economically and environmentally**.

work to become resilient and self-sustaining ... economically and environmentally

Why we are saying this

The Oxford Dictionary meaning of “self-sustaining” is “to be able to provide for your own needs”. The assumption may be made that when you engage with poor people, endeavours may never be fully self-sustainable according to that definition. However, a new venture may also be described as “sustainable” when the local people are able to access all the necessary funding independently of the “expert” whose task it was initially to do it on their behalf.

So, appropriate long-term planning can ensure that the host community can operate independently after the Brothers leave. The ideal would be that new ventures are set up in such a way that ownership is firmly in the hands of the host community right from the beginning. It is not a matter of the Brothers handing over the venture to the people at a later stage. The Brothers’ exit strategy should be there from the beginning. The power to lift itself out of poverty lies within the community. Our role as Brothers is to help them to recognise their gifts, encourage and affirm them so they begin to believe in themselves. We see self-sustainability in this sense as an important and achievable goal for the initiatives developed by the local community with the Brothers.

A more recent insight speaks of “resilience” rather than “self-sustainability” when referring to the steps taken by communities.

Resilience rather than sustainability seems to have taken over as the recognised goal in development. We help to build the capacities of the people so that they can take on responsibility for new ventures after we have gone and even if the donor funding were to cease. To fail to provide for ways in which a venture can continue once donor supports are withdrawn will inevitably result in the failure of the venture and the imposition of a burden upon the community that the venture was meant

to serve. Promoting resilience is a key dimension of initiatives designed to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, and make production and consumption more sustainable. This is a world concern and the [United Nations](#) identifies the need to integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development to achieve resilience and sustainability.

An awareness of the local eco-system is important for a community of Brothers so that they are aware of the impact of any proposed actions on the environment. Using resources sustainably for the environment is a natural companion to seeking economic sustainability.

As a way of promoting sustainability for our communities, Brothers involved in a ministry need to receive some financial support for their work. When making application to funding bodies, consideration needs to be given to this matter. It is not acceptable that a Brother's community goes without financial support for his ministry.

It is hoped that the proposed structures for Development Offices will, over time, enable us to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and expertise to raise significant funds for the Congregation and its work.

Resilience and sustainability as described above are clearly challenges that the Proposition puts before us. It is a goal towards which we are invited to work. It will make for a more authentic way of living Religious Life, engaging with poor people as well as witnessing to the "Great Work" (Thomas Berry) of saving the planet.

Why we think this will work

Solidarity with people will require the Brothers to adapt their living standards and be content with a simpler lifestyle. This will propose a particular challenge but we believe it will bring us to a more authentic way of being Brothers following Gospel values and living close to poor people. The impact of our lifestyle on the local eco-system is an intrinsic element of decision-making re community living. In this way economics and environment interrelate.

Having said this, it is clear that there will be a need for funding from sources outside the Congregation; the Development Offices are set up to support in this regard. The experience of the Marist Brothers in the *Ad Gentes* program reinforces this belief.

The overall feasibility of self-sustainability in development work is well-documented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and also by, among others, [Jeffrey Sachs](#) of the The Earth Institute at Columbia University, New York. His work with Millennium Villages in Kenya illustrates, by way of practical examples, how self-sustainability is achieved in practice.

Similarly, in places like Kenya and Timor Leste (as in the Comparators below), a body of data and experience has been built up that argues strongly that certain forms of self-sustainable practices are achievable in local contexts.

Comparators

[Timor Leste: Oxfam Australia](#)

In Timor Leste, *Oxfam Australia* has worked with the local community to assist with sustainable farming methods, by providing information and resources on production, sustaining the land and fertilising. The local community's production has improved and the people are able to sell their surplus produce at markets. So, by developing partnerships and networks with the local people, sustainable initiatives, like producing vegetables, handicrafts, and establishing co-operative stores, can be created.

[ATD \(Agir Tous pour la Dignité\) Fourth World](#)

This movement was founded in 1957 in France and has three major lines of action:

- Grass-roots presence and involvement among very poor families and communities, in housing estates, slums and isolated shanty towns;
- Research into poverty undertaken with the people concerned;
- Campaigning and mobilising public opinion at local, national and international levels.

The sensitive grassroots work among poor people undertaken by ATD members ensures that it is the local people whose skills and confidence increase. Thus sustainability is much more likely.

Oxfam Kenya

The involvement of the local people is important. Oxfam in the Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya employed a local project worker to work with the community. Families were trained and became responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of the latrines in the Camp.

HUBS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 18

There will be a “**Hub**” community providing support and services to groupings of four or five associated new communities **in the developing world areas.**

Hub ... in the developing world areas

Why we are saying this

A Way into the Future calls for “Hub” communities to be established in developing world areas, staffed by communities of Brothers (and other qualified colleagues). Using a caring, tactful and professional approach, they help facilitate personal, communal and ministry development in the area served by the nearby four or five communities.

The “Hub” serves varying purposes, given its context and location. Because it is intentionally associated with a grouping of four or five new communities, its primary purpose is to be at the service of these communities, which would in effect form a collective unit along with the “Hub”. These communities would visit the “Hub” for reflection and renewal periods regularly.

Clearly, the frequency of visit will depend on geographical proximity. At a minimum, it would be expected to be four times per year. It would also be expected that the “Hub” staff would visit the communities regularly.

The “Hub” will be well set up to meet the professional and personal needs of Brothers and colleagues. Spiritual journals and books, newspapers, TV, computers, prayer space, quiet areas, and internet access are readily available. In this sense, it will be the “hub” of the communities’ support.

The “Hub” community:

- Is a house of hospitality for Brothers and all who work with them in the new communities;
- Has three or four members (Brothers and/or qualified colleagues) who are skilled in spiritual direction, human and psychological development and conflict resolution;

- Is open to having other skilled people in an area come to assist the community in the above activities;
- Periodically, through the staff of the “Hub”, has extended visits to the communities in its area to get a deeper understanding of the needs of the Brothers working there and the desires and dreams of the host people;
- Is open to the associated communities for celebration of significant events like birthdays, anniversaries, accomplishments, festivals, and for rest and relaxation.

In her analysis of Religious Life for the future, Paula Downey makes the strong point that religious systems/organisations will survive into the future if they “have the ambition for greater participation and shared leadership which must be underpinned with a solid programme of support and development because people need the space and time to rediscover their own power and their responsibility”.

We realise that what is stated in the Proposition will not just happen without necessary support systems in place. The “Hub” would provide the required assistance and the “solid programme of support and development”, and would provide the “space and time” and opportunity for Brothers and colleagues to “rediscover their own power and their responsibility”.

Why we think this will work

Research was carried out by contacting fifteen Congregations involved in ministry in the developing world. It is evident that no Congregation has exactly the “Hub” community as is envisaged by the Proposition. However, it is amply clear from each Congregation that the need for such is very important. Leaders of these other Congregations were very interested in what we are proposing to do and hope that we will implement the proposal so that it may become a model for other Congregations. We would therefore be pioneers in the development of a “Hub” community, but with the strong encouragement and support of these other Congregations.

Congregations indicated that the vision of the “Hub” Community, as outlined by the Proposition, was ambitious, yet very worthwhile. It would work as long as there was clarity of understanding around the role of the “Hub” community in the structure of the Congregation and the local Province.

Our own history and experience as Brothers is that we have immersed ourselves so fully in the work and the “doing” that we have often neglected the necessary reflective element of our lives. The envisaged “Hub” community would assist Brothers in new communities to keep this flame alive. The importance of this “Hub” community cannot be over-emphasised and it will be essential to the well-being of the associated communities and their members.

To enable the “Hub” system to work, it will be very important for the Transition Support Team (mentioned later) to ensure that the location of “Hubs” and communities is such that regular contact is possible. This may well mean that the communities are within reasonable proximity to one another. Location of current Brothers’ communities should not be a determining factor on where the new “Hubs” and communities should be located.

The practical relationship of the “Hub” community with existing Provinces and with the Transition Support Team will become clearer in time with further discussion about the role of the “Hub”.

Comparators

The difficulty in finding Comparators lies in the fact that no other congregation to date has anything exactly like what is being proposed as a “Hub” associated with the four or five new communities. The nearest similarities include:

[Columban Missionary Society and Spiritans](#)

Conversations with both the USA [Columban Missionary Society](#) and the [Spiritans](#) revealed that they each have what they call “District” houses in their missionary sites where their men are “free to come for rest and relaxation without any pressure from leadership”. These Centres are essential as a support system for their men. The Spiritans are presently setting up three Centres of Spirituality in Africa in Tanzania, Nigeria and the Central African Republic where their men in formation would go periodically for formation and input into their Spiritan spirituality and history.

[Mill Hill Missionaries](#)

Fr Thaddeus, from the Mill Hill Missionaries, said:

“I have worked in India and there we have more or less a Hub community (though we do not use that name for it), where once a month the Mill Hill members living in the surrounding districts gather for an overnight meeting. This offers the opportunity to pray together, relax together, meet informally and – not unimportantly – do some business, which usually takes the shape of a meeting. Debriefing, and sharing one’s experiences and indeed faith sharing is also part of the aim. Not all objectives are always met, but this structure of meeting once a month has been very beneficial to each one’s well-being, our sense of being members of the same Society, and also for our work”.

SPIRITUALITY CENTRES IN THE DEVELOPED WORLD

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 19

In the developed world there will be **spirituality centres** that will provide on-going spiritual enrichment and training for Brothers, their colleagues, and the wider community.

spirituality centres

Why we are saying this

In the developed world, there is not the need for the same kind of support for communities as would be required for the new communities in the developing world. However, the increasing desire of people to find opportunities to deepen their understanding and living of their own “spiritual search” gives us another way to support people along these lines in the developed world. We have a number of Centres around the world at present that operate in ways akin to this, although a refocusing of direction may be needed for some of them. However, we have considerable experience in running such Centres, as well as a lived spirituality which people consistently say they find attractive. Such Centres would be available for Brothers, other members of the Edmund Rice Network, and people in the wider community drawn by the offerings of the Centre. A particular focus of the Centre would be on helping people develop processes of interiority and prayer, based around reflection on life in the light of the Gospel.

Why we think this will work

Given that Brothers strongly believe that sharing the spiritual search is one of their greatest acts of brotherhood, and given that significant numbers of our Brothers are qualified in leading others in such areas as group facilitation, spiritual direction, offering retreats and support for discernment processes, we believe that a Spirituality Centre which enables support for people to explore their spiritual life more deeply will be an attractive option for people. It hinges around having committed, capable and qualified people to run these Centres. At the same time, the openness of each Brothers’ community around the world to invite others into sharing its life, prayer and ministry involvements is foundational, and onto which the Spirituality Centres would build.

Comparators

[Centre for Ecology and Spirituality, Glenburn, Victoria, Australia](#)

The teaching emphasis at the Centre is not so much religious as spiritual, in the broader sense, especially as it concerns an attitude and identification with the earthed tradition, and what it means to be a human in an evolving universe. The Centre provides an opportunity for people to spend time on the spiritual and ecological dimensions of their lives. It offers space for reflection, discussion and education.

The Centre wishes to be inclusive and welcomes all interested in the link between ecology and spirituality. The Centre is dedicated to the promotion of a sound spirituality which recognises the ecology of creation, and the connectivity and balance of all life.

[An Tairseach – Dominican Farm and Ecology Centre, Wicklow Ireland](#)

An Tairseach, is the Irish word for threshold and suggests a new beginning, an alternative and more sustainable way of working with the land as well as a renewed relationship with the whole community of life, human and non-human. This Centre, run by the Dominican Sisters in Wicklow Ireland, offers a model for the kind of programmes which people are seeking as they try to understand how we need to live in a time of increasing danger to our planet.

[The Lantern Centre, Dublin](#)

The Lantern Centre in Dublin, welcomes people from many different community and religious backgrounds to enable them to have space for their own needs and also to engage creatively with other groups. It has a broad vision of inclusive opportunity, which the Proposition would seek to endorse.

COMMON ENTERPRISE

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 20

Engaged in a **common enterprise** that responds to the needs of people, **the Brothers will work collaboratively**, drawing on their individual skills and abilities.

common enterprise

Why we are saying this

Constitution 24 says: “As apostolic religious we are missioned by the Church for the evangelisation of youth, and especially for the education and care of the materially poor. This mission is expressed through a variety of ministries. In each ministry we respond creatively to emerging needs in a changing world.”

For many of us, our experience of “common mission” began with teaching in schools where all Brothers in the community engaged in the same ministry of teaching and followed the same timetable in both school and community. As our involvement with schools changed in many places over time, different Brothers became involved in different ministries and the sense of “common mission” often appeared to be lost or dissipated. Individual ministries became the norm for many Brothers. There is a belief that we have lost something very significant in our living together as Brothers.

It is for this reason that the Proposition speaks of the Brothers in the new communities as engaged in a “common enterprise”. In saying this,, we are speaking of the community’s commitment to engagement with the host community so that understanding of needs leads to an agreed way of proceeding. With a shared vision and purpose owned by all, the Brothers in the community work as a team where each contributes his skills and abilities, and all work alongside one another and the people. Mutual support, encouragement and shared expertise do not require all doing the same work, but the efforts of each contribute more effectively to achieving the desired collective outcome.

For really significant goals, it is said that “together we can do more”; or put another way, teamwork results in a greater impact than disparate individual efforts. Further reasons for “common enterprise” being preferable to people acting in isolation are:

- a more complete “witnessing” of religious brotherhood: we are Brothers to one another in our mission as well as in community, in addition to being Brothers of the people in the host community;
- a single, coherent collective goal is more focused than various separate individual activities;
- the combined commitment of Brothers in the enterprise again contributes to a quality of presence.

We recognise that Brothers who have become used to working more individually may be resistant to the proposed change, especially if they see it as a return to practices of the past. It is for this reason that we are stating clearly here that the common enterprise in which a new community is engaged is not envisaged as a return to everyone doing the same thing at the same time, but everyone having the same common vision and goal and contributing their individual skills towards the collective achievement of this goal.

Why we think this will work

There have been many examples in our history and tradition where the impact of Brothers working as a team creates a synergy which seemingly achieves more than if they had been working as individuals. This is another way of saying that the “whole is more than the sum of the parts”.

Brothers undertaking a “common enterprise” need also to have the capacity to face honestly “truths spoken in love”, and the resilience to continue working as a team while carrying one another’s burdens. We believe that the training that the community receives as it comes together will enable these skills to be further developed in the Brothers.

the Brothers will work together

Why we are saying this

“Each of us is evangelised, both through life in community and through ministry” (Constitution 25). By bringing our experiences of relating to others in our enterprise activities to our prayer together, by sharing our experience of God each week, our identity as Brothers is reinforced. We are in our mission together and with the host community of people, and we support one another in all the human dimensions of life. This is what being a “community-in-mission” means. How we live in community is as essential to our mission as the activity we undertake.

Having a common enterprise, Brothers use their respective skills and talents in supportive partnership, just as ribs of a leaf contribute to supporting the total leaf structure. Planning, implementing and evaluating will be carried out collegially by the Brothers and the host community.

An outlook of thinking collaboratively enables the possibility too of working in partnership with other groups who may have particular expertise to assist the host community in meeting its recognised needs. This is a healthy approach as envisioned in Community Engagement, so that we see ourselves and others as equal participants within a wider community.

Why we think this will work

We think this will work because other global Congregations working where the need is great have moved in recent decades from more individual approaches to the direction of working together (e.g. the Divine Word Missionaries). The evidence suggests too that this approach is more likely to attract and be helpful to younger Brothers who prefer to be working alongside others rather than separately.

An example from our present global mission is in the Philippines in Maasin. Here a community-based approach involving the Brothers and the Maasin people has been initiated, and the horizons for mission are extensive. If the Brothers were to cease to work collectively and employ a more individualistic approach, the different activities might well continue, but the impact on the host community and the ways of effectively involving the poorest communities would be diminished.

Comparators

[Society of Divine Word \(SVD\)](#)

The SVD Congregation, founded in 1875 to be a global missionary congregation, has membership of over 6,000 priests and Brothers and claims to have grown consistently over the last forty years. In an earlier period, needs of groups in isolated and remote places resulted in members of the Congregation working alone in “planting churches”, which had its heroism as well as costs.

The SVD Congregation has moved in the direction of changing from people working as individuals to a more community-based mission approach because:

- The solo approach presents difficulties in giving sustained, personal support to the member of the Congregation as well as having in place helpful checks and balances accompanying development
- Young people in different cultures seem to be attracted more to challenges with the company and support of peers or colleagues than to situations involving isolation and loneliness.

[Solidarity with South Sudan](#)

Solidarity with South Sudan is a project that seeks to promote the Kingdom of God in partnership with the local Church and the people of Sudan through the establishment and development of teacher and health training institutes and those pastoral services deemed most urgent. Around 200 Religious Congregations are involved in the Consortium, including the Christian Brothers.

[Maasin, the Philippines](#)

The experience of a community of Brothers living and working in a common enterprise is seen by the Brothers as a workable and helpful approach in the setting of another culture which would classify all the Brothers – from India and Oceania – as “aliens”. Feedback from the people so far has been favourable.

EVALUATION PROCESSES

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 21

Each new community will **regularly engage in evaluation processes** relating to the effectiveness of their work, the quality of community life, and commitment to personal and spiritual development.

regularly engage in evaluation processes

Why we are saying this

“One of the great mistakes is to judge policies and programmes by their intentions rather than their results” (Milton Friedman).

Evaluation may be defined as “a systematic determination of merit, worth, and significance of something or someone using criteria against a set of standards”. It is a vital process in any organisation to ensure that the elements of the organisation are meeting the criteria that have been set out for the organisation.

Such criteria will be based on the values that the Congregation proclaims in the Constitutions. Evaluation will assess the quality of both the ministry and the community life, as well as providing support and affirmation to individual Brothers.

Funding agencies that support organisations working in the developing world maintain that evaluation provides positive feedback both to those working on the ground and to the donor agencies. The evaluation involves all stakeholders in the work: the workers in the enterprise, the people who are the host community, and any other people involved in the administration of the enterprise. The funding agencies, such as Goal, Trocaire and Misean Cara, believe that such evaluation will help guarantee that people in host areas are involved in the process and the funding agencies reassured that the work is being done to the highest standards.

It needs to be said as well that, if the people among whom the community live are the ones who lead the community into new understandings of humanity and living the Gospel, they have an essential role in helping the community to articulate its learnings and evaluate its

living. Structures that are put in place have to ensure that the local people are integral to the evaluation process.

[Schon's](#) theory of the Reflective Practitioner offers a model for Religious to regularly reflect personally on the quality and effectiveness of their work in ministry. He stresses the importance of reflecting "in the action" and "on the action". By this he means that people need to be aware of how they are doing in an activity while they are engaged in the moment. Then they need to reflect subsequently on what they did to evaluate the effectiveness of the work. Such reflective practice is an important personal exercise for each community member, and sets up the possibility of a reflective community, able to evaluate its effectiveness in both community and ministry.

Our religious tradition has been clear on the importance of individual regular spiritual direction, which offers people the opportunity to evaluate and discuss their spiritual journey and provides a measure of accountability against the criteria laid down for ministry and community life. All Brothers are encouraged to commit themselves to spiritual direction. The use of professional supervision is strongly encouraged as well.

In more recent times, many communities of Religious avail of the services of a facilitator who meets the community on a regular basis to assist in the evaluation and development of community life. Many groups have found that a facilitator provides an external and more objective perspective that can both challenge and affirm the work and life of the community. Christian Brother communities will need the services of outside facilitation for the quality of community life to be evaluated, maintained and enhanced.

It has been found that evaluation of the enterprise and the community will need to take place frequently at the beginning of the establishment of the new communities. This will assist in getting off to a good start.

Why we think this will work

Having good processes of evaluation in place which address all aspects of our lives will help to ensure that the highest standards are being maintained, that people are held accountable, and that success is recognised and affirmed.

The Comparators offered below suggest that evaluation is both essential and effective. They offer different emphases, and focus on different

aspects of community: quality of relationships, open listening and sharing, understanding community dynamics and stages of development, and rituals that celebrate the life of the community. Such structures give confidence that the stated hopes of the community both for itself and its mission are being lived out in reality, and are closely aligned with the vision of the Proposition.

Comparators

[Intentional Communities](#)

The *Intentional Communities Manual*, established by the *Australian National Intentional Communities Conferences & South East Australia Communities Gatherings*, reflects the experience of many community groups that have come together for shared purposes. It makes the following comment from its collective wisdom: “Life is an experiment. And life in community is especially experimental! Communities need regular, structured time for reflection, evaluation and planning. Changes are needed as we learn and grow”. Various websites in other parts of the world indicate that this manual has been widely used around the globe.

[The Foundation for Community Encouragement](#)

The work of this body exists to look at operationalising Scott Peck’s characteristics of communities in community groups. Peck speaks of stages that communities go through in *Community Building* and lists these as: Pseudo-community, Chaos, Emptiness, Authentic Community. The headings indicate the very dynamic nature of community building and interaction. Regular self-evaluation, facilitation and support are needed so that these challenges can be managed effectively and the community not lose focus through misinterpreting normal stages of growth. In fact, the struggles which come from diverse opinions and attitudes are probably more healthy in ultimate community formation than if all community members thought similarly!

[Misean Cara](#)

The funding agency *Misean Cara* has very clear criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the work of organisations. Such criteria could be very helpful in creating similar indicators of effectiveness in Christian Brother ministry. The agency funds the assessments of the projects and sends detailed reports with recommendations to the organisations that initiate

the projects. An important part of the evaluation by *Misean Cara* is that it involves all the stakeholders in giving feedback on the services supplied.

Community-Based Rehabilitation

“Community-Based Rehabilitation” (CBR) was initiated by the World Health Organisation in 1978. It was promoted as a strategy to improve access to rehabilitation services for people with disabilities in low-income and middle-income countries, by making optimum use of local resources. Over the past 30 years through collaboration with other UN organisations, non-governmental organisations and disabled people’s organisations, CBR has evolved into a multi-sectoral strategy to address the broader needs of people with disabilities, ensuring their participation and inclusion in society and enhancing their quality of life.

The section on Evaluation in the CBR Guidelines has a clear outline of what is involved for any charitable organisation working with people with special needs. It creates a good basis for the sort of evaluation required by a community-based venture set up by a Christian Brother community as part of “A Way into the Future”.

All Comparators show that regular evaluation is necessary for healthy judgement of the quality of community life and mission.

ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 22

The Congregation will **attract as new members mature young men** who are enthusiastic to engage in the spiritual search, participate in ministry with poor people, and commit themselves to living in community.

attract as new members mature young men

Why we are saying this

Recent Congregation Chapters have said the following:

- “We will promote vowed membership of our Congregation in whatever ways are available to us” (Congregation Chapter, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1996).
- “Rekindling our efforts to seek new members will in turn transform the heart of the Congregation and help rediscover the precious gift of Brotherhood” (Congregation Chapter, Rome, Italy, 2002).
- “Each community to be open to inviting young people attracted by the charism of Edmund to explore living the vowed life in community” (Congregation Chapter, Munnar, India, 2008).

Despite these exhortations, the quality of our invitations to men, particularly young men, to join us has varied considerably in the different parts of the Congregation.

Brothers must be seen as visibly different in engaging in the new forms of community life and mission among poor people as proposed in the Proposition; the focus of Congregation life into the future becomes clearer and more challenging to potential candidates. Such a way of life is seen as requiring a candidate to have to grow through challenges and difficulties, and is worth devoting one’s life to. It is in the interaction with poor people that the Gospel comes alive in ways that reach the heart of humanity, and the call to brotherhood becomes real.

It makes much sense to invite mature young men to consider the life of a Brother:

- Many are energetic, holding the promise of bringing energy and enthusiasm to the enterprise;

- They may be more willing to take risks and minister at the very margins;
 - Many are fired by a dream, vision, passion and a desire to make a difference;
 - Many are more flexible, adaptable and adjusting;
 - Many seek meaning in their lives and share a strong sense of justice, social and environmental consciousness and human dignity;
- and especially,
- We believe that we have a unique lifestyle to offer to young men: brotherhood in community, ministry with poor people, a spirituality that is relevant in terms of new understandings in cosmology, theology and scripture.

Evidence from a variety of Congregations shows a tendency to require that candidates be at least 21 before they engage in the formal 'novitiate' aspect of training (see Comparators below). Our requirement is that when a man undergoes his formal religious formation (called the "novitiate", a programme over two years), he must be ready intellectually, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually to be able to give the best of himself to the experience.

This requires that he has reached a standard of education where he shows sufficient intellectual capability, has experienced life and relationships to the extent that he has a good sense of his own personality, sexuality, and relational style, and he shows himself to be responsible and strongly disposed to a life of service of people out of the experience he has had of God. Kevin J. McClone, in his article, "Intimacy and Healthy Affective Maturity – Guidelines for Formation" (*Human Development*, Winter, 2009) offers helpful guidelines here. A further aspect of major importance is the ability of the person to have not just adequate, but very good, fluency in the language used in the novitiate. These issues will require some fresh thinking in many parts of the Congregation.

Why we think this will work

Anecdotal evidence from the developing world says that the motivation of young men joining the Congregation is around their zeal for doing something relevant in outreach with poor people. An empirical study in India suggests that motivation around religious vocation is much more complex. A clear result of the study is that those who joined Religious

Life in India at a young age were frequently incapable of making mature choices, and after the experience of religious formation, felt almost universally that they were less mature than their peers outside Religious Life. The conclusion to the study states: “Unless stringent quality control measures are introduced in the selection of candidates at all levels, the Church may soon find itself with a leadership that has lost its credibility” (Paul V. Parathazham, “Vocation and formation of Priests and Religious in India: An Empirical Study”, *Jnana Deepa Pune Journal of Religious Studies*, 3, 2, 2000). This study encourages us to look in new ways at our strategies for promotion of religious brotherhood in the developing world.

With regard to research from the developed world, some relevant information comes from the Georgetown University Research Center USA in its 2009 study of 4,000 young Religious who had entered Religious Life in the previous ten years. 70 per cent had a degree before entering, and 90 per cent had held a job. 73 per cent had attended Catholic schools and 68 per cent had considered Religious Life before the age of 21. 85 per cent were attracted by a community of “joy, commitment and zeal”. 75 per cent felt “a sense of desire for spiritual growth and prayer”. This information suggests that the attraction is there when young people see what they are seeking being lived by a Congregation.

The strong growth in participation of young people in Immersion Programmes, where they become involved with people of different cultures and see first-hand the social structures which perpetuate poverty in the world, indicates that the idealism of young people is real and they are looking for opportunities for expressing it. Aidan Donaldson’s book, *Encountering God in the Margins: Reflections of a Justice Volunteer* offers clear examples of this reality.

The emphases referred to here – the desire of some young people for deeper spiritual life in a healthy community, along with experience of engagement with poor people which places them in challenging and life-changing situations – lead us to believe that there will be attraction for some young people to the new expressions of community and ministry described in the Proposition.

Comparators

[New Monasticism](#)

From a religious perspective, there is a growing body of groups of younger Christian people broadly referred to as “New Monasticism”. They are strongly committed to living with poor people, in community, in simplicity, and from a Christian vision. The kinds of characteristics noted of such groups are: submission to the larger church, living with poor and outcast people, living near community members, hospitality, nurturing a common community life and a shared economy, peace-making, reconciliation, care for Creation, celibacy or monogamous marriage, formation of new members, and contemplation.

This Comparator gives confidence that the possibility of community living among people who are poor provides the opportunity that idealistic young people are seeking in bringing Christianity alive in the world of today and the future. The Proposition is of its nature strongly relevant to such young people if it is lived radically as is intended.

[Marist Brothers](#)

The Marist Brothers state their requirements for those entering their congregation. A candidate needs to be:

- A practising baptised and confirmed Catholic;
- Between the ages of 21 and 40;
- A college graduate (or be in the process of obtaining a degree).

In addition, an individual should possess:

- A desire to know and serve God;
- An ability to live with and get along with others;
- A willingness to develop a prayer life;
- An enthusiasm to serve young people.

To be accepted for Initial Formation, one must be 21 years of age. The stages of the formation process are described as: Accompaniment for Enquirers, Initial Discernment, a Live-in Experience, then formal novitiate.

[De La Salle Brothers](#)

For those considering Religious Life, the following information is offered:

- Duration: Formal training is 36 months after initial contact. This involves processes of getting to know the Brothers, more detailed preparation, and formal novitiate, leading to the taking of vows;
- Entry requirements: Male, Catholic, minimum age 21 years (as a general guideline);
- Pre-requisite studies: Minimum three-year tertiary degree or trade; or significant work experience with/without qualifications;
- Skills: Open to men from a range of backgrounds including teaching, welfare, business, communications, information technology, healthcare, youth ministry, electrical, carpentry, plumbing and hospitality etc.

[Comboni Missionaries](#)

For those who wish to join the Comboni congregation as priests or Brothers, there are similar stages of getting to know the congregation prior to formal novitiate and further professional studies. The age noted of most entering the congregation is in the mid to late twenties. The comment is made that it is more difficult for a person to acquire language skills and adapt to other cultures once he/she turns 30. A further requirement is that candidates study a theology degree in a language different from their home language.

These Religious Congregation Comparators do not indicate success in attracting new candidates, but rather offer a wisdom about the approaches that need to be made to mature young people.

EDMUND RICE NETWORK & VOLUNTEERS

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 23

People from the Edmund Rice Network and other volunteers will be welcome to share the life of these new communities on a short or long-term basis.

People from the Edmund Rice Network and other volunteers

Why we are saying this

The Congregation Chapter in 1996 recognised the emergence, in many parts of the world, of individuals and groups who are inspired by the vision of Edmund Rice. The Chapter stated that this growing movement “has great potential for enabling both Brothers and other followers of Edmund Rice to live Jesus’ vision more fully”.

The Brothers recognise that some of these people, may see the vision of this Proposition as very much in line with their own hopes. The Proposition encourages ERN people who have particular skills and a desire to live in community to be members of the new communities. The Proposition also envisages other people becoming members of the new communities.

The experience of volunteers joining Christian Brother communities in many parts of the world has been mutually beneficial to both volunteers and Brothers. The volunteers often bring youthful energy and commitment to the work and community living. They gain an experience of work with people at the margins and a deepening of their spiritual lives.

to share the life of these new communities

Why we are saying this

People attracted to the Edmund Rice vision may wish for different reasons to live in community with the Brothers. All wish in some way to share in the vision and mission of the Congregation. Some want to deepen their spiritual search with the Brothers. Others may wish to commit for a period of time to an experience of community life. For some, living and working with people at the margins is paramount.

The Intentional Communities Manual stresses the importance of shared values and common vision as the most effective “glue” for the growth of a community.

At the heart of the community are the relationships that are developed, both between community members and with people in the host community.

The induction programme is undertaken by Brothers and lay members alike. Regular facilitation of the community would be expected. Likewise, a debriefing process is needed when a person leaves the community. Such a new model of community like this will mean adaptation on the part of the Brothers as well as on the part of the lay members.

Some of the men who come to live in community may, in time, choose to join the Congregation. Others may seek to be part of a new way of being community, and explore distinct and evolving forms of committed life.

The issue of boundaries is very important. The Mercy Congregation addresses this in the paper “Expanding the Ropes of Your Tent” (Grant & Hill, 2005). They argue that while it is important to keep distinctions between religious and “associates” clear and defined, it is possible to respect boundaries and see these as permeable rather than a wall. Each community will decide on what is required for this balance between shared living and personal space.

There is sensitivity needed to cultural factors associated with men and women living together. Apart from providing the necessary privacy and space for each person, in some cultures mixed gender communities would not be acceptable, so suitable housing arrangements would have to be made.

We believe too that a feminine presence has an important place in the lives of all Brothers. While we believe that there is a great value for some people in living as a mixed-gender community, there is also a value in men living a committed vowed life together.

Openness to new models of community may require not setting too many pre-conditions. Necessary boundaries need to be decided upon, but with the minimum rather than the maximum. Good facilitation is essential, enabling the community to learn from its experience, and work through the inevitable conflicts as they arise. The boundaries should not put

pressure on people to compromise their primary commitments, but be supportive of them.

As with the Brothers in these communities, other potential community members would need to undertake a programme of preparation to ensure that they were suitable for such community living, and that they had clear understandings of the responsibilities of all members in making the community a vibrant and healthy place to live.

short or long-term basis

Why we are saying this

There are different categories of people who may come to the community:

Guest – a friend or family member of one of the Brothers, who may stay for a period of time as a guest in the house;

Resident – a person who lives and works with the community with a short or long-term commitment and is expected to undertake similar responsibilities as other members of the community regarding community life, e.g. hospitality, household upkeep, sharing the spiritual search. The *Intentional Communities Manual* (2001) calls such people “Residents” and they are expected to pay their way in the community.

Short-term implies a commitment of three to six months, perhaps for people who are in a position to take leave from their employment or are between jobs. Such people may be keen to experience an alternative form of living for a short time.

Long-term implies a minimum of one year and may be attractive to people who are considering a life-change or an alternative mode of living, along with an experience of solidarity with poor people. They may have particular skills or qualifications that the community has found are needed in the work at the margins. This commitment would be reviewed after the first year and be flexible around the particular circumstances of each person.

All new members would have a “sponsor” who assists them with their integration into community life, and holds an informal review with them every three months. (*Intentional Communities Manual*, p.54)

Criteria will be established for approval of applicants to join communities so that the understandings of prospective applicants will be in line with the expectations of the community, and that the preparation required of both the applicant and the community will be attended to.

Why we think this will work

We believe that this model of community will work because we have had a number of examples of its working successfully in the last 20 years. Examples include: Kabankalan in the Philippines, where a married couple lived in the community for a year; Timor Leste (East Timor), which has had regular short and long-term volunteers living in community; Friends of Edmund Communities in Queensland, Australia; the current New Orleans Community in USA; a long-term female member of community in New Zealand. While there are challenges in forming such communities, there are also means available to do so, and rich experiences of Christian living for all.

Increasing numbers of people are seeking alternative ways of living in reaction to society's materialism. Others are searching for meaning and community in their lives and sense that traditional religion does not speak to their experience. The vision of the Proposition has the potential to inspire and encourage people to live and work with the Brothers for particular time periods, giving them the opportunity to experience community life and working and living with people at the margins.

“One thing is certain, the Spirit is alive, the call is being heard, and the paradigm is shifting. One knows that it is impossible to reverse a paradigm shift. Institutional Religious Life has experienced a dramatic reduction in numbers of vowed members and at the same time experienced a dramatic increase in associates, in volunteer organisations, in individuals wanting to be connected to the charism of the Congregation” (Grant & Hill, 2005).

The Comparators below give a number of examples, among many, of ways in which people are seeking to live alternative life-styles, by linking with religious congregations for that experience. We believe that this phenomenon is likely to continue to increase, and the Proposition encourages Brothers to be open to new models of community beyond what they have experienced previously.

Comparators

[RNDM Sisters](#)

The Sisters of Our Lady of the Mission have a presence in South-East Asia, India, Africa and Latin America and have similar structures to what we are proposing. Associates who express a desire to be in partnership with them enter a formal process to become part of the RNDM community, without being a vowed member of the Congregation.

[Lasallian Volunteer Programme](#)

This programme offers well-trained volunteers one or more years of service to schools and other aspects of the mission of the De la Salle Brothers to serve poor people, acting out of faith, rooted in the Gospel, and sharing community with the Brothers and other Lasallians.

[Medical Missionaries of Mary](#)

The MMMs have a number of years' experience working with associates and volunteers. Many doctors and nurses have committed themselves to work with the Sisters in ministry in developing countries for specific periods of time. Some choose to live with the Sisters, some stay on the campus in a separate residence and others stay close by in rented accommodation. The Sisters take each person on a case-by-case basis and are flexible around the needs and desires of each person.

TRANSITION SUPPORT TEAM

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 24

A **Transition Support Team** will establish, support, challenge, and review the new communities and their activities on a regular basis.

Transition Support Team

Why we are saying this

Initially, the team of Brothers to lead the implementation of the Proposition will be called the “Transition Support Team” (TST). For the past decade or more the concept of “team” has become very important for our Congregation. We have leadership teams at all levels and formation teams in our novitiates and pre-novitiates. Having authority invested in a team is in line with our notions of “Brotherhood” and at the same time an alternative to the more hierarchical structures of the Church. So it is not surprising at all to see that the Proposition suggests a team of Brothers as the ones responsible for the implementation of this new initiative.

The TST is a leadership team for the whole Proposition. It plans for the initial setting up of the Hubs and their associated new communities, and for their ongoing support and resourcing, as well as inspiration, challenge and review through to 2020. It must also be stated that the future role and structure of the TST beyond then needs to be addressed in conjunction with consideration of the Governance structures of the whole Congregation. With the likelihood of changes into the future to the current Province structures, any future role of the TST will become part of considering the larger scenario.

We feel that the demands of implementing the Proposition will put too much pressure on the current Province Leadership Teams who have more than enough to do at the present moment. It is very clear though that the TST would work closely with Province Leadership Teams and District Leadership Teams. The dynamics of these relationships will be worked out in time with good will on all sides, and a clear understanding by all Teams as to the relative responsibilities of each group.

The TST will have at least six and no more than eight suitably-skilled members. The Congregation Leader, as a member of the Congregation

Leadership Team, appoints the members of the TST, after a suitable process to determine the best people for the Team.

In order to be able to carry out its task of implementing the Proposition, the TST will need sufficient time to orientate itself in the spirituality underlying the Proposition, to develop a team spirit, and to decide how it wishes to live and operate into the future. This is crucial to its whole existence.

The TST, appointed by the CLT and accountable to it, will need to communicate regularly with the CLT, and also to develop a collaborative working relationship with other PLTs, RLT and DLTs.

The qualities for members of the TST will include openness to the emerging spirituality within the Congregation as a result of recent Congregation Chapters. Members of the TST will also need well-developed relational skills, enabling them to be good listeners, empathetic collaborators and sensitive to culture. Pragmatic, practical people with energy and ability to get things done will fit the requirements. We would also seek inspirational figures, confident and creative – people that can lead this enterprise with courage and generosity.

Why we think this will work

Our experience of team leadership in the Congregation over the past ten years or more has been very positive. A team benefits from shared wisdom and sharing the burden of leadership. A team provides a forum for discussion and a sounding board for new ideas. There is emotional support in times of stress, so that fatigue and loneliness can be better addressed.

Research by Ingrid Bens (see Comparator below) over the past fifteen years indicates that those organisations that have operated using teams have been significantly more effective than those that did not. Also, teams that have reached a high level of team effectiveness will have a greater understanding of the dynamics of Community Engagement as a means of working with a host community.

Comparators

[Marist Brothers' *Ad Gentes* Mission Programme](#)

Our study of this programme brings home to us the need for a team of Brothers to oversee the implementation of the Proposition. In conversation, the Marist Brothers acknowledged that they had only one person in the leadership role for their *Ad Gentes* Mission Communities, and were considering the possibility of bringing in another Brother to help with the pastoral visitations. In this sense, they offer more an indication of the need for a team, rather than providing an example of one already in place.

[Ingrid Bens' work on Teams](#)

Ingrid Bens has written extensively on formation of successful teams in workplace environments. In emphasising that setting up of effective teams is challenging, she notes that teams demand the use of a more facilitative leadership style than other work groups. There is also a strong focus on handling group dynamics, different structuring of meetings, and encouragement to team members to promote ever-increasing levels of empowerment in their organisation. When that happens, there is great ownership of the shared venture by the workforce.

[Province Renewal Teams](#)

Current Province Renewal Teams in some Provinces have the role of supporting, inspiring and challenging communities. While the TST also has a part to play in establishment, evaluation and overall management of communities set up through the Proposition, the PRTs offer an example, already in operation, of some of the elements of the TST's role.

FUNDING

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 25

The Proposition will require the **allocation of significant resources** for training, accommodation, and running costs for the community members and their activities.

allocation of significant resources

Why we are saying this

What is envisaged in the Proposition requires a significant re-balancing of existing financial resources available within the Congregation. If the Congregation believes in the Proposition, then the necessary resources will be found. Funding for research, training and ministry will be sourced from outside the Congregation.

Why we think this will work

At the present time, we note the following:

- All Brothers are being supported and, initially at least, the Proposition does not envisage an increase in the number to be supported;
- Some living accommodation suitable for the Proposition exists already. As existing property is being sold, the funds are used to acquire or rent more suitable accommodation;
- Some funding is being sought from outside the Congregation.

Currently, some resources from Congregation funds are used for training and research, although the Proposition does call for new approaches and a variety of different skills. Research and training will still require extra expenditure, and outside funding is accessible through Edmund Rice Development (ERD).

At present, some Provinces are self-sufficient, others are dependent on donor funding, and others are struggling financially. For example, the African Province is funded in part by the Edmund Rice Bicentennial Trust (ERBT) with the shortfall provided by some of the other Provinces and other sources of income. Funds for ERBT originally came from donations from Provinces in Europe and Oceania. These funds are invested and the proceeds from the investments are available for the upkeep of the Brothers in Africa. This funding will continue. Applications can also be

made to donor agencies that already provide funding to enable Brothers to pursue studies and various activities. Africa also receives significant funds from other donor agencies for its various activities with marginalised people. The Congregation has excellent working relationships with donor agencies such as Misesan Cara and Stichting Porticus (see Comparators).

As properties in the established Provinces are no longer required and sold, Provinces are reviewing the best use of the funds that become available. Some of the funds will be required for the care of the Brothers, but other funds may be transferred to areas of the Congregation that are growing. Currently Province Trustees are asked to consider the possibility of transferring 15 per cent of revenue from any sale of property to ERBT.

It is our belief that with strong partnerships with outside donors, further appeals to Edmund Rice Network people and friends of the Brothers globally, together with a redistribution of resources within the Congregation, the funding of the Proposition is possible.

Comparators

[Marist Brothers](#)

Evidence gleaned from a study of the Marist Brothers' *Ad Gentes* Programme suggests that an initiative like the one described in the Proposition can find the necessary funding. The Marist Programme was funded by three of their Provinces and by other Catholic donors in Europe. The Marist Brothers have also established a *Bureau of International Solidarity*, which continues to work with donor agencies. This body operates by accessing external funds for communities and their associated ministries. The Bureau has also established a fundraising campaign, *Sponsor a Brother in Asia*, where Marist ministries throughout the world sponsor a Brother. The Marist Brothers have received a substantial amount (US\$1m) from *Stichting Porticus* for both capacity-building and community development projects.

[Stichting Porticus](#)

This funding body based in the Netherlands provides funds for training for Religious. ERD is working to increase its funding from this source. In the case of the Marist Brothers *Ad Gentes* programme, *Stichting Porticus* more than covered the formation costs.

Salesians

The Salesians have had a long history of successfully appealing to a wide network of support. Their website offers opportunities for people to share in their mission and, in terms of fundraising, to support those in initial training, Priests and Brothers in mission areas, and the many ministry activities in which they are involved.

DEVELOPMENT OFFICES

PROPOSITION: PARAGRAPH 26

The responsibility for seeking funds will be undertaken by **Development Offices**. A key role of these offices will be to develop partnerships with donors to support the thrust of the Proposition.

Development Offices

Why we are saying this

With limited opportunity for salaried employment of Brothers or other in-built financial resourcing, the maintenance of the Brothers in the new communities and the financing of activities with a host community will necessarily depend on external funding. This funding will normally be derived from agencies and bodies interested in supporting development work.

From our experience, and that of others, we recognise the need for a permanent fundraising mechanism or facility. In recent years, the term “Development Office” has become the accepted description for this fundraising organisational arm. The title “Development Office” may vary in some regions of the Congregation, including, for example, Foundation or Trust, but the function and understanding of the role is similar. Funding for the new Brothers’ communities and their activities will therefore be undertaken by such Development Offices, with Edmund Rice Development having a coordination role so that all are working to agreed plans.

These Offices will design and implement a funding strategy and will seek resources from various sources: funding agencies, former and present students of schools, and other bodies, both within and beyond the Edmund Rice Network.

Establishing permanent fundraising facilities invites others to be in partnership with us in our mission. Many ERN people want to connect and be part of what we are doing. Through our different interactions and networks, we invite them to contribute not only through funding, but also through other involvement. By their participation they become advocates as well as funders. We are, in fact, inviting others to be involved in

changing and transforming society, inviting them directly into the mission of the Congregation.

A proposed model for fundraising and development would be as follows: Edmund Rice Development (ERD), a company set up by the CLT and based in Ireland, operates as a key fundraising body for the Congregation. Each of the Provinces of the Congregation has agreed to establish its own Development Office. This would mean Development Offices in Oceania, Africa, North America and India. Development work will go on in Europe and Latin America through other channels and the resources of ERD and North America, respectively. Aims and priorities for each Development Office will be similar, in that there is a dual role: fundraising for both local Province needs and the international Congregation mission. Specific structures will differ and be dependent on different circumstances in each area, and on the different legislation in each jurisdiction with regard to fundraising bodies and taxation concessions. The transfer of funds internationally will occur in accordance with the charitable objects of each Trust.

ERD, while not having any governance responsibility for the Province Development Offices, has a key role in ensuring communication across the Development Offices to enable common themes to be promoted, common targets and strategies set, a consistent message provided, and cooperation established across the different Offices. This coordination would have a truly global Congregation perspective.

The ERD Board recruits staff for the ERD Team, headed by a Chief Executive Officer, who have experience, professional training and competence in development and fundraising. They also appoint a Brother to the ERD Team to keep the Team in touch with Congregation thinking. This Brother needs international experience and the ability to organise networking across the Provinces.

Why we think this will work

From our own experience and that of other congregations, we recognise the effectiveness of a coordinated fundraising approach. This typically takes the form of Development Offices, as above. We believe this has worked for others and it can work for us. The examples cited in the Comparators illustrate this.

Across the Congregation there are different styles of fundraising. Yet there is an advantage in adopting a coordinated, professional and collaborative

approach. This is a strong argument for ERD to take on the coordinating role. ERD, working with the other Development Offices, would help achieve clarity in regard to funding priorities and strategy, and the development of a consistent branding and message for all Congregation fundraising activities. In addition to the development of an overall concept, the appeals, campaigns, websites, designs, branding and communications could all be coordinated and systematically implemented.

This model, then, works towards a global strategy and local implementation. The local Development Office would have close and perhaps personal links to former and present students of schools within and throughout the Edmund Rice Network. Providing local relevant regional involvement and communication through different means of communication (websites, newsletters, events, etc) is important. From a taxation and legislative viewpoint, funding raised in a country must be lodged by a charitable entity in that country in order that the donors may reclaim the tax element of their gift. The Development Offices ensure that necessary financial controls are in place, especially in relation to any legal transfer of funds outside the country of origin.

Comparators

[Marist Brothers' Bureau of International Solidarity](#)

The Marist Brothers have established the *Bureau of International Solidarity*. Aspects of the Bureau's work are to assist administrative units in developing countries to write, propose, present, co-ordinate, and evaluate projects for funding, and to network with NGOs and Marist Province/District Solidarity Co-ordinators.

[Jesuit Refugee Service \(JRS\)](#)

This body has a fundraising capacity that coordinates its appeal across the globe in different languages and appeal audiences. It invites people to support the general operation of JRS, as well as specific targeted campaigns.

[ER Beyond 250 Appeal](#)

The ER Beyond 250 Appeal ran from 2012-13. It was a Congregational approach with each region adopting the Campaign with appropriate

strategies and approaches to suit its area. It used the professional skills of the staff of Edmund Rice Development to ensure that there was coordination, continuity and accountability in what was done. This is a good prototype for the kind of coordination envisaged for ERD with the Province Development Offices into the future. The evaluation of this structure showed that some Province Development Offices, and associated Province Leadership Team members, found it difficult to incorporate the international dimension into their systems, an area which needs further consideration.