

House Reports
from
Lay Communities
In the
English Speaking Group

Rapport de maison
des
Fraternités de Laïcs Cisterciens
Anglophones

Informes Internos
de las
Comunidades Laicas Cistercienses
Anglófonas

The ILC conducts its meetings in English, French and Spanish. When a Lay Community is listed on the ILC website, it chooses which of those three language-groups it wishes to belong to.

The following is a list of House Reports from Lay Communities that have designated themselves as belong to the English-language group. (It does not imply that English is their primary language.)

In addition, a few Lay Communities from other language groups have translated their House Reports into English. Thus, in the following list, you may find a House Report written in English from a Lay Community whose language group is not English.

If you wish to read the House Reports from the other language groups (Spanish and French), you must download and print them separately.

Name of your group: Abdijgroep Koningsoord
Monastery: Abdij O.L.Vr. van Koningsoord
Monastic Liaison: Zr. Gertrudis
Number of years in existence: 4
Current number of members: 12
Contact Person: Pierre Brouns
E-mail address: pbrouns@gmail.com

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

We do not have one. We prepare our meetings by turns. One member coordinates practical activities.

Does your community have written internal guidelines? No, we don't have any.

Does your community have membership fees? No, we don't have.

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

That does not apply.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

Our group discusses the announcement of a new member. We try to find a balance between the number of members of the group (max. 12) and the need of intimacy. Until now all candidates have been accepted, all of them familiar with the abbey.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

Not in a structured way. Mutual contacts and friendship are growing spontaneously in the course of time, during the meetings and also outwards. These contacts and the commitment with the abbey are sufficient to support new members.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

Until now there is no need of a formal confirmation of the natural-grown bond between the members of our group and the abbey.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

The sister who is a member of the group plays an important role as a mediator between

the group and the community. She is a representative of the Cistercian charisma in our days as it is lived in daily life.

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

Never. We have once or two times a year a regional meeting for all the Dutch speaking lay-groups in the Netherlands and in Belgium. At those days we listen to a presentation of a monk or a nun.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

The monastic community is interested in our lives and each of us has a special relationship with some of the nuns.

Where does your community meet? *At the abbey.* How often? *7 times a year.*
For how long? *From 14.00 – 17.30 o'clock.*

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

We meet to share our experiences in discussing one or more chapters of the Rule of Saint Benedict in the context of lay life. A nun, who is a member of the group, provides us with guidance and insight. During the past three years we have been studying the Rule, in the near future we shall also take inspiration from other Cistercian resources and literature (such as the writings of Thomas Merton).

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

To listen to the Spirit and to grow in mutual friendship.

What are some of the strengths of your community?

Friendship and fidelity.

Name of your group: Associates of Assumption Abbey (St. Louis MO)
Monastery: Our Lady of the Assumption Abbey
Number of years in existence: 12
Current number of members: 12
Monastic Liaison: None
Contact Person: Tom Schultz
E-mail address: avaschultz@mac.com

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

We have no set leadership structure. We each take turns leading the monthly meetings.

Does your community have written internal guidelines?

Yes, we have a written charter that lays out expected involvement of members.

Does your community have membership fees? (if yes, specify amount:)

No, we do not have membership fees. For those that do not have computer access to get the monthly newsletter, they are expected to supply self-stamped envelopes. For anything that requires monetary funds, we collect them as we go along.

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

That is a question we have begun to explore this year. Newer members feel they need a way to somehow "catch up" with members who have been in the group longer and have more experience of studying Cistercian spirituality. We have arrived at no explicit process to accomplish that as yet.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

Basically, anyone can join us at any time. We give them a copy of the charter and help them with the current book we are studying. But we have no formal procedure.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

Essentially none, other than the mutual support all members receive. This likely needs to be addressed in a more structured way.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

While some members were in favor of this, the Abbott of Assumption Abbey discouraged it, so we never adopted any process to allow for making any formal commitment to the group or to the Cistercian charism.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

We have no monastic liaison. We had one in the past, but he was only temporarily assigned to the monastery. When he returned to his home monastery, Assumption Abbey had no one to really replace him. Brother Francis of the abbey tries to interact with us whenever we visit the monastery, but his involvement with us is limited at best.

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

At most once a year.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

We pray for and support each other, and we enjoy the abbot's monthly newsletter on the abbey website. But beyond that there is no overt contact or involvement.

Where does your community meet?

We have monthly meetings at a centrally-located church here in St. Louis. Meetings last for 2 hours. We try to have a group retreat at the monastery once each year.

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

Opening prayer, lectio, quiet reflection, discussion of that month's book reading, brief business meeting, praying of Compline.

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

Our small group membership hampers having productive meetings and discussions, since no one is ever there all the time. The dwindling size of the abbey monastic community means little to no support or involvement, even when we visit. And the extreme remoteness of the monastery makes visiting difficult in the first place.

What are some of the strengths of your community?

Our small size makes for a very close, tight-knit group. We make few demands on our members, personally or financially, so membership is easy. And we do not have a lot of group structure that gets in the way.

Name of your group: Associates of Assumption Abbey (Cuba MO)
Monastery: Our Lady of the Assumption Abbey
Number of years in existence: 3
Current number of members: 5
Monastic Liaison: None
Contact Person: Loretta Sellers
E-mail address: dsellers@centurytel.net

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

We have no elections. Leadership responsibilities are shared on a rotating basis each month. We have a consistent leader who keeps us abreast of meetings and retreats or other happenings at the abbey.

Does your community have written internal guidelines? No.

Does your community have membership fees? No.

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

Each month one member researches and reports on some aspect of the Cistercian charism. We also spend time reading and discussing books that relate to Cistercian values, written by Cistercians.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

New members are welcome at any time. When one shows by regular attendance and participation his/her seriousness in becoming an associate, he/she is accepted and is invited to visit the abbey and become acquainted with the community.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

New members are given oral and written instruction regarding the history and rationale of the lay-Cistercian movement and requirements for membership. Introduction to Cistercian monasticism is given to those not familiar with it already and a suggested reading list is given.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

At present no such opportunity exists; however, we would like to develop something in the future if the monastic community approves.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

Father Mark communicates by a monthly insert in a newsletter to the St. Louis group which is shared by our group. He suggests books to be read, encourages retreats at the abbey, and is available for group or individual discussions. He also has a monthly report on the Abbey website about happenings at the abbey.

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

There are no Cistercian nuns in Missouri. We do not usually have the opportunity to have presentations at our local meetings. We do have presentations two or three times a year at the monastery if the group requests it.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

The monastic community is a source of inspiration and encouragement, hospitality and prayer sharing. There is mutual respect and affection.

Where does your community meet? We meet in the sacristy of Holy Cross Church.
How often? monthly For how long? 1 and a half to 2 hours.

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

- Brief reading from scripture or inspirational book followed by 20 minutes of silent prayer.
- Report by a member on some aspect of Cistercian charism.
- Discussion of book currently being read. 4. Social/business concerns.
- Close with recitation of Compline.

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

Beginning meetings on time. Varied schedules and distances, family obligations make it difficult for some. Meeting on a weekday evening is time-restricting but some work on Saturdays and some are adverse to meeting on Sundays.

What are some of the strengths of your community?

Strengths are: determination to try faithfully to attend meetings, a fraternal concern for one another, a real love for the Cistercian community at Ava, a commitment to living the Gospel life as spelled out in the Benedictine Rule as we go about our daily secular lives.

Name of your group: Associates of Mount St. Bernard Abbey
Monastery: Mount St. Bernard Abbey
Number of years in existence: 3
Current number of members: 15
Monastic Liaison: Fr Hilary
Contact Person: Sylvia Mimmack
E-Mail: sylviamimmack@ntlworld.com

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

At present Fr Hilary leads the group; Sylvia Mimmack is secretary term 3 years.

Does your community have written internal guidelines?

Yes, a short introductory guideline.

Does your community have membership fees? No

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

The members are encouraged to read the Holy Rule, the constitutions, the works of some Cistercian Fathers, and modern contemporary authors, such as Andre Louf, Thomas Merton, Michael Casey, Cistercian Studies Quarterly.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

A person who seems keen of joining is approached and discreetly asked if he or she would like to join.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

At present there is no structured formation, but we are working on one.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

After attending four meetings a member is invited to make a commitment to the monastery. This takes the form of a ceremony in the choir stalls, usually after None, when each member makes his or her commitment individually.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

At present Mrs Sylvia Mimmack is secretary and liaison person. She helps to draw up the Agenda for the meetings, and sends it out. She also contacts potential new members. Also the members often contact one another by telephone or email. They also receive a monthly newsletter.

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

At each meeting two or three of the monks present their own experience of monastic life or his own thoughts on some subject of his choice. Thus the members get to know the Monastic Community.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

The Monastic Community seems to have accepted the Associates.

Where does your community meet? At Mount St. Bernard Abbey

How often? 3 times a year

For how long? Friday to Sunday

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

Follow the Divine Office, listen to two or three talks by monks. Discuss ideas; have time for private prayer and meditation.

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

Since we started one member has died; one member is too ill to attend meeting. Another member has not communicated with us at all. Another member has resigned and has said he will not be attending in future.

What are some of the strengths of your community?

A great and growing friendship between members. Gradual increase in numbers. Rich enthusiasm. Love of the Cistercian Order.

Name of your group: Associates of Southern Star Abbey
Monastery: Kopua
Monastic Liaison: Abbot Brian Keogh
Number of years in existence: 4
Current number of members: 33
Contact Person: Peter Stuart
E-mail address: peterstuart@clear.net.nz

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

Coordinator appointed by the abbot, for an unspecified term

Does your community have written internal guidelines? Yes

Does your community have membership fees? No

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

Reading material notified to Associates; annual study program; annual retreat; contact with monastic community and coordinator; three newsletters annually.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

Discernment for a year; followed by personal rule of life sent to coordinator; Admission letter from abbot.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

Information and guidance from coordinator; link with other Associates where local group exists; opportunity to join Associate retreat weekends and study program.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

Answers under Question 5 describe our context.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

Abbot and Associates coordinator set and monitor direction, and are in regular contact.

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

At annual retreat (same retreat offered three times yearly); annual study program via email offered by the abbot

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

Where does your community meet? [Monastery and regional groupings](#)

How often? [Varies, depending on group and occasion.](#) For how long? [ditto](#)

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

[Example of one regional group:](#)

[Afternoon tea; monastery news; pre-arranged study focus; vespers.](#)

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

[Geographically spread throughout New Zealand, with regional groups operating in only 3 areas; difficulty for some in getting to the monastery \(distance and cost\); balancing a range of interest levels among Associates; significant numerical growth \(including enquirers and those in discernment\) within short time; addressing increasing desire for more intentional formation \(program\).](#)

What are some of the strengths of your community?

[Desire of Associates to share Cistercian charism to the extent possible in their varying contexts; significant numerical growth within short time of Associates' existence; Associates' exploration of commitment to monastery and in Associates' church, family, vocational and community contexts; practical assistance given to monastic community by some Associates, where possible.](#)

Name of your group: Associates of the Iowa Cistercians
Monastery: New Melleray and Mississippi Abbeys
Monastic liaison: Fr. Neil Paquette, Sr Gail Fitzpatrick
Number of years in existence: 12
Current number of members: 50
Contact Person: Teresa McMahan
E-mail address: thmcmahan@q.com

Describe your group's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

Guidance is by a council of nine, which includes a nun and a monk. Committed members elect representatives from the On-going Group (who are also all committed members). Elected council members appoint a secretary and a representative of the members in formation. Elections are held every 2 years, with a rotation of 2 or 3 positions being filled. Terms are four years,

Does your group have written guidelines? Yes

Does your group have membership fees? Yes \$75.00

How does your group address the formation needs of your community?

Initial Formation: AIC members participate in a 3 year program of presentations and discussions which are offered monthly. Particular teachings have to be attended prior to eligibility for commitment.

On-going Formation: presentations enable committed AIC members to draw from the riches of scriptural, spiritual, theological, and patristic resources. There is also a strong emphasis on sharing individual talents and abilities in service to the AIC.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

When space is available, those who are interested will be provided information about AIC goals and objectives, and complete a self assessment questionnaire. They are invited to attend Visitor's Day in September. After a mutual discernment they may then participate in Initial Formation for 3 years, complete another discernment process, and then decide if they want to proceed with a Commitment.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

Orientation is held in September each year, in which prospective members are invited to participate in the AIC meeting. In October, they are invited to attend a second orientation with 2 senior members and engage in a discernment process. They are assigned a mentor to "walk" with them, and to answer questions.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

After careful discernment, members create their own individual statements to reflect the particular ways they will be faithful to their calling. These are shared publicly in a ceremony with the AIC, OLM, and New Melleray communities

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

The role of the Monastic liaison is to provide guidance, and support as well as teaching when asked. They serve as models of contemplative spirituality based on the wisdom of Cistercian values and practices.

How frequently do you have monastic teaching presentations at your meetings?

Presentations from monks and nuns are nearly every month

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

Both monastic communities are represented at each monthly meeting, Both communities have been very supportive and welcoming

Where does your group meet? At New Melleray or Mississippi Abbey

How often? Monthly For how long? 9:00 – 3:00

Briefly describe the agenda your group follows at a typical meeting:

Informal gathering, Terce, Announcements and reading from The Rule of Benedict, Lectio, Silent Meditation, Teaching, Sext, Brown-bag lunch with a reading and business meeting, Discussions, None, Closing prayers.

What are some of the current challenges your group is facing?

How to deal with the growing numbers of members and the problems that accompany large groups: physical space, formation issues, manpower, etc.

What are some of the strengths of your group?

We are very fortunate to have two monastic communities to support us, and they are very generous with their time and talents. We are continually “forming” and “reforming” as the needs of our community grow and different issues arise. We have the monks and the nuns to help guide us. Members with enormous commitment to the AIC and Cistercian values

Name of your group: Cistercian Fraternity of Gdańsk
Monastery: Abbaye Notre Dame d'Aiguebelle
Monastic Liaison: Father Michael Ziolo
Number of years in existence: since 2002
Current number of members: 5
Contact Person: Dariusz Dabrowski
E-mail address: ddab@zie.pg.gda.pl

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term)

Coordinator is elected by all members of the Fraternity for a duration of four years, renewable.

Does your community have written internal guidelines? Yes, we have Statutes.

Does your community have membership fees? No.

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

Father Michael sends us letters or we prepare conferences by ourselves on a specific subject (e.g. on Cistercian tradition or according to the Bible).

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

A candidate writes a letter of admission. If the coordinator of the Fraternity or the Abbot, or his delegate, see no obstacle, the candidate can start two years training (for further procedure see point 7).

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

Participation in formal meetings (Holy Mass, prayer, conferences), personal talks.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

At the end of the second year of training, the candidate has to decide if she/he wishes to become a member of the Fraternity. She/he writes a letter of intention and, if accepted by the Fraternity, she/he makes promises, temporary (three years) or definitive.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

Father Michael helps in our formation. He has already sent us about thirty letters on different subjects (e.g. on lectio divina, on silence, on how to read the Rule).

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

Father Michael sometimes comes to Poland so on this occasions he teaches us personally.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

We had our promises in Aiguebelle. We know Fathers and Brothers from the Monastery and they know us. Fathers and Brothers support us by their prayer. We physically feel this spiritual support from Aiguebelle.

Where does your community meet?

We have meetings in our flats and a retreat in the Sanctuary of Pregnant Mary in Matemblewo.

How often?

Four meetings per year (Saturday-Sunday) and a retreat once a year. Also we organize informal meetings.

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

We take part together in the Holy Mass; we prayer together (Vespers, Lauds, adoration); we have two conferences (usually one according to the Bible and one according to the Cistercian tradition); a discussion on organizational matters.

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

We wish we could have more members.

What are some of the strengths of your community?

All of us have made definitive promises.

Name of your group: Cistercian Friends of St. Joseph's Abbey
Monastery: St. Joseph's Abbey
Monastic Liaison: Father Francis Rodriguez
Number of years in existence: 7
Current number of members: 11
Contact Person: Cindy Clark
E-mail address: Crc4xpi@aol.com

Describe your group's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

We are autonomous of St. Joseph's Abbey. Our Lay Community is governed presently by two lay persons with guidance from our monk liaison. There is no election process currently in place.

Does your group have written guidelines?

We have no guidelines to date, only a Statement for Inquirers which outlines what the community is, and expectations for anyone feeling called to this specific Lay Cistercian vocation.

Does your group have membership fees? Yes, \$50 per person annually.

How does your group address the formation needs of your community?

Utilizing Vatican II documents on the Laity, and teachings from a variety of resources on Lectio Divina and in group discussion.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

Inquirers are sent the Statement for inquirers and the Cistercian Lay Contemplative Plan of Life. If they live within the distance limitations and wish to attend meetings, they are invited to attend up to three (3) meetings as an Observer. An application needs to be submitted to enter Candidate Formation. At its conclusion, the candidate makes an Initial Commitment to the Lay community.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

To enhance what is outlined above (#5 response), members may request a mentor. Our monk liaison is also available to each one.

Of members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise), please describe what it entails:

At present, we accept an Initial Commitment, then an annual Re-commitment to the Lay Cistercian Community.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

Father Francis, who is currently appointed by our Abbot, is both a personal and community guide. He participates in meetings by giving a spiritual conference and works close to guide the lay leadership of the community.

How frequently do you have monastic teaching presentations at your meetings?

At each meeting.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

The monastic community will offer Mass on our special Days of Prayer and agree to be part of the retreat team at our annual retreat. Several may attend our annual Picnic. Welcoming relationships are becoming possible with some of the Abbey Community, though these are, for the most part, "from a distance."

Our Father Abbot makes himself available to the lay leader for the purpose of receiving an annual House Report of the community. The report consists of a review of the current year activities, challenges, and Lay Council decisions, and a look forward to the hopes for development and growth of the community. Father Abbot is generous in offering his comments and insights which are then reported back to the Lay Council and the community.

Since the inception of this Lay Community, it was mutually agreed that both Father Abbot and Father Prior would be regularly informed of meeting announcements and community activities. Father Abbot has also remained the contact for requesting Abbey facilities at our disposal for special meetings and the annual picnic.

Where does your group meet? Our community conducts its regular meetings on Abbey grounds, at the retreat house. Special meetings (Advent Day of Prayer, Picnic) are held the Abbey Grange.

How often? Once a month, eleven months of the year.

For how long? Candidate Formation begins at 1 PM. We then join the Abbey Community in the Office of None, conduct our meeting at the retreat house, then conclude with Vespers with the Abbey Community inside the Abbey Church.

Briefly describe the agenda your group follows at a typical meeting:

Announcements (we're Catholic after all!) followed by an reflection from the Rule of St. Benedict. We move from Lectio Divina to a conference/discussions led by lay leadership (at this time), and a conference by our monk liaison 9or another monk from the Community) We close with the Abbey Community at Vespers.

What are some of the current challenges your group is facing?

At this particular time, an honest discernment by newcomers, individuals in Initial Commitment helping in the work of the developing community.

What are some of the strengths of your group?

There is a core of faithful members who are sincere about deepening their growth and understanding of our Cistercian identity.

Name of your group: Cistercian Lay Contemplatives
Monastery: Mount St. Mary's Abbey
Monastic Liaison: Sr. Maureen
Number of years in existence: 9
Current number of members: 24
Contact Person: Cecilia Llama
E-mail address: jcrlam@hotmail.com

Describe your group's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

We have no formal elections or formal leadership structure. Together with our monastic liaison, Sr. Maureen, we decide as a community the ongoing direction of the group. The lay members facilitate communications with email/telephone contact among the group and with the sisters.

Does your group have written guidelines? No.

Does your group have membership fees? No

How does your group address the formation needs of your community?

Our group focuses on ongoing formation for all members rather than on a highly developed initial formation program. Newcomers have a year of initiation that is described in question #5. Our ongoing formation has involved four courses given in cycles which include: monastic practices/the Cistercian order; thoughts (using the book Thoughts Matter as our guide); prayer and the psalms.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

New members meet separately with a lay subgroup for approximately four times over a one year period. During these meetings the newcomers are introduced to Lectio Divina, the Rule of St. Benedict and Cistercian practices. After one year the new members are invited to join the full group meetings and retreats.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

Orientation and support are provided initially as noted above. We are a mutually supportive community so that as needs arise whether expressed by newer members or more established members, individuals or the community as a whole respond as seems appropriate.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

We make no promises or formal commitments. We are distinctly not a third order – rather the focus of our community is learning, living, praying and loving in Cistercian spirituality that is supportive of our primary vocations as wives, husbands, parents, aunts, siblings, and professionals in many different fields.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

Sr. Maureen is our leader and spiritual guide. The monastery community provides us with much support – three sisters are officially liaisons led by Sr. Maureen with Sr. Marcia and Sr. Luann. In addition, other members of the community assist with conferences and participation in our retreats. The sisters provide educational presentations – for example, currently we are studying the Psalms based on Sr. Maureen’s book. Sr. Maureen meets with each member once a year in a private meeting to maintain a sense of where we are in our individual spiritual lives as well as within our communal spiritual lives.

How frequently do you have monastic teaching presentations at your meetings?

Monastic teaching presentations take place monthly at regular meetings and at our retreats

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

The relationship between the communities is warm, loving and mutually supportive. The community allows us to assist in support in their industry, in hosting an event for the sisters once a year, as they support us in learning to live Cistercian values and in their prayers. We are invited to share in monastic events such as funerals and Solemn Profession ceremonies.

Where does your group meet?

The group meets at the abbey’s retreat house.

How often? **Monthly** For how long? **Approximately 2.5 hours**

Briefly describe the agenda your group follows at a typical meeting:

- A. Pray office of None.
- B. Pray Lectio Divina and share insights.
- C. Presentation of monastic teaching.
- D. Business agenda
- C. Fellowship.

What are some of the current challenges your group is facing?

The biggest challenges include:

- A. How to handle additional members.
- B. Whether to add more structure
- C. How to continue our growth into a more cohesive community.

What are some of the strengths of your group?

The major strengths of our group are:

- The maturity level of its members
- The core members have been involved for 9 years
- Deep sense of friendship and mutual respect with the sisters

Name of your group: Cisterciënzer Groep Sion
Monastery: Abbey of Sion, Netherlands
Monastic Liaison: Br. Paulus van Bavel ocso
Number of years in existence: 6
Current number of members: 25
Contact Person: Maria van Mierlo, chairwoman
E-mail address: info@mariavanmierlo.nl

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

We are an officially registered association with notarial executed statutes, an annual general meeting, and an elected board of four members and one of the monks. Members of the board are chosen for a period of three years. One committee is responsible for the contents; small committees are formed for practical purposes. All administration is done by members.

Does your community have written internal guidelines?

We are working on them! A first draft has been completed recently (the statutes of our association are merely administrative).

Does your community have membership fees? Yes (if yes, specify amount: € 25,00)

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

They participate in a program for novices, written by father abbot. The program lasts 1,5 year. Recently we started a monasticat of 2-3 years in which presently all members (except novices) participate.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

Candidates first visit the 'guest group' several times, where they do lectio divina, some reading and meditation. After three or four times, they can visit the novitiate.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

In a meeting with one of the members, new members receive an introduction to the novitiate and its course of lessons. Some members have had a training by one of the monks in accompaniment. Each novice is accompanied by one of them.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

The novitiate closes with a small ceremony in which all have the opportunity to express in their own words their commitment. The monasticat will end up the same way. In December 2007 for the first time one of our members is going to make a more formal commitment by making a private vow in presence of the chairwoman and the abbot.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

Except communication between group and abbey, he is also novicemaster of the group. The abbot is also 'liaison', being member of the board. He also teaches the monasticat.

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

Each month: a session of the novitiate/monasticat. Once a year we invite a guest speaker, who may be monk or nun.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

The monastery and we, as an association, are independent from each other. The abbey and we chose for this in the hope to develop an authentic cistercian lay spirituality. For formation we still feel dependant from the abbey.

Where does your community meet? *In guestrooms of the abbey.*
How often? *once a month* For how long? *one day.*

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

09.45 terce / 10.00 separate meetings of monasticat and novitiate / 12.15 sext / 12.30 lunch + break / 13.00 plenary session, including lecture and none / 15.45 closing ceremony

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

We are growing very fast. A group of 25 people needs more 'structure' than a starting group of three or four persons. The board has written a first draft of internal guidelines, but it seems to take a long process before the group can accept something like that.

What are some of the strengths of your community?

- We really feel that we are growing in love for each other and God above all. Being members of the group, we all are walking on the same way, and little by little we really learn from each other during this ongoing process.
- Our independence as described under (10) is very important to us.
- Our group can be joined by every true God-seeker, independent from his/her own religion.

Name of your group: Conversi: an On-Line Community
Monastery: New Melleray, Our Lady of the Mississippi
Monastic Liaison(s): Br. Cyprian Griffith(NM), Sr. Louise Burnard
(OLM)
Number of years in existence: 3
Current number of members: 50
Contact Person: Ven. Peter Zimmer
E-mail address: plzimmer@telus.net

Describe your group's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

Presently there is an Administrator, appointed by AIC, and four members of Council, who were chosen by lots.

Does your group have written guidelines? Yes

Does your group have membership fees? Yes US\$75.00

How does your group address the formation needs of your community?

We require a three year formation period during which members are required to complete 18 formation topics selected and provided by monks or nuns from one of our two monasteries, or by a member of AIC.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

There is an application form (attached). Upon receipt of the completed form the administrator sends copies to all members of council, for discussion (online/asynchronous). If the application is approved, the applicant is invited into the on-line guest house, which has some, but not all of the resources available to members. One council member currently serves as 'guestmistress' to answer questions and otherwise help guests discern whether Conversi is a good fit for them. Presently membership is limited to fifty (50) active members and there is a waiting list for entry. When space comes available, and on a quarterly admissions basis, the applicant at the top of the guest house list becomes a member.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

A good and awkward question, which has recently been asked by a number of newer members. (See # 13 below)

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

Presently none of our members has been active long enough to complete the required eighteen topics; however as that time is coming, we are currently working on what a formal commitment and promises might entail.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

They provide guidance and support to the council, and serve as our liaison to the monasteries.

How frequently do you have monastic teaching presentations at your meetings?

Every month.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

Generally quite good. It is evolving, as they become more aware of us as a related but separate entity from AIC, and as they see us in person through our annual Conversi retreats, and on an individual basis, as many of us do take personal retreats and/or stays in the NM monastic enclosure.

Where does your group meet? In cyberspace...

How often? It varies – daily (journals. Forums), weekly (journals/forums), monthly (formation topics discussions). Never as a full group.

For how long? Regarding formation topics, 1 hour as a 'live chat' (synchronous chat room), with 3 time options within the week of meeting, to allow for time zone differences.

Briefly describe the agenda your group follows at a typical meeting:

1. Members are asked to begin their session with prayer.
2. The facilitator begins discussion by asking for general impressions, etc. of the talk for the month.
3. As particular issues or questions arise the conversation becomes more focused.
4. At the end of an hour the meeting closes.
5. Over the next few weeks people are encouraged to reflect more deeply in the Forum.

What are some of the current challenges your group is facing?

Perhaps we grew too fast. It is difficult to develop relationships with fifty people, and newer members are feeling a bit lost. Our council is trying to address this: (a) by live in-person discussion at our annual retreats; (b) in council discussions (live, through Skype),

and (c) through opening asynchronous discussions in our Conversi journals, where members can and do post, and others reply. We are learning a lot in particular through this last format, where anyone can enter in the conversation and where the discussions stay as current as can be.

What are some of the strengths of your group?

Being an on-line group has proven to offer many advantages.

- The asynchronous nature of meetings allows individuals time for deeper reflection.
- It enables individuals to participate as often as they wish.

Being in a direct filial relationship to AIC, and two monastic communities provides rich support and guidance.

Name of group:	Fraternity of lay Cistercians
Monastery:	Our Lady of Koutaba -CAMEROUN
Years of existence:	five years
Monk in charge of liaison:	Father Georges Delomier
Number of members:	14 (fourteens)
Contact :	Monastère de Koutaba
E-mail	koutabamonastere@yahoo.fr

Describe the directional organisation of your group (method of election, length of mandate, etc.)

The fraternity of lay Cistercians affiliated to our lady of Koutaba, Cistercian monastery, was created in the year 2003, with Christians who for so many years assiduously frequented the monastery who moreover expressed the desire to go further in the knowledge and the practice of the Cistercian charisme. At the initiative of the then superior, the first group of seven members of whom six were married (three couples) was formed, they soon started drawing up its statutes. The fraternity is directed by a committee composed of a president, a secretary reporter in charge of keeping the documents, an accountant treasurer, an assistant secretary in charge of secessions and retreats, a commissioner of accounts who is equally in charge of discipline. It also has a chapter of seven members, one of whom is a monk representing the monastery. The general assembly made up of all the members of the fraternity has sovereign powers.

Have your group drawn an internal regulations?

We have status legalised by at the senior divisional office of Foumban.

Has your group a fixed amount of subscription?

In other to meet with the needs related to the functioning of the group, an annual subscription of 25000 FRS CFA per member was fixed. It is equally provided for the possibility to organise punctual feasts in case of some important events.

How are formation needs organised in your group?

Formation is assured by the monks especially on the Cistercian charisma and values as well as on the role of Saint Benedict. The Father superior and his prior as well as visiting or invitees, discharge with joy this task. Moreover the retired Bishop of the Diocese of Bafia, in the name of his Lordship Athanasius Mballa proposed his contribution.

What procedure have you adopted for the integration of new members?

Admission in the fraternity is done by successive steps; firstly the aspirant needs to have a "godfather", secondly is admitted as an observer, then as a postulant for two

years followed by the novitiate which last four years, at the end of which you can make simple vows followed by final vows.

How do you help the new members in their orientation?

It is in the spirit of fraternal charity that we precede on the discernment and admission of a new member. We listen to his personal motivations, the godfather as well as the entire group takes him in charge, moreover the opinion of the monastery is always asked for.

If the members of the group have the possibility to make engagements or promises could you describe what it involves?

Until now only two couples have had to make engagements for the entry into the novitiate. It's a decisive step which implies more fidelity in the following of Christ. The ceremony took place in the monastery and was presided over by the superior in the presence of the entire monastic community. A copy of the role of St Benedict was handed over to each postulant

What is the role of the accompanying monk?

He assures the indispensable role of the spiritual guide to the group, aids and forms the members on discernment, progressively introduces the group in the spirituality and the love of Cistercian values. He encourages the growth of the soul of the group, moderates and tempers differences and conflicts

At what frequency do monks give magistral lessons during your meetings?

About four lessons per meeting and we have four meetings annually excluding the novices who have more formation session with magistral lessons.

What type of relation has the entire Monastic community with your group?

The entire monastic community looks upon the group as real brothers and sisters. We do feel fully associated and concerned by the life of the monastic community, so do we share it's joys and sorrows as well as it's projects. They on the other hand do collectively and individually carry us in their prayers, we are in the course of building a community of life together in the respect of our different states, us as the laity and they as religious, both sharing the same Cistercian charisma.

Where, does your group meets, at what frequency and for what length of time.

At the monastery of Koutaba, four times a year: at Easter, the feast of St Bernard, the feast of Christ the King and a session for children during school holidays.

Briefly give a model description of your meetings.

Offices, studies/teachings, lectio-divina (spiritual reading), sharing, chapter meeting, rosary, community prayer;

What principal obstacles or difficulties do you have to face?

Cohesion and life in group,
Divergences of appreciation for the admission of new members,
Welcoming of non-catholic members.

What are the strong points of your group?

Charity, sharing, mutual help between members and with the monastic community. we took an active part during the marriage of one of the members, actively present for the monastic profession of one of the monks, for the silver jubilee of the Father superior as well as the for the death of Brother Joseph in the monastery and the burial of members of our families. With the grace of god we continue our adventure faithful to the call of Christ.

Name Of Your Group: Fr Ojefua Lay Cistercians of Illah
Monastery: Holy Cross Cistercian Abbey, Illah
Number Of Years In Existence: 1
Monastic Liaison: Rev Fr Ogechukwu Ibe
Current Number Of Members: 8
Contact Person: Priscilla Osadebe
E-mail Address: illahlaycist@yahoo.com

Describe your group's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

By election in the presence of our Prior (Advisor) Rev. Fr. Ogechukwu Ibe, OCSO, and for five years

Does your group have written guidelines? No

Does your group have membership fees? Yes, N50

How does your group address the formation needs of your community?

Through monastic Prior (or Advisor) Fr. Ogechukwu Ibe

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

We let the new member know the involvement and the spiritual needs of the lay Cistercians for the person to know if he/she can cope.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

Not yet

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

Not yet, we are just beginning

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

Advisor: Fr. Ogechukwu Ibe
Spiritual Director: Fr. Bernard Okechukwu
Teacher: Br. Cyril Ejezie

How frequently do you have monastic teaching presentations at your meetings?

Every month (last Sunday of the month) and the Prior (Advisor) takes care of that

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

We are recognized and supported by the Prior Rev. Fr. Ogechukwu Ibe

Where does your group meet?

At the monastery

How often?

Once a month

For how long?

8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Briefly describe the agenda your group follows at a typical meeting:

We follow the monastery's timetable

What are some of the current challenges your group is facing?

We are trying to grow

What are some of the strengths of your group?

We are supporting ourselves with prayers and trying to follow the monastic life

Name Of Your Group: Fr Tansi Lay Cistercians
Monastery: Our Lady Of Mount Calvary Cistercian Abbey
Number Of Years In Existence: Thirteen Years
Monastic Liaison: Rev Fr Bertrand M.C Okoh
Current Number Of Members: Thirty
Contact Person: Bro Hyacinth Mary Onyebu
E-mail Address: Laycistercianawhum@yahoo.Com

Describe Your Community's Leadership Structure: (election Procedure, Length Of Term, Etc.)

Election Of Coordinator By Secret Ballot With 75% Votes Of Professed Members. Other Officers Same Secret Ballot But With Simple Majority. Tenure Of Office Three Years. But Can Be Re-elected For Three Times Same Office. Leadership Structure Is From Abbot To Chaplain, Coodinator, Council, Executive, And The Lay Cistercian Community.

Does Your Community Have Written Internal Guidelines? Yes

Does Your Community Have Membership Fees? No

How Does Your Community Address The Formation Needs Of Your Community?

We Have Formation Master And Mistress With Three Other Formators Including Our Chaplain Who Give Formation Lectures On Various Aspect Of Our Life And Needs. Also Books On Monastic Spiritualities Are Recommended For Members Lectio Divina.

What Is The Procedure For Accepting New Members Into Your Community?

Letter Of Application From The Intending Person Then Application Form Which Requires Personal Information With Letter Of Recommendation From Ones Parish Priest Or Any Catholic Priest As Well As From Spouse, Parents Or Guardian As The Case May Be. If Satisfied, He Or She Is Admitted As Postulant For One Year, then Novice Two Years First Profession Renewed For Six Years Then Final Profession.

What Kind Of Orientation And Support Is Provided For New Members?

Counseling, Formation Lectures On Postulancy With Provision Of Rule Of St Benedict Breviary For Divine Office Etc

If Members Have The Opportunity To Make A Formal Commitment (or Promise) Please Describe What It Entails:

It Means That The Member Is Now A Full Lay Cistercian Member Having Passed Through Postulancy And Novitiate

What Is The Role(s) Of Your Monastic Liaison?

He Is An Immediate Link Between Us And The Monastic Community. He Gives Many Lectures On Monastic Life And Culture. Gives Spiritual Guidance. Hears Our Confession. Etc

How Frequently Do You Have Teaching Presentations By Monks Or Nuns At Your Meetings

Two Times On The Average. Always Available On Request

What Is The Relationship Of The Monastic Community As A Whole To Your Community?

Very Cordial, Friendly And Encouraging.

Where Does Your Community Meet? At The Monastery

How Often? Three Times In A Year For How Long? Three Days

Briefly Describe The Agenda Your Community Follows At A Typical Meeting:

We Follow Our Monastery Time Table As Much As Possible So As To Attend All Their Divine Office Prayers. Also Hold Community Meeting, Do Station Of Cross On Friday. Have Free Time For Members To Relax Times For Conference And Spiritual Talk And Counseling.

What Are Some Of The Current Challenges Or Difficulties Your Community Is Facing?

Money To Meet Up Our Finacial Demands. Enough Accommodation For Members During Retreats And Meetings. Etc

What Are Some Of The Strengths Of Your Community?

Ability To Assist The Community In Their Needs And At Profession As Much As We Can. Also Solely Fund Expenditures Of Our Profession And Reception Of Guest. Assisting Members In Need As Much As We Can.

Name of your group: Genesee Lay Contemplatives
Monastery: Abbey of Our Lady of the Genesee
Monastic Liaison: Fr. Francis Steger
Number of years in existence: 14
Current number of members: 34
Contact Person: Margaret Mary Weider
E-mail address: margaretmary31@hotmail.com

Describe your group's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

Council consists of 9 members including Fr. Francis. 4 are appointed by Fr. to perform various roles. 4 are elected by the general membership: 2 for 2 years, 2 for 1 year renewable. The Chairperson is chosen by the Council. Council meets monthly with additional meetings as needed. Council reports monthly to the general membership. Council is responsible for developing all aspects ie: admissions, formation, scheduling etc.

Does your group have written guidelines?

Yes. We have our GLC Way of Life, Admission Procedures. Both are on the Genesee web page.

Does your group have membership fees?

Yes, \$75.00, unless this presents a hardship and then all or part can be waived. We will also have to ask for contributions to cover Regional and International Meetings. Members who come a distance also make a standard donation for their overnights.

How does your group address the formation needs of your community?

We have 2 sessions during our monthly gathering day that all members attend. One is a conference given by Fr. Francis based on an assigned reading the group has done. The second in a presentation given by 2 senior GLCs or 1 GLC and 1 monastic on a topic relating to The Rule of St. Benedict, the Cistercian Charism/history, or other topic relating to monastic life.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

Inquirers receive an information packet including The Way of Life, the nature of the commitment (what is expected of a GLC), Admissions Procedure explained and an Application. In addition to the completed application, we ask for 2 references familiar with the spiritual life and practice of the applicant. The applicant is interviewed by the Admissions Coordinator and the Application is reviewed by the Admissions Coordinator and the Fr. Francis (GLC Spiritual Director).

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

New members have separate formation sessions for the first 4 months (Jan-April) which give a general orientation to The Way of Life, RB, Cistercian Charism, Lectio Divina, Liturgy of the Hours etc. New members are given GLC Guardian Angels to assist with questions and following the days schedule.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

After 2 ½ years of initial Formation and regular attendance, a candidate writes a letter to the Spiritual Director requesting to make the GLC Act of Commitment. This is a non-canonical promise to God in the presence of the GLC Community and the Abbot. At this time the member receives the GLC Medal of St. Benedict. This Act of Commitment is made annually thereafter.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

The monastic liaison acts as the Spiritual guide for the group and for individuals seeking direction. He sits on the Council as a guide/advisor in things relating to monastic life and the GLC as it relates to the Monastic Community.

How frequently do you have monastic teaching presentations at your meetings?

Monthly, once sometimes twice.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

The Monastic Community as a whole leads us by their example. They inspire and support us by their prayer and fidelity to their way of life that includes silence, solitude, simplicity of lifestyle, humility, obedience, stability, respectful for work and hospitality. Some of the monks are comfortable with sharing with us during our monthly meetings and/or annual retreat and have been very generous with us in that way. In 1999 the community voted on their continued approval of the GLC.

Where does your group meet?

How often? [Monthly](#) For how long? [8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.](#)

Briefly describe the agenda your group follows at a typical meeting:

[Terce/Group Lectio/Personal quiet time/Conference by Spiritual Director/Sext/Lunch with Table reading followed by personal conversations/None/Formation session/Personal quiet time/Mass with the monastic community/Vespers.](#)

What are some of the current challenges your group is facing?

[Our Formation Program is in a constant process of formation. We are working on refining and defining both the method and the content of our instruction. We also need to define the various roles and tasks of the Council members. Our days together are so full it is hard to keep communication lines open and clear when we are also encouraging an atmosphere of quiet.](#)

What are some of the strengths of your group?

[Our group has a very good spirit. Members care about each other in a gentle, supportive and yet not intrusive way that encourages growth and gives each the space needed to grow even within a very structured program. Although we meet only once a month, there is a bond of love and prayer that keeps us together so that when we are together it is as if we had not been apart. Everyone is very grateful to be a part of this lay community associated with this Monastic Community.](#)

Name of your group: Glencairn Associates
Monastery: St Mary's Abbey, Glencairn, Ireland
Number of years in existence: 6
Current number of members: 11
Monastic Liaison: Sr Lily
Contact Person: Jean Kilcullen
E-mail address: jeankilcullen@eircom.net

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

Glencairn Associates met on a very informal basis three times a year up to 2007. The first co-ordinator was appointed in April 2007 by the Abbess for a period of two years.

Does your community have written internal guidelines? No, not yet

Does your community have membership fees?

We contribute 20 euro to the sisters each time we meet towards the cost of our Day of Contemplation.

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

We have no structure for formation as yet.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

We have no formal procedure for accepting new members as yet.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

None

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

No formal commitment is required or possible.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

The monastic liaison sister meets with the coordinator to agree dates of meetings and is the link with her Abbess and community. It is quite informal.

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

We would usually have an input from one of the nuns at each of our Days of Contemplation.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

The relationship has improved in the last twelve months and is quite informal. We usually meet for coffee and a chat as a start to our Day of Contemplation. Individual associates have built up friendships with some of the sisters over the years.

Where does your community meet? In the monastery

How often? 4 times a year For how long? 10 am to 4 pm on a Saturday.

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

10 am Meet Community for coffee
10.30 Input from Abbess or other nun
11.30 Lectio Divina
12.40 Divine Office
13.00 Lunch
14.00 Private prayer time
15.00 Discussion of RB
16.0 Eucharist

Those who wish stay on for supper and Vespers.

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

I would see the main challenges for the coming year are the structures and formation for the current group of Associates. We also need to decide on how the group will accept new members.

What are some of the strengths of your community?

We are diverse group of lay women and men who each bring their own gifts to the group. There is a huge amount of experience and spirituality that we have not yet tapped into but we would be hopeful we may begin to share at a deeper level in the future.

Name of your group: Lay Associates of Bethlehem Abbey
Monastery: Bethlehem Abbey, Portglenone
Number of years in existence: 7 years
Current number of members: 12
Monastic Liaison: Dom Celsus Kelly
Contact Person: Bridie Quinn
E-mail address: bridieq@hotmail.com

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

We have a core group of 3 people elected by the associates. They meet with the Abbot each month prior to the group meeting to arrange an agenda. No length of term has been specified.

Does your community have written internal guidelines? No

Does your community have membership fees? No

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

These needs are addressed by the example of the community, by regular appropriate teaching and by keeping in touch with what is current on the website.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

An existing member approaches new members. They are invited to attend the monthly meeting; they are warmly welcomed and encouraged to stay.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

We have no specific support structure in place. A copy of the Rule of St Benedict is given to every new member and they are advised of the daily spiritual exercises recommended to members.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

We have not yet undertaken a formal commitment (or promise).

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

The monastic liaison welcomes members to Vespers, prays with and for the community, presents a teaching at each meeting, assists with the preparation of the agendas and assists in arranging an annual retreat for members.

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

We have a talk given each month by the Abbot. Priest's who give retreats to the monastic community also gives talks to the members.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

The group has an excellent relationship with the monastic community. They find them friendly, helpful and accepting.

Where does your community meet? We meet in the monastery Guest House.

How often? Monthly For how long? 2hrs minimum

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

Vespers, Silent Prayer, Opening Prayer, minutes of previous meeting, correspondence, website update, teaching, any other business and Compline.

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

Recruitment

What are some of the strengths of your community?

Good fellowship. Good relationships. Sound teaching. Unity

Name of your group: Lay Cistercians of Gethsemani Abbey (LCG)
Monastery: Gethsemani Abbey
Monastic Liaison: Fr. Michael Casagram, Br. Paul Quenon
Number of years in existence: 18 Years
Current number of members: 169
Contact Person: Bob Siegel
E-mail: bobdee8@chartermi.net

Describe your group's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

Our corporate group is the Advisory Council with representation from each of the 8 communities, OH(2), Mi, KY, TN, IL, PA, IN,. We have three officers "Coordinator, Secretary, Treasurer" All of the members are elected annually.

Does your group have written guidelines?

We have National guidelines for mentoring, formation, and "the Plan of Life", as well as others. They are on our web page. <http://laycisterciansofgethsemani.org/>

Does your group have membership fees? (if yes, specify amount:)

Yes it is pretty much a free will offering though we do recommend \$10. The local Communities do as they see fit, some have a treasury and some do not.

How does your group address the formation needs of your community?

We have a 2 year mentoring period for new members and a "formation" document for ongoing formation. It is up to the local community to organize their own formation process.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

The application is available on our web page, it is sent to Bob Siegel who does the first review. If all is well it then goes to the appropriate local community leader who will then get the person into the mentoring process.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

The new members are contacted by Bob and then the community leader and then they are immersed into the community and are provided with a specific mentor.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

Generally the formal commitment is made at the abbey during our annual LCG retreat. For those members who are unable to attend the retreat there will usually be a Local Community formal commitment service.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

Both Br. Paul and Fr. Michael are members of the advisory council and guide us in sustaining our Cistercian character. They are our contact with the Abbot and the Brothers. They provide some guidance and spiritual support regarding the charism and wishes of the abbey. The monastic liaison does NOT govern the LCG, and is not responsible for the day-to-day running of the LCG. Because the abbey has limited resources, the LCG is lay run, and only really appeals to the monastic liaison when there are questions.

How frequently do you have monastic teaching presentations at your meetings?

Usually at every local meeting, and certainly at the annual retreats.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

Our contact with the community is formally through Br Paul and Fr. Michael but with the number of members we have there is a wide, deep and loving relationship with the community. While the relationship between the monastic community and the LCG community is still developing, we are in continuous dialog. In recent years, the abbey's support for the LCG has grown tremendously. They have increased their communications with us, attended our LCG Advisory Council meetings, welcomed us for meetings at the abbey, and pray for us.

Where does your group meet? How often?

The Advisory council meets 2 a year for a weekend, and the individual communities usually meet once a month for different lengths of times, sometimes a weekend sometimes 4 hours, etc.

Briefly describe the agenda your group follows at a typical meeting:

Community meetings are usually prayer, Psalms, lectio, centering, teaching general discussion and a lot of dialogue.

What are some of the current challenges your group is facing?

In general managing the size and getting everyone into community. This is true of the corporate leadership and the small communities. The communities are split according

to state and some states are large with many members and develop satellite communities,

What are some of the strengths of your group?

The devotion and commitment of the members to this Cistercian life commitment. There is a strong support to make it work and let the Holy Spirit do what the Holy Spirit wants to do. Another strength is the love and support we receive from the Abbey.

Name of your group: Lay Cistercians of Holy Cross Abbey
Monastery: Holy Cross Abbey
Monastic Liaison: Fr. Joseph Wittstock
Number of years in existence: 10
Current number of members: 15
Contact Person: Maureen Normann
E-mail address: mz.normann@verizon.net

Describe your group's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

The Lay Cistercian Council and its Dean are elected by Professed Lay Cistercians (known also as Chapter Members) annually. All Professed appear on the ballot. Once the five-member council is elected, a second election is held to choose one of those elected to serve as Dean. All terms are for one year. The council meets monthly to serve the needs of the community. The Dean serves as the designated representative of the Lay Cistercians of Holy Cross Abbey and is the liaison with the Abbot and Monastic Spiritual Advisor.

Does your group have written guidelines? Yes, we have Constitutions and Statutes.

Does your group have membership fees? Yes (if yes, specify amount: \$30, annually)

In the event of hardship, this can be waived. We also accept donations from anyone who wants to give more.

How does your group address the formation needs of your community?

The initial formation period lasts about 4 years, after a 4-month Observership. A Coordinator of Inquirers assists persons seeking information about the LCHCA and Observers. At least one professed member serves as a formal support and guide to the Postulants and Novices. Our Monastic Spiritual Advisor helps to shape this process of formation, which continues after profession and as long as one is a Lay Cistercian.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

Observers are welcomed every September and may choose to enter the one-year Postulancy. Mutual discernment takes place annually beginning with the Postulant's request to enter the three-year Novitiate. These annual requests must be affirmed by two-thirds of the professed members.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

They receive the Constitutions and Statutes, Formation Guidelines, Reading List, etc. Their Coordinator is available to answer any questions or concerns. Observers attend

monthly meetings, participate in daily prayer, attend Novitiate instruction with the Monastic Spiritual Advisor, Chapter Member teachings, and assigned book discussions.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise), please describe what it entails.

At the conclusion of the Novitiate, the Novice discerns whether to request to make promises or to leave the community. If the request to make promises receives the support of two-thirds of the professed members, the novice makes the promise of stability, obedience, and conversatio morum in the presence of the Abbot, Dean, Lay Cistercians and monastic community during the annual community retreat. At the same time, those already professed re-affirm their promise. I, N., promise my stability, fidelity to the Lay Cistercian way of life, and obedience according to my state in life, under the Rule of Saint Benedict, Abbot, and in accordance with the Constitutions and Statutes of the Lay Cistercians of Holy Cross Abbey. I do this before God and all his saints, in this Abbey of Our Lady of the Holy Cross of the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance, constructed in honor of the Blessed and ever Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and in the presence of Dom Robert Barnes, abbot of this monastery, N., Dean of the Lay Cistercians of Holy Cross Abbey, and all the brethren.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

The formation of the Lay Cistercians is guided by a Monastic Spiritual Advisor provided by the Abbot. We are fortunate that Father Joseph Wittstock has been our Monastic Spiritual Advisor since 2000. We are aware that it might not always be possible for the Abbot to provide us with this assistance. In such a case, formation would continue under the guidance of the Abbot and the Lay Cistercian Council.

How frequently do you have monastic teaching presentations at your meetings?

Father Joseph provides monthly teaching to the Novices & Postulants in the morning and to the Professed in the afternoon.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

As a result of a formal vote by the Conventual Chapter of monks on Trinity Sunday 2006, the Lay Cistercians are formally recognized and have a relationship specific to Holy Cross Abbey. We are committed to mutual prayerful support and appropriate service to one another. The Abbot makes an annual Visitation to the Lay Cistercian Community.

Where does your group meet? At Holy Cross Abbey

How often? 3rd Saturday of every month For how long? 10am – 3:45pm

Briefly describe the agenda your group follows at a typical meeting:

Terce, Lectio Divina in common, Novitiate teaching by Monastic Spiritual Advisor & Chapter meeting for Professed (these are separate and simultaneous), Sext, Lunch, Chapter Member Teaching by a Professed LCHCA, Midday Prayer in the Monastic Chapel, Afternoon Reading Discussion for Novices and Postulants & Continuing Formation for Professed (these are separate and simultaneous), concluding intercessory prayer.

What are some of the current challenges your group is facing?

Successful orientation of Inquirers through the Observership & Postulancy, ensuring that each is equipped with the necessary tools and spiritual formation to discern their call to the LCHCA while recognizing the uniqueness of every Observer and managing the content of a three-year Novitiate with new persons entering the Novitiate each year.

What are some of the strengths of your group?

As lovers of the place and of the brethren, we enjoy a strong relationship with our Abbot and the monks of Holy Cross Abbey. Particularly since their formal recognition of our community, we feel even more accepted and encouraged by our monastic brothers. The length of time we have for formation and discernment, in a climate of mutual support, prepares us to make our promise of stability, obedience, and conversatio morum.

Name of your group: Lay Cistercians of Holy Spirit Monastery
Monastery: Holy Spirit Monastery
Monastic Liaison: Fr. Anthony Delisi
Number of years in existence: since 1987
Current number of members: 45
Contact Person: Sandra Maule
E-mail address: sandramaule@yahoo.com

Describe your group's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

Elected council of three selected from the professed members (there is no nomination or volunteer component to this process, all non-auxiliary and professed members' names are written on the ballot). The vote is done by the professed members (those who have taken their final promises) and the juniors (those who have taken their simple promises). Two hold one year positions and one holds a two year position.

The monastic liaison is a monk delegated by the abbot (currently we have two monks, one a priest and one a brother). They are actively involved in council decisions.

Does your group have written guidelines? Yes, we have statutes.

Does your group have membership fees?

We will start a voluntary dues October of this year (\$12/month).

How does your group address the formation needs of your community?

Formation is 5 years: A two year Novitiate and a three year Juniorate. There is a curriculum for each year and a Novice Team and a Juniorate team.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

We have a formal Inquiry Process with an Inquiry Director who responds to those who are interested. It is expected that the inquirer will come to a retreat (on Cistercian Charisms), meet with a spiritual director and do some reading on the Lay Cistercians. There is a 3 part orientation session followed by an Inquirers Retreat, with another meeting with a spiritual director and then a formal request to enter sent to the Council).

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

See above, also each Novice is assigned an "angel", a member of our community who will be there as needed on our meeting days (Gathering Days) and talk to them at least once a month between meetings.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

Yes, we have a very formal ceremony and celebration after the 5 year formation with final promises being signed and witnessed by our community, friends, spiritual director(s) (monastic liaisons) and the abbot. Following this we have a wonderful meal and celebration.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

Our monastic liaisons (we have two) are very involved as spiritual directors, as part of the decision making with the council and as part of our teaching staff.

How frequently do you have monastic teaching presentations at your meetings?

Every month, Father Anthony facilitates a morning class (we read a Cistercian text, Father emails us questions and he will facilitate the discussion). Brother Chaminade assists with the Rule of Benedict class (we have both a monastic and lay presence for that monthly class). For our annual week end retreat, generally half of the talks are given by monks.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

We are formally recognized, we are supported by our spiritual directors (Father Anthony and Brother Chaminade who are present at council meetings and monthly community meetings), we prayerfully support one another, we assist with events at the monastery when we are asked and the monks attend an annual picnic sponsored by us.

Where does your group meet? We meet in the retreat or guest house of the monastery.
How often? Once a month.

For how long? We meet from 8:30am-4:30pm 11 times per year and once a year we meet for a weekend retreat from Friday evening to Sunday evening.

Briefly describe the agenda your group follows at a typical meeting:

Gathering Day Horarium 8:30 AM: Preparing for Liturgy of the Hours (optional)
9:00 AM: Lauds
9:30 AM: Mass
10:30 AM: Community Business Meeting
10:55 AM Class: Father Anthony

12:00 PM: Midday Office with the monks in the Abbey Church

12:15 PM: Lunch and Angelus

1:15 PM: Class time: Novices, Juniors, Professed all meet separately

2:30 PM Conference on the Rule (Brother Chaminade/and Lay Cistercian)

3:30 PM Rosary/Spiritual Direction/Reconciliation

What are some of the current challenges your group is facing?

Our active professed membership is small and hard to find teachers, leaders, mentors...
Clarifying the role of the council and monks. Meeting the needs of different personalities.

What are some of the strengths of your group?

A reverence for this way of life and a sincere desire to live the Rule of Benedict and the Cistercian charisms. A very diverse group with many professions and talents.

Name of your group: Oblate Community Zisterzienserkloster Langwaden
Monastery: Zisterzienserkloster Langwaden
Monastic Liaison: Pater Basilius Ullmann OCist
Number of years in existence: 35
Current number of members: 20
Contact Person: Gabriele Franziska Heitfeld-Panther
E-Mail address: Heitfeld-Panther@arcor.de

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

The leader is the oblate master. He nominates a representative. The representative is involved in teaching and guidance and is responsible for national and international contacts.

Does your community have written internal guidelines? draft

Does your community have membership fees? no

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

There is regular 2 to 4 hours teaching during the meetings. Also seniors would contact the newcomers. There is a monk at every meeting. The oblates join the monks at prayer and for the main meal. Newcomers gradually grow into the community.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

They come to the monastery and join the community meetings, which take place every month. They apply for postulancy (up to one year), then apply for starting the noviciate. The latter normally lasts one year (can be extended). Oblation can be done if the monks agree. Both, starting the Noviciate and Oblation ceremony take place during Solemn mass on the Solemnity of the Cistercian Abbots Robert, Alberich and Stephen, January 26th.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

Teaching on the Rule of Saint Benedict, retreats, personal guidance, meetings. Contacts within the community.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

Commitment is oblation to the monastery of Langwaden according to the statutes (although it is not a vow) it is meant for life time. "I offer myself to God as an Oblate of

the Cistercian Monastery of Langwaden and promise, trusting in the intercession of Our Lady, Mother of God, all the Angels and Saints, to follow the teachings of Saint Benedict and the Cistercian spirituality, to live according to the teachings of the Holy Gospel and to follow Christ. This I promise before God and all the Saints, before the Prior of this monastery and the Oblate community present. Amen.” The rite finishes with the “Suscipe Domine...”

Oblates pray the liturgical office, love the eucharist, lectio divina, attend meetings, love their community and the Cistercian charism. More on (in English) : www.zisterzienseroblaten.de click flag for English version

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

He (the oblate director) is the link to the monastery. He teaches the oblates and tries a dialogue between monks and oblate community. He is present at all meetings. The prior always says mass. Mass is a joined by all the monks and oblates.

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

Each time there a two monks at the meeting. Prayer, meals and Mass always is with all the monks.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

The monks give as much as they can. It very much depends on the particular monk and oblate.

Where does your community meet? [At the monastery](#)

How often? [Once a month. Once a year weeks retreat, feast days](#)

For how long? [10 to 16 hours](#)

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

[10.00 instruction /discussion](#)

[11.30 mass / sext](#)

[12.30 lunch](#)

[13.30 non](#)

[14.00 instruction /discussion coffee](#)

[15.30 end](#)

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

To realize we have a Cistercian identity and to link the monastery to the world-wide Cistercians. The difficulty is that all this is very new for the monks and has to be done in small steps. Oblates are trying to get deeper into Cistercian spirituality. There is an apostolate in the world.

What are some of the strengths of your community?

It is open, people know each other. Diverse people form the community. Love and Continuity.

Name of your group: Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of South Florida Lay
Cistercian
Monastery: Holy Spirit Monastery
Monastic Liaison: Sister Lillian Shank, Father Anthony Delisi
Number of years in existence: 8
Current number of members: 30
Contact Person: Crunch Fox
E-mail address: foxes5@bellsouth.net

Describe your group's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

We are led by a council of 5 members who each serve a 3 year term. We have, at the end of the 3 year term, elections for a new council member. Sister Lillian, our monastic mentor, attends but does not vote at our council meetings. Other members of our group have leadership responsibilities as observor teachers and formation (year 1 and year 2) teachers, librarian, newsletter coordinator, etc,

Does your group have written guidelines? Yes

Does your group have membership fees we take a donation at each monthly meeting

How does your group address the formation needs of your community?

Several designated members of the community teach those who have completed a 5 month observer course. They have monastic topics specified for each teaching for year one and year two.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

The mentor speaks to the person who is interested. Or the person interested can speak to one of the seniors. It is seems appropriate, they may attend a monthly meeting. They are reviewed by the council and if accepted, enter the 5 month observer period of teaching.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

New members attend monthly meetings, hear conferences by a monastic, attend a two hour orientation support meeting on 5 topics specified in our guidelines.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

After two and a half years of observer classes and formation classes, the members discern with the monastic mentor if the Holy Spirit if asking them to make a one year

promise. After 3 one year promises, they may make a lifetime promise or they can continue with their one year promise. Or they can attend with no promise.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

She keeps up contact with the Holy Spirit Monastery and the Georgia Lay Cistercians.

How frequently do you have monastic teaching presentations at your meetings?

Monthly except for the month of May.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

Holy Spirit Monastery is very close to us spiritually, not geographically. We have a beautiful annual 3-day retreat there and official visitations every few years. The Holy Spirit Community has voted to form a bond of unity and charity with us.

Where does your group meet? St. Thomas More education center in Boynton Beach, Fl.
How often? Third Saturday of every month For how long? 8:30 am-3:15 pm

Briefly describe the agenda your group follows at a typical meeting:

Mass 8:30 Lauds 9:30 Coffee Conference by Sister Lillian with discussion; Lectio Divina; Midday Prayer ; brown bag lunch; Newsnotes ; Sharing on Cistercian monasteries; meetings; Sharing on meetings of interest; Sharing of family news; Ned for prayers; Conference on Cistercian Spirituality by a senior with discussion; Adoration of Blessed Sacrament.

What are some of the current challenges your group is facing?

How to keep our Cistercian focus if we lose Sister Lillian; Singing the liturgy regularly; Encouraging the whole community to stay for the whole monthly meeting.

What are some of the strengths of your group?

A great love of Cistercian life and simplicity; generosity in attending council meetings and other occasional outside affairs; acceptance, understanding and deep love for one another; faithfulness in coming to monthly meetings.

Name of your group: Secular Oblates of Holy Trinity Abbey
Monastery: Our Lady of Holy Trinity Abbey
Number of years in existence: 12 years
Current number of members: 18
Monastic Liaison: Fr. Leander
Contact Person: Wally Nelson
E-mail address: honoreo@msn.com

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

Our leadership structure of the Secular Oblates of HTA mainly under Fr. Leander. If Fr. Leander is unable to lead the group, Fr. Cummings takes over. In our formation years we decided not to elect our own officers.

Does your community have written internal guidelines?

Yes, "The Rule of life for Secular Oblates of Holy Trinity Abbey".

Does your community have membership fees? No

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

The formation needs are taken care of by our director.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

Novitiate Period of 5 years. During those years a yearly promise is made. Eventually if the candidate wants they can make a "Definitive Promise" after 5 years.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

Our director supplies a list of recommended reading material for new members. Participating in the liturgy of the hours at the meetings is also presented.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

Our usual mouthy meetings take place in the Monastery parlor. However once a year when we make our renewal, we meet in the Monastery church and our director conducts the ceremony.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

I assume liaison means, in our community, director. The director prepares and delivers the monthly lecture at the meetings. Leads discussion on various topics and questions raised by the members. Approves the entrance of new members. Writes and mails the Oblate Bulletin as often as possible.

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

At every meeting,(once a month).

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

The relation of the Secular Oblates to the monastic community is only with Fr. Leander, our director. No other monks participate with us.

Where does your community meet? **Monastery Palor.**

How often? **Once a month** For how long? **1 hour.**

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

Opening pray.

Lecture on a particular topic.

Question and answer session on the topic.

An open question and answer session.

Chanting of the three Psalms.

Closing pray.

Coffee and donuts!

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

The survival of the monastic community. They have the highest average age in the order.

What are some of the strengths of your community?

Devout and prayful members. Not just the local members but also the members abroad.

Name of your group: Tarrawarra Abbey Group
Monastery: Our Lady of Tarrawarra
Monastic Liaison: Fr Steele Hartmann
Number of years in existence: 10
Current number of members: About 18 (variable)
Contact Person: Lucia Real Martin
E-mail address: luciarm@optusnet.com.au

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

We are a lay Cistercian informal group, with a monastic advisor who provides leadership and guidance to the group but with no formal leadership structure in the group itself. The group has been running for 10 years with Cistercian hospitality as its core structure and we have grown and welcome new members with this in mind.

Does your community have written internal guidelines? Yes

Does your community have membership fees?

We don't have membership fees. Money is not required for the group to function. When books or materials are needed for group study, Father Steele obtains them and each member purchases his or her own copy. Members contribute food for lunch before meetings; costs of our annual Christmas party or other celebrations are collected from members when required.

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

While we don't have formal training programs for the community, when a new member joins, personal guidance is provided by Father Steele who spends time with the newcomer in understanding their formation needs and level and he recommends a program to follow including books, texts, etc... Yearly we follow a book chosen between the lay community and Father Steele that also contributes to our formation in Cistercian spirituality. Additionally we have one retreat a year during which F. Steele provides us with a talk on a particular subject and 1-2 additional lectures from either Father Steele or other monks from the Tarrawarra community.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

The lay group functions on the basis of hospitality that the Rule of St. Benedict captures as one of its main aspects, and therefore we are open and welcome newcomers interested in Cistercian Spirituality and sharing it in community.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

As stated in question #4, Father Steele provides initial orientation and the group welcomes newcomers letting them know of the functioning of the group and the focus that the group has on Cistercian spirituality and the Rule of St. Benedict.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment, please describe what it entails:

The Monks of Tarrawarra provide for lay persons of either gender to make a formal commitment to follow the Rule of Benedict as Cistercian Oblates. For someone to do so, they need to write to the Abbott asking for his permission and stating the reasons why they wish to pursue this association with the Abbey. However this does not mean there is a formal commitment from the person to Tarrawarra Abbey and its community but a wish to strengthen the association and friendship. Two members of our group have availed themselves of this opportunity; however this is not a requirement for membership of our group.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

Father Steele leads and supports the group in terms of its formation and spiritual guidance as well as providing a nexus between the lay community and the Tarrawarra Abbey community. He also provides individual spiritual guidance to members as needed. As well as the spiritual guide, he is an active member of the lay group bringing his life and monastic experience and vision to each of our meetings that provides for many enriching and challenging discussions.

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

As stated in question #4, Father Steele provides talks at an annual retreat and other times during the year, as well as other monks including the Abbott who have made presentations to the group in various topics including hospitality, lectio divina, etc...

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

The Tarrawarra Abbey community is very supportive and interested in the lay group following up its course and development both through F. Steele and the individual members of the lay community. Logistically, they always welcome us in the abbey to stay for our meeting after Sunday mass and during our retreats to use their facilities.

Where does your community meet? **In one of the meeting rooms at Tarrawarra Abbey.**
How often? **Monthly** For how long? **2 hours**

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

We meet after 10am Sunday Mass, we share a meal, discuss matters of interest sharing our daily lives, and then spend about one hour discussing the chosen text at the time from a book chosen at the beginning of the year with Cistercian spirituality as its main theme. The book provides material to reflect on how to apply Cistercian spirituality to our daily lives and we share the joys and challenges of doing so as part of our journey of making Christ a central part of our lives. About once per annum, we have a day of reflection at an historic cottage in the abbey grounds.

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

Size is a challenge although it varies from 10 to 20 depending on who is available and if there are new comers. Sometimes members expectations of what the group will provide for them in their spiritual life is also challenging but we try to work through the concerns and different stages of spiritual growth of members.

What are some of the strengths of your community?

Versatility - Our group includes native speakers of English, French, German and Spanish. We are from widely different backgrounds. For example, some of us witnessed the horror of World War II in various parts of Europe, one member spent time in East Timor during the struggle for independence, several of us do volunteer work with the sick and disabled. This adds real meaning to our discussions. Welcome and openness – Our group is very open to new comers and we try to practice St. Benedict rule on hospitality with every new person that makes contact with the group. Sometimes it is only for a short time, others have been in the group since its inception but all are part of the group and feel welcome.

Name of your group: Weggemeinschaft St. Benedikt
Monastery: Zisterzienserkloster Stiepel
Monastic Liaison: several monks
Number of years in existence: 5
Current number of members: 11
Contact Person: Gabriele Franziska Heitfeld-Panther
E-mail address: Heitfeld-Panther@arcor.de

Describe your community's leadership structure: (election procedure, length of term, etc.)

In the election last March the members elected two representatives. They serve as liaison to the monks supporting the community. They also organize the meetings. There is no set term.

Does your community have written internal guidelines? Being developed

Does your community have membership fees? no

How does your community address the formation needs of your community?

There is an annual main topic (2007 lectio divina, 12 meetings). We meet at least once a month for a day at the monastery. Each meeting has two units of a teaching type, with discussion. We meet every month. At least at every second meeting there is a monk giving the talk and leading the discussion and celebrating mass for the community. The community grants us access to the meeting rooms and makes it possible to have retreats, even for a whole week. Anyone is free to attend any prayer or mass of the community.

What is the procedure for accepting new members into your community?

It is a decision of the group or the leader. There is no official procedure or promise. Recently we have had people asking for membership through mail-contact.

What kind of orientation and support is provided for new members?

First they just attend the meetings. The leader would talk to them. There is, however, no set program. Since we meet regularly they just grow into the group.

If members have the opportunity to make a formal commitment (or promise) please describe what it entails:

There is no formal commitment. We are discussing having written confirmation of membership.

What is the role(s) of your monastic liaison?

Several monks are very helpful to support our meetings by giving talks, going on pilgrimages with the community, giving retreats and celebrating mass for the community. On the whole it is not a liaison through one particular monk.

How frequently do you have teaching presentations by monks or nuns at your meetings?

At least every second meeting.

What is the relationship of the monastic community as a whole to your community?

It is an informal relationship. We get the support we ask for and the community is open to let us participate in prayer, adoration and mass and the monks give lectures.

Where does your community meet? In a guesthouse of the monastery.

Once a month for a day. Twice a year for a weekend. Once a year for a longer retreat.

Briefly describe the agenda your community follows at a typical meeting:

9.45 Lauds (in German, sung, in the chapel) and chapter reading
10.15 First unit on a set topic (monk or member or guest)
12:00 Sext and Non (with the monks, Latin, in the church)
12.20 Lunch (in the guesthouse or in the guest refectory)
followed by a lunch break (for walks or silence or talks...)
14:00 Second unit on the topic
16 Holy Eucharist
17.15 Tidying up
17.45 official end
(possible to join vespers at 18 hours)

What are some of the current challenges or difficulties your community is facing?

It is a challenge to see the community grow together as a community. It is growing in numbers but also in depth. Members are now asking for and trying more structure and commitment. A new chance has come up for the community since we now have found a priest joining the leader as spiritual advisor. The difficulty still is that a community like this is something new, for the parish and the diocese. The challenge and the chance is the need, the searching, we see among people

What are some of the strengths of your community?

We are open, growing in love and continuity