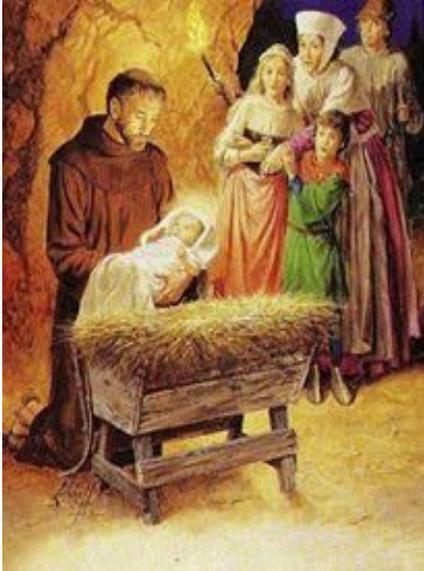


# FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 113

Epiphany 2015

## New OEF Minister General Elected!



On December 4, 2014, on the eve of the Feast of St. Nicholas of Myra, the nominating and election committee met and tabulated the ballots returned by the professed members of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. After tallying the vote and contacting the leading candidate, we are pleased to announce that Sister Susan "Shoshannah" Kay was elected in the first round and has agreed to serve as the Minister General of OEF. In addition, as she promised in her election discernment statement, she has appointed Br. John "Juniper" Robertson to serve as the Co-Minister of OEF for the same term.

The Ministers-Elect will join the Servant Team meeting on December 14th, which begins at 8:00 PM Eastern Standard time. Going forward they will assume responsibility for moderating the team meetings from January onward. There will be a rite of installation for the Ministers during worship at the 2015 Chapter/Convocation in St. Louis, celebrating in prayer and song what the Holy Spirit has done among us.

Please hold the new Ministers in prayer, that God would grant them the energy to fulfill their office and the commitment to serve the whole order in love.

Please continue to hold the team in prayer, when we meet and throughout the week, that we would be guided into doing God's will and serving the order with compassion and love. May the Holy Spirit remain ever at our side as a community as we discern together how we are called to serve in the world.

Many thanks to Sr. Lorraine DiDio, Sr. Markie Oliver and Br. Ron Nuss-Warren for their willingness to serve and for providing the order with many excellent choices in this election. Many thanks to Sr. Dale Carmen, who has served as the interim MG during our time of transition. Many thanks to the brothers and sisters who took the time to nominate, pray, discern, ponder and vote. Many thanks to God for carrying along this little community of Franciscans as we follow Jesus.

On Behalf of the Nominating/Election Committee- Peace and All Good,  
John Michael Longworth, OEF

### Inside this Issue:

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## Report on 2014 TSSF Chapter

Anjelika Morse, OEF

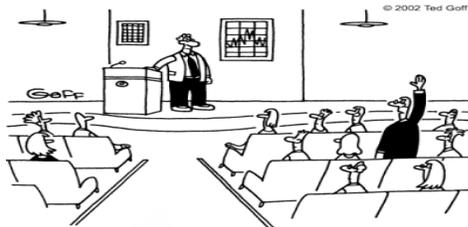


Once again this year, I had the privilege of representing OEF at the Annual Chapter of the Province of the Americas, TSSF. This year, this meeting was held in Greater Boston with overnight accommodations at the Walker Center in Auburndale and most of the business sessions held at Grace Episcopal Church in Norwell about a half hour drive from the Walker Center. This church is where John Brockman, Minister Provincial, serves as Rector.

Since the Province of the Americas includes all of North and Central America, the Caribbean and a large portion of South America, Chapter meetings tend to be very busy and this one was no exception. As is the custom of this body, Chapter began with a half day Quiet Day, led by Judith Gillette, TSSF. It was a time of reflection on our personal experience of our vocational charism, first, inwardly toward ourselves and, secondly, outwardly to another, to a situation or beyond.

Throughout the business sessions of Chapter, we paused every half hour for prayer. Bishop Gordon Scruton, Provincial Bishop Protector believes that the work of the order should "marinate" in prayer rather than being "bookended" by prayer. This is particularly helpful when dealing with contentious issues, of which there were a number at this particular Chapter.

The first real order of business was elections. The Minister Provincial's first term was concluding, so there was an election for MP. John Brockman was not elected to a second term. Tom Johnson, the order's longtime Bursar was elected MP. This created a vacancy for Bursar. David Lawson-Beck was elected Bursar. Liz Peacock was elected Director of Formation Counseling to replace the previous director who was stepping down from that position. Janine Schenone was elected to the Standing Committee. The newly elected individuals who were present were installed to their respective offices at Eucharist that evening.



"Could we extend the annual meeting? I still have a lot of complaining to do."

Most of the second full day of Chapter was spent in small groups dealing with a variety of issues that required the attention of Chapter. Some were contentious, some were fairly routine. Many of the issues considered had been raised by the membership of the order as questions or complaints that they sought to have addressed by their leadership. The issues fell into the following categories that defined the small groups: 1) Brazil/Guyana/Caribbean, 2) Communications, 3) Financial, 4) General, 5) Pastoral/Chaplaincy, 6) Pastoral/Formation, 7) Statutes. Small groups dealt with multiple issues under their purview and returned to the large group with recommendations for action by Chapter. It was an exhausting and intense day in which some very important work was accomplished. There also was work identified that will require further study and work by task force groups in the year ahead.

It was necessary for me to leave on Friday night to return home for health reasons. The only remaining work to be done at that point was presentation and approval of the budget on Saturday morning. As has been the case in the past, it was a rich experience to join our sisters and brothers from TSSF for their Chapter. I have developed deep respect and affection for these dedicated followers of our Father Francis.

Respectfully submitted,  
Anjelika, OEF

### A Friendly Reminder Regarding Social Media

Please do not post information or pictures of OEF siblings on Facebook or other social sites without their permission. Some of our siblings do not wish to be seen on social media for various reasons. Please protect their information as you would yours.

Thank you!



## Regional News



Siblings of the OEF,

We stand/sit/pray/sing (on Dec. 5, 2014) between two Fellowship events in our life as an Order:

In North Decatur, GA, northeast of Atlanta and well within its urban embrace, there was a gathering (today, I believe!) of elements of the Piedmont Fellowship around a meal, including

Brother James Schwarzlose (Pine Lake, GA), Associate Brother David Rensburger (Atlanta), Postulant David Miller (Lawrenceville, GA), and Sara Turnpin, a TSSF associate. Kevin McCoy intended to be at the table until other commitments prevented his being there.

So, yea! for the Piedmonters!

Then tomorrow, the Northeast Fellowship gathers in Hartford, CT  
Our prayers for each one's decision to be there,  
for safe travel,  
for glorious gathering,  
and safe return to home & hearth.

'Tis good to gather! - michael v./oef



THE meeting place was the Mediterranean Grill in Metro Atlanta. An enjoyable meal began the meeting at noon on December 5th. A varied, rather unfocused discussion about being instruments of the Lord's peace preceded, accompanied and completed the meal. (It did touch on the fact that Ferguson, MO is right next to Florissant, MO which is home to the OEF's next Chapter and Convocation!)

Sorry, details of the dishes served are not available.

peace and all good

James



Peace and all good. My wife, Leigh-Ann, and I met many of you at Chapter in Detroit in 2013 and 2014. I'm inspired by St Francis' life-long conversion and dedication to the Gospel.

Leigh-Ann and I joined Sr Allegrezza at the St Agnes Hospitality House in Lexington during the weekend of November 7<sup>th</sup>. Original plans had been for several to meet the last weekend in October but, last minute scheduling changes (St Agnes House had construction issues) resulted in a much smaller group.

We spent the weekend in conversation and prayer. A wonderful time to learn each others' stories in a deeper way. Discussions centered on a theme of perspectives, how they are shaped and the changes that we become aware of through the process of formation. I had desired a Franciscan community for at least a few years before I found the OEF but had thought it unlikely because I was neither Catholic nor Episcopal. I found the OEF when I was in crisis and needed prayer help concerning my sister's small brain tumor. The prayer response from this community was filled with love and concern. That loving prayer response is what prompted me to come to that first Chapter as an inquirer. In Detroit, we found a welcoming family. Formation is changing me, opening my heart in ways that I had not anticipated. Teaching me to develop disciplines that lead to greater focus on Christ and in turn a truer more joyful love of everyone in and for Christ.

On Sunday morning, we gathered for prayer and the presentation of my personnel rule at the chapel altar. Sr Allegrezza welcomed me to the Order with beautiful imagery portraying Professed, Novices, and Postulants, all traveling together on The Way, each offering encouragement, counsel, and excitement to the others as needed.

Thank you for receiving me in our journey for Christ.

Mark Whitten n/oef

*Words From the Interim Minister General**... And From Our Co-ministers -Elect*

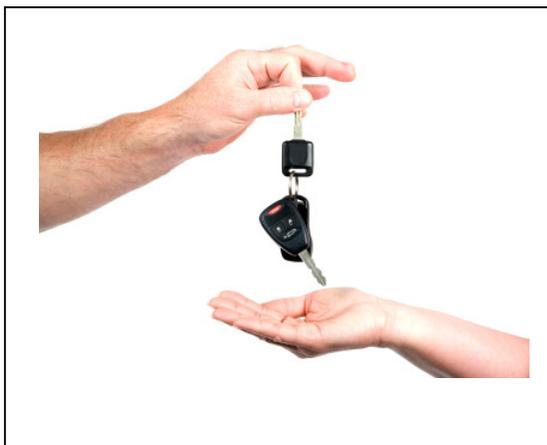
Grace and peace. We are grateful for all God has done for us through the five humble and blessed professed members who accepted nomination to Minister General. Their five 'testimonials' of faith, spiritual journey, hopes and prayers for OEF; were a witness and encouragement to us all. Gracias. Gracias. Gracias.



Shoshanah and John Juniper; welcome and God's blessings on your willingness to serve as Co-Ministers of OEF and lead us by example into a new paradigm of decision making. Shoshanah and John Juniper have already been invited into the Servant Team and participated in the Servant Team's monthly Conference Call December 14<sup>th</sup>. I have asked them to take leadership, with the Servant team, in setting the dates and agenda for January and February meetings, as Ken (my husband) and I will be moving 100 miles east to Steele, North Dakota in January. I am willing to re-join the Servant Team meetings in March, in a supportive role to our new Co-Ministers.

Often, I reflect on a comment attributed to Francis of Assisi, "I have done what was mine to do; may Christ teach you what you are to do." Again, as a unique Franciscan order, we join our hearts in discerning and practicing what we are to do, for the sake of all of God's creation.

Peace and Joy in Franciscan community,  
Dale Carmen OEF



Peace and Good to Each and All

I, Shoshanah, am humbled by your vote of support. As promised, I have appointed Juniper as Co-minister. Together we write.

As your new Co-ministers, we immediately stumble upon a challenge, even in the writing of this brief message: How do we write honestly as "we" instead of the all-to-familiar "I"? Which begs also the question: How are we -- all of us -- to be "we" as this Order?

May we begin by praying one for another. Then, may we continue by praying one for another. Listening ever closely for what is ours to do.

As Interim Minister, Dale has invited the two of us to join the current Servant Team. We have accepted, considering this service a trust and an act of faith. We would now like to share a few preliminary thoughts on how we plan to divide our work as Co-ministers:

Shoshanah will be taking the lead in chairing the Servant Team monthly meetings, and in collaboration and preparation for Chapter 2015.

Juniper will be taking the lead in making individual contact with professed members. We are hoping to speak directly with each professed member within the next few weeks to hear your views on our Order, and also what you need from your ministers. Know that our "doors are open and our lights are on".

Shoshanah will take the lead on representing the OEF to the wider Franciscan Family, seeking assistance as needed in representation to the various gatherings.

Over the past year, along with Michael Vosler, Anne Nancy, Lorraine, Carlo and Bruce James, we two have been serving on the Statutes Review Committee. The committee's work is now complete. Within the next few weeks, we expect to circulate the proposed revision which is a significant reformulation of the Order's governance. In response, we are looking forward to an active exchange with members of the Order. It will be further discussed at our 2015 Chapter in July in St. Louis, with implementation according to the discernment at Chapter.

We are excited to be serving/ministering among you as we in the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans work to fulfill the Crucified's charge to Brother Francis to "Rebuild My Church".

A blessed and renewing Christmas to each and all as our Jesus comes to us in humble hopeful vulnerability. May we follow his Light,

~ Shoshanah and Juniper, Co-ministers

# The People of God: A Sacred Prism

*An Interfaith Conference to Celebrate the Unity and Common Life We Share in the Holy One*



**Sunday, April 12, 5:00 p.m. through Tuesday, April 14, noon**

**Franciscan Center of Tampa, Florida**

In these times of uncertainty, fear, and suspicion of people from different faith traditions, this conference affirms the Divine Light that shines through all people of Godly faith, and offers the opportunity to experience that Life-Giving Spirit in an interfaith gathering.

Led by a rabbi, a Christian priest, an imam, and an interfaith minister, participants will hear presentations, and experience some of the spiritual practices of the three Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (including the Sufi tradition), with portions of Holy Scripture, music, poetry, and movement. Participants will also have opportunity to share among themselves how the spiritual practices of their faith traditions inform and guide their lives, and to offer ways that we can go forth from the conference to be witnesses of unity and hope.

### **Conference Cost:**

\$260.00 person, includes program, room (double occupancy), and board  
(dietary considerations for interfaith gathering).

### **Registration:**

\$100.00 deposit due by February 1, 2015 (non-refundable); balance due by March 30, 2015.

Make check or money order payable to *Roots & Branches*, and mail to:

Roots & Branches

35 Circle Drive

Hyde Park, NY 12538

For more information, contact Reverend Masud Ibn Syedullah, TSSF at:

info@rootsandbranchesprograms.org

(646) 401-2790

**A Program of the Joint Committee of Franciscan Unity**

**In cooperation with *Roots & Branches: Programs for Spiritual Growth***

**[www.rootsandbranchesprograms.org](http://www.rootsandbranchesprograms.org)**



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## REGISTRATION FORM

*Please print all information*

NAME: *(Please print)* \_\_\_\_\_

*Last First Middle Initial*

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

*Street number City State Zip Code*

CONTACT INFORMATION: \_\_\_\_\_

*Home phone Cell E-Mail*

Do you have a room-mate preference: (circle one) Yes No

If Yes, name of person: \_\_\_\_\_

Dietary Restrictions: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any health issues or physical limitations conference leaders need to be aware of:

*(circle one)* Yes No

If Yes, please explain below:

---

**CONFERENCE FEE:** \$260.00 (Program, double occupancy room, meals)

**Deposit:** \$100 (non-refundable) due by February 1, 2015

**Balance due by March 30, 2015**

Make check or money order payable to *Roots & Branches*

Mail check or money order to:

Roots & Branches

35 Circle Drive

Hyde Park, NY 12538

Confirmation of your payment will be sent to you upon receipt.

*A detailed schedule of the program will be sent to you four weeks prior to the conference.*

For more information, contact Reverend Masud Ibn Syedullah, TSSF at:

info@rootsandbranchesprograms.org —or visit us at rootsandbranchesprograms.org





## Formation Station



Thanks to those of you who have so generously offered to serve the order as a formation counselors! It has been good to talk to so many of you lately. If I haven't connected with you yet, feel free to call at your own convenience (I'm on eastern standard time). I'm noticing that finding time to connect seems to be difficult for many in our busy days. At the same time, I've heard from several postulants and novices that they get discouraged when they don't hear enough from their FC's. Remember that both frequency and fullness of feedback can help someone struggling with a topic or overwhelmed with life in general. Ironically, the journey to simplicity is fraught with complications. And the task of vulnerability is aided by reassurance. Thanks for the wisdom and willingness to share that you offer to those that choose to walk with us. From what I've heard your guidance and input regarding the chapters is both meaningful and appreciated by our "littlest siblings". I hope that you are blessed as well in the time you spend sharing with them on this journey to the heart of Christ and the company of Francis. I pray for each of you to find the moments and the words you need. We couldn't do it without you! Thanks again, +Sr. Allegrezza



### Introducing...

*Tony Rennett*

#### Brothers and Sisters

I have long prayed for a community in which I could fall more deeply in love with Jesus, and through His Spirit with those around me. Over the past decade the Spirit has consistently led me back to the Franciscan community and in particular people associated with the OEF. A few years ago I began to pay attention and begin a more intentional inquiry. I am following the call of Christ's Spirit which has led me to you.

I have walked the journey of a Postulant and desire now to seek a deeper relationship with the Christ in you. I am humbled to become an OEF novice and look forward to meeting some of you soon.

Charis  
Tony



#### *Mark Whitten*

Peace and all Good. I, Mark Whitten, and my wife, Leigh-Ann, met many of you at the 2013 Chapter in Detroit. We live in northern Mississippi with our three young adult children and attend LifeSpring United Methodist Church. I'm inspired by St Francis' life-long conversion and dedication to the Gospel. As I study, my mind and heart are opening to what we can do to live out the Gospel more completely. I am blessed and thankful to continue my journey as part of this community.  
In Jesus, Mark



Mark Whitten's novicing ceremony,  
Nov. 2014 at the Mid-Atlantic regional  
gathering

# MY CHRISTMAS MIRACLE KITTY

SISTER CHRIS, OEF

Those of you who know me best are probably aware of my 15-year-old tabby, Clawdio. He was a character from the start. An 8-week-old orphan offered to me by a neighbor whose girlfriend moved out and left her kitten behind. My neighbor didn't want this little bundle of fur. My response? "Bring him over!" As soon as he was set down at my apartment door, this tiny kitty walked right in like he owned the place (as cats tend to do)! Nothing shy about this boy! My neighbor warned me that he was a pistol: "Be careful. This cat will jump in the shower with you, so keep the door closed!" Impossible, I thought. No self-respecting cat would be caught dead in a wet shower! But sure enough, the first time I took a shower with him in the apartment, this crazy cat jumped into the shower, stood under the water, then jumped out and raced around the apartment! From then on, the door was closed!

He never ceased to amaze and entertain me. This cat was too smart for my own good! While he was still a little thing, I started coming home to find my bathroom rugs in the middle of the living room. I couldn't imagine how he was doing it. The rugs were bigger than he was! Then one day, I caught him in the act. His little teeth were clamped onto the rug, and he was dragging it backward with all his might! Then there was the time he disappeared while we were traveling from Wisconsin home to Illinois. I got out of the car to pump gas, and when I got back in, he was nowhere to be seen! I called, but got no response. Then I panicked! Had he jumped out when I opened the door? I searched the gas station and the bushes nearby, calling with no response. Heartbroken, I finally had to leave. A short time later, the little devil jumped onto my shoulder from the back seat and scared me to death! To this day, I don't know where he was hiding, but he rode in a cat carrier from then on! He has never ceased to keep me on my toes in the 15 years since!

Over the past few years he's gotten older, of course. He developed diabetes and had to be put on special food. Then he started limping, and I was told he had arthritis. His hips were bone-on-bone, so he went on Cosequin

(powder from a capsule sprinkled on his food). His teeth started to go, so he needed water on his dry food so that he could chew it. Last year, he started losing weight. A blood test (for which he had to be sedated – he hates the vet!) revealed hypothyroidism. So he got a pill we had to toss down his throat. Through all of this, he was his same old self, and pretty good about taking pills. He was getting a little slower, but was still a riot!

About a month ago, things changed. He wasn't eating and seemed to have a lot more trouble moving around. I took him to the vet, and he let her examine him (a first!) with no fighting, hissing or growling. I knew something was up. The vet said, "He has a golf-ball size mass in his stomach!" I thought, "Well no wonder he's not hungry! A cat's stomach isn't that big to begin with!" An ultrasound revealed a tumor, not in his stomach, but in his colon. The vet was almost sure it was cancer. Not wanting to put a 15-year-old cat through surgery he may not survive, we decided to try steroids to see if that would shrink the tumor. The vet also gave us liquid morphine to keep him comfortable. He responded very well to the steroid, which made the vet question her diagnosis, but then he developed a growth in his nasal cavity. This caused him to wheeze and produce a lot of mucus. The vet told me to try Children's Benadryl to dry up the mucus. That was a disaster! What I didn't realize was that children's medicine is flavored! My choices were cherry, grape or bubblegum. I tried the bubblegum because it was dye free. Of course Clawdio hated it. It made him gag and cough up a bunch of nasty stuff, so I quit after 2 doses.

After all of this, the poor kitty was miserable. By now, it was December. He was wheezing all the time, and so stiff and sore he couldn't lie down properly. He started stumbling and losing his balance, and the discharge from his nose crusted over every night. I spoke to the vet late on a Friday. We decided he was suffering too much and it was time to let him go. It was too late to do anything that day, so we set an appointment to euthanize him on Monday. Then, the miracle happened!

## MY CHRISTMAS MIRACLE KITTY... CONTINUED

The next day, Mom and I started decorating the house for Christmas. We put up the Christmas tree, and Clawdio suddenly perked up! He was fascinated, and seemed to be moving around better. He claimed the tree skirt as his new bed, and spent most of his time sleeping under the tree. (This is nothing new, I have a picture of him sleeping under the tree several years ago.) The next day, he was up and demanding food. His movement continued to improve, and he was obviously more comfortable. By Monday, I had to call the vet and cancel the appointment. She was amazed at his progress and said, "He's our miracle kitty!"

Now, over a week later, he seems back to his old self. The growth in his nose is gone, along with the drainage. He still has the tumor and the poor prognosis (after all, his age is equivalent to a 95-year-old man!), but his appetite is ravenous and he is enjoying some quality of life again. He even came downstairs early this morning just to wake me up and demand to be fed, something he hasn't done for a month! We've decided to continue keeping him comfortable and spoiling him until the inevitable time comes, but are feeling blessed and grateful that he is doing so well. He's our little Christmas miracle!



Clawdio under the tree, Christmas, 2013



The "old man," 2014



## Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Submissions for the Lent 2015 issue of "Fiddlesticks" are being accepted immediately.

Deadline for submissions is March 15, 2015.

Send submissions to Sister Chris at  
[capoef@solarus.biz](mailto:capoef@solarus.biz)

or snail-mail to:

Christine Petersen, OEF  
 853 Norwich Ct  
 Nekoosa, WI 54457

**Thank you!**

*Fiddlesticks*  
 c/o Christine Petersen, OEF  
 853 Norwich Ct.  
 Nequosa, WI 54457  
 U.S.A.



## Greccio Creche

from "Songs for the Little Flowers" by Katie Cook, OEF



I love the wooden figures  
 we take out at Christmastime:  
 the Holy Family, livestock,  
 shepherds in their shyness,  
 anachronistic astrologers,  
 at least one angel,  
 and the glorious star.  
 With or without the stable or cave,  
 or sleeping Bethlehem as a backdrop,

I love them.

Francesco,  
 I can visualize the tableau that you created  
 in the hills of Greccio,  
 the first nativity scene  
 (since the original)  
 that I know about.

I can imagine the little cave  
 with an ox and an ass  
 and a roughhewn trough  
 and the candles and torches  
 of the Little Brothers and their friends

As the Christ mass was sung  
 over the hayfilled altar.

I am glad that you  
 celebrated the birth of Jesus  
 and not only His death.

I thank you for the gift of the creche,  
 a reminder that Jesus was born  
 in a rustic place  
 among humble people  
 In the presence of stable creatures,  
 heralded only by Sister Star  
 and some dreadful angels;

For with this gift you yearly remind us  
 that it was in a poor birth  
 that Christ was truly rich  
 and in a humble nativity  
 that He was truly King.

