

The Servant Team's Report to the Chapter, 2016

A. The life of the order 2015-2016

1. Servant team meeting and work together - We have met regularly by telephone conference (generally monthly). We also had one face-to-face meeting in CT in November. Over time, we have grown in our trust of one another and in our commitment to prayerfully discern together.

In addition to the duties outlined in our respective job descriptions, and in response to the needs of the Order, our work together includes, but is not limited to the following:

Following the resignation of our former DFC, we appointed Brother David Luke as Interim DFC. The Office of Formation Counseling is now a collaborative team, a model we support and strongly encourage. We are grateful to Brother David Luke for accepting this responsibility and to the many involved in this important work.

In response to a growing number of requests from the membership, we turned our attention to more effective ways of conflict transformation. To this end, we appointed a committee of three (John Michael, Anne Nancy, John Son of Syvert) to explore possibilities. They, in consultation with others, have prepared a Model of Conflict Transformation for consideration by the membership.

We are turning our attention, at this time, to planning for Chapter/Convocation, and for our Order's transition from an elected Servant Team to a prayerfully discerned selection of a 5 member Council.

We have not done all we had intended. One notable area that needs further attention is quarterly reporting. It is our sense that it would be of benefit to compile a list of who is reporting to whom, and to invite comments/conversation. We hear from the membership a mix of responses to reporting: confusion, disinterest, gratitude, commitment. How can this become a more meaningful experience? The goal is mutual accountability and nurture -- leading to spiritual growth and joyful faithfulness. Another area that needs tending is improving communication between the Servants and committees as well as members of the Order. This is an ongoing challenge for a dispersed Order such as ours.

2. Financial situation of the Order – Petra

a. As of the end of 2015 our total cash balance was \$18,855, which is \$3,061 lower than at the end of 2014 and \$533 lower than the average at the end of the last 5 years. Our total income in 2015 was \$28,047 and total of expenses was \$31,443, resulting in a negative change in the fund balance of \$3,396. In the last 5 years the average change in the fund balance was a gain of \$739. We are not in trouble, but this does mean that as an Order we need to increase the amount of money that comes in for the year 2016.

b. In 2015 Chapter made up 63% of our total expenses. The next largest category in which we spent was technology at 10%, then dues and subscriptions at 7%, travel at 6%, the meeting of the Servants at 5%, and printing and reproduction at 3%. The remaining expenditures made up 6% of the total. We feel that all of these things are important for the life of the Order and everyone's contributions help pay for them.

c. Contributions are very uneven, as we should expect, but if our contribution only covers our share of the cost of Chapter, we are benefiting from much more than that to which we are contributing, which means others are paying for it. This is good and this kind of balance between one's humility and another's generosity is what we want. Our money represents the investment of our time and labor. To give our money is, in a very real way, to give something of ourselves. It is truly an "offering" that we make, its value being proportional to our income. What do we spend our money on? In some cases, we might need to examine whether our commitment to the way of Francis and Clare actually has the priority that we profess it has, especially if we contributed nothing this past year. This is worth praying over and even discussing with one's spiritual director. We might find that the more we invest of ourselves into the Order, the more the Order will matter to us.

d. Accordingly, in an effort to raise giving, Brothers Michael Vosler and Coyote wrote and shared a letter to encourage regular giving both via Fiddlesticks and email.

3. Office of Formation – The Order has 48 members who have professed lifetime vows, 22 living under Novice vows, 12 Postulants exploring a vocation with OEF, and One Associate to the Order. Since last Chapter there have been 130 inquiries through our website and additional inquiries directed by members into the office of formation.

Brother David Luke is serving as Interim Director of Formation Counseling. Assisting him in the collaborative work of the Office of Formation are: Brother Louis Canter and Sister Helen Bathurst, as well as numerous indispensable formation counselors. A more detailed report will be shared with the membership when available.

4. Communication with the Order

a. Fiddle Sticks- Current Circulation: 73 e-mail and 44 snail-mail issues per quarter.

At the moment, the newsletter's format and size seems to meet our needs. It continues to be 10–12 pages per issue, with some 16-page issues at times. She has enlisted the help of Sister Kathleen for proofreading help, which has already improved the quality of the publication. Suggestions for improvement are always welcome. Thanks to Staples Copy & Print who gives us free shipping for e-mail orders. Sr. Chris reports that It is a great pleasure to edit this newsletter every quarter, and will continue as long as the Order deems appropriate. She will continue to expand and reorganize the newsletter as necessary to meet the needs of the community. She expresses concern of the inconsistent contributions from some of our Servant Team, especially the Chaplain, MG, DFC and possibly treasurer. It is important for the community to hear from these folks every quarter, as some of our siblings are not on the web site or the e-mail list. It would help us feel better connected to the workings of the Order.

Thanks to all who do contribute on a regular basis, or even occasionally. You make the newsletter valuable and newsworthy.

b. Website- In 2015, OEF successfully reopened our website, using Wordpress as the content management tool for the public information portion of the site. We had at least monthly updates to the site, all of which were cross-posted on Social Media. In addition, an organizational management portion of the site, powered by WildApricot has been used to: manage membership records, provide mass e-mail with tracking, and manage the registration for Chapter. In both cases, there are additional steps we could take to further utilize these tools. On the public communication side, authors are needed for monthly reflections and news articles, even sharing excellent work that members are doing in their local ministries would be most welcome. On the organizational management side, it would be great to see the Council, the Treasury and the Formation Office trained in the use of WildApricot so that we could have a single consistent format for communications, membership records, and income tracking.

c. Social Media- OEF has a Twitter account to publicize our website updates and to follow other Franciscan tweets. We also have an active Facebook page with 630 followers and daily updates. Presently the page receives updates from Br. John Gaudreau, Br. John Son of Syvert, Br. Romero, and Sr. Lorraine DiDio. Our Facebook page is another place where website updates are cross-posted. We have received dozens of messages, questions and encouragements through this page in the past year.

d. Council minutes- Beginning in 2014 and continuing through 2015, an effort has been made to share concise minutes of Servant Team meetings with the members of OEF. It will be important for the Council to maintain this procedure to give members a sense of what is being discerned throughout the year. Quarterly reports from the various teams (Formation, JPIC, Joint Committee) would also enhance the sense of "mission together".

5. Ecumenical links

a. FAN/JPIC – OEF has been invited to appoint a representative to participate on the FAN Action Commission. This is a small group of committed Franciscans from various Orders and in various regions of the country. They meet monthly by telephone conference. The goal is to animate members locally and to work collectively on JPIC issues. Servants have delegated to our OEF JPIC Committee the selection of this representative. FAN Action Commission April Event, April 14-15, 2016, Washington, DC This is an event intended to recruit and engage members more actively. It is open to all who are interested. Food and simple lodging provide at no cost. (contact Shoshanah for more information).

b. OFS- In October, Shoshanah attended NAFRA, the annual Chapter meeting for our Roman Catholic Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters. This was an election year for them. Watching their election process was of particular interest. They use the same form as that used in selecting a pope-- minus the smoke.

c. TSSF- In October, Shoshanah attended the annual TSSF Chapter meeting for our Episcopal

Third Order brothers and sisters. They, like we, in the heart of their meeting, were trying to discern the unique call of God to their Order, and how to live faithfully into that call.

d. Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity- OEF representatives to the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity are Brother Louis Canter and Brother Elijah. This year's event is using the recent encyclical of Pope Francis, "Laudato Si' – On Care for our Common Home" as a springboard for discussing elements of Franciscan Unity. The event will be held this summer in Pennsylvania. Contact our representatives for more information.

6. OEF JPIC

OEF representatives to our OEF JPIC Committee are: Brother Coyote, Sister Katie Cook, Brother Romero and Sister Magdalena. They have begun meeting more regularly by telephone conference, and are expressing interest in providing programming for Convocation 2017. Areas of particular concern include, but are not limited to: Racism Awareness, Justice for Refugees and Immigrants, and Care for Creation. The pope's encyclical is a source of inspiration for this group as well.

7. Regional gatherings and regional life

We are blessed to have Mature Fellowships that have met over the years and have established a rhythm and a pattern as well as two people getting together. Fellowships are constantly shifting as Inquirers and Postulants pop-up. Maturity of Fellowships requires the commitment and proximity of Professed members. The Northeast U.S. has a Mature Fellowship with ten Professed and an annual retreat. Georgia has a lively Piedmont Fellowship with retreat along the way with a Professed and an Associate energize those gatherings. Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota & Iowa, and the Chicago Metro area have the Lighthouse Fellowship with five Professed gathering regularly. In Texas, there is a strong Fellowship history with two Professed. We presently have two person Pacific Fellowships, one in New Zealand, one in Japan; and a Professed in each one. Ohio, Indiana, a bit of Michigan, Kentucky, and Tennessee center the Mariposa Fellowship with five Professed widely scattered among those states. Florida is hopping with a Professed in the north and a Professed in the south. A three-some meets in the southeast corner. In Arizona & New Mexico we have three Professed and an Associate. In the Pacific Northwest our Chaplain is moving but two Professed in Oregon support a Fellowship. In Northern California Professed fellowship. Upstate New York has the makings of a Fellowship from Maryland, Rochester, Ithaca, and Syracuse with two are Professed. Virginia and North Carolina lack Professed, but there's some OEF life in the area. Pennsylvania has the makings of a Fellowship with a Professed. Ontario, Canada has a four person Fellowship, two Professed. Southern Illinois and Missouri might bond into a Fellowship with two Professed. In Nebraska, Wyoming, & Colorado there are two Professed. All of that still leaves some very solitary OEF Sisters & Brothers in Australia, Nigeria, Hungary, Ireland. Mississippi, and Nebraska. (see full report below).

8. Statutes revision / Book of norms

The 2nd stage statutes committee is submitting a draft of the statutes revision to the membership. If this draft is adopted, the Order will proceed with the Council. The Committee has identified several areas where work may still be needed on the statutes: the need for an outside "visitor" for the Order, concerns about how to proceed in pastoral matters where confidentiality is important, structuring and maintaining the "book of norms". The Committee has collected a number of items that it is recommending be shifted to the "book of norms" and away from the Statutes in keeping with the Chapter mind that the Statutes should be kept relatively minimal focusing on that which is permanent.

9. Norm for addressing conflict within the Order

A team consisting of John Son of Syvert, Anne Nancy Vosler, and John Michael Longworth spent the fall of 2015 discerning a set of norms for healthy communication and conflict transformation. In addition, a number of members were engaged to help with revisions, clarity and further discernment. That output will be before the assembly at Chapter 2016 and if it is adopted, then the Council will need to invite and train the members of the listening team. Supporting these norms will also mean committing to giving the financial resources that will make training the listeners possible.

B. The work of the Council

1. Internal organization

The Council will be well directed to meet while still in Indianapolis and begin the process of determining how the group will work together and divide responsibilities. One of the most repeated concerns by the membership of the Order about the shift to the Council is where does the buck stop, who is responsible for what. The intention in creating the Council was to allow freedom for the Council to sort out its ways of doing business but everyone both inside the Council and in the Order and in the wider Franciscan Family will need to know who to communicate with about what. What follows is a list of items that we would suggest the Council address early in its functioning to allow for clear lines of communication and action.

- a. Council meeting times
- b. Council meeting facilitation & meeting minutes

- c. Who is the go to person on the Council for what? – how do member know?

2. Pastoral responsibilities

In not having a designated chaplain or minister(s) the Council model opens approaches to the pastoral work of the Council. What follows are items that we believe will be key to the Council fulfilling its pastoral responsibilities?

- a. Addressing pastoral issues - Sickness, emergencies, birthdays/anniversaries
- b. Build connection and linkages among the membership
- c. Transition for the newly professed
- d. Celebrating life passages (marriages, births, new ministries, becoming grandparents, etc.)

3. Ecumenical responsibilities

Members of the Order will need to be identified to the point of contact for each of these relationship. Someone on the Council will need to represent these issues and be the person for those members who are contact with the various Franciscan Family groups

- a. Attending TSSF & SFO chapters
- b. Participating in FAN, FI, Joint committee & JPIC-
- c. *FAN: The membership relations person Sr. Lucie Marie from FAN would like the name/email/phone of the Council Member designated to work with FAN after the Selection at Chapter.*
- d. Speaking for and representing the Order - The OEF JPIC, various member of the Order and the Council all may find themselves speaking for OEF, that is speaking for the Chapter of OEF. The Council will want to attend to who speak how about what.
- e. Keeping channels open and conversation going with our smaller family members (OFR, OLF, etc.)

4. Appointments to be made by the Council

- a. Director of the Office of Formation Counseling
- b. Scribe/Secretary
- c. Treasurer
- d. Editor of the Fiddle Sticks
- e. Technology Coordinator
- f. JPIC Animator(s)

- g. FAN representative
- h. Joint Committee representatives
- i. Chapter Worship Coordinator (2017)
- j. Convocation Planning Group (2017)
- k. Chapter registrar (2017)

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Appendix

Duties of “Fiddlesticks” Editor:

Keep address lists current, adding addresses of new members and friends as needed and determining their preference for e-mail or snail-mail.

Solicit and accept articles, poems, photos, etc. from members and friends of the Order.

Write articles as needed to fill issue.

Keep a file of articles between issues.

Set deadlines for the submission of articles for each issue.

Follow up with Director of Formation to make sure all new inquirers have submitted an introduction.

Select and insert appropriate articles using the format established in Publisher, adjusting the layout as necessary.

Proofread and edit all articles.

Find pictures and graphics suitable to the articles.

Edit entire newsletter for spacing and other errors.

E-mail completed newsletter to Staples (or other copy store) for printing.

Pick up finished newsletters and purchase postage required for national mailing.

Fold newsletters and insert contribution envelopes and any other fliers as requested by the

Servant Team.

Print and apply address labels.

Deliver finished newsletters to post office, having international mailing items weighed for correct postage.

Convert computer version of issue to PDF and send out to e-mail recipients and to web master for the web site.

Maintain a paper and computer archive of each issue.

If issues are returned, follow up to find a correct address

Regional gatherings and regional life – Submitted by Michael Vosler OEF

No Franciscan fears solitude. There are exceptions to every such statement that smacks of the absolute; but for the most part.....solitude is sought, even craved, by most of us in this little Order.

Solitude is a gift to the spirit and is a part of every spiritual journey.

Solitude can be counted upon to allow spirit to encounter the Spirit-that-is-Holy.

In solitude we drift between mind-in-control reflection and deep reflection that opens to Mystery.

Solitude is growing time, being aware of the angels time, naming the demons time.

Solitude is its own kind of prayer time, with or without words.

There are many stories of Francis and Clare giving themselves to solitude.

There is the practice of "mothering" whereby one sister or brother cares for another who is thereby freed to persist for a while in solitude, the necessities attended to by the mother.

By contrast, Fellowships time is being-with, being-together time.

Fellowship time is face-to-face time, spirit to-spirit time.

Fellowship time is time to remember who I am in the context of "who WE are."

Fellowship time is enJOYment time -- time to get to know our others, to delight in our others, to occasionally be irritated by another and so reflect on why that is, from whence comes such irritation; and how do I more deeply love my brother or sister?

Fellowship time can be serious-think time, or play time, certainly singing and praying time and discerning together time.

To Fellowship requires time, and often, certainly for us in this scattered Order, to Fellowship requires travel; and it helps to have a convener, a host, a worship leader, a hospitality coordinator, and whatever other roles seem appropriate and helpful.

Though Fellowships often have some sort of geographical definition, there are no strict boundaries. You can decide to be a part of any Fellowship gathering you can get to, but we hope you'll at least be a part of the one that seems more geographically close to you.

We are blessed to have everything from Mature Fellowships that have met over the years and have established a rhythm and a pattern, to 2 people just getting together.

Our configuration of Fellowships is constantly shifting as Inquirers and Postulants pop-up, expressing interest and wanting to meet an OEFer in the flesh. We encourage that! And meeting with a group of us is even better than meeting one-on-one.

As Fellowships Coordinator for the OEF, I work with our Formation Office to try to maintain a current Geo-Locator List. What follows is a kind of summary "where" we are and the "type" of Fellowship dynamics going there. I'm noting here only the OEF participants, though some of our Fellowships may include, or even be centered by, TSSF or SFO Franciscan colleagues.

Maturity of Fellowships generally requires the commitment and some proximity of the Professed among us.

Sort of (not strictly) following the time-zones:

We have two 2-person Pacific Fellowships, one in New Zealand, one in Japan; and 1 Professed in each one.

The Northeast U.S. has a Mature Fellowship with presence from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, NY City and the Metro Area which includes New Jersey; and there are 10 Professed among them -- our greatest number of Professed in a Fellowship.

They have been gathering regularly and shift the location and the mode of their gatherings. One would expect that one day there will be a Northern New England and a Southern New England/NY Metro pair of Fellowships, that might one day become a triad.

Upstate New York has the makings of a Fellowship from such city/towns as Maryland, Rochester, Ithaca, and Syracuse -- 2 are Professed.

Virginia & North Carolina currently lack any Professed, but there's some OEF life in the area.

Georgia is downright lively as the Piedmont Fellowship with Coffee/Lunch gatherings, and at least one retreat along the way. 1 Professed and 1 Associate energize those gatherings.

Florida is hopping with presence in the north and south, calling themselves The Tropical Troubadours, and with 1 Professed in the north, 1 Professed in the south. A sororital (sororal?) 3-some has shaped down in the southeast corner.

Pennsylvania has the makings of a Fellowship within that state. but currently only 1 Professed.

Ohio, Indiana, a bit of Michigan, Kentucky, & Tennessee center the Mariposa Fellowship with a strong contingent of 5 Professed (& one more coming!), but widely scattered among those states. We're hoping they can sustain a rhythm of gathering.

Ontario, Canada has the makings of a 4-person Fellowship, 2 of those Professed.

In the Great Lakes region of Minnesota, Wisconsin, reach west to North Dakota & Iowa, add northern Illinois's Chicago Metro area we have the Lighthouse Fellowship with 5 Professed providing the glue for this expansive gathering of OEF colleagues who have achieved some bit of regularity.

Southern Illinois and Missouri might link and bond into a Fellowship with 1 Professed there and another not too far away.

And then there's Texas! and the Bluebonnets Fellowship -- with a strong Fellowship history and ivy that extends to Georgia & Oregon. 2 Professed hold the center in Texas, and early in this year of 2016 they will hear and receive the vows of a Novice from Oklahoma! Until further notice, the Bluebonnets Fellowship will consist of Texas & Oklahoma. And sometime soon we may hear of Vows of Profession spoken on Texas soil from a long Novitiate.

Nebraska, Wyoming, & Colorado, shouldn't there be a Where-the-Plains-Meet-the-Mountains Fellowship? There's 2 Professed in that configuration, not to mention one of our disappeared brethren who could be found by one seeking the lost sheep.

In Arizona & New Mexico we have 3 Professed and an Associate and await word of the The Sunshine Fellowship forming or however they choose to name themselves. We gave blessing to our Associate to become fully membered in another Order carrying his

Franciscanism with him. There is word of a fled-Texan.....stay tuned.

Looking to the Northwest corner of the USA and the Southwest corner of Canada, it is, so far, a US story. Our Chaplain is removing his/our presence from northern Washington to beef up our Mariposa Fellowship, but we have some not-yet-Professed OEF life in that State that links certainly to our 2 Professed in Oregon and called the Juniper Fellowship.

In Northern California with the San Francisco Bay as its Center is the Golden Gate Fellowship with Professed north and south of the Bay and OEF presence in the City and on the door-step of the State Capitol.

Southern & Central California has spawned interest in the OEF over the years but no sustained journeys towards Profession, no shaping of a Fellowship. We await the Spirit's working.

All of that still leaves some very solitary OEF Sisters & Brothers in:

Australia, Nigeria, Hungary, Ireland. Mississippi, Nebraska (link towards Colorado or North Dakota?).