

1 **The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans' Statutes**
2 (a proposal for the Order's consideration at Chapter 2016)

3
4 **Article I: Name**

5 The name of the Order shall be The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.
6

7 **Article II: Mission Statement**

8 Celebrating God's presence and grace in everything, following the Poor Christ of
9 the gospels in lives of mutual care and accountability in harmony with the faith and
10 practice of the whole Franciscan family, we are the Order of Ecumenical
11 Franciscans. We seek to grow in the love and knowledge of God and to serve
12 Jesus Christ in faithfulness to the spirit and example of Saints Francis and Clare of
13 Assisi.
14

15 **Article III: The General Rule of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans**

16 **Prelude**

17 The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy
18 Spirit in the Church, unites all members of the people of God, clergy and laity,
19 who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saints
20 Francis and Clare of Assisi.
21

22 Christ calls us to follow this way, so that he may send us, like Francis and Clare, to
23 offer all that we have and all that we are. We shall strive to be living witnesses
24 among all nations to the great truth that, in Christ, "there is no longer Jew nor
25 Greek, there is no longer slave nor free, there is no longer male nor female"
26 (Galatians 3:28); that there are no barriers of race or nations in God's family.
27

28 St. Francis and St. Clare recognized that people from all walks of life are called to
29 follow Jesus and live the simple Gospel life. We strive for unity as an Order,
30 comprising those who live a radical embrace of the evangelical counsels of
31 Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, as well as those who live a secular life of
32 simplicity. Among us are those who embrace the active life, the contemplative
33 life, the eremitical life and various mixes thereof. We seek a life of daily
34 conversion under a definite discipline and lifelong vows. Members may be from
35 any Christian faith community or church. Members are clergy and lay, inclusive of
36 all gender identifications and sexual orientations. We live and serve in our
37 respective communities as married, partnered or single.
38
39

1 **OEF Principles**

2 1 through 16

3 *(It is suggested that the Order consider updating its Principles, with particular*
4 *attention to #17.)*

5
6 **Article IV: Chapter**

7 This Order is a self-governing body whose members meet annually and is
8 governed by its Professed Members who shall select Council Members and make
9 decisions under the discernment of the Spirit in accordance with our Principles and
10 in harmony with Jesus Christ.

11
12 Each year the Order comes together for Chapter/Convocation, which consists of
13 the following: The Order’s Business, Community Prayers and Worship, Ongoing
14 Formation, the Sharing of Our Lives, the Celebration of Rites of Passage, and the
15 Re-dedication to Our Rules of Life.

16
17 **A. Business and Discernment**

18
19 **1. Chapter Business**

20 Chapter business is approached through our Prayerful Discernment of God’s will
21 for the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. We boldly affirm that in opening
22 ourselves to the Spirit through a process of silence, loving, respectful dialogue and
23 a deep listening, we, as the gathered body, will be led into the will of God. We
24 call this process of conducting business and decision-making Prayerful
25 Discernment *[see Article VIII]*.

26
27 **2. Participation of Absent Members**

28 Absent members of the Order are also encouraged to participate in Chapter by
29 lovingly and respectfully sharing their thoughts and concerns with a proxy, who
30 will in turn share these with the gathered body at Chapter. A present member may
31 serve as proxy for up to two absent members. If possible, absent members will
32 observe the silence that supports Prayerful Discernment wherever they are, and let
33 love transcend all distance. Ultimately, discerning the will of God for the Order of
34 Ecumenical Franciscans at any given Chapter will rest with the gathered body at
35 that Chapter.

36
37 **3. Agenda Creation**

38 Any member is welcomed to bring a concern, an idea or a proposal to the Council
39 at any time for further consideration. If it is a concern that a member would like
40 to see brought to Chapter for discussion and discernment, the member is asked to

1 bring the matter to the attention of the Council at least 4 months prior to Chapter
2 allowing sufficient time to be added to the Chapter's agenda.

3
4 **4. Annual Reports**

5 Annual Reports at the invitation of the Council will be presented by the following
6 at Chapter (copies will be made available): The Council, Formation Coordinator,
7 Treasurer, Fellowship Coordinator, and JPIC Animator. Committees and other
8 individuals representing and/or working on behalf of the Order may be asked to
9 report as well.

10
11 **5. Chapter Minutes**

12 Chapter Minutes including reports will be sent to each OEF member in a timely
13 manner.

14
15 **B. Community Prayer and Worship**

16
17 **1. Worship Services**

18 The Council coordinates the Worship Services at Chapter, freely delegating and
19 inviting participation of others. The Service of Profession which includes Rites of
20 Passage for those in formation, and the Renewal of Vows and Personal Rules of
21 Life for the Professed will be coordinated by the Council in collaboration with the
22 Formation Coordinator.

23
24 **2. The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans welcomes all present to the Lord's Table**
25 **as we worship together at Chapter or in local and regional OEF gatherings. At the**
26 **invitation of the Council any person may be welcomed to lead worship and a**
27 **professed member of the Order will preside at the Eucharist/Communion/ Lord's**
28 **Supper/Breaking of the Bread/Agape Meal in accordance with the discipline of**
29 **one's respective faith community and one's individual conscience, both of which**
30 **we respect and affirm.**

31
32 **3. The use of inclusive language is encouraged.**

33
34 **4. The expression of our diverse faith traditions is valued and celebrated.**

35
36 **5. Members of OEF shall renew their Vows and Personal Rule of Life at Chapter.**
37 **Absent members should renew the same within a worship setting if at all possible.**

38
39 **6. Newly selected Council Members are commissioned at Chapter.**

1 **Article V: Positions of Service to the Order**

2 Those in positions of service to the Order will collaborate as needed, caring for one
3 another with respect and deep listening, approaching decisions prayerfully, and
4 striving to reach unity for the benefit and well-being of the entire Order.
5

6 A. The Council

7 The Council is made up of 5 Professed Members of the Order, both lay and clergy
8 without distinction, who have been selected by the Professed at Chapter to ensure
9 the healthy and effective administration of the Order, to support the Order
10 community in its Life and Witness, and to represent the Order to the wider Church
11 and the world. Council Members are trusted to seek the well-being of the entire
12 Order and are accountable to the membership.
13

14 1. Responsibilities of the Council

15
16 a. Administration of the Order

17 i. The Council ensures the timely tending of all financial, legal and
18 administrative matters. The Council also ensures internal Order communication.
19 To these ends, the Council appoints and works in consultation with the Treasurer,
20 Scribe and any others needed to fulfill these responsibilities.

21 ii. The Council will coordinate preparations for our annual
22 Chapter/Convocation, delegating responsibilities as needed. The Council will set
23 the agenda for Chapter discernment and will facilitate dialogue, discussions and
24 prayerful discernment.

25 iii. The Council facilitates and coordinates the public voice of the Order to
26 other orders, churches, allies in particular ministries, and to the public at large.
27

28 b. Nurture of Community Life and Witness: The Council nurtures the spiritual
29 well-being of the Order, seeking to reinforce the integrity of the Order and its
30 faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

31 i. Council meetings: The Council will meet regularly (monthly as a
32 guideline), asking for prayer and encouraging input from the membership.
33 Meetings may be face-to-face or by telephone conference, Skype, or other
34 available means. The Council will determine how its meetings will be facilitated
35 and organized.

36 ii. Annual discernment on community Life and Witness: At any time, but
37 especially during Lent, members of the Order are asked to prayerfully reflect upon
38 the Life and Witness of our Order. Each member is invited to share these
39 reflections with the Council. Taking these reflections into consideration, the

1 Council will prepare a report on the same which will be presented annually at
2 Chapter, with copies sent to the membership.

3 iii. Chapter/Convocation: The Council will coordinate preparations for
4 Chapter/Convocation, facilitate Chapter Discernment and coordinate Worship
5 Services.

6 iv. Spiritual nurture of those in Formation: The Council will support and be
7 in consultation with the Formation Coordinator for the spiritual nurture of those in
8 formation and to address formation needs which may arise.

9 v. Spiritual nurture of the Professed: The Council will coordinate effective
10 means for the Professed to report regularly on the living of their Rules. The
11 Council will provide opportunities for ongoing Franciscan formation.

12 vi. Pastoral care: Understanding both the difficulty of a dispersed
13 community providing pastoral care and that each member's local faith community
14 is the primary source of pastoral care, the Council will assure pastoral
15 communication with all Professed Members of the Order. There will be times of
16 crisis within the Order as well as times of crisis for members – illness, loss,
17 difficulties. The Council will strive to be a prayerful, listening, and compassionate
18 presence, mediating among members as needed, and encouraging all members to
19 care one for another. The Council may form committees to further support this
20 work.

21 vii. Calling forth gifts: Recognizing and cherishing the many talents and
22 passions present within the membership, the Council will call forth gifts of
23 members to be used for service within and beyond the Order.

24 25 2. Terms of Council Members

26
27 a. The Council will be selected every three years for a term of three years. Council
28 Members are selected from the Professed by the Professed. A Council Member
29 may serve up to three consecutive terms on the Council, then must step away from
30 this service for at least two years.

31
32 b. In the case of a vacated seat on the Council, the Council has the discretion of
33 appointing a replacement or of asking the Chapter to select a replacement at the
34 next Chapter Meeting. Serving a completion of term will comprise “one term”,
35 regardless of length of time actually served.

36
37 c. If at any time during the three year term, the Council, under the guidance of the
38 Spirit, recognizes a need for greater inclusion and/or balance on the Council, the
39 Council may appoint up to two additional members to meet this need. Such terms
40 also comprise “one term”, regardless of length.

1 3. Selection of Council

2
3 a. Prior to Chapter:

4 i. Members of the Order are encouraged to be in prayer individually and
5 collectively regarding the needs of the Order and the gifts of members.

6 ii. Any Professed Member unwilling or unable to serve on the Council will
7 notify the Scribe in writing requesting that his or her name be removed from
8 consideration for service on the Council.

9
10 b. At Chapter:

11 i. Community prayer and discernment: On the first full day of Chapter, a
12 period of at least three hours will be set aside for members to pray and to seek
13 discernment on Council selection. Members may meet informally to talk or may
14 spend time in solitary discernment. Proxies may speak with the absent members
15 whom they are representing. The outgoing Council will host a discernment
16 meeting (45-90 minutes) for those desiring collective prayer and discernment.
17 Participants are invited to speak as the Spirit moves them to speak. This is not a
18 time to engage in debate or dialogue regarding the selection. Rather, it is a time to
19 listen and to seek the Spirit's guidance.

20 ii. Gatherers: The outgoing Council will appoint three "Gatherers" from
21 among those in attendance at Chapter. It is encouraged that visiting representatives
22 from other Franciscan Orders serve in this capacity when possible.

23 iii. Emerging Council: First gathering of names. Following the time of
24 prayer and discernment, each Professed Member, when ready, lists on paper and
25 submits to the Gatherers the names of five Professed Members to serve on the
26 Council. Absent members do the same via their chosen proxies. The Gatherers
27 will announce the names of 10 Members: 5 who identify as male and 5 who
28 identify as female. These will be the five most frequently named in each gender
29 category.

30 iv. Second gathering of names: The membership will have an opportunity
31 for further prayer and discernment. Following this time, and in the same manner
32 as before, Professed Members will again select and submit 5 names, this time from
33 this list of 10. The Gatherers will tabulate those selections, and announce the
34 newly selected Council at the next appropriate gathering.

35
36 The Council will consist of: 2 Professed Members who identify as male (the 2
37 most frequently named), 2 Professed Members who identify as female (the 2 most
38 frequently named) plus one additional Professed Member of either gender (the
39 next most frequently named of either gender).

1 *[Note: The intention is for the Council to reflect gender balance. We recognize*
2 *there are persons who identify as neither exclusively male nor female. Such*
3 *persons are not to be excluded.]*
4

5 B. Other Positions of Service to the Order

6 Collaboratively recognizing the gifts of members, the Council selects members to
7 fill the following necessary positions within the Order: Formation Coordinator,
8 Scribe, Treasurer, Fellowship Coordinator, JPIC Animator (Justice, Peace, and
9 Integrity of Creation), Newsletter Editor, and Technology Coordinator. The
10 Council calls forth other gifts as necessary, forming committees as needed for the
11 good of the Order. All of the above are accountable to the Council and to the
12 membership of the Order.
13

14 1. Selections by the Council

15

16 a. Office of Formation

17 i. The Formation Coordinator, in consultation with the Council, is entrusted
18 with the training of Formation Counselors and for the materials used in formation.

19 ii. The Formation Coordinator will choose one or more Formation
20 Assistants to aid in the fulfillment of the entrusted formation responsibilities.

21 iii. The Formation Coordinator welcomes all inquiries to the Order and
22 coordinates introduction into the formation process.

23 iv. The Formation Coordinator in consultation with Formation Assistants
24 and individual Formation Counselors, accompanies Postulants and Novices along
25 the journey of formation.

26 v. The Formation Coordinator directly notifies the Fellowship Coordinator
27 with the names, locations and contact information of serious Inquirers and those
28 entering into Formation to facilitate face-to-face contact with Order members and
29 to encourage participation in local and regional gatherings.

30 vi. The Formation Coordinator collaborates with the Council, Fellowship
31 Coordinator and respective Formation Counselors in welcoming Postulants and in
32 receiving the vows of Novices. These Rites of Passage may be celebrated locally,
33 regionally, or at Chapter.

34 vii. The Formation Coordinator provides the symbols marking transitions to
35 Postulancy, to Novitiate, and to Profession per current decisions of the Order
36 regarding these symbols.

37 viii. At least Quarterly, the Formation Coordinator will share with the
38 Council the current updated list of those in Formation and their respective
39 Formation Counselors.
40

1 b. Scribe: The Scribe is chosen by the Council to facilitate communications within
2 the Order.

3 i. The Scribe is responsible for assuring that Chapter minutes and records of
4 discernment are taken and for their distribution to all members of the Order.

5 ii. The Scribe may be asked to take minutes at meetings of the Council.

6 iii. The Scribe is responsible for the prompt dissemination of all minutes and
7 other pertinent Order information. To this end, the Scribe may utilize
8 Fiddlesticks, postal mail, the OEF website, OEF List and/or other available media.
9

10 c. Treasurer

11 i. The Treasurer is responsible for the receiving and depositing of donations
12 to the Order.

13 ii. The Treasurer is responsible for all cash disbursements approved by the
14 Council.

15 iii. The Treasurer is responsible for filing any necessary tax returns to the
16 IRS.

17 iv. The Treasurer is responsible for presenting a financial report quarterly to
18 the Council and yearly at Chapters.

19 v. The Treasurer works with the Council to create an annual budget.

20 vi. The Treasurer will be sensitive to OEF members in regards to financial
21 matters. Individual financial situations of members will be kept confidential, and
22 only shared with other Council members if absolutely necessary to conduct Order
23 business.

24 vii. In consultation with the Council, the Treasurer is responsible for the
25 Registrar work of Chapter as well as Chapter Scholarships and pricing.

26 viii. In consultation with the Council, the Treasurer may appoint an assistant
27 for Registrar work if needed.
28

29 d. JPIC Animator (Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation)

30 i. The JPIC Animator is asked to serve by the Council and works
31 collaboratively to elevate awareness of Justice and Peace issues.

32 ii. The JPIC Animator establishes links of communication between the OEF
33 and other organizations in common commitment to JPIC issues and concerns.

34 iii. The JPIC Animator, working with the Fellowship Coordinator,
35 facilitates participation in local and regional events promoting JPIC issues and
36 concerns.

37 iv. The JPIC Animator encourages and supports Order participation in the
38 Franciscan Action Network and Franciscans International, and keeps the Order
39 informed of FAN and FI events and actions.
40
41

1 e. Newsletter Editor

2 i. The Newsletter Editor is asked to serve by the Council and works
3 collaboratively to publish a newsletter four times annually.

4 ii. The Newsletter Editor collaborates with the Scribe in disseminating
5 pertinent Order communications.

6
7 f. Technology Coordinator

8 i. The Technology Coordinator is asked to serve by the Council and works
9 collaboratively to set up and maintain technological networks and communications
10 for the Order. This will include the OEF website, Facebook, Twitter, Skype,
11 teleconferencing and any other technological advances of the future.

12 ii. The Technology Coordinator convenes various members of the Order to
13 accomplish the technical tasks to maintain technological advances.

14
15 g. The Council may make other appointments and form committees in accord with
16 its discernments of what might add to the life and well-being of the Order.

17
18 2. Appointments made by the Formation Coordinator

19
20 a. The Formation Coordinator enlists Formation Assistants to aide in meeting the
21 responsibilities of the position and in the work of formation.

22 b. The Formation Coordinator matches each Postulant and Novice with an
23 individual Formation Counselor for accompaniment on the journey toward
24 Profession.

25
26 **Article VI: Membership**

27 Admission into this Order is gradually attained through a time of orientation, a
28 period of formation of at least two years, and Profession of the Rule. The entire
29 community is engaged in this process of growth and formation. Profession, by its
30 nature, is a permanent commitment. Members of this Order meet annually.

31
32 A. Inclusion

33
34 The membership of the OEF consists of those who have made vows as Professed
35 or as Novices. Inquirers and Postulants are welcome to participate in the life of the
36 community as they explore their vocation with the OEF.

1 B. Disciplines

2

3 Recalling that Franciscans are called to rebuild Christ's Church, at every stage
4 Members and Postulants will:

5 1. Have an updated personal Rule of Life, and will strive to follow it.

6 2. Exercise a discipline of prayer and biblical study/reflection.

7 3. Engage actively in a local Christian faith community.

8 4. Meet regularly (monthly) with a Spiritual Director.

9 5. Attend annual Chapter/Convocation and regional gatherings.

10 6. Make regular financial contributions to the Order, as well as contributions of
11 time and talent, prayers and passion in accord with the Order's needs and modes of
12 service.

13

14 C. Signs of Membership

15

16 1. Professed Members:

17 Professed Members receive a San Damiano cross upon Profession and may use the
18 monogram "OEF" after one's name.

19

20 2. Novice Members:

21 Novice Members receive a Tau cross upon Novicing, and may use the monogram
22 "n/OEF" after one's name.

23

24 D. Journey into Membership

25

26 1. Inquiry

27 a. Initial Dialogue:

28 The Formation Coordinator or that Office's designee dialogues with the
29 Inquirer regarding the nature of our Order and the Inquirer's interest therein.

30 b. Entry Requirements:

31 The following are required prior to reception as a Postulant:

32 i. Active engagement in a local Christian community or church

33 ii. Acquisition of a Spiritual Director

34 iii. Draft of a Personal Rule of Life addressing the eight elements: Worship,
35 Prayer, Penitence, Work, Lifestyle, Mission, Obedience, and Community

36 iv. Submission of a spiritual autobiography

37 v. Submission of an application

38 vi. Financial donation

39 vii. Two letters of reference

40

1 2. Postulancy

2 Postulancy is an initial period of formation lasting at least six months, as an
3 exploration of membership in the OEF.

4
5 a. Formation:

6 i. Upon completion of the entry requirements, one may be received into the
7 Order of Ecumenical Franciscans as a Postulant. Each Postulant is assigned a
8 Formation Counselor. The Postulant will reflect monthly with the Formation
9 Counselor on a formation chapter as well as on the following of one's Rule.

10 ii. The Postulant is expected to continue in the disciplines outlined in VI-B.

11
12 b. Requirements to move into the Novitiate:

13 i. Completion of the first six formation chapters

14 ii. Letter of request from the Postulant to enter the Novitiate

15 iii. Letter of recommendation from the Formation Counselor

16 iv. Statement from the Spiritual Director

17
18 The Novicing Ceremony may take place in the presence of any Franciscan
19 community upon the completion of all the requirements.

20
21 3. Novitiate

22 The Novitiate is the first stage of membership in the OEF, a period of formation
23 which may last from two to five years.

24
25 Applicants to the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans who have had formation in
26 other Franciscan Orders that led to Profession, may enter the OEF as a Novice-By-
27 Transfer.

28
29 a. Formation:

30 i. Formation continues with monthly reflections on formation chapters with
31 one's Formation Counselor as well as reflection upon living one's Rule. The
32 Novice is expected to continue with the Disciplines as listed in VI-B.

33 ii. Formation of Novices-By-Transfer into the OEF shall include reflections
34 on their previous experiences towards becoming a member of their former Order,
35 contrasts and similarities between that Order and the OEF, content in our 30
36 Chapters, and anticipations of Life and Profession in the OEF.

37
38 b. Requirements for Profession:

39 i. Completion of the Formation Chapters

40 ii. Discussion with one's Formation Counselor about Profession

- 1 iii. A written request from the Novice to the Formation Coordinator that one
- 2 be considered for Profession
- 3 iv. Recommendation of the Formation Counselor
- 4 v. A written statement from the Spiritual Director
- 5 vi. A letter of support from one's spouse/partner
- 6 vii. Affirmation by the Treasurer of a pattern of giving
- 7 viii. Attendance at least one Chapter/Convocation prior to the one at which
- 8 the Novice will profess
- 9 ix. Meeting of the Novice with the Council, Formation Coordinator, and
- 10 Formation Counselor

11
12 c. Presentation for Profession:

- 13 i. Upon completion of these requirements, the Novice is presented to the
- 14 Professed gathered at Chapter for discernment of Profession into the Order.
- 15 ii. For the purposes of Order business at that Chapter, those accepted for
- 16 Profession will share the responsibilities of participating as a Professed Member of
- 17 the Order.
- 18 iii. If accepted, Profession of Vows will be spoken during worship ceremony
- 19 at Chapter.

20
21 4. Profession

22 Profession by nature is a permanent commitment to the community.

23
24 a. Formation:

- 25 i. Formation is ongoing.
- 26 ii. Professed Members are expected to continue in their disciplines as
- 27 outlined in VI-B.

28
29 b. Engagement with the OEF community:

- 30 i. Professed Members will report quarterly, as assigned, to another in the
- 31 Order during Advent, Lent, Pentecost and Francistide.
- 32 ii. Professed Members are invited and encouraged to offer their gifts in
- 33 service to the Order.

34
35 5. Release from Vows

36
37 a. Novice Members:

- 38 i. Any Novice who wishes to be released from vows should consult with the
- 39 Council, the Director of Formation and with his or her Formation Counselor.

1 ii. Following this consultation, the Novice may be released from vows by the
2 Formation Coordinator.

3
4 b. Professed Members:

5 i. Any Professed Member who wishes to be released from Vows must
6 consult with the Council.

7 ii. Following this consultation, the Professed Member may be released
8 according to the discernment of the Professed Members gathered at Chapter.

9 iii. In a situation we hope will never take place, the Council can restrict a
10 Professed Member and bring the matter to the Chapter to consider dispensing the
11 member's vows.

12
13 6. Associates

14 Very occasionally the Order may grant Associate membership in the Order. As
15 examples, someone previously Professed in the OEF who finds it necessary to
16 suspend their relationship as a vowed Member of the Order, yet wanting to
17 maintain a connection to the Order; or someone who has completed the 30
18 Chapters of formation, but because of health or imprisonment is precluded from
19 attending Order Chapter Meetings. Those designated an Associate to the Order
20 prior to the amending of these Statutes shall retain that designation.

21
22 7. Friends

23 The Order is grateful to the many friends of the Order. The Order may formally
24 acknowledge a friendship by naming an individual "Friend of OEF".

25
26 **Article VII: Amending the Statutes**

27 A. These Statutes may be amended by the discernment of the Professed Members
28 gathered at Chapter.

29
30 B. Written submissions of proposed amendments will be distributed as they are
31 received to all Professed Members of the Order.

32
33 C. Absent members may participate through consultation with their chosen proxy,
34 the ultimate discernment resting with the gathered body.

35
36 D. Amendments made at any given Chapter will be reviewed and evaluated at the
37 subsequent Chapter meeting.

1 **Article VIII: Prayerful Discernment**

2
3 The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans approaches decision making, such as in the
4 Business Meeting of a Chapter, through Prayerful Discernment, a process of
5 listening for the promptings of the Spirit until we come to the Leading of the
6 Spirit—the experience of unity in the will of God. This process affirms Christ
7 Jesus’ authority over our lives and our Order, confidence that the Spirit of Jesus
8 will guide us, and our commitment to following God’s will into the Divine plan.
9

10 We acknowledge the primacy of the Holy Spirit in our communal process through
11 the discipline of not running ahead of the Spirit’s leading. We ‘wait on the Lord’
12 rather than rush willfully into our own limited wisdom. The difference between
13 the two is a profound sense of peace and awe before God rather than the sense of
14 having won or lost regarding our own perspective. This consolation is not always
15 given to us, but we treasure the obedience of faith far more than winning or losing
16 a debate.
17

18 This process of decision-making is a prayerful, humbling, opening of each one of
19 us, through which the Holy Spirit can lead us into Unity. It offers us a sacramental
20 understanding of working together as a community in the presence of God.
21 However, Prayerful Discernment of the Leading of the Spirit is contingent upon
22 each individual’s attitude—there must be a willingness to remain open to the
23 promptings of the Spirit within us all.
24

25 This process may only be truly engaged in through faith and trust that Jesus is in
26 our midst and that his Spirit will guide us. It calls for patience, prayerfulness and a
27 willingness to listen deeply. It requires each of us to be humble and open to hear
28 what the Spirit is saying, and, most demanding of all, the ability to let go of our
29 attachments, what we may individually desire as the outcome.
30

31 It is in actually letting go of the outcome that the Leading of the Spirit may
32 creatively guide us. This process offers an alternative to debate driven dialogue
33 and finding a common denominator that everyone ‘can live with’. The process of
34 Prayerful Discernment is a sacred way of letting go and of letting God lead.
35

36 Chapter Business Meeting discernments and decisions will most often find
37 immediate or quick clarity and unity as discerned by both the Listener and the

1 gathered body. Yet even these easier discernments need to reflect the spirit of this
2 deep-listening process. It is a gift when the Leading of the Holy Spirit seems clear
3 to all the gathered and allows us to move on to further business.

4

5 Although the process itself is solemn, let us remember that just as the Spirit may
6 lead us into silence and prayer, the Spirit can and will also lead us with humor,
7 laughter, song and dance. Let us allow the Spirit to move us, as she so desires.

8

9 The process of Prayerful Discernment seeks to transcend debate and argument as
10 the mode of Chapter Business Meetings, trusting that the Holy Spirit will guide our
11 interactions towards building up the Body of Christ in mutual respect and love.
12 Let us trust the Spirit of Jesus to guide us to right decisions and into the good that
13 awaits us in the Mystery of God.