

## A PULL TOGETHER OF OUR REFLECTIONS

RE: THE ROLE OF STATUTES, as the Statutes Review Team, OEF

May, 2015

### SOCIAL/RELIGIOUS/CHURCH CONTEXT

An inheritance from previous historical Orders. (CG)

To inspire us with wisdom & practice from the past. (CG)

Secular law requires we have Statutes. (CG)

Every organization needs them to be ordered, vs. chaotic. (BJK)

Emerge from prayer and collective thinking and rethinking. (MV)

Are created by human beings working at being community-in-Christ and trying to be open to the Way of God's will (MV)

### STATUTES IN A FRANCISCAN ORDER ARE.....

A covenant defining who we are & strive to be, and how we are to be with each other.

(LD) To say at least who we are trying to be, and to guide & us in living that out.

(BJK) To organize our efforts and to resource us when we have questions or disagreements. (BJK) They spell things out with definition and procedures for our interactions and discernment for the way forward. (BJK) They guide our mutual care and accountability. (BJK) Reveal both our understanding of who we are as this little Order, and our understanding of who God is for us and how God works through us. (MV)

A sacred promise to each other and to our Lord. (LD)

A sacred document written with love, prayer, & guidance of Holy Spirit.(LD)

Are a reach for the transcendent. (MV)

Emerge from prayer and collective thinking and rethinking. (MV)

Need to invite us to listen to one another and to the Silence, to be in communion with one another (MV)

Our bones/skeleton providing structure, protection, ability to move. (LD)

A guideline. (LD) A guiding influence. (CG)

Guidelines to how we live together. (JJR)

Guidelines mutually agreed upon that provide ease for our ordinary life (JJR)

Guidelines that keep us from having to ask the same questions over and over again. (JJR)

Protection when things get difficult (e.g., litigation)

An historical trellis to help us grow, but not the plant itself. (CG)

To pass on some kind of form of life & to avoid chaos. (CG)

The parameters that help us channel goodness in a focused & helpful way. (CG)

The guide, the guardrails, to help us stay on the path to which we're called.

(SSK)

Puts structures in place to keep us sound, faithful, true. (SSK)

They declare what is currently seen as necessary, (MV)

They prompt us to act together with a common mind & spirit. (MV)

As binding as we wish it to be. (LD)

Loose garments that give direction and organization.

A living document, able to grow with us. (LD)

Are a reach for the transcendent.

Encompass varying degrees of spiritual maturity. (CG)  
More Beatitudes than Law, but some of both. (CG)  
All the other stuff not in our Mission Statement, General Rule, Principles. (SSK)  
It helps us live the charism. (SSK)  
The way we do things. (ANV)  
Hold the memory of the ways things have worked well, or not so well, in our time together. (ANV)  
Are the fruit of previous experience, of practical and collective wisdom. (MV)  
Serve as a means to enculturate new folk into the OEF. (ANV)

#### GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

....HS guides the writing (LD)  
....the HS empowers it. (CG)  
....the Master Gardener is the HS! (CG)  
....the HS has the last word on everything. (BJK)  
....trusting that God will lead us through. (JJR)  
....we must always be responsive to the nudgings of the Spirit. (MV)

#### OUR MISSION AND PURPOSE WE ASK THE STATUTES TO SUPPORT

To walk down this particular Franciscan dirt road together. (LD)  
The Mission Statement as stated in Article II: "Celebrating God's presence and grace in everything, following the Poor Christ of the gospels in lives of mutual care and accountability in harmony with the faith and practice of the whole Franciscan family, we are the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. We seek to grow in the knowledge and love of God and to serve Jesus Christ in faithfulness to the spirit and example of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi". (BJK)  
To live the Franciscan Charism, close to the heart of Jesus. (SSK)  
To live the Gospel life together in obedience to the church. (JJR)  
To live the our commitments to Spirit, truth, and love. (JJR)  
To be surprised by love. (JJR)

#### CONSEQUENCES OF BREAKING IT (as a Covenant)

The body hurts. (LD)

#### FRANCISCAN STATUTES ARE NOT....

....a legal document, legally binding. (LD)  
....laws or by-laws (JJR)  
....a set of rigid rules, hard, dry, brittle. (LD) ....cast-in-stone laws. (BJK)  
....a new Torah. (JJR)  
.... a final answer to any question put to them. (BJK)  
.... the heart & soul of the Order (they are in the Franciscan Charism) (SSK)  
.... the charism. (SSK)  
.... the voice [or power] of Christ calling in the moment. (SSK)

## OUR STANCE TOWARD OUR STATUTES

- Love, compassion, inspiration are the tendons, ligaments & cartilage that allow movement and so trump the bones. (LD)
- We balance two impulses: (a) to keep them deliberately vague, open, to allow us to feel our way into the future as the Spirit guides us; & (b) to craft them in accord with our current discernments. (CG) Can be tightly or loosely written, closely or lightly enforced. (JJR) To hold them lightly, seeing/holding loving relationship as more important than enforcing Statutes. (ANV)
- Require of us art & intuition & a growing/deepening maturity. (CG)
- Towards each other with our Statutes as backdrop: forgive! forgive! forgive! (ANV)
- They bear the stamp of humility that we don't always get it right and never perfectly right. (MV) - We will always get it wrong. (ANV)
- They occupy the space between the profound & the mundane, between the necessary ordering & the givenness of freedom-to-decide, between obedience & freedom. (MV)
- They beg forgiveness for blindness not yet realized, while they lean into the hope for tomorrow's clarity. (MV)
- We resist easy and careless alteration, but welcome amendments in accord with new understandings.

## QUESTIONS WE ADDRESS TO OUR STATUTES

What among their Articles most needs to be changed soon? (LD)

Do they intend to be "open", or defining? (ANV)

Do they create or foster hierarchy, or support egalitarian & collaborative community? (ANV/MV)

Are they necessary? Must they define ways of doing things? (ANV)

Whom do you say we are? (MV)

Are we taking you too seriously? or not seriously enough? (MV)