

July 4<sup>th</sup> , 2015

To: OEF Chapter

From Juniper OEF

Re: International contacts.

In May, I had the opportunity to spend three days in Belfast with Scott Peddie. I was able to introduce Scott to Br. David Jardine SSF who had lived with me for several years in the SSF house in Brooklyn. David is a Belfast man who has been working for 30 years on a ministry of healing for our land in Northern Ireland (NI). David is a Church of Ireland (Anglican) clergyman as well as an SSF friar. He has started something called Divine Healing Ministries <http://divinehealingministries.org/> in Belfast which has gathered an ecumenical movement four times each week, twice in a Church of Ireland church, once in a Presbyterian Church and the fourth in a Roman Catholic church. Scott and I were also able to meet with an MD who is an active TSSFer in NI. David, Scott and I spent a very lively evening with Paul Hamilton, a psychiatrist who has just submitted his OEF rule. All of this is very exciting development for OEF in NI.

On June 21<sup>st</sup>, OEF received a message from Br Pavel SFES a message on our Facebook page. The Saint Francis Ecumenical Society (SFES) is an ecumenical Franciscan Order in Eastern Europe. They express considerable interest in developing a relationship with OEF. As a result I have developed a correspondence with Br Pavel SFES, much of which I have included in this report.

In addition to the above international developments, it should be noted that we now have two members in New Zealand and two members in Japan. God, the Holy Spirit is leading us in ever larger international circles.

I am hoping at the Chapter to convene a group of OEFers interested in this project and to continue exploring the relationship with SFES.

Peace and all goodness, Juniper OEF

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Here begins the correspondence with Br. Pavel SFES:

On June 21<sup>st</sup>, OEF received a message from Br Pavel SFES a message on our Facebook page.

[Павел Владимирович Левушкан](#)

Jun 21st, 2:24pm

I am a guardian of the Saint Francis Ecumenical Society (SFES): ecumenical Franciscan order created in 2005 by people from Catholic, old catholic, free Anglican/episcopal, Lutheran and charismatic churches. <http://ecumena.ru> Today we have 58 members in Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Sweden, Germany, Great Britain, Israel. Brother Daniel in Israel, who took monastic vows. We see our mission in expanding fraternal contacts with sister ecumenical Franciscan communities in USA, Canada and Europe. We would like to offer your community to begin a dialogue to establish fraternal cooperation.

We have a great desire to have fraternal relations with your brotherhood. We would like to start a dialogue and fraternal cooperation, invite your priests read our lectures, as well as assist the Society. We really need your help and advice. We have just started the path that you go for a long time. And

we want to learn from you

Pavel Levushkan SFES

*As a result I explored the SFES webpage and contacted Pavel.*

2015-06-22 2:48 GMT+03:00 John Robertson <[jgrbklyn@gmail.com](mailto:jgrbklyn@gmail.com)>:

Hi Br. Pavel

Thanks for posting to the OEF - Order Ecumenical Franciscan - Facebook page. It is a great blessing to be connected. My guess is you may have found our webpage <http://www.oeffranciscans.org/> that has among other things a little of our history and our principles <http://www.oeffranciscans.org/about/the-general-rule/>.

We are about 70 members mostly in North America but with members also in Ireland, Japan and New Zealand. Our membership includes Quaker, Pentecostals, Salvation Army members, Lutherans, Anglicans, United Church of Christ. Methodist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Ecumenical Catholics among others OEF is a member of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity with the Anglican and Roman Catholic Third Orders in North America.

It will be great to get to know each other better. This is my email. Shoshanah and I are co-ministers of the Order, John Michael is the Scribe and Communications person. Lorraine facilitates our Facebook Page.

When this email get to you, please respond and we will continue our discussion

Peace and all goodness

Hugs and blessings

Br. Juniper OEF

*Pavel responded.*

On Mon, Jun 22, 2015 at 10:05 AM, St. Francis Ecumenical Society  
<[ecumena.ru@gmail.com](mailto:ecumena.ru@gmail.com)> wrote:

Dear brother! Yes, we are very pleased to continue the dialogue!

I first wrote somewhere else in 2006-2007. Then the minister was Fred Ball.

But we are constantly monitoring your site and continue to be a desire to establish formal fraternal dialogue, so that we together make common cause - building up the unity of the Body of Christ, sharing the gifts of the Spirit, and follow along the Franciscan vocation.

We in the ministry get inspiration from three sources:

1. Experience and St. Francis Spirituality
2. The spiritual community of Taizé
3. The history of the Community "Ecumena", founded in the 80s of the 20th century in Moscow, by a dissident brother Sandr Riga. She also relied on Franciscan spirituality. We are its heirs.

Today we have a community of Third Order SFES and a group of urban monks SFSR (The Saint Francis Ecumenical Society - Regular, 5 men in Israel, Bielorussia, Russia).

The basis of the spiritual life: to follow the statute and spirituality of Francis in our worldly activities, as well as the creation of peace, acceptance and unity. Where brothers and sisters live near they are going into small groups for reflection, study and practice Christian meditation. We cooperate with WCCM.org.

We also have a friendly relationship with bishops of Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Augsburg Confession in Russia, Orthodox Anglican Church in USA, Old Catholic Church in Slovak Republic, International Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches, Apostolic Episcopal Church in Portugal and Czech Republic, Karelian Evangelical-Lutheran Church, Lutheran Church - International (USA), etc.

Br. Pavel SFES

*I responded*

2015-06-22 17:39 GMT+03:00 John Robertson <[jgrbklyn@gmail.com](mailto:jgrbklyn@gmail.com)>:

Hi Pavel

Thanks for writing back. I remember Fred mentioning you all some years ago. sorry we dropped the ball.

You probably know that we were found from TSSF because at that point they were not accepting members who were not in communion with the See of Canterbury. We are a disburse group with some regional gatherings.

I live in Brooklyn New York, am an Episcopalian/Anglican. I was for 25 years a first order friar in the Society of St Francis. I left with SSF to remain working in the poor neighborhood of Brooklyn where I have served since 1983. After leaving I met my husband and live with him in the neighborhood serving in a variety of way.

I looked over your website and read most of Br Paul's book (using Google Translate - never the best). OEF is what is called here an "open and affirming" order. Many but not most of our member live in committed same sex relationships. Our members who do not identify as LGBT affirm the call to relationship of those of us who do live in committed same sex relationships.

I understand that we as an Order are presently only in parts of the world where same sex relationship have been affirmed. I understand from my Anglican heritage that this is an issue that cause much division among Christians around the world. If our Orders are going to express some kind of unity we will need to talk through our understanding of this issue. Paul's book and Panich Elena article tell something of what the issue looks like from where you all have be placed in God's Kingdom.

Aside for this issue, what I read on your website sounds very much like OEF and it would be great from my point of view to explore closer connections in the body of Christ.

I am grateful for you persistence in reaching out to us and hope that St Francis and Clare will assist us in forming strong community affections.

Peace and all goodness

Hugs and blessings

Juniper

*Pavel responds*

On Mon, Jun 22, 2015 at 10:48 AM, St. Francis Ecumenical Society <[ecumena.ru@gmail.com](mailto:ecumena.ru@gmail.com)> wrote:  
With regard to same-sex unions, I would like you to understand it well. We live in a different cultural environment, and only a few years ago, even faced with this question.

Now we are studying it carefully and try to work out for themselves a truly Franciscan attitude that should be adopted and enforced openness to the needs of people and their lives.

We have one brother who is gay. He is a monk. Perhaps there is someone else, we do not look at the sexual orientation of our members. Perhaps in the future we will be more open to this question. But in Russia, it is difficult - very different thinking people. But - here it is important to understand this - that your country has been held for decades, for us - the story of a maximum of 4-5 years.

Our views on this matter are also changing, and some thoughts in the book is already out of date. Today we are more open in their thinking.

I can say one thing. We are completely and totally agree with the fact that homophobia is - sin. And we believe in a God who is the Eternal Love, not Heavenly Dictator

Br. Pavel SFES

I respond

On Mon, Jun 22, 2015 at 11:04 AM, John Robertson <[jgrbklyn@gmail.com](mailto:jgrbklyn@gmail.com)> wrote:  
Thank Pavell

I expected this answer from you and am grateful to receive it. We all live in the time and space where our Beloved puts us. I remember not so many years ago that same sex marriage anywhere would have been unimaginable and I am now grateful to go to blessings in many Christian Churches.

I also understand in humility that not every idea that seem so certain to me stand the test of time. In prayer we deeply trust God to lead us ever closer to the Truth.

I do know that the issue is very hot in Russia. The morning paper has a story about the government in Moscow blocking a performance of a play about the Trial of Oscar Wilde, who was a turn of the 20th century English play write who was put on Trial for his same sex attractions. These issue of patriarchy always seem to link to nationalism.

Beyond this, how to get to know each other. Tell me a little about you.

As I said I am living in Brooklyn working as a social worker in community development and with frail elderly people needing health care and assistance. I teach social work at two university in New York.

Today I have the flu that is hanging on so I am around trying to take care of myself.

I try every day to spend an hour in meditation to read spiritual reading and to scripture.

Shoshanah, my co-minister lives about three hours way in Connecticut. She is coming to spend the day with me on Wednesday so I will talk to hear about your email.

Looking forward to getting to know you better.

Hugs and blessings

Juniper

*Pavel responds*

On Mon, Jun 22, 2015 at 11:32 AM, St. Francis Ecumenical Society <[ecumena.ru@gmail.com](mailto:ecumena.ru@gmail.com)> wrote:  
I was born in Siberia, and lived there until 2004. Now I live in Latvia, Jelgava.

In Siberia, I was actively engaged in human rights activities. There was a staff member of the Lutheran Hour Ministries. Already it has created the first Lutheran resources on the Internet.

When I arrived in Latvia - opened its own portal <http://Baznica.Info>. Today it is a popular portal that read almost all known pastors and bishops of the Protestant churches in the former USSR.

For a long time was a member of the Roman Catholic Church. But I do not agree with the monarchical principle of the church, and their views on ecumenism - as an organizational merger. I feel closer to the vision of ecumenism - like network structure.

Since 2010, participating in the organization of a crusade - the mass evangelization in Eastern Europe. Many work in Israel are helping the local church and the victims of the Holocaust.

A few years ago I joined the Lutheran Church of the Augsburg Confession in Russia and became a pastor. And this year, he was elected bishop of the Southern Diocese. In January 2015 I was ordained.

In our diocese we are engaged in the work of rehabilitation centers. We now have three centers, which are more than 70 people. This is mainly the homeless and ex-convicts, to which we give a second chance in life. This is a great project for us, he is worth 100 000 dollars a year, which we are making money for their needs.

*I respond*

On Mon, Jun 22, 2015 at 12:41 PM, John Robertson <[jgrbklyn@gmail.com](mailto:jgrbklyn@gmail.com)> wrote:  
Thanks Pavell

I also have worked for many years in substance use treatment with folks out of prison. Had me involved in some of the early HIV related work with Users. In that world you often see the exhaling power of God at work as people turn their lives around.

I will get back to you with more after I meet with Shoshanah. Let me know what next steps would be helpful on your side.

Blessings

J

*I also sent this website from John Michael*

On Sun, Jun 28, 2015 at 8:42 PM, John Longworth <[pastorjml78@gmail.com](mailto:pastorjml78@gmail.com)> wrote:

<https://www.reconcilingworks.org/what/mm/support-for-marriage-from-lutheran-leaders>

Here are a variety of pastoral letters and theological statements from the Evangelical Lutheran perspective.