

Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity 2019 Report

A Report to the Minister and Chapter of the Order of Secular Franciscans (OFS), the Third Order, Province of the Americas, Society of St. Francis (TSSF), the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF), the Order of Lutheran Franciscans (OLF), and the Order of Franciscans of Reconciliation (OFR).

June 10, 2019

Since its inception in February of 2004, the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity has believed:

“For the sake of creation, we are called to bear witness to the essential unity of the church, the Body of Christ, by working towards Franciscan unity in all of its expressions. We will achieve this through dialogue and collaboration among the Orders which follow Christ in the tradition of Francis and Clare.”

Since the annual meeting on August 9-10, 2018 in Detroit MI, the Committee was charged with a number of tasks to foster further unity among our respective Orders and to become more transparent to one another. This began with the discussion and the creation of a website and Facebook presence.

www.franciscanunity.org

The web address' ownership was transferred from Fred Ball (OFR) to the Joint Committee for continued use. The Order of Lutheran Franciscans has graciously agreed to cover costs and maintain the website for the first two years. A link to our Facebook presence is also found on the website.

In other meeting business of the Joint Committee we extended an invitation to the Order of Franciscans of Reconciliation (OFR) into our Committee's fold. The invitation was accepted immediately making them the 5th Order to join our work.

And, with respect to the leadership and representation of the Joint Committee, in the Fall of 2017 it was the turn of OEF to convene for the Joint Committee. Due to several circumstances, OEF received the approval from the committee body to act as a co-convenor arrangement involving both Br. Jahiro LeFevre and Br. Louis Canter from OEF to carry out this role together.

Due to Br. Louis Canter's uncertain health and additional responsibilities with work, upon prayerful discernment has decided to resign as an OEF representative from the Committee. The OEF's active Council is in the process of selecting another member to carry out the duties. The person selected will be invited to attend the annual Joint Committee meeting in August. In turn, Br. Jahiro, OEF will continue to serve out the final year of the three year term as convenor of the Joint Committee, to which in 2020 the leadership will be turned over to OFS.

Joan Verret, TSSF, due to uncertainties surrounding her health, has also decided to resign from the Committee. We wish to thank Joan for her many years of commitment to the work of this Committee. She will truly be missed.

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Until this past year, the Joint Committee produced conferences throughout the United States, designed around The Elements of Franciscan Unity, bringing together the leadership of now the five sponsoring Orders to reflect on and discuss those Franciscan principles we hold in common regardless of our ecclesial identification. Those conferences have been enthusiastically received, and have served to further our mission to broaden our understanding of each other and to deepen our relationship.

At its Annual Meeting last August 2018, following much prayer, discussion, and listening to each other, the Joint Committee discerned that the 2019 conference again should be based on the Franciscan Elements we hold in common between our respective Orders. Masud Ibn Syedullah (one of the original founding members of the Joint Committee) shared that the coming “Together” aspect of conference holds a lot of power and is also integral to the experience of a program to alleviate our differences and deeply exploring our commonalities.

The conference was held from Friday afternoon, May 9 through Saturday afternoon, May 10 at the Palatine Renewal Center in Florissant, MO. Facilitated by Masud (member of the Joint Committee), and other members of the Joint Committee, the purpose of the conference was to provide greater understanding and appreciation for the diversity of God’s presence in the world as Franciscans. The theme of the conference was “Elements of Franciscan Unity: Intersections of Our Life - in Christ, Saints Francis and Clare.”

The conference attendees numbered 23. Special note: Jan Parker, a local to the area and the current National Minister of OFS, also made an appearance with the committee members over dinner the evening before the conference but did not attend.

2019 Annual Meeting will be August 9-10 in Mesila, NM to begin the plans for the upcoming year. During this time we will review how the previous conference went, plan for the 2020 conference, and to become more acquainted with the new members rotating on to the Committee.

And last, I wish to express my deep gratitude to the respective Chapters for their on-going financial support of this valuable and mutual ministry, and continuing to encourage members of their Order to attend the Elements of Franciscan Unity conferences when it occurs in their area.

Current members of the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity are:

Joyce Wilding, TSSF	Dede Bruns, OLF
Masud Ibn Syedullah TSSF	Christopher Markert, OLF
Jahiro LeFevre, OEF	David Gerardot, OFR
Louis Canter, OEF	Jim Schratz, OFR
Donna Hollis, OFS	
Michael Carsten, OFS	

Respectfully submitted, June 10, 2019
Br. Jahiro LeFevre, OEF, Convener