

This report covers the time period beginning with Chapter/Convocation 2018 and continuing to Chapter/Convocation 2019.

Chapter/Convocation 2018 was June 28-July 1, 2018 at the Pallotine Renewal Center in Florissant, Missouri. Our theme was: "Listening Deep, Rising Up, Embracing Hope". We began underground, worshiping in the midst of tornado warnings. We participated in support of migrants at rallies in downtown St. Louis and at a Migrant Detention Center. We prayed with one another, broke bread together, renewed our vows, and welcomed new members. We listened, learned, laughed and longed together, knowing that this Chapter experience was but one small yet significant step on our journey of faith (communal+individual) which began long ago and continues on.

2019 Chapter/Convocation will be June 27-30 at the Roslyn Center in Richmond, Virginia. This marks our 35th Anniversary as an Order. Our theme is: "35 Years: Looking Back, Moving Forward". We will select our next Council. Again we will renew vows and welcome new members. In the midst of worship and prayer, surely there will be more listening, learning, laughter and longing. With curiosity and joy, we anticipate what awaits us.

It is not always what we plan. Nor is it always what we expect. We plan what we can, we prepare as we see fit, and then we surrender to surprise, trusting in the guiding Spirit of our Living Loving God.

The OEF Statutes easily fill two pages outlining "Responsibilities of the Council". (Article V - A.1) These responsibilities fall into the broader categories of: a.) Administration and b.) Nurture of Community Life and Witness.

These could keep an eager Council unceasingly busy and engaged on multiple fronts in numerous and various activities for a long, long, time.

We are not that eager Council. But we have tried to be faithful.

We have chosen to meet regularly (generally weekly) by Zoom, to be available to the membership, to pray for one another, and to be attentive to matters that are brought to our attention. We begin and end each meeting in prayer. We share "news from around the Order", including thoughts and concerns shared on the chat-list and in Fiddlesticks.

* We have held several collaborative phone conferences

with the Formation Team and with our Treasurer, Nancy.

- * In December, we gathered for a face-to-face meeting in St. Louis.
- * Brother Jahiro and Brother Louis have served as our OEF Representatives to the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity.
- * Markie represented OEF at NAFRA (the national meeting of OFS).
- * John son-of-Syvert and Brother Louis, along with John Michael, attended the OLF Chapter (Lutherans).
- * None of us were available for the TSSF Chapter, but, thankfully, Fred Jaxheimer graciously represented us well there.
- * Markie and Brother Louis joined other OEF participants in May, 2019 in St. Louis for the Mini-Conference on Elements of Franciscan Unity. This was sponsored by the Joint Committee with participants from other member-Orders.
- * We have each participated, as able, in OEF Regional Gatherings.
- * We have communicated quarterly through Fiddlesticks, and at other times via email or on the chat-list.

We each bring our unique gifts (and challenges) to the Council. Over the years, we have learned to lean on one another, and have done our best to encourage one another. This is our last year serving together as this Council.

The experience has been humbling, daunting, energizing, exhausting, gratifying, and grace-filled. Our love for this Order has deepened, as our walk along this Franciscan path has strengthened.

At various times, each of us has hit unexpected curves in life (health, work, family, etc.). At such times, we have had to rely on the other Council members to carry the work forward for a time. We are grateful that this is shared work.

As Council members, we find that we are often the "go-to" people. When there is a question, a concern, an idea or suggestion, people come to us. We listen. At our best, we are readily responsive. Sometimes we deal with it promptly. Sometimes we pass it along to others who can better address it. Sometimes, inadvertently, we may let it fall between the cracks. It is good to have a "go-to" place/people.

But it is important to keep this in mind:

The Council is selected from among the professed and serves
-- not over the membership -- but from among the membership.

The Council's job is one of empowering and calling forth gifts.
The Council is charged with making sure that everything
runs smoothly and functions well, but the Council's work,
perhaps more importantly, is a work of nurture.

Of confidentiality.

Of prayerful wondering.

Of careful consideration.

Of compassionate connection.

Of faithful sharing.

Of presence.

Each of us, in little ways, have done at least a little of each of these.
We trust that that matters.

It is also important to keep this in mind:

While the Council may, at times, speak for the Order,
in reality, each member speaks for the the Order.

Our words and our actions, our lives and our passions
are the work and the words of this Order.

That matters, and it matters mightily.

We are all in this together.

Now and always, may we pray one for another.

In Christ, our Light and our Salvation,
OEF Council Members
Shoshanah, Markie, John son-of-Syvert,
Brother Louis and Brother Jahiro