

FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 133

Lent 2020



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TSSF Chapter, 2019

By Br. Bruce James Kay, OEF

Chapter Meeting of Third Order Society of Saint Francis (TSSF), Province of the Americas, Trinity Retreat Center, West Cornwall, Connecticut, October 7-11 (M-F), 2019. Brer Bruce James, OEF, reporting

I was selected to serve as your representative to this meeting, mainly because I live only 2 hours from West Cornwall, and travel expenses were minimal (I even took folks to the airport on my way back home). Trinity Retreat Center is awesome! It has very nice rooms and nice grounds with lots of walking opportunities, and a small "farm" (well, donkeys, chickens, and gardens), right on the Housatonic River. There is a freight train right through the property (only occasionally), excellently prepared food from local sources (and wine at dinner!). Apparently, you can do private retreats there at a very reasonable price (\$85/day with 3 meals).

Preliminary documents were sent out in 8 rounds, ranging from the fellowship coordinator report to the financials of Trinidad, Tobago, and Nevis. Extensive! I called them the ODF, the Order of Documentarian Franciscans, when I presented my report on the OEF.

On Monday we all arrived for dinner and held an orientation session for new Chapter Members, who are "Ministers of the Chapter," (i.e., representatives appointed for fixed terms, responsible for the business of the Province). All the participants, except for me and a few others, were Chapter Members. All day Tuesday and Friday morning they held Chapter, with Wednesday and Thursday devoted to Convocation. It was very nice to get most of Chapter out of the way first, and devote ourselves to Convo totally for two straight days.

In Chapter, these statistics were presented: 510 professed in Province of The Americas, 18 countries, 47 fellowships, 3 virtual fellowships, 17 professed this year. Topics included:

Rule experiment, sacred ecology, companions project, mentoring project, tools for tertiaries, Zoom chat room, pod casts, working group on formation, "parking lot" should be called "garden" (not a compost heap!), future of TSSF, desire to do more integration into local parishes,

(Continued on page 2)

TSSF Chapter 2019... continued

difficulty of getting younger generations involved, how to do prison ("Perugian") ministry, requirements for confession/rite of reconciliation, safe community document, reporting, and perception of Chapter ordering "from above".

Convo consisted of two main parts, one presented by Charlie, TSSF, on the history of the tertiary movement, which was very interesting and informative. One of his main points was that metanoia is the main charism of 3rd orders: "Living the evangelical life in a spirit of ongoing conversion."

Throughout Chapter and Convo, their concern for the earth was first and foremost. The other main part of Convo was led by Steve and Teresa, who have a Church of the Woods in Canterbury, New Hampshire. They literally drag stuff into the woods on a sled and hold worship there! (In case of really bad weather they are building a primitive shed-like structure.) "The world awaits beyond the walls." In their four Convo sessions, they led us in four modes to approaching nature: 1. Creation and incarnation; 2. Prophets of destruction & the collapse of creation; 3. Into the tomb; and 4. Resurrection/Renewal. They held one Eucharistic Service inside, after we had spent time on our own finding interesting things (leaves, stones, sticks, etc.) to share on the table, and one service outside among hordes of gnats! Steve explained that the gnats were actually a sign of a very healthy local ecosystem.



Service among the gnats!

During their third session, "Into the Tomb," as Steve spoke, I took notes that turned out to be in somewhat poetic form, which I'd like to share:

Waiting in the darkness

Doing nothing

While Christ

Does what he does

New things take shape

In the darkness

In tomb

And womb

No accident

That Christ is planted

In the Earth

New life comes forth

No matter how great

The loss

Blind faith

It's beyond Belief

And yet

It is what we do

New life is emerging

It will happen

With or without us

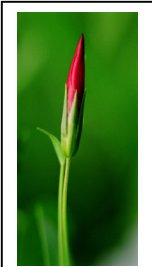
Because it is the truth

The tomb

Is becoming

The womb

(Continued on page 3)



TSSF Chapter 2019... continued

And a further session of Convo was led by Jeff, TSSF, about the preparatory document for the meeting of bishops called by Pope Francis on Amazonia, and Integral Ecology; a very rich discussion!



A very rich discussion!

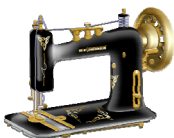
I very much enjoyed the whole thing. There was definitely a camaraderie of fellow Franciscan travelers that I detected immediately. I felt right at home in their presence; they seem to share many of the same joys and sorrows that we do in the OEF. And I felt held in their arms, as I was struggling with the recent admission of our daughter onto a psychiatric ward, exhibiting florid psychotic symptoms, which she came out of only weeks later. I let them take care of me in that regard.

I made many new friends, and got invited back to next year's Chapter, of course. But I would rather share this wonderful treat, and I think we should send someone else from OEF next year.

I'll finish up with an Order joke I hadn't heard before:

Q: What do you need to start an order?

A: Two people and a sewing machine!



TSSF Western Convocation

Siblings,

I had the good fortune to attend the Western Convocation gathering of the TSSF-ers the weekend of August 2-4, 2019 at San Damiano Retreat Center in Danville, CA as an OEF presence from the greater Franciscan Family. I carried with me the greetings and good wishes of our community for their time together.

The gathering was wonderful! The theme focused on "Care of Creation." The TSSF-ers are experimenting with Zoom and we had a great discussion via Zoom with TSSF Brother Jeff Golliher, who has done extensive work on environmental issues. On Saturday, several of the brothers from the SSF community were able to join us as well as one of the CSF sisters. The brothers are preparing to celebrate 100 years this fall.

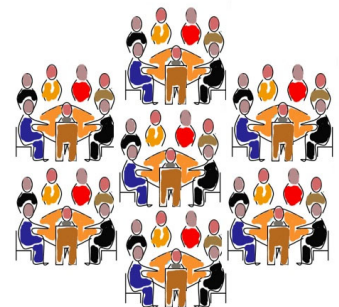
The TSSF Provincial Ministers from around the world will be gathering later this month for a time of fellowship and discussion about the order. Sister Janet, the Provincial Minister for the Province of The Americas, was part of the group at San Damiano. She asked that those gathered in Danville pray for the upcoming ministers meeting. I assured her of our prayers as well.

It is so good to be gathered with other Franciscans. Several folks mentioned knowing members of our community through work on the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity. And many folks shared about all of the "Inter-Franciscan" gatherings they have in their local areas.

It was an honor to carry our little community into this gathering.

Blessings of peace,

Sr. Kathy Lawler, OEF





Words from The Servant Council



From The Council regarding The 2020 Chapter/Convocation:

This year's Chapter/Convocation is June 24th-28th in Florissant, MO at the Pallottine Renewal Center. Our registration opens Feb. 1st for members thru March 30th, open registration is from March 15th thru May 15th, and late registration is May 15th thru May 31st. The cost is \$300.00 for Thurs. thru Sun. midday and \$400.00 for Wed. thru Sun. midday. Scholarships are available. Please contact the Treasurer, Nancy Menning, if you have a question, want a scholarship or to make a donation to the scholarship fund. Please register as soon as possible. This is very helpful in our planning. Pay when you can or no later than at Chapter/Convocation. Please contact the Treasurer about your payment plan.

Our focus at Convocation this year will be around Clare. Watch for further information about our theme.

Please remember we will be as green as possible. So, bring a coffee mug or your water bottle. Expect that there will be very little paper used. All reports need to be posted on the web site by June 1st. We will be contacting people very soon regarding where to send your reports.

We will be recycling as much as possible at the Renewal Center. This year we may see the Center's new composting system (I hope it is up and running when we get there) and the newly planted trees.

If you are driving to Chapter, please remember we need your help in picking people up at the airport and returning them to the airport. Be prepared to be asked to help us all with this service to the Order.

Please remember the Council and the many others in prayer who are preparing our time together in St. Louis. Thank you in advance for your prayers and support.

Peace and all good,

Sr. Markie Oliver, OEF, on behalf of the Council

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A Memorial for Br. Baloo (Keith) Downey:

I checked with Br. Lilith Bear, OEF regarding a memorial donation for Br. Keith Downey and we mutually agreed that a donation to Stem Cell Research would be the most appropriate. Here is the address of the University of Minnesota Stem Cell Research Program:

University of Minnesota Health-Bone & Transplant Clinic
Phillips-Wangensteen Building
516 Delaware St SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Peace and all good,

John Son-of-Syvert (Syvertson), OEF





A Few Good Reads



Ruthless Trust by Brennan Manning

(Published in 2000 by Harper One, 190 page paperback.)

This is considered a sequel to Manning's "Ragamuffin Gospel" and continues his call to all who claim to be Christian to really and truly *TRUST* the Redeemer of our lives, purely and simply. In Manning's own words: "Ruthless trust is Teresa of Avila persevering in prayer for eighteen years without one comforting emotion, believing that 'God will see justice done to his chosen who cry out to him day and night even when He delays to help them.' (Luke 18:7). Ruthless trust is heeding the admonition 'not to parade your good deeds before men to attract their notice...' (Matt. 6:1) and instead routinely perform hidden, secret acts of kindness that no one will ever know about, confident that 'your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you' (Matt. 6:6). Ruthless trust is hanging tough in the dark nights, when we are plunged into desolation but know that the absence of God is only *apparent*. As Bede Griffiths said, "I feel myself in the void, but the Void is totally saturated with love." (pp.169-170)

Brennan Manning writes as storyteller who weaves both well-researched elements with personal experience to present us with a loving, encouraging challenge to radically rest in the wonderful will of God. The work is a powerful Bible study on God's call to trust in God. He explores the historical call as reflected in the story of Christianity. At times he offers loving criticism of how the institution has gone off course. This volume blessed me with this challenge. It seems that we live in a world that hungers for a genuine Franciscan witness like that of Francis and Clare who radically threw off the trappings of security their world offered in order to trust the Lord of Life. Their witness transformed this world and our era needs again to be transformed, re-formed by radical trust that allows the Spirit to work. Give yourself a spiritual vitamin infusion and read, ponder and be changed by this witness. As Manning wrote in

his closing paragraph:

"...the splendor of a human heart which trusts that it is loved gives God more pleasure and delight than Westminster Cathedral, the Sistine Chapel, and all other human glories combined. Why does our trust offer such immeasurable pleasure to God? Because trust is the preeminent expression of love. Thus, it may mean more to Jesus when we say 'I trust you,' than when we say 'I love you.' (pp.180-181)."

-David Delacroix, OEF

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Peace to you! I wanted to recommend a book for your consideration entitled Domestic Monastery. It is written by Ronald Rolhieser. It is a great and easy read with great gems regarding spirituality and contemplation in the home. I found it a small, compact and great read.

-Louis Canter, OEF

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Grace and peace! I received a wonderful Christmas gift from my Spiritual Director: Psalms for Praying by Nan C. Merrill. The book has been around a while, published in 1996, and some of you might be familiar with it. It is basically a rewording of the Book of Psalms in poetry form. There is a review from Madeline L'Engel which says,

The very livelihood of the Psalms causes us to want to say them in our own language... Nan Merrill has done this marvelously, and I'm grateful for this labor of integration and love.

I am enjoying this addition to my daily office!

-Sister Chris, OEF





Formation Station



Greetings Beloved Siblings!

The Formation Team continues our work of accompanying the Inquirers, Postulants, and Novices of OEF as they discern their place in our community and we discern their call to live and serve alongside us. There were 115 inquiries in 2019 and we thank Sr. Helen "Kiwi" for deftly answering the doorbell and helping them begin their process. We currently have 9 Postulants, and 11 Novices in active formation. We anticipate that at least two, and perhaps more will be ready to petition for Life Profession at the 2020 Chapter in St. Louis.

Speaking of St. Louis, members of our team, the Servant Council, and some of the assistants to the council for ongoing spiritual formation will be gathering with representatives of OFS, OLF, and OFR from January 31st to February 2nd. This is our first effort to host a Joint Franciscan Formation Summit. We will be sharing, learning, and exploring together on topics like: the formation process, companions & chapters (accountability in formation), transfers, re-entry, exit paths, rites of passage, ongoing formation, and helping professed go from mentee to mentor. Your prayers for the success of this gathering are welcome.

Finally, I want to offer a personal word of thanks to Sr. Sophie Elise. Not only is she a great and thoughtful reporting companion, but she eagerly stepped in to help the Formation Team as our Postulant Coordinator. We are all so grateful for her efforts. She has discerned that the time has come to step down from that role in the Spring of 2020, so we want to wish her well and celebrate her contributions. We will have an announcement soon about the new configuration of the team.

If you are feeling called to serve as a formation companion, please let me or Sr. Paula Clare know and we will be sure to include you in our deliberations as new candidates prepare to enter the Postulancy. That's it for now, as I like to say, "Be good, drive safe, and don't do anything I would do." Love you all!

Peace and All Good,
Br. John Michael, OEF

Introducing:

Hi Brothers and Sisters, I am pleased to introduce my formation companion, Gail Stephens, who has recently begun formation as a Postulant. Gail is a Quaker from upstate New York. She currently serves as Clerk of her meeting's Earthcare Committee and also carries a concern for war tax resistance. She has returned to the OEF after a long absence to try her vocation once again. Please join me in welcoming Gail to the OEF family.

Peace and All Good,
Sophie Elisa

* * * * *

*Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am pleased to introduce a new Postulant to OEF, Phil Waselik. Phil is my formation companion as he explores the OEF. Phil is a Lutheran minister from Oakdale, Connecticut and is in Clinical Pastoral Education at Gundersen Health System in Lacrosse, Wisconsin. In addition to his ministry, he has been involved in music education, community bands and many other interests. Welcome Phil!

John soS

.....

Phil in his own words:

My name is Phillip John Waselik. I just moved to La Crosse, Wisconsin to work at Gundersen Health System as Chaplain Resident. I also serve as an ordained pastor for the ELCA. Currently, I play in a community band, and serve in pulpit supply when needed. I originally come from Connecticut where I attended the University of Connecticut and was Director of Bands at a local public high school. My seminary experience was at the Lutheran Theological Seminary of Philadelphia and also served at a congregation in Pennsylvania before moving to Wisconsin. I am honored to begin this journey with the OEF.

Formation Station... continued

I like that we're introducing new Postulants, and delight in introducing Andrew Clifford of Richardson, Texas, a member & unpaid staff at 1st UMC, McKinney, Texas — north of Dallas. There, he is a founding member of the FUMC Center for Transformative Prayer (CTP). Andrew considered himself a part of the New Monastics movement prior to discerning his Franciscan fiber while reading Richard Rohr. He then found us, the OEF, and the possibility of covenantally living a strong commitment to, and spirit of, Franciscanism and ecumenical enthusiasm. He is Chief of Clinical Development of Mind Body Wellness Center in Plano, Texas; a former competitive runner; and is lead singer in a classic rock band -Retriever! The Formation journey has begun!

- michael v.

.....
Andrew in his own words:

I have been abiding in Jesus Christ since 1972. I am originally from CA where I spent the first 35 years of my life, and I have been living in TX since 1991. I have worshiped as a surfer, runner, and currently lead singer in a classic rock cover band, with this later silly hobby being practiced at the request of my spouse who thinks I am too serious at times. I am married with four kids, and two are still living at home. I intentionally practice as an evolved progressive inclusive evangelical, with a strong call to witness to the presence of the universal Christ, universal salvation, and loving kindness to all creation. I practice Clinical Psychology in medical settings (Rehab Hospitals, LTAC, SNFs and Nursing Homes), and specialize in the care of patients with chronic pain, chronic disabling medical conditions, depression, and neurocognitive disabilities (dementias). I serve at First United Methodist Church in McKinney as a founding member of the Center for Transformative Prayer at that Church. I am also the founder of the Christlike Mindfulness Fellowship in McKinney TX. Blessings and peace to all.



Greetings All!

My name is Jerrod Oltmann. I've been on the edge of OEF for years after Brother John Michael introduced me to the Order, as I was going through the discernment process for ministry in the U.C.C. I currently reside in the United States in Bangor Maine. Bangor is about 4 hours from Boston and 2-3 hours from the Canadian Border. I currently serve in a small church in Bangor, and I am pursuing licensure within the Maine Conference of the U.C.C. Outside of my church work, I am a tax advisor in Bangor, specializing in representing people dealing with the Internal Revenue Service and Maine Revenue Service. I also help run a nonprofit that helps survivors of domestic violence recover from financial abuse. I live with my partner Hayley and our three cats Lydia, Lizze, and Bennet.

I was originally attracted to the OEF because I was looking for a more structured approach to discernment and the OEF's ecumenical and UCC roots combined with a focus on creation care and seeing the life of Jesus through the eyes of Francis really appealed to me. I think this is what keeps me coming back when I can, despite being one of the longest running postulants in the order's history! Aside from dealing with quite a bit of transition in the past few years, due to moving and family occurrences,

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Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Submissions for the Pentecost 2020 issue of "Fiddlesticks" will be accepted immediately.

Deadline for submissions is April 15, 2020.

Send submissions to Sister Chris at
capoef@solarus.biz

or snail-mail to:

Christine Petersen, OEF
934 Round Oak Ct.*
Nekoosa, WI 54457

Thank you!

**Note the new address!*



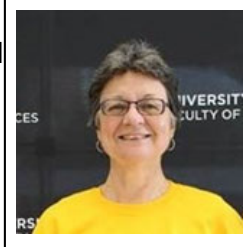
Formation Station... continued

I've found that the order has something to teach me, and I believe I have something to give back even if it isn't as often as I'd like.

Warmly, Jerrod

* * * * *

Catherine Maine says: I am a spiritual director and was a staff member of the Jubilee Program in Spiritual Direction (Ontario). I have been a sacred circle dance facilitator for over 20 years and a labyrinth facilitator through Veriditas. I am interested in ecological sustainability and in building community, cultivating hope and taking action in this context. *Carol Stiver is Catherine's FC.*



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JUDY EVANS TAKES NOVICE VOWS

At 1:00 PM on November 6, Judith (Judy) Evans spoke her vows as a Novice in the OEF, becoming the first (and only) OEF member in Idaho. Judy's pastor, Rev. Marci Glass officiated at the Rite of Passage held in the Evanses's home. Judy's husband, John, and her mother, "Judy Senior," were present and her Formation Companion, Sophie Elisa Dale joined in by phone to pray for Judy as she said her vows. Judy, active in her church, Southminster Presbyterian Church in Boise, Idaho, has a leading to promote the stewardship of creation, and has begun teaching an adult religious education class on the care of our Mother Earth. It has been a joy to serve as Judy's Formation Companion, as she truly has a Franciscan heart, loving and open to wonder, and is a dedicated follower of our "little way."



L-Rev. Marci, R-Judy

Submitted by Sophie Elisa Dale, OEF

OEF Online Bible Study

A group of six or seven have been meeting for Bible study using the communication software ZOOM. All OEFers are welcome to join.

We are studying the Gospel lesson from the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel Reading for the Sunday that follows. We have now studied Luke 10: 1-11 & 16-20, the sending out of the 72; Luke 10:25-37, The Good Samaritan; and Luke 10:38-42, The Martha and Mary story. The sessions have been fun, and have taken us all deeper into our faith and our exploration of living the Franciscan way. We use the "African Method" bible study: We first read the passage and everyone identifies a word or phrase that stands out for them. We then read the passage again (in a different translation), and everyone identifies how this passage impacts them individually. We read the passage a third time (in a third translation) and everyone identifies how the reading impacts us as a community. Then time for general sharing on the passage. Fourteen members responded to the poll about day and time. The most popular time is Monday @ 8:00 EST, Next there is a tie for Tuesday and Wednesday @8:00 EST. I am not free on Monday or Wednesday. Going forward, I propose that we alternate between Monday and Tuesday evening @ 8:00 PM EST. So last week's bible study was on Monday January 27th at 8:00 est. **Everyone is welcome! Our meeting time is 8:00-9:30 PM EST,**



You will need a computer or a smart phone with a head set (and camera would be good) to participate. If you are interested in joining, send me an email at jgrbklyn@gmail.com and I will send you the Zoom link. We can also talk on the phone to get you started. It will be great to have you with us! Br. Juniper, OEF.

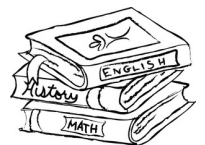


OEF History Project



For those who haven't heard, we (Sr. Dale, Br. Ron, Sr. Markie, and I) are working on a history of the Order. As we move forward, it would be helpful to me to receive copies of pictures, notes, meeting records, and the like to help fill out the content of the book, especially anything that reflects not only "business" decisions but personal takes on the Order at any given moment in time.

Thanks, Betty Lou



From the OEF Archives

"How can space be left for the one God except by immersing oneself with courage in the way of contemplation, and the way of encounter without confining God in one's reasoning? For it is always from beyond our reasoning that God comes to us, whatever our respective faiths may be." - From a 2014 OEF Northeast Retreat Reflection written by Br. Romero (Greg) Williams, OEF.

[Submitted by Br. Rat and Br. Fred Jaxheimer in memory of Brother Romero, Professed 2015, entered eternal life February 14, 2019]

* * * * *

Greetings, All!

The word of today is Grateful. I am grateful for many things but there are a few that I wish to share with you on this special day. First, I am grateful that ~ 15 years ago, members of the OEF kidnapped me and forcibly Noviced me before all assembled. Now I was not thrilled about it at the time; but today, I am aware of the many blessings that come from within the OEF Community. Second, I am grateful that Br. Fred has given me a job as the Guardian of the OEF Archives. These are the records which formerly resided in "the Box" which spent many years traveling the land, accumulating records as it was passed from Treasurer to Treasurer and handed off to other Servants over the years. Now encased in steel - nothing goes in or out without my inspection and approval. Just don't ask about that one check stub or receipt for a contribution to the Joint Committee of Franciscan Unity in 2007 - I will plead the fifth. Lastly, I am grateful that today, January 25th begins the year of the Rat. I was initially very disturbed to hear that it only comes around every 12 years! That seems so ridiculous, but Fred mentioned that the Rat is the FIRST of the 12 Chinese zodiac signs and that improved my attitude a little bit. So on this day which begins the year of the metal rat, I stand on this metal box and wish all my siblings in the OEF a Happy New Year – one which I pray is filled with blessings and adventure and all the characteristics which come with my animal spirit--well certainly those which also complement our Franciscan Charism: Wit, Alertness, Flexibility, Vitality, and most importantly, being Content with a Simple and Peaceful life.

Br. Rat



Our Good Causes

**A forum for sharing the ministries of OEF members*

I wanted to share 2 good causes in my area. I also hope others will share some info about other good causes they work with.

First, the OFS, our Catholic Franciscan siblings. Their leadership packs tote bags for shelters along the border. If you go to their web site www.secularfranciscansusa.org and work your way down the page you will find "1,000+ Ways to share." This will inform you about this and other service projects. At my Regional Fellowship gathering (Crossroads) last October, we gathered up our loose change and ordered some socks.

The second good cause is a personal service project that I run. So, this is an old fashion request for support. The Wild Card Café, my grab and go, offers free breakfast foods, hot drinks and snacks here at Ball State University. Over the past 2 years we always wanted to see at least 20 students each day and generally we did. This year we are seeing 30 or more students each day. The Cafe is open 2 days a week (Wed. and Thurs. morning 7:30am to 10am). We are currently setting up some more fundraisers to meet our increased costs. More students means more food is needed. Last year we had a grant that provided money for equipment and staff support (that was for me) and some for food. This year we do not have a grant. If you find this service project something you are interested in supporting, please send checks to: Grace Village Campus Ministry, 1400 W. Riverside Ave. Muncie, IN, 47303. (Sorry, we do not have PayPal.) On the memo line write either WCC supply, that is for food and equipment or WCC support and that is for supporting staff (me). Also follow us on FB for some great photos. I think sharing some of the work that we are doing is helpful for knowing what we all are called to do and be. Many of you are prayer warriors. Please keep praying for all of us. Thank you

Peace and all good,
Markie Oliver, OEF



Fellowship News



Part of the task of the Fellowships Team is to “watch the world,” this place and that place, and take note of “somethin’ happenin’ here!” **What follows is a focus mostly on where we are emerging.**

-Ireland: We’ve long had Brother Scott as our lone Irish presence, then came Neal & Virginia’s decision to move to Cork, doubling our Irish presence! *[Conversely: OEF presence in Oklahoma, and thus the Central Plains, went to zero.]*

-New York City & the Metro area, there were Brothers Owusu, John Juniper, Luis, Richard and Rene; and Sister Petra. Illness and Sister Death cut short Rene’s fuller engagement as a Professed Member of the Order. At Petra’s side we’ve come to know and enjoy the presence and personality of Karen, not (yet) a member of the Order, but a steady presence among us. Then Sister Sara Holiday appeared out of the quietness of her library and home and is among us as a singing and writing presence. Her husband Gayden has participated in a gathering there. And not long after Sara Noviced, Sister Linda Barley so proximate, appeared and has Noviced.

- Eastern Canada: Brother Carlo was our lone presence around Lake Ontario, there in the Toronto Metro area; then Brother Patrick stepped out of the military chaplaincy and settled in Kingston at the east/north tip of the Lake, and Sister Catherine Maine popped up to the west of Carlo and the Lake, giving us an Ontario threesome.

- Vermont/New Hampshire was Sister Anjelika by herself in southern New Hampshire for a long time. Then came Brother John Michael to Vermont; and Sister Carol Stiver, already in NH, got a good case of Franciscan Fever. Now, Brother Dan Miller gives us a quartet in those contiguous states. Mountains and miles make fellowshiping difficult, but these 4 and Brother Obadiah up in Maine are our Northern New England presence. A Zoom gathering might be helpful to supplement gatherings of the Northeast Fellowship.

- Pennsylvania: Another longtime-alone was Brother David D. in Altoona, PA. Then came Brother Fred to the east in Sugarloaf, and now south of Fred is Sister Claire Slomski in Warminster, and our entry to the Philadelphia Metro. David D. became David and Yoseph, bringing joy to David and to us. And Donna Clair Gasiewicz is in Bushkill getting to what she can when health challenges allow. Bursts of interest appear around Pittsburgh, emerging strength of community in Pennsylvania.

- The Carolina’s - Brother Ed Holm became a Postulant, Novice, then Professed there on the NC Shore as an “only presence.” Dennis Testerman, a “forever Novice,” all alone in SC, has now been joined in SC by Sister Lone Parsons, allowing us to say: Things are evolving in The Carolinas!

- Michigan received from Ohio the presence of Brother Brendon Shaffer on its east side, to join Brother Ysidro Mohn, living in Buchanan. Then some Inquirers emerged with promise of a Franciscan journey. The Crossroads Fellowship came into being to include Michigan, and things begin to roll... and Zip! Suddenly, there is Brother Ron Nuss-Warren who magically appears in Midland! A whisper of OEF presence in Michigan becomes a shout!

- How to explain Wisconsin? How long has Sis Chris been there all by herself? Suddenly, a trio of Inquirers, all in process. Stay tuned!

- St. Louis became a place of strong OEF presence and Fellowship back in the early 2000’s; then our presence dispersed. The emergence of the Gateway Fellowship over the past year and a half has been wonderful to watch with a well-established pattern of gathering and setting up the next Gathering. The core strength there is Sr. Paula Clare and Brothers Robert Anthony, Jacoba Katya, and Steven Bowman, with Jonathan Savage and other Inquirers on the journey.

Texas, the little state at the southern end of the Great Plains is alive and rolling as the Blue Bonnets Fellowship, though scattered here and there, thus hard to gather.

(Continued on page 11)

Fellowship News... continued

-Zoom Fellowships may be a way to at least occasionally add to the regularity of gathering. In Texas, we have two long-ago Professed, Sisters Katie Cook & Magdalena Stebbing, and recently Professed (though long with us) Sister Louann O'Bannion. Then add Sister Denise Magnuson, reasonably close to Magdalena, and a Postulant readying to Novice just north of Dallas; plus some folk who also participate in Gatherings — Franciscan energy grows in Texas!

-The Northern Mountain States - We had a Novice in Jackson, WY, all alone for years; but the ember went out... Then Sister Judith Evans gave a Franciscan shout from Boise, Idaho; and Sister Nancy Menning moved to Missoula, MT.

Meanwhile, the Great Northwest Fellowship has gained in strength, with Sister Sophie Elisa and Brother Jahiro in Oregon, and the addition of Brother Stephan and Sister Jul in Washington. And like Plastic Man of old (you have to be old to remember!), they are stretching their arms to embrace a still-interested presence in Spokane and beyond to Judith and Nancy M. Zoom may provide the infrastructure to allow increased degrees of Fellowship.

Finally, California - No Professed became two Professed, then six Professed around San Francisco Bay. And now, sprouts of presence are growing in southern California with Postulants in San Diego and Palm Springs (respectively, Brother Brandon Robertson and Sister Maureen Forman). Brother Steve Jerbi, once in Encino, is whispering of a move to someplace where we have no presence — stay tuned!

Another place where we had no presence but do now: Delaware - Sister Carole Jerome.

-Inquirers where we've not been present creating the possibility of "1st Novice as a Member of the OEF from this place": Central Ohio! Alabama! Louisiana! New Mexico!

All of these are in addition to strong and not so strong Fellowships not here named. As the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, we continue our journey, and survey the horizons, ready to be surprised! Thank you, Creator God, Moving Spirit, and Ever-present Jesus!

FELLOWSHIPS COMING UP:

THE GATEWAY FELLOWSHIP centers in Missouri, includes Western Illinois, and welcomes all who will come. We are anticipating a Gathering Feb. 22nd, 9:30am-2:30pm at Model Technology Solutions, 12125 Woodrest Executive Drive, Suite 204, Creve Coeur, MO 63141. Contact Paula Clare, Steve Bowman, Bob Blattner, or Jacoba Katya Ketchum.

THE TEXAS BLUEBONNETS hope to gather for receiving the Vow of a Novice sometime mid-to-late February, probably in the Dallas-Waco area.

THE CROSSROADS FELLOWSHIP (think Indiana, Michigan, & Ohio) are working on finding the best date for their Gathering in February or March.

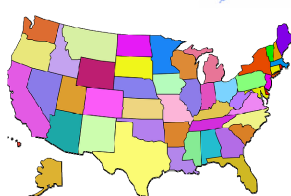
NORTHEAST NEW ENGLAND FELLOWSHIP New London CT on Saturday March 28, 2020, NOON TO 5PM. Bring a drum!

AND THROUGH THE MONTHS TO COME:

The Zoom Bible Studies are available to you weekly, coordinated by Brother John Juniper.

If you wish to be a part of the On-Line Fellowship, connect with our Irish Brother, Neal Dunnigan.

- michael v., for the Fellowships Team



Biocultural Restoration of Sacred Sites, Earth Day, and Restoration Ecology's Patron Saint

Br. Coyote (Gary Paul) Nabhan, OEF

The question, of course, is what on earth is going to bring about the transformation that is needed; what is going to help us, once again and anew, to find our place and purpose within this beautiful prolific earth? One response that has been frequently overlooked by scholars...is that of ecological restoration.

Gretel Van Wieren (2008) Ecological Restoration as Public Spiritual Practice

The Dawning of the Age of Restoration

As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of Earth Day, it may be worth taking time to reflect upon how ecological restoration initiatives have changed the perception of the larger, now globalized "environmental movement" of which many of us has been contributors. As an alumnus of the Earth Day organizing team at the headquarters for the first "Environmental Teach-In," I cannot recall hearing the phrase *ecological restoration* during that moment in our nascent movement, nor seeing it mentioned in any of our *Environmental Action* newsletters. In the spirit of the late 1960's and early 1970's, we were about protesting bad policies and bad actors; there was already a yearning for environmental justice that didn't fully express itself and flourish for another two decades.

But something curious happened when twenty million individuals of all colors, races, and creeds turned out for the first Earth Day in April of 1970: We realized that the heterogeneity of players who appeared that day would become our greatest strength. Some had little interest in policy change, but they went out and planted dozens of native trees along stream banks that day. Others of the "Flower Power" ilk expressed their gratitude to Mother Earth by sowing thousands of wildflowers seeds in meadows and gardens.

In short, many already wanted to walk the talk about healing the earth or restoring damaged lands. Curiously, they were not all of one ideological, political or spiritual persuasion. And yet, those who learned of early restoration efforts at Curtis Prairie in Wisconsin, the Fermi Lab in Illinois or the Desert Lab on Tumamoc Hill in Arizona clearly felt an affinity for these efforts to restore, not just to preserve. They were hungry for more

engagement with the science we now call Restoration Ecology.

The Patron Saint of (Restoration) Ecology

As the Earth Day organization affirms its elaboration of its own history, in the 1970's, the interfaith community became further engaged in the environmental movement for a curious reason:

"...Pope John Paul II declared St. Francis the Patron Saint of Ecologists. In some ways, St. Francis of Assisi could be viewed as the original Earth Day advocate. Not only did he care for the poor and sick, but he preached multiple sermons on animals, and wanted all creatures on Earth, including humans, to be treated as equals under God. (<https://www.earthday.org/2016/10/06/patron-saint-animals-ecology/>)

I have argued elsewhere that St. Francis would be better regarded as the Patron Saint of Restoration Ecology, for the pivotal movement in his life was when he came upon a deserted sanctuary that had been badly damaged, and heard a voice say to him:

"Francesco, come and restore this sacred place, for as you can see, it has fallen into ruin."

Although Francesco di Bernardone initially assumed that his calling would simply be to restore the abandoned chapel of San Damiano in the forest not far from Assisi, his vision of his mission expanded over the rest of his lifetime.

Francis first attempted to restore respectful collaborations among the rival city-states of Italy that had been burning, cutting and pillaging the surrounding forests for decades. He then attempted to reform the Catholic church. He refused to let his Order own property or worship in buildings, for he believed that the Creator was everywhere in Creation, not trapped within institutions.

During the Crusades, he went into the battlefields in Egypt to initiate peace talks between Christians and Muslims, resulting in a decree that made Jerusalem open to pilgrims of all religions. By the time he wrote his *Canticle to All Creatures* and died in 1226, he held an even more expansive vision: that the entire earth was sacred, and in need of constant restorative actions.

(Continued on page 13)

Biocultural Restoration of Sacred Sites... continued

It may have taken his devotees of many faiths another 750 years to fully grasp the magnitude of his vision, but today they are actively restoring the understory vegetation in the old growth forests on Umbria's Monte Subasio above Assisi using the principles, practices and protocols of restoration ecology.

Perhaps this remarkable historic tradition of a "restorative ethics" encourages restoration ecology professionals to collaborate with peoples of all faiths and creeds to heal, reclaim or re-diversify the places that their communities have identified as sacred lands.

The Restoration of Sacred Sites

In 2015, an international and interfaith team led by Travis Reynolds of Maine's Colby College called for more initiatives to utilize sacred sites as "ecological libraries" for landscape restoration, and as institutional models for biodiversity conservation (Reynolds, et al. 2015). They note that forest patches around places of worship are found worldwide, with hundreds of thousands of sacred groves nominally conserved in countries as diverse as Ethiopia, Ghana, Japan, India, and Tanzania. And yet, they and others have argued that "the dwindling biodiversity of sacred natural sites has begun to attract international attention, and some ecologists now advocate prioritization of sacred natural sites for preservation" (Reynolds et al. 2015; Shen et al. 2012; and Vershuuren et al. 2010).

Despite their poor choice of the word *preservation* for this monumental task, what these field scientists are really speaking to is the need for *biocultural restoration* of lands held sacred by many faiths all across the planet (Nabhan 2018). As culturally significant areas first protected for religious reasons, these sacred sites may have initially been refuges or relics in otherwise heavily-utilized landscapes, but they have evolved into truly biocultural landscapes that may retain many species not found in their surrounding matrix.

My point is that these sacred landscapes are usually of such cultural significance to local faith communities that restoration ecologists are likely to find willing collaborators to engage in restorative practices. These faith-based community members may not use the same lexicons or share all the same values to which practitioners of science-based restoration ecology are accustomed.

Nevertheless, their long-term interest in the sanctity of such sites opens us up to an extraordinarily large range of collaborations of a nature with which our field has not typically engaged.

My call to all of my colleagues in restoration ecology is to go beyond simply "preaching to the choir" to begin collaborations with willing partners "in many choirs," whether they are Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia, Hindus in India, Native Americans living along the U.S./Mexico border, the Druze in the Cedars of Lebanon, Buddhists in Japan, Jews in Israel, or Franciscan Catholics in Assisi (Coyote 2019; Handel 2018; Nabhan 2019; Reynolds et al 2015).

Unless we restore dialogue and on-ground practice across the Great Divide—the historic schism between science and faith, I doubt whether our visions for replenished, functioning landscapes—or even the vision of St. Francis, our patron "saint"—will ever have a chance to take root.



An Important Reminder

Reminder! Nancy Menning is the OEF Treasurer. Contributions can be made by sending a check (made out to "Order of Ecumenical Franciscans") to Nancy at:

**Order of Ecumenical Franciscans
c/o Nancy Menning, Treasurer
908 Elm St *
Missoula, MT 59802**



***Please note the new address!**





Fiddlesticks
c/o Christine Petersen, OEF
934 Round Oak Ct.
Nekoosa, WI 54457
U.S.A.



Becoming

By Denise Magnuson, n/OEF



The Cosmic Spirit, Holy and One
 Flows to the edge of time.
 Beating with love, the heart of God
 Breathes Spirit into chaos
 Creating wonder in the process of becoming.

Energy, matter, and spirit
 Dynamically expanding and contracting,
 Creating and annihilating
 Breathe in and out with the Spirit
 Bringing unity to dimension.

Organic forms linked to the Spirit in a sacred bond
 Roam and feel their way through space,
 Rhythmically reaching out to the Eternal Breath,
 Joyfully touching one another and the Holy One,
 Evolving in greater complexity and wonder.

Conscious thought bursts into color
 Streaming psychic energies into creation,
 Intensifying light, creating hope and desire.

Creation searches for truth, seeks the eternal.
 Creator Spirit, Love, enters the depths of consciousness
 Warming the heart of matter and energy.
 In goodness and truth, matter and love are drawn to each other.

Creation crashes, swelling the cosmos with pain,
 The Holy One cries, aching, hurting with each breath.
 Infinitely compassionate, The Spirit becomes one with creation
 To suffer all, to gather all
 Healing the cosmic soul.

Grace rains on the universe, now forever renewed in love.
 Totally forgiven,
 Sacred creation lifts its hands
 Rejoicing in mercy

Longing for each other
 Spirit and creation converge in the Holy One
 Jesus, the glory of becoming
 Jesus, the infinite brilliance of life
 Jesus, the center of cosmic love.