

CHAPTER REPORT: THE FELLOWSHIPS TEAM 2019-2020 7/13/20

What a year for Fellowships within the life of the OEF!

One year ago “zoom” might have referred to trips from here to there, from home to the place of gathering, and back. Now, Zoom is the means not of locomotion, but of connection....and we have more time not just to recognize faces, but to study faces. “Getting to know you” in a new way.

Part of “the new” of Zoom is that distance does not matter. Thus Sister Kiwi shows up among the Great Lakes Lighthouse Fellowship. That’s a Wow! Our Irish Brother Neal shows up among the Bluebonnets. And others of us pop around....

So why should geographically defined Fellowships continue?

We’ll need to ponder that in the coming year.

The case for continuing proximity defined Fellowships includes:

- despite the electronic connections available over humongous distance, we inhabit the world by geographical place marked by geographical, ecclesial, political, and linguistic realities which influence our identities, shape our consciousness, and give definition to our responsibilities and our vulnerabilities regarding our neck of the woods —local economics, local tragedies, and the occasional natural (though maybe human caused) afflictions. Geographical place offers shared references and shared consciousness. In John 1:38, the two disciples of John, wanting to know Jesus more intimately asked “Where are you residing?”

Place is important.- geographical proximity allows my hands & eyes & ears & heart & brain to engage you, my neighbor-of-place, at a deeper depth, walking while talking, sharing the fellowship of table and food and beverage, seeing more deeply into your eyes, connecting with the feel of this relationship that deepens connection and awakens empathy, compassion, appreciation of humor and nuance.

- Luke 10:29-37 - Who is my neighbor? The one whose wounds we can presence and to whom we can offer practical response. We’re all wounded! All attending to our neighboring Siblings as we can, all being attended to by those same neighboring Siblings.

So, I expect we’ll continue to grow our Fellowships around geography, with always dynamic rather than fixed boundaries. Every Fellowship is shaped by who will regularly come from where, when we gather as a Fellowship.

As we Zoom gather, there’s no limits to distance, and we reduce our carbon footprint. May our imaginations grow as our Fellowships mature.

One aspect of Fellowships Coordination prior to Covid-19 was being able to work with the Formation Team to help both Inquirers and new Postulants be in conversation with their nearest neighbors. Now those will be Face Time, or Mask-to-Mask, or simply phone calls or e-mail exchanges.

Fellowships are on a spectrum from being “Mature” at one end to “Present but not yet Gathered” in the middle, and “only in our imagination” on the other end places we’ll be one day but aren’t there yet. Gatherings got knocked for a loop in 2020 by the Pandemic, but Zoom has proven to be a technology for our times. Every Fellowship needs a Spark or a Spark Team to initiate the energy towards being in touch with one another and gathering as possible, These days, every Fellowship also needs a Zoom Host, local or borrowed.

AN INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP consisting of 5 Professed & 1 Postulant that stretches from the Pacific to the Atlantic, is being explored.

2-person presence in New Zealand and Ireland anchoring the ends of that, Brother Charles K. continues as our lone presence in Japan, and we now have a Postulant in Athens, Greece: Brother Vasileios Spiliopoulos! Brother Neal D. is using a new computer program through Facebook called Workplace to “gather” colleagues .

THE GREAT NORTHEAST FELLOWSHIP(S), 14 Professed, 3 Novices, 3 Postulants - able to meet as one or as 3 sub-Fellowships [NEW ENGLAND, NYC METRO, TRISTATE]. They gather regularly, and Brother John Juniper is serving as Zoom Host.

THE CENTRAL AND SOUTH ATLANTIC SEABOARD FELLOWSHIPS,

5 Professed, 4 Novices, 1 Associate -

THE ST. ANTHONY FELLOWSHIP (Maryland, DC, Delaware, Virginia & North Carolina) - we're there but haven't yet gathered; *need a Zoom Host!*

PIEDMONT FELLOWSHIP (South Carolina & Georgia, Alabama) - operating as a Table Fellowship in Atlanta, until C-19; *need a Zoom Host*

THE TROPICAL TROUBADORS - inactive as a Fellowship since Brother Louis' fight with cancer became so serious and Sr. DiDio's exit — but the presence is there! *Need a Zoom Host!*

CANADA EAST-CENTRAL - 2 Professed, 1 Postulant - Covid-19 deterred the gathering of the 3, but we're present around Lake Ontario! *Need a Zoom Host!*

Perhaps should include Rochester NY.

SOUTH OF THE LAKES FELLOWSHIPS, 9 Professed , 2 Postulants

THE MARIPOSA FELLOWSHIP - (Southern Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama & Mississippi) - awaiting revival, tied into Crossroads or Piedmont in the interim

THE CROSSROADS FELLOWSHIP - (Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Northern Kentucky, Eastern Illinois} - got born this year out of a Table Fellowship in Indiana, gathered, then bumped into the C-19 reality; *need a Zoom Host!*; has real growth potential towards early maturation.

THE GREAT WATERS FELLOWSHIPS 7 Professed, 4 Novices, 3 Postulants

THE GREAT LAKES LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP - (North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, & northwest Illinois) - were regularly meeting in Retreat Centers until C-19, now by Zoom with Philip Waselik serving as Zoom Host and with many “visitors”.

THE GATEWAY FELLOWSHIP (southern Illinois, & Missouri) were meeting regularly until C-19; now *need a Zoom Host*.

THE BLUEBONNETS FELLOWSHIP (southern Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, & Texas) - a lively Fellowship, picking up density in all that space! Sam Loudenslager serves as Zoom Host, and they get visitors!

THE MOUNTAINS & PLAINS & DESERT FELLOWSHIPS

4 Professed, 2 Novices, 2 Postulants

THE CENTRAL CANADA FELLOWSHIP - held in our collective imagination to include the Provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta & western British Columbia.

THE NORTHERN PLAINS FELLOWSHIP (North Dakota, South Dakota, & Nebraska)

THE CLEARWATER FELLOWSHIP (Montana, Idaho, Wyoming) - we're there! linked to the Northwest Fellowship while we await density. *We'll need a Zoom Host.*

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS FELLOWSHIP (southern Wyoming, Colorado, western Kansas, northern New Mexico) - we're there but haven't gathered as a Fellowship; *need a Zoom Host!*

THE DESERT SOUTHWEST FELLOWSHIP (New Mexico and Arizona) - no gatherings, *and need a Zoom Host*

THE WEST COAST FELLOWSHIPS 9 Professed, 1 Novice, 3 postulants

THE GREAT NORTHWEST FELLOWSHIP (western British Columbia, Washington, Oregon & northern slice of California) - were meeting pretty regularly until C-19; *need a Zoom Host!*

THE GOLDEN GATE FELLOWSHIP (Central Valley, SF Bay Area, & Hawaii) - have been meeting regularly and have Karen Lawler as Zoom Host, and Postulant Steve Jerbi is our presence in Lana'i. Hawaii

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SUNSHINE FELLOWSHIP - waits for density, and currently links to The Golden Gate Fellowship

As additional Fellowship Opportunities we have

- the occasional ON-LINE FELLOWSHIP coordinated by Brother Neal Dunnigan;
- the WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY hosted by Brother John Juniper
- and this year we did a 5-sessions BOOK STUDY of "Tragic Investment" A Call to Anti-Racism by James Addington More may well follow

Inquirers are of course invited to be part of our Fellowships, and more and more of our Fellowships have some "Friends Of The Order" we invite to participate and with whom we seek to stay in touch. Members of other Franciscan Orders are welcomed to Fellowship Gatherings, and are grateful for their hospitality towards us.

- Brother Michael Vosler for the Fellowships Coordination Team
Neal Dunnigan, Fred Jaxheimer, Faith Kline, Sam Loudenslager