

# Formation Team Report for OEF Chapter 2020

There has been a change to the team personnel this year with the resignation of Sophie Elisa Dale and the addition of Carol Stiver. The team now consists of John Michael Longworth who oversees novice pairings, the data base and copes with the technical side of things; Paula Clare Clouse who also oversees novice pairings; Carol Stiver who oversees postulant pairings; and Helen (Kiwi) Bathurst who receives all inquiries and works with inquirers through the application process. We work together when it comes to discerning admission of postulants and who to match them with for Formation, discerning acceptance of new novices, discernment of who to recommend to the assembled professed at chapter for acceptance to profession, and deal with other matters that need a combined decision.

## **Inquirers**

From 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 we had 92 inquiries including some from overseas. 18 of the inquirers went on to request application forms. We admitted 15 postulants, three of whom have subsequently withdrawn. Others have taken novice vows during the course of the year.

## **Postulants**

Currently we have ten postulants actively working with their companions. There are several who hope to novice soon. Our postulants stretch a wide variation in experiences, ages and religious affiliations. Their interests take many forms from spiritual dance to our desert fathers and mothers.

Carol's function as a formation team member means that she is part of their introduction to the Order as a support figure to them as well as their OEF companion. She greets them upon acceptance and reaches out to all of them quarterly.

Their variety stimulate her imagination about what it means to be a Franciscan and gratitude for those who walked this path with her. Please consider volunteering your time to companion one of our upcoming postulants.

## **Novices**

There are presently 13 Novices in the Order including the 3 who have requested life profession. We are in the process of assigning a new companion to a Novice who recently returned to formation after a hiatus. It is always a joy and a wonder to observe the changes, growth, and challenges that come with this process and we are grateful for the work our companions and novices are doing. The past few years have demonstrated that Novices can step into important community roles as members of OEF. This includes bringing greetings to the Chapter of other Franciscan Orders, offering valuable insights in the OEF-Chat, and providing vital assistance for Joint Franciscan activities that help deepen the bond between orders.

## **Profession**

We have three names to bring to the professed assembled at chapter as we recommend that they be approved for taking vows of Profession; Stephen Kirk Bowman, Jul Baker and Sam Loudenslager.

## **Other Matters**

We have now instituted an inactive list where we place the names of people who are not responding to repeated attempts to contact them by their Formation Companions and the Formation Team. We have not deleted them from the system because they have not formally withdrawn but it does free their companion to take on someone else. When an inactive person gets in touch and asks to resume formation, we then review who to ask to become their formation companion as they move forward.

Through some difficulties we had with a couple of new postulants this year, we have seen the need to write a new draft formation chapter one which, we hope, clearly sets out what formation is and what formation is not.

We would urgently recommend to the Council and the Professed that we discern how to manage profession of overseas candidates who do not have the means to travel to the USA to make profession. We can foresee that sometime in the future we will have a greater presence in some countries and could manage profession regionally but for now the problem remains.

Finally, we would like to give grateful thanks for all those professed members who give freely of their time and energies to companion our postulants and novices through their initial formation period. We could not do it without you! We also invite other professed members who are not already engaged in this important and rewarding work and would like to join the team of Formation Companions to get in touch with one of us.

John Michael  
Paula Clare  
Carol  
Helen (Kiwi)