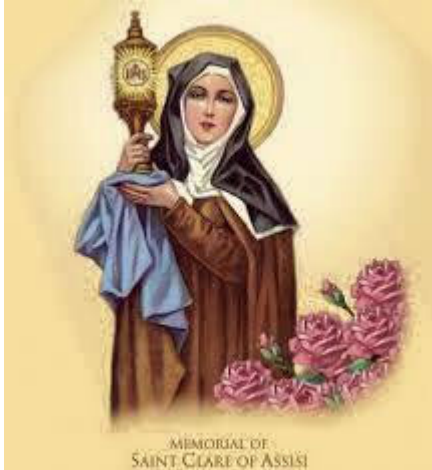


# FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 139

Post-Chapter 2021



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## My Reflections and Thoughts About The 2021 Chapter/Convocation

Sr. Markie, OEF

This year's C/C was different. I mean, we were using a hybrid format for C/C. Some of us were in person at Pallottine and some were on ZOOM. Overall the weather in St. Louis was better than most years and that meant we were able to be outside more. For me, that was what was great about being in person. There are new trails to walk and a really nice fire pit. We met on Wed. night for Vespers at the fire pit. Yes, it did rain a little which kept us inside for Fri. morning prayers and Sat. night vespers, but the option was there.

For several years now when we come in early (on Wed.), we have been engaging in community service or social justice of some kind. This year we did some green projects at Pallottine. There were siblings weeding the gardens, some were weeding around the labyrinth and some weed-whacking on the trails. There were other siblings working on a project, computer work, to support the Peace Picnic (Sun. Oct. 17 at Pallottine). The picnic gathering is an Interfaith get-together. There are some of our siblings who are planning to attend and to help out. There were also some siblings who traveled over to U.S. Rep. District 1 Cori Bush's office and talked with her staff. I hope they write something and post for all to read.

These kinds of activities have become important to our community building. The laughter, the sweat, the conversations and the results are life changing. Our meal times were also good times for community building, lots of conversation and just plain catching up with one another.



(Continued on page 2)

## My Reflections and Thoughts... continued

Our worship services, I thought, were well done. A challenge, yes, but we did it and we learned some things along the way. But for me, the morning prayers, mid day on Fri. and Vespers were the most meaningful. Don't get me wrong; the preaching at the worship services was great and it was nice to see so many on the ZOOM screen, but these other times were just different. They were simple, quiet and thought provoking, as we were just sitting together.

Our Sundays together have become a day I look forward to as well. The services are usually about looking forward. The conversations at breakfast and lunch are always looking forward, and our Parking Lot session has always brought up thoughts and ideas that are important for us to see and even dream about. There are always comments made or questions not asked that

need space for us to know what is on siblings minds. These Sundays are about looking forward.

As I look back on C/C 2021, I have a good feeling about who we are as a community. As I look forward to C/C 2022, I see good things happening as we continue to build this community and as we connect with folks here at Pallottine, and in the St. Louis area, especially the Interfaith group. I look forward to more green projects, social justice acts and interfaith activities. So come early next year on Wed., and be part of the action! Next year's C/C dates are June 22nd thru the 26th, Wed. afternoon thru Sun. lunch.

Peace, comfort and joy to you all in 2021.

Peace and all good,  
Markie Oliver



## Chapter 2021 - More Reflections

Br. Juniper, OEF

I was supposed to be in St Louis. Had the ticket, ready to go, and then a trip to the hospital and a very sick friend who needed care meant that I joined the Chapter Convocation via Zoom. I am so grateful to Salachar for the wonderful ways he made Zoom work for us coordinating with the in-person group in St Louis.

The worship together was uplifting, was inspiring, was wonderful! From Vespers on Thursday, the morning prayers, midday prayer, all were really grounding. So good to pray together! Our communal worship with great preaching gave a deep sense of gathering at the table with Jesus. It was so wonderful to see Denise and Andrew profess in the order!

The small group I was part of for the Convocation was a mixture of long-time OEFers and people just inquiring. The small group listened carefully to each of our experiences and our care for one another grew as we spent the hours together. We didn't want it to end and spent additional time as a group together.

The Chapter agenda was light. The wonders of elections to profession; the sadness of dispensation of vows for a beloved member; a commitment to a loving walk with a sister over the next year; reports on the dedicated work of the many teams that make OEF happen. It is always particularly valuable to hear of the vital work of the Formation Team. I am deeply grateful for the hours they spend in the service of the Order. Our money gets managed, our connection to other Franciscan orders is honored and all of the communication work is acknowledged.

The team that has taken on revising the OEF Principles to more adequately represent the inspiration of St Clare and to better describe our communal commitment to undoing the historic brutality of Patriarchy and White Supremacy is a great service to me and to us all. We spent an important period of time reaffirming our commitments to these values and developing expression, so that our commitments become apparent in our personal rules and our Franciscan vocations.

All in all, even though I could not get to St Louis, I was motivated and renewed by attending the Chapter/Convocation online.

Juniper

## An Invitation from The Servant Council

The Council would like to invite you to a Chapter follow-up conversation on the OEF response to White Nationalism/White Supremacy. We are wanting to facilitate a prayerful discernment, focusing on how each of us makes sense of this in our lives and Franciscan vocations.

The Zoom gathering is planned for Sunday, August 29th from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm EDT. We are proposing starting with brief presentations on prayerful discernment and a review of the OEF work on White Nationalism/White Supremacy. We will then break into small discernment groups where each member is encouraged to reflect on how this anti-racism work takes shape in our lives. We will then reassemble in the main room and receive report backs from each of the small groups.

The afternoon is to give ourselves time to reflect together and not to make any decisions or take on any positions as an assembled group as an order. This session is intended to be in the form of a Convocation discussion and not a Chapter session.

Look forward to seeing you on August 29th at 4:00 pm EDT/ 3:00 pm CDT / 2:00 pm PDT, 9:00 pm in Ireland and 5:00 am Monday 8/30 in Tokyo and 8:00 am Monday 8/30 on New Zealand.

Here is the Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86453897766>

Meeting ID: 864 5389 7766

One tap mobile:

+13017158592,,86453897766# US (Washington

DC) +13126266799,,86453897766# US (Chicago)

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

Ireland: +353 6 163 9031

New Zealand +64 9 884 6780

Meeting ID: 864 5389 7766

Find your local number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86453897766>



## OEF - First Impressions

*\*An on-line discussion initiated by a new Postulant*



I attended Convocation in-person because I needed some non-electronic contact to be sure I hadn't joined a cult. There was a very appropriate level of friendliness - genuine warmth without the Love Bombing cults are known for showing Inquirers and new Members. The food and accommodations were excellent, so I was able to cross off the sleep deprivation and hypoglycemic fugue warning signs of cults. And while Markie is very charismatic, that charisma is as anti-cult leader-like as possible, so there went one of my big deal breakers. Lastly, the feeling when Order members arrived and left was that of genuine gladness to have had them present, as opposed to a checking-up and checking-in on how seriously they were taking Convocation. I definitely feel like I can leave, and because of that, I've decided to stay.

The thing I appreciated most from Convocation was the willingness to have brave conversations. I HIGHLY recommend [Practice Showing Up: A Guidebook for White People Working For Racial Justice](#) by Jardana Peacock. It's a quick read that makes a convincing case for anti-racism work as a spiritual practice. I will be rereading it as I continue to discern my Rule. I'm trying to pare down my inbox so it's easier to notice what all comes in. I know I occasionally receive some things from the Order, but I wonder if I'm on all the various email lists.

Thank you for the deeply meaningful experience at Convocation. I'm filled with excitement and gratitude to join you in following Jesus the little way.

Bethany (she/her)



Group Hug!

### Siblings Respond:

Bethany, you make me laugh. I refused to submit "Inquirer" paperwork to OEF until I'd gone to chapter/convocation and looked these good people in the eyes. I felt right at home from the moment I was met at the airport for a ride to the retreat center back in 2000.

Sr. Nancy Menning, OEF

So great to meet you, Bethany!

I first came to Convocation when Shoshanah was professing, to make sure she wasn't joining some kind of cult! The rest is history, as they say.

Brer Bruce James, OEF

Hi Bethany,

I too decided to check out the Order in person to see if they were the neat bunch of people that I thought they were or if I had got things very wrong. On my second morning I looked round the room, found that I knew everyone's name and said to myself, "I have come home".

Sr. Kiwi, OEF

(Continued on page 5)





First Impressions... continued

Hi, Bethany--

It was great to meet you in St. Louis. Your message cracks me up! Especially the description of Markie. Like many of us, I was very nervous and wary the first time I came to Chapter, but I was soon put at ease. It was while watching the Juniper Cup that I said to myself, "These are my people!"

Peace and good.  
Sr. Katie Cook, OEF

-----  
Thanks Bethany,

Worrying about a cult never entered my mind as I knew Sr. Anjelika as my Episcopalian priest's spouse and then came to know some other OEF members on the regional level.

Thanks to you and others for raising my consciousness about the fears that Inquirers and Postulants may have. It's important for me as a Formation Committee Member to be sensitive to that.

Happy Friday,  
Sr. Carol Stiver, OEF

-----  
It was also something that friends mentioned to me when I told them that I was thinking of becoming a Postulant. I was already feeling quite confident that it was not something I needed to worry about, but I was not surprised when I read others who said that they had gone to Chapter to reassure themselves about whether they needed to be concerned about that or not.

Crystal (OEF Postulant)



## Another Fond Farewell



It was a real blessing to have been able to attend Richard's Celebration on Friday afternoon at the Church of the Incarnation in Manhattan. It was of course a wonderful mix of people from his life. The Mass had a great soloist who sang among others "There is a Balm in Gilead," which was Richard's signature hymn in the Intercession Choir. Many voices spoke about his gifts in their lives, family, people from school, and several trans people who spoke of Richard's very significant support. There was a great story of Richard's role many years of being St Nicholas at the yearly Christmas Festival including a presence that the blessing of Clement Clarke Moore's grave in the attached Trinity Cemetery. There was a hilarious story about the blessing during COVID. The Celebration ended with Luis Antonio carrying Richard's urn around the church. I am blessed to have known him.

Br. Juniper, OEF



Richard



Br. Luis & Richard



Richard & Br. Luis





# Fellowship News



The first ever Virtual Gathering of The Northwest Fellowship and the Golden Gate Fellowship took place on the morning of Sat., May 29th. The Gathered included Nancy Menning from the Rattle Snake Neighborhood in Missoula, MT,; Julian Baker in Olympia, WA; Steve Jerbi in Seattle having recently moved from Hawaii, and now host to 18 chickens; Anne Nancy & Michael Vosler from North Bay's Rohnert Park, CA; Karen & Kathy Lawler from the Central Valley's Elk Grove, CA, and serving as our Zoom Hosts; Betty Lou Leaver, from South Bay's San Juan Bautista, CA, and a Member of the OEF Council; frequent guest John Surinchak of the Ecumenical Franciscan Order of the Universal Anglican Interspiritual Church, residing in Novato, CA, North Bay; and Jonathan Roach, our new OEF presence in Hawaii!.

Our focus was to "check-in" with one another and provide some "getting to know time" together. Things that came up in the midst of that:

- our awareness of the Indigenous People upon whose land we live our lives
- family delights and challenges
- life lived and work done in COVID Pandemic times
- books we're reading
- people we serve and their health & economic challenges
- ministries & projects we're engaged in
- our spirit care for ourselves in the face of real challenges
- our faith communities, good ministries and hefty challenges

Geographies of concern included India, Gaza/Israel, Afghanistan

People & Issues of concern and engagement included care for The Unsheltered, Orcas & Whales, our OEF Siblings, the Asian Community experiencing targeted harassment & violence, care-givers and care-giving.

Of current particular note:

Kathy Lawler's ordination as a Deacon by the Episcopal Church of Northern California, on June 12th, and her intention to give focus to the Conversation Between Science and Faith.

Carl Leaver's passing

Kids with special needs challenged mightily by the Pandemic.

- michael vosler

The Southeast contingent of the OEF which once was numerous enough to meet in retreat... prior to the vicissitudes of moving, age, job changes, health -- not to mention pandemics and other scourges --- got three of us together along with an icon of the Blessed Poverello (look closely at the photo) for lunch. Noon is not the best time to get the greatest number of us together.

Those who read the news understand that some Georgians don't appreciate democratic thought... so we were put up against the wall to be shot.

James Schwarzlose, OEF



Pictured(l-r): Br. David Rensberger, Sr. Ione and me (Br. James)

## Fellowship News... continued

**Crossroads Fellowship Zoom Gathering July 17**

What a wonderful gathering! We were 11 Franciscans strong! As always, we opened with prayer. We each shared our individual "take aways" of C/C and what particularly touched us about the weekend. We shared perspectives from those of us who were in-person, and those who joined in on Zoom.

We will be starting another book discussion at our August 21st gathering. We chose There There by Tommy Orange (Cheyenne and Arapaho descendant), a novel of Native American history and identity expressed through essays. **All** are welcome to join us!

We are planning an in-person gathering the week-end of October 7-10th at Pokagon State Park (NE tip of Indiana). We want to be sure to invite and include our siblings of other Orders that are located in that area.

We continue to lend support to our local ministries serve social justice platforms any way that we can.

For our Spiritual Enrichment segment, we acknowledged the July 16 anniversary of the Canonization of our beloved Francis of Assisi in the year 1228. Scripture, readings, prayers and petitions led us towards the end of our two hours together. Our door is always open! Stop on in sometime!

Peace and Prayers Always-  
Deb Snider-Scott, OEF

*\*A reminder to welcome all to our Crossroads Fellowship Zoom gathering on Saturday, August 21st, starting at 10:00 am EASTERN. We will be discussing "There There" by Tommy Orange. Revealing and poignant stories from "a chorus of voices telling of the plight of the urban Native American."*

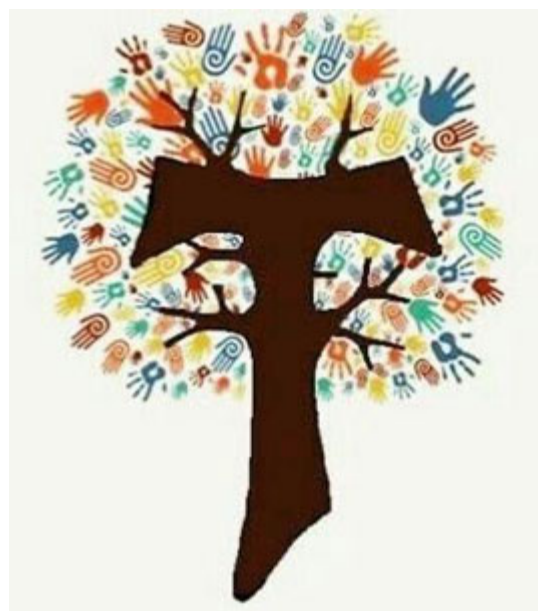
*You don't want to miss it!*



**How do we as a Franciscans transition from our individual places in the world to the one closer unit that we call family? Join us for Transitus and let us hear together what the spirit is saying as we draw closer to one another.**

**This year's Transitus service will take place on Saturday October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 3:00pm Central Time.**

***Stay tuned to the OEF email list for details***





## OEF Community Outreach

On June 23, 2021, several Convocation attendees met with Missouri Congressperson Cori Bush's staff. They introduced the OEF and advocated for the Congressperson to consider becoming a co-signer on the National Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 870/H.R. 2035), which would work to expand access to mental health treatment for lower income individuals. Those present included Michael Vosler, Br. Salachar, Br. Bob Blattner, Postulant Bethany Woychick, and guests Angela and Worth Hartman.



L-r: Bethany, Michael, Angela, Worth, Bob & Salachar

## OEF Online Bible Study

The weekly OEF bible study has moved to Wednesday at 8:00 pm EDT. You can join the study on Zoom:

Topic: OEF Bible study Time: This is a recurring meeting Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89760718708?pwd=N2ROTHcrWUpWSzlyM2N3eEdG-dEF0QT09>.

We study the gospel for the coming Sunday as listed on the Revised Common Lectionary. We use the "African Method" Bible Study: Read the passage, everyone picks the word or phrase that stands out for them. Read the passage again (in a different translation), everyone identifies how this impacts them as a person. Read the passage a third time (in a third translation) and everyone identifies how this impacts us as a community. Then time for general sharing on the passage.



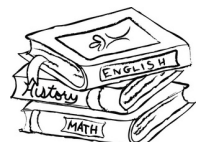
You are most welcome to join!

Br. Juniper, OEF

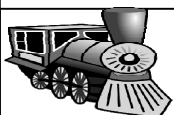
## OEF History Project

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





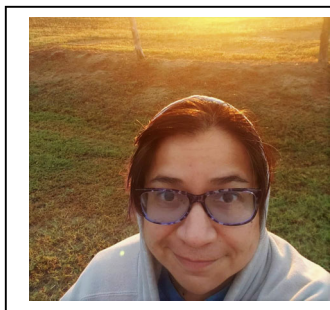


# Formation Station



## Introducing:

Hi and peace to all! My name is **Samadhi** (Sam, Sammy) **Metta Bexar**, a Postulant from San Antonio, Texas. I was pleased to “meet” siblings at the Convocation recently via Zoom, and look forward to more conversations. I’ve worked in colleges/universities forever, right now as an assistant director for the McNair Scholars program at my school. We help first-generation, underrepresented students prepare for and get into doctoral programs, something close to my heart as I was/am first-generation, and eventually went on to my PhD in English from the University of Iowa (go Hawks!). Here’s hoping all stay well, safe, and happy.



Congratulations to all those who gained new levels in the Order through the Rites of Passage Ceremony on Saturday at Chapter!

## New Postulants:

Samhadi Metta Bexar (Introduced above.)  
Kay Licon  
Bethany Woychick

## New Novices:

Jason Melia O’Brien  
Donal Walsh



And last but not least,

## New Professed Members:

Br. Andrew Clifford, OEF  
Sr. Denise Magnuson, OEF

**Welcome one and all!**



# 2021 Juniper Cup Results

As usual, our Juniper Cup competition was a rollicking good time! The assignment was to write a limerick about traveling Franciscans. Here are some of the entries:

Third Place winner, and recipient of Little Sister Purple Rat: Br. Daniel Miller:

*There once was a country Franciscan,  
Whose formation companion, a chicken,  
Spiritually grew,  
But then off she flew,  
Last heard she'd become a Dominican.*



Second Place winner, and keeper of Br. Rat for the year: Br. Neal Dunnigan:

*There once was a Franciscan from Assisi  
Whose COVID status was queasy  
To quarantine was he sent  
In a small brown tent  
With prayer he said "all is easy".*



First place winner, and recipient of the coveted habit of James the Least: Sr. Kiwi (Helen Bathurst) -- which is convenient, because she still has the habit from the last time she won!

*Some friars set out for the stars  
But somehow they landed on Mars  
They preached now and then  
To some little green men  
Who said, "Go! For this planet is ours."*



**Congrats to our winners and this year's most foolish Franciscans!**

**Some also-rans:**

Sr. Deb Scott:

***Jolly Travel'n  
Franciscans***

*We are ~ jolly travel'n  
Franciscans ~ of various  
types!*

*We be Zoom'n ~  
Facebook'n FaceTime'n ~  
ev'n Skypes!*

*Tau Cross' n Browns by  
car or by plane!*

*Tau Cross' n Browns by  
bus or by train!*

*OEF'rs are ~ gather'n an'  
prattle'n cause ~ Chapter's the hypes!*

(Not exactly a limerick, but fun, none-the-less!)

Sr. Kiwi's spare:

*Francis wanted to preach to a whale*

*So he jumped in a boat and set sail*

*The whale blew his spout*

*St Francis fell out*

*of the boat and here endeth my tale.*



Can't wait to see what Sr. Kiwi dreams up for us next year!



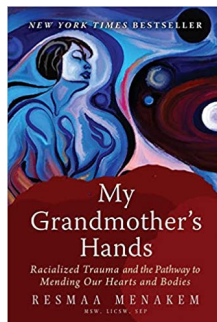
Deb & Mark Scott at their Franciscan best!

## A New Book Study!

Anyone interested in joining in a study of My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies by Resmaa Menakem Tuesdays from 8:00-9:30 pm EDT. Please reach out and let me know. If there is interest, the study began on May 4th.

### Publishers Weekly

Sensitive and probing, this book from therapist Menakem delves into the complex effects of racism and white privilege. Departing from standard academic approaches, he speaks from the wisdom of his grandmother and his own expertise in somatic therapy, a field that emphasizes the mind-body connection. Trauma, both present-day and historical, forms the cornerstone of Menakem's analysis. He writes that race is a "myth—something made up in the 17th century," with the concepts of whiteness and racial superiority nonetheless now "essential facts of life, like birth, death and gravity." The result is that both black and white people are traumatized with fear of the racial other and with the "dirty pain of avoidance, blame, and denial." At the outset, Menakem implores readers to "experience" his book in their bodies. To this end, bodycentric activities, such as breath exercises, are described throughout. Menakem emphasizes body mindfulness, helping readers move from unhealthy reflexive responses to traumatic emotions to the conscious experience of "clean pain," which involves directly facing such emotions and thereby getting past them. Menakem is specific when directing his messages. "To all my white readers," he says, "welcome... let's get to work." To law-enforcement officers he gives the same welcome. And to African-Americans, he offers counsel and highlights the value of their experiences.



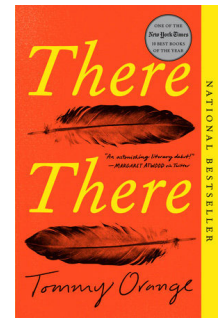
Br. Juniper, OEF

## Another New Book Study!

Good and Blessed Day everyone! Crossroads Fellowship will begin a new book study at our next gathering on August 21. If anyone cares to join in our book of choice is: There There by Tommy Orange, descendant of Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. "Tommy follows 12 characters from Native communities: all traveling to the Big Oakland Pow Wow. This chorus of voices tells of the plight of the urban Native American—grappling with a complex and painful history, with an inheritance of beauty and spirituality, with communion and sacrifice and heroism."

Peace and Prayers Always-

Deb OEF



## Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Submissions for the Thanksgiving/Christmas 2021 issue of "Fiddlesticks" will be accepted immediately.

**Deadline for submissions is October 15, 2021.**

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!**





## Siblings Reflect: Franciscan Theology and The Principles Revision Team

One day, Brother John Michael kept a promise to Brother Romero that both of them would march together with The Rev. William Barber II and the Poor People's Campaign. While Brother Romero had already gone on to his rest, the hope of resurrection and divine encounter in death (Principle 15) meant that friendship and brotherhood could not be overcome by death, for she is our beloved sister too.

So, one brother carried the other, in their heart and in their pocket on a photograph, as the interfaith company of God's beloved children walked silently through the streets of Washington, D.C. undeterred by barriers, Homeland Security and F-35 overflights summoned to defend the White House from 300 clergy and religious who came to plead for the poor, cast out the demonic power of white supremacy and call for an end to injustice just as Principle 10 calls each of us.

As Franciscans, we begin our theological and moral reflection through the lens of embodied spirituality and faith, always inquiring, "how is the Incarnate Christ that I have encountered in the world inviting me into ever deeper love?"

The Servant Council invited eight Professed siblings to the work of prayerful discernment around the General Rule and we have been pondering, stewing, marinating in the text for a while now. Sure, there are some grammatical and administrative tweaks to consider, but we have been asking for the Spirit to open a path to deeper understanding.

Tonight, 7/16/21, six of us met and the Spirit whispered joyfully, "No more staring at the text beloveds! Encounter the text in your lives, Rules, circumstances, works of mercy and works of justice!"

As we move forward in this reflective practice together, we ask for your prayers, your wondering, and along the way, your stories too. Where has the rule been made flesh in your life? Our stories offer us the hope of transformation and redemption, even as we embrace the Christ we find in our neighborhood. Let us become a living word, an image collectively of the Word made flesh.

Peace and All Good,  
Br. John Michael, OEF (They/Them)  
Formation Team

### Siblings respond:

John Michael has asked for a timeline. I wouldn't hinder the Spirit from leading each of you where you most need to be led, when you need to be led there. But, as for the eight of us on the Principles Revision Committee, we have committed to thinking first about how our antiracist and de-colonializing activities in the world link up with our personal rules, with General Principle #10 (and perhaps others), and with our understanding of Franciscanism. I imagine we'll be doing that together over the next two or three weeks. And then we'll move on to other practices and other principles.

Any stories and reflections the rest of you might offer over the next few weeks, on that theme or on others, will inspire us. We look forward to hearing your stories.

Sr. Nancy Menning, OEF

I grew up during the Civil Rights Movement of the 60s and marched in protests with posters that I had made. I married into a Black Jamaican family, and when my daughter was growing up I always encouraged her to identify with her Jamaican and Black heritage. Most of the children in the public school system (by far) were Black. She wasn't singled out. She always thought of herself as mixed (one parent Black, one white). Through high school, however, she began to realize that others identified her as Black — her Catholic high school was predominantly white — and in college she fully identified as Black (which other people had already identified her as), and still does. America's racial conflict was brought home to me. I was not racist. Of course not. Except I began to realize so many and pervasive things that I hadn't paid any attention to, often invisible things, that affected my child and did not affect me. Historical and institutional things that I unconsciously was perpetuating by enjoying a privilege that I didn't even know I had. Assumptions I made about people because I did not see how their lived experience was so different than my own.

The way Brother Romero brought up race always seemed inappropriate. He bothered me. He was aiming at the wrong target. I was less racist than anybody, so innocent that my whiteness glowed. He bothered me the way my professor in seminary, James Cone\*, bothered me. Only James Cone was much more blunt: "Of course you're racist!" Oh, that bothered me so much. I was a white person who had experienced poverty, hunger, homelessness, and scorn by institutions for being so poor, in other words, an oppressed person myself. Racism was all about class (so I was thinking until I read Cornel West, the best friend of my other professor, James Washington, the Reader of my thesis). How could Professor Cone be right? He must think all white people are the same. In fact, he understood me far better than I understood myself. Brother Romero was right, and so was Professor Cone. And they both loved me deeply. (Yes, Professor Cone loved me — I think a lot).

It took me a while to get it, and it was a very uncomfortable journey. I still had a lot to learn. Now that I've learned a little, I now know I have a whole lot more to learn; "To turn the hearts of parents to their children."

Of course as Siblings of Penance, the important thing is less what others do — which of course matters — but more our own involvement in systems of oppression. It is not about us not being racist. Let's take it for granted that if we are white Americans, we are implicated in systemic racism and the settler-colonialist mentality that defines the dominant American culture. We can also take it for granted that we are

## Siblings Reflect... continued

not aware of our participation. As Franciscans, the first step is poverty of spirit, i.e., to renounce that we actually "have" anything of merit to latch onto when we are in the Divine Presence (which is, obviously, all the time). My daughter, another person who loves me immensely, continues to teach me, and show me I have so much to learn.

So the point is not to stop being racist but to come to the clarity (Clare) that we ARE racists and to BECOME anti-racists. "Their" guilt is already ours. Pretending it isn't would be like Jesus refusing to be baptized and refusing the wilderness and, ultimately, refusing the Cross.

But this also means that the problem is not just "in" this person (ourselves) or that person (the "other") but is a collective and shared problem. It is a social problem, just like the problem of the mercantile class was for Francis and nobility was for Clare. The social issue has to be addressed because it is our own problem and we are fleeing penance by skirting it.

Realizing what being anti-racist is (instead of feigning non-racist) will be different for each of us and will try each of us differently. It can't be put aside though, for none of us white Americans can die innocent. We want, however, to live (and die) as penitents.

Petra Aleah Strand, OEF (pronouns: she, her )

In college, I was amazed and called to follow Clare and Francis in the way of Jesus. They showed me what I later learned to know that love collectively is justice. They really disputed that status quo of their time by their insistence that poverty was the entrance to the path of Jesus.

Francis went further and challenged the Western hegemony by crossing the crusader's front, befriending the Sultan, bring the Angelus back to the west, and becoming the protector of the places of Jesus in the Holy Land. Francis saw that learning first had from the other allowed the Holy Spirit to make things new.

So, I ran off and joined the 1<sup>st</sup> order of SSF wanting to follow Francis and Clare in their lives among the poor that they know was the true following of Jesus. Of course, there are lots to tell of failures and moments of inspiration. In 1983, I was allowed by the order to move into the burned out and abandon neighborhood of the Lower Eastside. I began to worship at St Mark's in the Bowery. There I met a saint of God, Eloise Graham Booth, a glowing African American senior. One day she said to me – "Black people join White organizations but White people don't join Black Organizations." This really stuck. As an intentionally naive White person, my first internal response was – "There are Black organizations." Lots more to the story but three years later, three of us in SSF moved into the all Black neighborhoods of East Brooklyn and I began my 35 year membership in an all-Black Afro Caribbean Episcopal Church, St Thomas. I had so much to learn and I am still learning. People were mostly gentle with me and very welcoming. Black people do look after White people.

The last two weekends, I have been to two funerals, one of a man who was brought up in the streets of NYC who was a dear friend. I would make a big fuss about this old

white man walking down the street with a younger Black man. He was at first our trainer and then a deep companion for ten years. His family rallied and gave him a big send off. I have become used to being the only White person and people who do know me look but my friends just welcome me. We then went to the gathering of his martial art world. Meta had eight black belts. There were twenty five teachers of martial arts at the gathering. The depth of energy and commitment was amazing. Again, Mark and I were the only white people in sight. We were honored because we had cared for Meta.

I have been active in the neighborhood and on our block in the fight for affordable housing. With rent now at \$3000/month, the people of the neighborhood are being driven out of their community. One of the warriors who have been engaging with is a very outspoken woman, (you might say Blanch is a loudmouth), who has lived on our block since 1972. Mark has trouble with her because one day when she thought I wasn't pushing hard enough on a housing issue she made a homophobic slur. Her husband of 61 years died last week. At the funeral home at the end of the block, we had his celebration of life. It was packed. One of the cousins sang some wonderful Spirituals. There were many testimonies of his life. There were a couple of other White people who came because as new people on the block, they had joined Blanch and I and other long term community members in the housing fights.

I am very grateful to have taken steps to cross the multiple race lines in my world. I know a little, not much. I have many deep friendships. I join in the fight for justice, following Jesus with the guidance of Clare and Francis.  
Br. Juniper, OEF

Thank you Juniper! The deliberate point of avoiding the word "race" is that as long as we continue to use terminology that we've been ingrained with for centuries we will never heal totally. "Race" in and of itself is a powerfully divisive tool of separation. All humans are of the same gene pool of homosapien!

(Continued on page 14)

## 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**



## Siblings Reflect... continued

To break it down into races, merely subcategorizes and propagates supremacy of one over another; which has been and continues to be the mortal sin of mankind! Biologically proven, peeling away the skin tone, we are of the same species. Skin tones and cultures and ethnic heritage is what we really are talking about. So, yes, for me personally, to continue using race and racism in our language continues the broken and hurtful pattern of subcategorizing. Sub (inferiorizing) humanity, and it continues to demonstrate power and control. That is why, when I speak of “let’s not be limiting our scope” when looking at our Principles, it’s not just White on Black transgressions. The damage that has been done against all of humanity is our ability and sinful nature to disrespect world cultures and ethnicities, eliminating that which we are not familiar with. This is not just a White sin, it’s humanity’s sin, and a dreadful one it is. We pray for forgiveness and work diligently and tirelessly for equality of all mankind, and think that we can heal the gaping wounds of disrespecting each other’s hereditary, cultures and skin tones! We all bleed the same color, and our wounds are many!

Peace and Prayers Always-  
Sr. Deb Scott, OEF

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Dear Ones,

I have been watching the discussion here and my own process with interest but also with a certain amount of... I’m struggling for words here. All the politically correct words, beliefs and attitudes are somehow to me like a beautiful meal that has no nutrition in it. So easy to throw words around, but what do they actually mean? Too easy to use them to self justify that does not heal and does not actually mean anything.

Forgive me but I looked to my own process for answers. I am old enough that I can remember nursery rhymes I learned as a child without thought or understanding. Eeny, miney, mo... Remember when the “n” word in that childhood rhyme was changed to tiger? Or ring around the rosy which dates back to the plague. All the cultural attitudes I took for granted and never meant anything by, need re-examination.

I remember falling in love with tall ships as a child and dreaming of being the captain of one of them, only to be told by my mother that women couldn’t be ship captains. Or my father who did not want me to go to college to become a professional violinist because women were not accepted into the big orchestras and he thought I wouldn’t be able to earn a living. They loved me and meant well. Fortunately, some of that has changed.

I believe that at the basis of racism, prejudice, however the dysfunction is named, is the choice of power, domination and control over relationality. Martin Buber put it perfectly for me when he defined the two basic types of relationship: I - you versus I - it. As long as I don’t have to grant you personhood in my mind, the current thinking is that I am justified in not only using you but using you up. I think of the many dogs, for instance, that are now being returned to

shelters now that people are going back to work, as if they were some kind of commodity after being adopted for companionship during COVID. Did no one think of the dog as a sentient being? Or are they an “it,” as I said, and just another commodity? Yet when was the last time I treated someone like an “it?” The cashier I just bought my groceries from? Did I even notice the lawn care workers keeping the grounds around my apartment clean and cared for? If not, I am laying the unhealthy groundwork in myself for perceiving another human being as an “it.” Such a slippery slope!

There is a saying: “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” It is also true that those who choose power and domination live in constant fear of those they have chosen to dominate. I just finished a study of Shakespeare’s play MacBeth with a group of friends. What an incredible psychological study of what happens to the human spirit when power and domination are chosen over relationality.

It isn’t just people and animals. We wouldn’t be facing the dangers of climate change and the environmental disaster that are happening if we hadn’t considered Nature and everything in it as an “it,” a commodity to be used and used up. I have just finished reading the book Finding the Mother Tree, by Suzanne Simard. She scientifically demonstrates that even in the plant world, trees nurture each other, care for each other, particularly their own kin and “children” and live in community with each other. When I go to my Rocky Mountains out here, I am in awe of the interplay of light, earth, air and clouds that, in the end, affects the whole of the continent.

Perhaps there is no such thing as an “it” out there. And yet, when I do go out to the mountains, I end up picking up trash all over the place. I have to avoid the ATVs that rip up the environment and destroy the peace, quiet and wonder of the wilderness with their noise and disregard for anything or anyone else out there that their owners and perpetrators do not even know exist. Yes, even the wilderness and everything in it is a commodity to some. Sorry for my resentment!

Perhaps it is the damage that Darwin’s theory of the survival of the fittest has done. All Nature demonstrates the power of community. In community I am diminished if any in my community is not cared for, as Christ teaches. All voices in community speak to some aspect of each individual in the community and need to be heard. If any individual in the community is not well, the community is not well. In community, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. (See A Different Drum by M.Scott Peck) So much for Darwin!

I digress, but maybe not. Behind the choice of power and domination are the feelings of deprivation and entitlement, from there is only a short step to blame and hate. I do the best I can to be a good human being but I would be a liar if I said I had never gone that road., another slippery slope. So, am I a racist because I am white and have lived mostly in a straight, white world, maybe. But as a human being with these unredeemed possibilities within, I am definitely in need of transformation and social healing. For



## Siblings Reflect... continued

me, the transformation begins within, with me. If it does not, then one oppressor, prejudice, etc., only replaces another. MacBeth was replaced by more violence and murder. I can only heal my innate racism/prejudice/fear, injustice towards you, whatever you want to call it when I see me in you and can relate, better yet, when I see Christ in you with awe and wonder, respect and love, I am seeing you as Buber's "you," rather than an "it," regardless of the "packaging" you come in.

So, with all due respect, preach social justice. Use all the politically correct words. Change laws. But until fundamental beliefs, awareness and attitudes are healed and transformed on a much deeper level, I am sorry, I do not have much hope. Perhaps this is called true penitence.

Some thoughts, forgive me if I have offended and/or not understood. It has been hard to articulate what I am thinking and feeling.

Your little sister,  
Sharon, n/OEF

White people using race-blind language simply assumes that the world is the same for people of color as for White people. This is deeply and troublingly not so. I agree as does science that race is a social construction but a powerful one it is that benefits Whites almost everywhere on the planet. Leaving race out leaves our sisters and brothers out. I am grateful that OEF is engaging in the depth of the discussion about race and White Supremacy. NYT 7/19/21 Why Christians Must Fight Systemic Racism: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/18/opinion/racism-christianity.html>.

Br. Juniper, OEF

Dearest OEF Family,

As a member of the Principles Revision Cohort (not really sure if we have an official label), I am reading these posts with such depth of appreciation and have even been moved to tears by the stories and images that have emerged. I am equally grateful for the willingness to be vulnerable that many of you have shown. There are people of privilege in our Order, people of color, and all sorts of "otherness," experiences which have been incredibly painful throughout the lives of many of you.

As a person that has experienced the privileges of identifying as white and cisgender, although I grew up in communities as the only "white" kid and in extreme poverty, I nevertheless was aware early on that my friends in very similar economic and class environments were at a greater disadvantage because I was white and I was being given more opportunities. As a child, I knew this by observation. It was very obvious because I was the only white child in the elementary school and it was confusing.

All of my biological grandchildren are mixed-race, and dark. Which means that we have family members that are also dark. My daughter is a lesbian and is married to a wonderful woman, another othering. Our family is beautiful

and loving and supportive, and yet, those who are darker, experience life differently than those of us who are lighter. (You can even insert the brown bag test--it's real.) While life was very challenging for me due to many struggles we may all share, things that drastically affect families and individuals, poverty, sexuality, mental illness, trauma, addictions, and more, I still see my privilege. My white privilege does not mean that I have not suffered, that life has not been hard, but that I have not suffered because of the color of my skin nor my ethnicity.

One of the early and very significant things I learned from Catherine Meeks at the Center for Racism in Atlanta, is that to do race work, we all need to start with ourselves. Everyone is racist. We just are because we are shaped in a culture that was founded and built on racism. A construct that was invented, but has been very useful to the tenets of White Supremacy--which is all about power and greed, and fear. I guarantee you that our friends of color gathered in this chat have had experiences in this country that you and I of white identity will never experience.

We all need to do our own inner work, something I think we've set out to explore by joining this little order of Franciscans. We need to identify the biases we carry in ourselves and *find out our own ethnic and cultural identities*. Whiteness is sterile. We are all more than we think we are and discovering who we are can go a long way to get us out of the mindset of whiteness and its privileges. It is the inner work that no one can do for us except ourselves and God (and trusted ones who can mirror back for us.)

Here is where our personal rule of life might come into play. Perhaps we begin where we are. We eat an elephant one bite at a time. A good friend just said to me today, "It's a Long, Long Road to Freedom!" Let's begin with the next step [which may be different for each of us individually, but also move us forward collectively]. If we feel defensive, let's just sit with that and explore it. God holds you in a brave space. No one is here to bring shame.

In the meantime, perhaps we post a statement for the inquirer, those in process, and the Professed on our web site that affirms our intention to do this work. While F. Scott Fitzgerald is not exactly my favorite author, there is wisdom in his words: "To be kind is more important than to be right. Many times what people need is not a brilliant mind that speaks but a special heart that listens." Let's be kind. Let's listen. Thank you all that showed up bravely here.

In Peace and All Good,  
Sr. Magdalena





*Fiddlesticks*  
*c/o Christine Petersen, OEF*  
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*Nekoosa, WI 54457*  
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## Are We Paying Attention?



I was 8 years old at the time.  
 I remember hearing that a church was bombed.  
 That four children were killed in Sunday School.  
 That it was a Baptist Church.  
 I lived in the South.  
 I went to a Baptist Church.  
 I went to Sunday School every Sunday.  
 I was never afraid. I always felt safe.  
 I do not remember what anyone told us about this.  
 I just remember that it happened.  
 To children. To girls. In Sunday School.  
 At a Baptist Church.  
 I remember wondering about the hate and the fear,  
 the ugliness and the unfairness --  
 -- that, in some ways, it felt very far away.  
 -- that, in some ways, it felt very close.  
 Violence exploded all over the place.  
 I read it in the papers. I saw it on TV.  
 I heard the grown-ups talking.

I remember being confused.  
 And, at times, feeling afraid.  
 But mostly, I was not afraid.  
 Mostly, I felt safe.  
 Because I was safe.

After a long, long time, things got quiet.  
 And I thought everything was okay.  
 I was not paying attention.  
 I pray and promise to pay more attention.  
 I pray and promise to listen.  
 I pray I will never stop wondering.  
 I pray that I will let the listening  
 and the wondering  
 take me wherever it will  
 -- by God's grace and in God's love --  
 Trusting in Love that forgives...

peace to all... ~ shoshanah