

FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 140

Thanksgiving/Advent 2021



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PRAYERFUL DISCERNMENT:

An Approximate Restoration

by Br. Coyote Nabhan, OEF

Foreword

The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans approaches decision making, such as in the Business Meeting of a Chapter, through Prayerful Discernment, a process of listening for the Promptings of the Spirit until we come to the Leading of the Spirit—the experience of Unity in the Will of God. This process affirms Christ Jesus' authority over our lives and our Order, confidence that the Spirit of Jesus will guide us, and our commitment to following God's Will into the Divine plan.

We acknowledge the primacy of the Holy Spirit in our communal process through the discipline of not running ahead of the Spirit's leading. We 'wait on the Lord' rather than rush willfully into our own limited wisdom. The difference between the two is a profound sense of peace and awe before God rather than the sense of having won or lost regarding our own perspective. This consolation is not always given to us, but we treasure the obedience of faith far more than winning or losing a debate.

This process of decision-making is a prayerful, humbling, opening of each one of us, through which the Holy Spirit can lead us into Unity. It offers us a sacramental understanding of working together as a community in the presence of God. However, Prayerful Discernment of the Leading of the Spirit is contingent upon each individual's attitude—there must be a willingness to remain open to the Promptings of the Spirit within us all.

Process

We come to the Chapter Business Meeting with an open mind and heart, as none of us, individually, can know before Chapter what the Holy Spirit has in store for us.

The gathered body is served by a Listener and a Recorder appointed by the Council. These two servants do not speak personally, nor do they share their own opinion. Their work is primarily to listen attentively for the Leading of the Spirit through the gathered community, and to faithfully record this Leading. If either one feels that he or she must speak to an item of Business, a replacement must be found until that particular item of Business has been addressed and the Meeting is ready to move on to the next item of Business.

(Continued on page 2)

Prayerful Discernment... continued

We pray and sit in silence, at the beginning of every Meeting, at the end of every Meeting, and during the Meeting whenever we seem to have drifted away from our central concern, the work of the Holy Spirit, in our midst and in our hearts.

The opening and closing periods of silence are a simple way to acknowledge the presence of God with the whole of our being. Moreover, the opening silence also affords us an opportunity to let go of egocentric needs, personal opinions and private agendas, and thereby clears the way for each person to wait patiently for the Spirit to speak to our hearts.

This time of settling into the presence of God is invaluable, for therein we encounter the Beloved and the Love necessary to bear with one another through the myriad complications human nature cannot help but 'bring to the table,' even when seeking to serve God with chastened hearts.

Being committed to faithfulness to God through Christ Jesus, the well-being of the Order, and respect for each Member of the Order, let the Holy Spirit purify each of our hearts, let everything brought forward be sanctified. In this way all our speaking in Chapter will be of this spiritual nature, and each of our contributions will have something of the 'Promptings of the Spirit' about it.

When so moved, we raise our hands and await acknowledgment from the Listener, whereupon we may respectfully and lovingly offer insights, questions or statements. Let us do so loud enough for all to hear, perhaps by standing, with a clear voice that respects one's siblings.

We always address the Listener, speaking with care what we hope has been prompted by the Spirit. A time of silence should follow to hold in prayer each offering.

The Listener listens deeply to every message offered, hopefully messages that have been prompted by the Spirit, and seeks to facilitate the Meeting. Sometimes the Listener calls for silence and prayerful reflection to help us listen for the Leading of the Spirit. Passionate discussions can generate more heat than light. Anyone in attendance may request that we return to silence for prayer. Moreover, siblings may stand in silence to denote strong objection to aggressive behavior.



All who are gathered are welcome to share their thoughts, questions and concerns, and these offerings received by the body as prayers in and of themselves.

Normally one only speaks once to an issue, and only to bring new light to the discussion. The Leading of the Spirit is not the collected wisdom of those present, but the Collective Discernment of God's will. Let us all hold our opinions lightly and be more interested in the voice of the Spirit speaking through the gathered community.

The Recorder also engages in prayerful listening and helps the Listener express in words the sensed Leading of the Spirit. This Collective Discernment is then offered to the gathered body for potential approval. These two servants may often confer quietly with one another while the gathered body continues to hold all in prayerful silence.

Thereafter the Listener may be enabled to speak the Leading of the Spirit, even just provisionally, and perhaps after further labor in the Spirit. And with the help of the Recorder, a decision or a call to action may be tested with the gathered body (again and again if necessary) and approved.

Records of Discernment which reflect the Leading of the Spirit are only approved when the gathered body comes to an expressed Unity in the Will of God.

In Case Of Disunity

Sometimes a sibling may disagree with what the gathered body believes is the Leading of the Spirit. They may disagree and 'step aside'—accept the Chapter's decision while expressing a disagreement with it. Or they may feel led to 'stand in the way'—humbly and courteously insisting that the Chapter consider their concern before action.

When a sibling feels led to 'stand in the way' the gathered body and the individual will patiently and lovingly labor together in hope of coming to a truer understanding of God's Will. In our labor we acknowledge that our sibling may have some truth or light that the rest of the body does not yet see. We are willing to remain teachable and trust that our dissenting sibling is also teachable.

When the gathered Body allows the truth offered by a sibling to 'stand in the way' it is not granting the equivalent of 'veto power.' The gathered body remains free to implement any decision the community has prayerfully discerned. Indeed, it may, through the Listener, call upon the dissenting sibling to 'step aside,' and this may be noted in the Records of

Prayerful Discernment... continued

Discernment. It may discern the truth of one 'standing in the way' and include this concern in it's decision. Or it may decide to lay over the decision for another time. Ultimately, it is up to the gathered body to name the Leading of the Spirit and to follow the Leading.

There is no claim for infallibility in this process. It is always possible that those at Chapter failed to let the light of Christ shine fully into our Order and into our hearts, or that the Spirit has not moved to grant clarity at this time. Chapter discernments may certainly be revisited to seek more light. The Order may ask Council to include such a concern on the agenda again at a later date.

Afterword

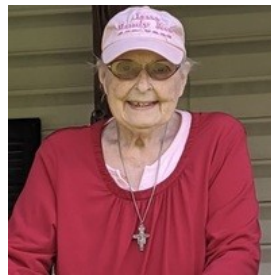
This process may only be truly engaged in through faith and trust that Jesus is in our midst and that His Spirit will guide us. It calls for patience, prayerfulness and a willingness to listen deeply. It requires each of us to be humble and open to hear what the Spirit is saying, and, most demanding of all, the ability to let go of our attachments, what we may individually desire as the outcome.

It is in actually letting go of the outcome that the Leading of the Spirit may creatively guide us. This process offers an alternative to debate driven dialogue and finding a common denominator that everyone 'can live with.' The process of Prayerful Discernment is a sacred way of letting go and of letting God lead.

Chapter Business Meeting discernments and decisions will most often find immediate or quick clarity and unity as discerned by both the Listener and the gathered body. Yet even these easier discernments need to reflect the spirit of this deep-listening process. It is a gift when the Leading of the Holy Spirit seems clear in the moment to all the gathered and allows us to move on to further business. Although the process itself is solemn, let us remember that just as the Spirit may lead us into silence and prayer, the Spirit can and will also lead us with humor, laughter, song and dance. Let us allow the Spirit to move us, as she so desires.

The process of Prayerful Discernment seeks to transcend debate and argument as the mode of Chapter Business Meetings, trusting that the Holy Spirit will guide our interactions towards building up the Body of Christ in mutual respect and love. Let us trust the Spirit of Jesus to guide us to right decisions and into the good that awaits us in the Mystery of God.

Another Fond Farewell



**Patricia Diane Seward
Leon**

**August 10, 1941 -
April 10, 2021**

"I can't wait to meet Jesus!"

These are the words she often spoke that now give us comfort as we announce the death of Patricia D. (Seward) Leon, 79, on April 10, 2021. Patty was a devoted Christian who spent most mornings singing those church hymns that would cause her to close her eyes and smile, her lovely alto voice on key, remembering every word learned so many years ago. Born on August 10, 1941 at AO Fox Hospital in Oneonta, Patty would soon learn to play the piano and French horn, and it was music that would remain with her all her life, long after her memory failed to remember what may have happened yesterday. Her love of trees, birds and the glorious mountains that were her view from her Schenevus home would often stir up memories of the childhood spent at her parents' home in Colliersville, the days at their camp on Crumbhorn Mountain, and how she and her two sisters would play at her father's quarry, Seward Sand & Gravel. Soon she would leave childhood behind, become a college graduate, earn a Black Belt in Karate, and bear two children, Julianna & Noah. Living in New York City brought many career choices, including working at the Dept. of Motor Vehicles in the Financial District in Manhattan, where she would find herself and thousands of others running for their lives on 9/11. On July 14, 1979, Patty married John Leon, Jr., and they lived in Brooklyn. Soon they would close on a weekend home in Schenevus, NY and Patty moved permanently to the area in the summer of 2008, with John continuing to work in the city, coming home on weekends, until finally retirement brought them the peace and tranquility that had been sought after so many years of the ups and downs of life. Patty was a member of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Schenevus, as well as the *Order of Ecumenical Franciscans*. She would compile an extraordinary library of bibles and stuffed animals, all of which brought her the pleasure of knowing that if anyone was in need, she could and would provide. Patty was not perfect, but she ultimately owned up to mistakes made in this life and handed herself over to Jesus. And in Him she found the forgiveness, love and salvation she had been searching for all her life. And now she is at Peace. Patricia is survived by her husband of 41 years, John Leon, Jr. of Schenevus and her sister, Rebecca Seward of Vernon, NY.



Words from the Servant Council



Dear Siblings,

As part of our common life together and according to our statutes, “Professed Members will report quarterly, as assigned, to another in the Order during Advent, Lent, Pentecost and Francistide.”

If you haven’t connected with a sibling for Francistide, we encourage you to do so.

We also want to invite us all to use these times of reflection to consider the topic of our Convocation this year, how we receive and offer care to one another. Our intent in reporting with each other is just this: to celebrate the goodness and joy in our lives; to ask for and receive support and care for what is difficult; to discern how the Spirit is leading us in our daily lives; and to keep building community and relationships with the open-hearted, generous love we have known in Jesus, Francis, Clare, and the great cloud of witnesses that touch our lives.

If it is helpful, you can use the readings and reflective questions we offered in our small group sessions, such as this excerpt and queries from the *Later Rule of Francis*, “Chapter VI: Let the Brothers Not Make Anything Their Own; Begging Alms: the Sick Brothers.”

“Wherever the brothers may be and meet one another, let them show that they are members of the same family. Let each one confidently make known his need to the other, for if a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, how much more diligently must someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit! When any brother falls sick, the other brothers must serve him as they would wish to be served themselves.”

- What is the basis of our care for one another?

- How have you experienced care with your Franciscan siblings, giving or receiving, as “members of the same family?”
- How can we encourage one another to “confidently make known [our] need to the other?”

With our prayers and love,

Your servant council (Betty Lou, Bruce James, Jacoba, Juniper, and Markie)

An Invitation:

Calling all readers, those who like to draw and those who like to write poems, there is something in the air for you. First, I am updating and doing a makeover of our songbook. If you write poems that are Franciscan themed, would you consider sharing these with the whole Order by sending them to me so they can be included in the songbook? Maybe some of our musicians may be inspired to put music to a poem or two. If you like to draw and you have drawings that are Franciscan themed I would like to include them as well in the songbook. My goal is for the songbook to include more of us and our gifts. Thank you David Delacroix for creating our songbook, it is a wonderful gift.

Secondly, if you have any books to donate about Francis and Clare, or Franciscan themed books, please remember that Pallottine Renewal Center is collecting books for their new library. They would also take books of poems and science fiction. Thank you to those siblings who have already donated books. Please send your books to: Pallottine Renewal Center, 15270 Old Halls Ferry Rd., Florissant, MO 63034 or bring them with you to the next Chapter/Convocation in June 2022.

Thank you Siblings, for all that you bring to our little community.

Peace, comfort and joy to you all in 2022

Markie Oliver

Words from the Servant Council... continued

After a very thoughtful and probing reflection on the place of White Supremacy and Patriarchy in our lives as OEF members at the gathering on August 29th, the Servant Council would like to invite you to our next steps Zoom meeting on November 7th.

Picking up on the themes of the August gathering of lamentations and penitence, the idea is to reflect on Br Romero's questions of:

- Who are you listening to?
- Who are you accountable to?
- And an additional question of what's next for you?

The Old Testament view of lamentations as to speak out prophetically and penitence is the step toward amends to changing our lives so as not to repeat the harm and possibly to make some repair. At its core, the history of White Supremacy and Patriarchy is so infused in our world that our efforts and steps can only make a tiny difference and we will continue to live in a world that gives privilege based on our positionality related to White Supremacy and Patriarchy.

The gathering will be

8:00pm-9:30 pm Ireland

4:00-5:30 EST

3:00-4:30 CST

2:00-3:30 MST

1:00-2:30 PST

11:00 am -12:30 pm HST

6:00 am-7:30am JST Monday Nov 8th

9:00 am-10:30 am New Zealand Monday Nov 8th

The Zoom link for the meeting is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86551217667>

Phone link is 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)

Meeting ID: 865 5121 7667

To find your local number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kf9nCVCKE>

We are hoping to see many of you as we take our next steps of accountability for the sins of our culture from which many of us benefit.

Juniper

OEF at Pallottine Renewal Center Interfaith Picnic October 17, 2021

OEF was represented at Pallottine Renewal Center's first Interfaith Picnic on October 17, 2021. Salachar, Markie & Eleanor, Deb & Mark, took part in volunteer assistance, alongside many others for the set up, take down, entrance greeting, directions, and parking assistance for the picnic!



Interfaith Peace Picnic on October 17

Many of the local St. Louis Area Faith Communities were represented. Family-friendly interfaith activities included music, information tables, presentations, performances and children's activities. The OEF had a table set up for the making of bracelets and flags! It was a beautiful weather day with a tremendous turn out.

“Peace cannot persevere without a circle of friends!”*

**Pallottine Interfaith Picnic flier*





Fellowship News



The 2nd Virtual Gathering of the combined **Northwest & Golden Gate Fellowships** on Saturday, Sept. 4th, 2021

Kathy & Karen Lawler served as our Zoom Hosts, allowing the virtual presence of OEF Siblings in this vast geography of our Fellowships — from Missoula to Hawaii, from Bellingham to the South Bay, and Visiting Siblings beyond our vague boundaries.

The Northwest was represented by Aviva Rios, Julian Baker, Stephan Gerhardt (with Muriel right behind him), Mir Plemmons, Steve Jerbi, Nancy Menning, Jahiro Quest Lefevre, and Kimberley Steele [journalist! who knew?].

The Golden Gate had Lilith Beorning Longino, Kathy & Karen Lawler, Betty Lou Leaver, Jonathan Roach, Anne Nancy & Michael Vosler around the virtual table, with David Chasteen making a brief but valiant appearance from his car while on retreat in a very rural part of Colorado. Sustaining the connection proved difficult, but we saw him!

Visiting Siblings from Farther Reaches —the bonus goodness of the virtual mode of gathering — were Samadhi Lopez and Samuel Loudenslager, Texas Bluebonnets; Kiara Mychal Hart, Great lakes Lighthouse; Linda Rose Barley, Northeast/NYC; Debra Snider-Scott, Crossroads; and Reg Weeks sent his regards from New Zealand with the lament that our time zone differences made for a very early NZ Sunday Morning that didn't work with his Interim Pastoral schedule.

Brother Jahiro convened us with a Sufi/Zoroastrian Invocation & Spiritual Reading from the Gathas, in the mode of that Mystical prayer practice. Included was chanting two of the 99 Names of Allah, inviting the comparison of the fairly recent Christian Hymn, "Bring Many Names." One can imagine Francis' time with the Sultan, each attending the prayer practices and the prayers of the other, perhaps adopting elements for their own spirit practices.

Our Prayers that day were lifted for Pat Leon's family, our most recently departed OEF Sibling, April 10th, 2021; and Betty Lou's loss of husband Carl on August 16th. When we would gather in, or just visit, San Juan Bautista, Carl was gracious in

his welcoming and generous in sharing his barbecue skills. The Celebration of Life Service for Carl is (perhaps "was" as you read this) All Saints Day, November 1st, 2021.

The bulk of our time together was given to Individual Check-ins, allowing the incarnational realities of Sibling journeys to weave the fabric of "our presence" in these places of God's geography and the Church's life and witness, and remembering upon whose ancestral land we live and worship. Check-ins were followed by Questions we're aching to ask of the group or specific Siblings; e.g., How does one discern "the next step" one takes in journeying as part of the OEF?

A Take-Away from this 2-hour Gathering:: God has blessed this little Order so abundantly with the unique bundles of skills, commitments & engagements & ministries, passions & interests — and trials & spirit strengths!

Humbly and joyfully sharing with you!
- brother michael v. /oef [him/his]

NorthEast OEF Gathering

NE OEF Sibs gathered Saturday, September 18, 2021 (1:00-3:00pm EDT). Sibs shared updates of presence of God and Frances and Clare in their lives. Despite being dispersed, the common theme of seeking balance amidst the chaos resonated with all. Retirement congratulations to Catherine; welcome home after visiting their son and a thank you for visiting with Betty Lou (both in California) to Bruce and Shoshana; welcome back to face-to-face classes to Dawn; best wishes to Petra as she and Karen begin long awaited renovations on their home; congratulations to Juniper as he begins his volunteer work with the Jamaica Bay Reserve; warm greetings to Toni and the Holy Spirit's guidance seeking a new house of worship; welcome back to face-to-face classes Linda Rose!

Servant Council members, Juniper and Bruce, asked for prayers and discernment as the planning for OEF's Chapter Convocation 2022 (last weekend in June 2022) and selection of Servant Council members proceed.

Fellowship News... continued

We closed with Romans 8:24: "For in this hope we were saved, but hope that is seen is not hope, for why does one still hope for what he sees?" We choose to live in hope and to do what we can regardless of what we have, and where we are.

SAVE THE DATE: NE OEF's next gatherings are planned for **Advent**, December 11, 2021 (1:00-3:00pm) and for **Lent**, March 5, 2022 (1:00-3:00pm).

Peace and all good~



L-r: Deb Scott, Angie Hartman, Markie Oliver, Mark Scott, Kelly Tague

Crossroads Fellowship Report

Good and Blessed Greetings to all of our Franciscan Siblings!

We are happy to report that our monthly Zoom gatherings have been a continuous source of spiritual growth, on-going formation, and staying in close relationship with our Franciscan siblings in the Crossroads Region. We have enjoyed visitors from other Regions, as this draws our dispersed family closer together. We can never say it enough :) our door is always open!

Our most recent news and cause for celebration was participating in a Novice ceremony on October 3, 2021 (O' Blessed Transitus) for our Crossroads sibling, Kelly Tague, who lives and works in Muncie, IN. His home church, Dialogue Church, has embraced him and supports him on this Franciscan journey. Markie gave an introductory talk on the OEF and it's core mission of "bringing life to Gospel, and Gospel to life!" Kelly gave a very moving talk on the importance of our "Rule of Life" and how this one discipline has made a significant impact on how he is conducting his life as a believer, and as a Franciscan. What a powerful service and witness to his home church, family and friends! As Markie said: "Welcome to the Dance"!

October 7-10 found us gathering in Pokagon State

Park. Some were camping, some were in the Potawatomi Inn, and yet we gathered daily around a warm campfire. Nature gifted us with warm days, cool nights, rain, sunshine, rainbows, falling leaves, and falling walnuts, lots of falling walnuts (helmets recommended! LOL).

On Friday, October 8th, we ceremonially welcomed **Angie Hartman** into Postulancy with our OEF family as her Formation Companion, Denise Magnuson, joined in via FaceTime. (*Angie's introduction appears on Pg.9 of this issue.*)

While at Pokagon, we participated in a service led by Chaplain Worth Hartman (spouse of Angie) centered around St. Francis of Assisi and stories told of Francis and the animals and the first Creche! Scout (Markie & Eleanor's dog) was our campsite mascot as we sang in open air around the campfire; read aloud Psalm and Scripture. We prayed, lifting up our joys, our concerns, and our petitions. We see unresolved harm of the past carried forward into the ways we "act out" at times, and realize the dire need for compassion, understanding, mercy, care, and forgiveness exchanged amongst ourselves, as an Order, and as humankind, one to another, while navigating these disconcerting times.

We will continue to meet on the third Saturday of every month by way of Zoom. We will begin a new book study at our next gathering: "Francis, The Journey and the Dream" by Murray Bodo. We've also entered into conversation about ways that we, as a Regional Fellowship, could take action in lending support to struggling students of higher education in our area, and in which direction do we go. Please keep us in prayer as we discern our next step.



A Hymn of Remorse

We covered over your colorful earth with gray cement.
 We cut down trees and stripped the soil wherever we went.
 We scarred the hills for gold and coal,
 Blind with greed inside our soul,
 Our goal: to have complete control.

Lord, have mercy. Can we be restored?

Lord, have mercy.

We have children we don't love so we shove them away.
 Make sex a drug, the more we take the more we crave.
 From tender kiss to slamming doors
 From sacred vows to lawyer wars
 Break ours down to mine and yours
 With no remorse.

Lord, have mercy. Can we be restored?

Lord, have mercy.

What of the lands of tribes and nations who lived here first?
 Who took the best with broken treaties, and left the worst?
 By whom were slaves bought, used, sold?
 Who valued humans less than gold?
 Who told us racist lies until our hearts went cold?

Lord, have mercy. Can we be restored?

Lord, have mercy.

The noise of traffic is drowning out the songbird's song.
 Your voice within us is telling us that we've gone wrong.
 You call us from our selfishness,
 To be blessed—and to bless
 To turn to you, to begin anew.

Lord, have mercy. Can we be restored?

Lord, have mercy.

—Brian McLaren

From [Songs For a Revolution of Hope](#), released October 1, 2007

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



On Saturday October 16th **Steve Joseph Jerbi** was received as a Novice in the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. Steve took his vows in the Chapel of University Congregational United Church of Christ in the company of his family, friends and peers (Mir Plemmons, Br Liliith Beorning and Br. Stephan Gerhardt.)



Also received as a Novice this month: **Samhadi Metta Bexar!** This occurred during our Zoom Transitus Service on October 2nd (on her birthday, no less!).

Congratulations to both of you!

Introducing:

Jonathan Roach

Alohe e Siblings,

Blessings from Windward side of Hawai'i Island! I am Jonathan Roach, and I am a theologian, writer, pastor, husband, father, and an work-in-progress. I grew-up across Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan as a preacher's kid in the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana) and went on to earn a BA in English Education. I thought that I knew and understand everything about life and faith coming out of college, but after going off to teaching 8th grade writing in Navajo Nation, I was broken and humbled by realities and wisdom that I had never encountered. After returning to Michigan, I earned a Master of Library Science from Wayne State University and served as the Director of Library Service at Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit while I earned my Master of Divinity. I was first licensed and later ordained at

First Congregational Church of Detroit, that became my spiritual home. In Detroit, I also met my future wife Rev. Jihey Esther Chung and we have now been married 15 years. We moved just north of Homestead, Florida so that I could work on my PhD in practical theology at St. Thomas University. While in south Florida, I was blessed to add Enye Grace Roach to our family, to be introduced to the little way of Francis and Clare through my friend's Sister Pat Doody OSF, and to finish my PhD on a theology of mundane work. I was called to New Hampshire next to serve Stratham Community Church, United Church of Christ and then three years later I was called to follow my wife as she followed her call to Hawai'i Care Choices Hospice of Hilo for the next step in her ministry. I spent two plus years working as the Branch Manager of the Honoka'a Public Library and the Laupahoehoe Public and School Library. As God prepared me for my next steps into ministry and on October 1st of this year, I began as an Associate Conference Minister of the Hawai'i Conference of the United Church of Christ and as a postulant of the OEF.

Peace and Blessings, Jonathan

Welcome, Jonathan!

On Friday, October 8th, we ceremonially welcomed **Angie Hartman** into Postulancy with our OEF family as her Formation Companion, Denise Magnuson, joined via FaceTime. Angie lives in Indianapolis, IN. She is a retired Social Worker, the eldest of 8 siblings, and a long standing lover of the Franciscan way of life, as her parents were third Order Franciscans. She, and her husband Worth, have journeyed along as friends of the OEF these last few years. She is now ready to begin official Formation!

Welcome to the family, Angie!



Lifelong Formation Station



OEF has a brand new committee!

The Lifelong Formation Team originated in 2019 as a ministry providing resources that would stimulate ongoing formation and spiritual growth beyond Profession! Stephan Scott-Gerhardt, John Syvertson, Dale Carmen, along with consultation from Louis Canter, began gathering book titles, movies, documentaries, podcasts, and online links that were Franciscan in nature, encouraged Spiritual growth, or assisted in life circumstances. A huge thank you to Salachar for building the resource page and uploading the information to our OEF website. Debra Snider-Scott came on board in 2020 as a calling developed to offer Seasonal Zoom Services to our siblings during a time of isolation and restrictions in our home communities. We currently offer Transitus, Advent, Lent, and Pentecost online services. As a team we meet regularly to "think tank" what we can do next to lift up and encourage all of our siblings. We are always open to suggested resources that keeps our Faith in forward motion as Franciscans, and as a family! Please feel free to offer suggestions and resources to anyone on the Team. In this column you will see reviews, service summaries, and resources that feed our lifelong need of spiritual enrichment and growth. Be sure to check out the resource page on the OEF website.

Peace and Prayers Always-

Dale Carmen, OEF
Debra Snider-Scott, OEF
Stephan Scott-Gerhardt, OEF
John son-of-Syvert, OEF

OEF ZOOM TRANSITUS SERVICE OCTOBER 2, 2021

The annual OEF Zoom Transitus Service on October 2nd was quite a success with wonderful representation from, not only the OEF, but the OFS, TSSF, OLF, Little Sister of St. Clare, and from all those who have a deep love of Francis and his charisms! Upward to 70 attendees (three full Zoom pages) gathered from countries all around the globe, some of which included Guyana, Ireland, and Canada. The OEF was honored to begin by sharing in the novicing ceremony of **Samadhi Metta Bexar** on this special day! Happy Birthday Sam... and welcome to the family!

We all gathered as one Franciscan family in remembrance of our dear St. Francis of Assisi, reading biographical stories of the time leading up to his welcoming Sister Death, the singing of the Canticle of the Creatures, reading John's Gospel account of Jesus washing the Disciples feet, and Psalm 142. We shared morsel and drink during the Agape Meal time. Prayers and

Petitions, spoken and unspoken, were lifted to the heavens. A closing Blessing from St. Clare was shared in English and Italian. Much gratitude goes out to all of the participating readers, and our awesome technician, Salachar! Thank you OEF Siblings for such great support and attendance, also for extending invitations out and beyond our Order. It is so important for us to stretch out our arms with welcoming grace and Franciscan hospitality to the entire Franciscan Community. Continue to be a peaceful presence in the world!

The Lifelong Formation Team always welcomes book reviews, resource recommendations, movies, documentaries, course studies, etc., all things that keeps us growing in Faith, in Franciscan Spirituality, and in communion with our Order.

OEF Advent Zoom Gathering

The OEF will gather via zoom on Saturday December 4th at 3:00pm Central Time to celebrate the second week of Advent. As always we encourage you to invite folks from other orders.

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81589013625>

Meeting ID: 815 8901 3625

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,81589013625# US (Washington DC)

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Dial by your location

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+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)

Meeting ID: 815 8901 3625

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kc9ggPI1ez>

Peace and Blessings from the Lifelong Formation Team



Meitheal: Fellowship and Creation

"Meitheal" (pronounced meh-hel). It is the Irish word for cooperation - our coming together to work together for mutual benefit. Meitheal is an expression of universal kinship, something vital to Franciscanism. The word links beautifully with the Greek "oikos", the root of "oikoumene" (ecumenical) - our common home. In recent months both Brs. Neal and Jason have connected with fellow tertiaries of the TSSF here on the Island of Ireland - meitheal.

One example of meitheal was a study on the growing climate emergency. Br. Jason suggested a joint reading of "Seeing Differently: Franciscans and Creation" by Cocksedge, Double, and Worssam. Written by three Anglican/Episcopalian first and third order Franciscans, the book provides a Franciscan lens through which the reader can enter relationship with God through creation in both rural and urban contexts. TSSF and OEF in Ireland have been reading this book together and, once monthly, reflecting on the implications of same - vegetarianism; ways of avoiding plastic use; sustainability, such as growing your own produce; the vital importance of tree planting, even if it is one in your own backyard; ethical purchasing of food and other products; Franciscan spirituality as creation spirituality and so much more.

Another meitheal opportunity was realised when Brs. Neal and Jason participated in the TSSF Annual Retreat. Entering the "Zoomiverse" we prayed and reflected on various aspects of Francis' "Canticle of Creation." It was a chance to be silent in God, to gaze, consider, contemplate to imitate/embody God's revelation to us in our daily lives. The retreat was an enriching time, a time to be family together as two aspects of the same spiritual tradition. In reaching out we have formed a healthy relationship with our siblings that we hope to nurture, with a view to working, sharing and co-operating for mutual enrichment and the benefit of the other.

From this side of our sister, Mother Earth, we in Ireland hope to inspire the meitheal in you! For it is coming together to support and help each other that we can work together to foster social and eco-justice. In a world that cries in such pain from the injurious injustices of exclusion, domination, racism, sexism, hatred, disrespect of the other, selfishness and greed, the universal kinship expressed as meitheal is the Franciscan communal vision of human/non-human relationship that we so desperately need to heal our common home in this climate emergency.

Peace,

Br. Neal Dunnigan, OEF &
Jason Melia-O'Brien, n/OEF



The OEF Treasurer has a new address!

Nancy Menning has moved from Missoula, Montana, to Eugene, Oregon. Nothing changes for those of you who contribute by PayPal or through the OEF website. But for those of you who contribute to OEF using automatic (ACH) checks sent from your bank or by mailing personal checks to Nancy, please note the new mailing address below. Thank you for your continued generosity!

Affinipay via the OEF website

Log in to the OEF website (<https://oeffranciscans.org/>). Look for the "Donate" drop-down option under the tab labeled "The Scriptorium." One-time as well as recurring donations can be made there.

Paypal

Log in to your Paypal account, then use the following email address to send your donations to OEF: oeftreasurer.registrar@gmail.com.

Via ACH check from your own bank or credit union

Ask your bank or credit union for the paperwork to set up an automatic monthly donation to OEF. Have the checks made out to **Order of Ecumenical Franciscans** and have them mailed to:

Order of Ecumenical Franciscans
c/o Nancy Menning, Treasurer
3175 Duke Snider Ave
Eugene, OR 97402

Do it the old-fashioned way by writing a check

Make your personal check out to **Order of Ecumenical Franciscans** and mail it to the address above.

An Important Reminder

*****NEW ADDRESS*****

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
3175 Duke Snider Ave
Eugene, OR 97402**





By Gary Wheeler

**Reprinted with permission from "The Sword," newsletter for St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Little Rock, AR, August 26, 2021*

This July more than a dozen members of St. Michael's and others began a virtual journey guided by Deacon Sam Loudenslager, OEF using a program developed by the Episcopal Church called **This is Sacred Ground**. This ten-episode experience was promoted this past year as part of **Becoming Beloved Community**, the larger Jesus movement-inspired initiative that seeks "to respond to racial injustice and grow a community of reconcilers, justice-makers, and healers."

In Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's introduction to **This is Sacred Ground**, he makes the point that Moses at the burning bush on Sinai was instructed to take off his shoes because he was on sacred ground, not because the earth was sacred but because God was about to tell the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Curry pointed out that places, where people's stories are told, are sacred ground.

The ten-part series provides multiple stories by people who are harmed because of race as either perpetrators or victims. Participants view a film and written documents to explore the history of racism in the United States from its beginning in the 1600s at New Plymouth to the current day. In this sense, it is an educational effort presenting new scholarship on how white people have intersected with minority populations in America. When the group is brought together, it is, more importantly, a safe space where the participants can share their stories of the past and of awakenings to the role we have played in perpetuating systemic racism.

These sessions are called dialogue circles where all share their experiences and respond to the curriculum they have studied. They intend to get white people talking to each other because race has been a creation largely of European white people to maintain property, riches, and power.

It is, therefore, necessary for those of us with privilege to understand the different journey of others who have grown up non-white in America. One of the readings from *Waking Up White: and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debby Irving in fact points out that it takes skin color plus favoritism and power to sustain systemic racism.

Ultimately, the goal is to find paths to reconciliation by truth-telling, repairing relationships, creating new visions, and practicing the way of love. The group has to date completed 4 of the 10 zoom sessions. The comments of the participants are confidential but have been notable for the recognition that we have grown up with false narratives about race, and that we and our families have been complicit in macro and microaggressions against minority populations whether they be Black, Indigenous, or other people of color.

Sam Loudenslager and I are both participants in the group. I asked him how he came to learn about and facilitate the sessions. He had heard about the program from other clergy and without much thought prepared to offer it to the St. Michael's community as a resource for others' personal study. Like many of us he had already spent time refocusing on racism in America since the many murders of Black individuals over the last few years that have been brought to light such as George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Trayvon Martin, Ahmad Arbery, and others.

Sacred Ground... continued

This included in-depth discussions with his Franciscan colleagues. However, when he looked at the curriculum, he realized there was much more to dive into, particularly the racism towards Asians, Indigenous peoples, and other people of color recently rekindled by President Trump during the pandemic. After a few sessions, he realized that race is certainly not a Black and White issue, but a much more pervasive behavior.

"It's everywhere," he stated. The other attraction was the "depth of sharing." The atmosphere created during the sessions is focused on listening without judgment. As a result, people are able to be candid and honest.

I asked him if it worked to have the group be largely white people talking to white people. Sam believes that such an arrangement permits people to talk more freely, "drop their guard," and agrees with another author studied in the group, James Baldwin, that racism is the white person's problem, and can only be solved with white people coming to terms with their own history and what they have done. In this sense, there is a confessional aspect to the experience. Our own personal family histories are discussed: whose families owned slaves in the past or participated in systemic racism activities. The sessions evoke strong emotions as participants are confronted by the evil that has been done to non-white people in America. Being in a safe place to absorb and process these emotions is critical.

The sessions have been built around two books, *Waking up White*, noted above, and *Jesus and the Disinherited* by Howard Thurman, several films and documentaries (produced by PBS, the Episcopal Church, VOX, National Geographic, and podcasts), and selected readings from magazines and academic sources.

The general topics include:

- ☐ The story of racism in America;
- ☐ The roots of whiteness;
- ☐ The problems with the Doctrine of Discovery (promulgated by European monarchies in order to legitimize the colonization of non-Christian lands);

- ☐ Racism against Indigenous peoples, the history of the slave trade, Latino and Asian and Pacific Islander histories;
- ☐ The myths of full access to the American Dream;
- ☐ The polarization of White America, injustice and incarceration of people of color, and finally;
- ☐ How to repair the breaches created by our history and present world.

Typically, around 10-15 people attend each session, and the value of the discussions has been echoed by most participants. For those who want to learn more, a general description of the program can be found at

www.episcopalchurch.org/sacred-ground/



Deacon Sam Loudemslager is leading a 10-part series of zoom meetings that look at systemic racism in America.

NEXT "FIDDLESTICKS" DEADLINE

Submissions for the **Lent 2022** issue of "Fiddlesticks" will be accepted immediately.

Deadline for submissions is January 15, 2022.

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!





Anti-Racism



Many of you know about and have been active in this realm for some time. I write to you as a learner who is relatively new to this material. A couple of years ago, a friend took a course that gave an abridged version of work about White Supremacy culture. It explained 12 characteristics of this culture and provided antidotes or actions that could be taken, particularly when working in mixed race groups. Based on the anti-racism work of Tema Okum:

<https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/>.

These characteristics startled me, gave me pause, and still reverberate. I continue to reflect on how they are at work in me and in our society:

- Perfectionism
- Sense of urgency
- Defensiveness
- Worship of the written word
- Only one right way
- Paternalism
- Either/or thinking
- Fear of open conflict
- Individualism
- Objectivity
- Right to comfort

Okum has since added 2 new characteristics:
https://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/white_supremacy_culture_-_still_here.pdf

- Quantify over quality
- Progress is bigger and more

These characteristics have been at the edge of my awareness as I have been learning while living a very busy life. I want to be more intentional with this material now that I have a bit more time.

Recently, another friend shared a YouTube video by academic and anti-racism activist, Robin D'Angelo. It is so clear and succinct. It is helping me to better understand and integrate this material. [Deconstructing White Privilege with Dr. Robin DiAngelo - YouTube](#)

I find it to be challenging to curate resources, given the abundance available. At the same time, I humbly offer these two resources that have helped me.

Catherine Maine, n/oef





Franciscan Spirituality, Climate Change, and Systemic Racism

by Nancy Menning, OEF

Dan Horan, OFM holds a faculty position at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana, and is a respected voice in Franciscan spirituality. In the current (Fall 2021) issue of Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality, he argues that Franciscan Spirituality is uniquely positioned to help us address contemporary challenges like climate change and systemic racism. While Horan's larger argument addresses the appeal of Franciscan spirituality even to non-Franciscans (and non-Christians), I offer these notes on Horan's article as an invitation to your continued formation as a Franciscan.

The world Francis and Clare lived in was, like our own, one of social upheaval and civil unrest. The early Franciscan tradition adopted a virtue of mercy to offer a gospel-grounded response to the "signs of the times." Beyond this overarching emphasis on mercy, Horan draws our attention to three other features of the early movement: itinerancy, outreach to marginalized communities, and a nonjudgmental and inclusive approach to nonbelievers and practitioners of other faith traditions. With respect to itinerancy, rather than fleeing the world by entering a monastery, the early Franciscans moved toward the world, "recognizing God's enduring presence within the world and quotidian life" (214). Thus, we are called to relationship and engagement, rather than piety and escapism. When we think of the Franciscan tradition's outreach to and solidarity with the marginalized, we recall stories of lepers and of voluntary poverty in the early years of the Franciscan movement. Today, we too are "called to surrender those belongings or sources of power and domination that would impede our ability to see one another without prejudice or judgment" (215). Finally, with respect to engaging with others, Francis's approach to non-Christians (including Sultan Malek al-Kamil) was one of inter-religious friendship and relationship building, recognizing our common humanity, rather than one of proselytizing, excluding, or violently opposing. Today, we are called to meet people "wherever they are in their own spiritual journeys without imposing prejudices, judgments, or conditions" (216).

Horan then suggests how Franciscan Spirituality offers a distinctive response to the contemporary challenges of climate change and systemic racism. With respect to climate change, the last thing we need is better stewardship and continued anthropocentrism. The Franciscan tradition offers three helpful concepts: kinship, *pietas*, and *usus pauper*. The kinship with creation expressed in the Canticle of the Creatures de-centers the human and acknowledges "nonhuman creaturely agency and capacity for divine relationship" (218). When Bonaventure wrote about *pietas* (piety) he wasn't

thinking of the modern meaning of the word: being "observably reverent or devotional" (218). Instead, he drew on the classic Roman meaning of the term, referring to the care of one's parents, other family members, the dead, and deities. Hence, a Franciscan understanding of care for creation is not one of stewardship of resources but one of caring for one's family members. *Usus pauper* is a term associated with the medieval Franciscan theologian Peter of John Olivi. The term is related to the vow of poverty and refers to the "restricted" or "poor" use of those things we need to sustain our lives. Franciscans are called to be discerning about what we use and consume. Each of these concepts -- kinship, *pietas*, and *usus pauper* -- can help us respond faithfully to the challenge of climate change.

Writing primarily about the United States context, Horan identifies *haecceitas* and evangelical poverty as two Franciscan concepts that are helpful in responding to systemic racism and white supremacy. *Haecceitas* (this-ness) comes from the work of medieval Franciscan theologian and philosopher John Duns Scotus. The general consensus in medieval philosophy was that the essence of a given object was defined by its "what-ness" -- its human-ness, tree-ness, or dog-ness, for example. In contrast, Duns Scotus argued that a thing's "this-ness" -- its particular identity and intrinsic worth originating from "the loving and free act of the divine will through creation" (221) -- was primary; any common aspect, like "human-ness" (or Whiteness), was secondary in importance. This recognition of every person's inherent dignity and value is a resource for re-thinking justice and equity in a context of racial injustice and oppression. The second concept, evangelical poverty, "addresses the need for those who benefit from the unjust system of racial oppression and white supremacy to divest themselves of unearned privilege and power" (222). Evangelical poverty is, at its heart, a renunciation of power; it is not an end in itself but a means of removing barriers that inhibit relationship with all people and the rest of creation. "What is particularly interesting for us today," Horan writes, "is the prerequisite that the friars acknowledged their unearned privilege and power before they could attempt to do any good or advocate on behalf of anyone else. It required a willingness to see reality as it actually is and not how those in privileged social and ecclesial contexts wanted to see the world" (223).

As Francis said at the end of his life, "I have done what is mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours to do."

Citation: Daniel P. Horan, "Spirituality in a wintry season: the wisdom of the Franciscan tradition in the quest for meaning today," Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality 21.2 (Fall 2021): 207-227.

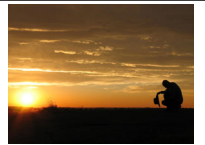


Fiddlesticks
c/o Christine Petersen, OEF
934 Round Oak Ct.
Nekoosa, WI 54457
U.S.A.



Morning Prayer (I/we)

by Reg Weeks, OEF



O Holy One ~ Creator, Redeemer, Restorer

I open my heart to you;

I surrender every part of my life to you.

Come, fill me with light, and joy, and peace;

I offer you the only thing I truly possess,
 my capacity to choose a response to what life may
 bring today.

By myself I have no sure guide, nor certain
 strength of purpose,
 so share your life with me, that I may
 live through faith,
 the life of truth, justice, and compassion,
 the life of beauty, love, and humour,
 the life of patience, wisdom, and strength.

And guide me to the people
 I should meet or help;
 to the circumstance in which I can
 best serve you;
 whether by my words, my actions, or my prayer.

But above all, make Christ to be formed
 within me,
 that I may dethrone self in my heart
 and make Him sovereign,
 so that He is in me and I in Him,
 today, and always.

This is my prayer in Jesus' name, Amen.

