

FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 144

Thanksgiving/Advent 2022



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“Answers Blowin’ in The (Whirl) Wind?” *

Naomi Washington-Leapheart

Then the Lord spoke to Job out of the whirlwind: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me.” -- Job 38:1-3 (NRSV)

Let’s be honest: the God of Job 38 must have skipped class the day pastoral care was taught. After Job spent all that time--dozens of chapters--begging God and his community for a reasonable explanation for his suffering, God sidestepped the question. Instead, God cued the whirlwind and pulled receipts. “Have you seen my work? Who’s God here, you or me?”

For many people, God’s speech to Job is unsatisfying at best and insulting at worst. Every time I read it, my gut reaction is “Ouch!” followed by “Yikes!” followed by “But what have you done for me *lately*, God?”

As we live through realities that seem to take us from grief-to-grief, we desperately crave balm in this Gilead. We want soothing words and delicate touch. And we deserve them in the midst of our pain.

But what I’m reluctantly, and at times resentfully learning, is that God’s response isn’t always pastoral, in a warm and fuzzy sense. God may instead give us hard-to-hear answers to questions we didn’t ask:

No, human beings are not the center of this wild and unpredictable universe. No, our faithfulness does not guarantee us a life free from precarity. Yes, wounds are where the light can finally enter, doing the tender work of showing us what James Baldwin called “the doom and glory of knowing who you are.” And we can only know who we are as we make ourselves vulnerable in community with others.

Perhaps God’s invitation to us when we are feeling most desperate is to look around at all of creation. We might be able to find solace in our collective struggle to stay hopeful and alive in a world filled with both beauty and pain.

(Continued on page 2)

Blowin' in The (Whirl) Wind... continued

Prayer

God, our pain often overwhelms us, and all we want is immediate relief. In the meantime, help us experience the comfort of connection in the ashes while we're waiting for the beauty to return.

**Shared by Br. Juniper, OEF for discussion
From "Stillspeaking Daily Devotional," United
Church of Christ, Oct. 17, 2022*

Siblings respond:

Thanks for sharing this. I preached recently on that passage in Job, and (if y'all will pardon me for quoting myself) I came to this conclusion: In the intensity of his suffering, Job has experienced what many people do, a narrowing of his awareness, his attention focused only on his own affliction. He has lost touch with the wider world, and what God offers in these speeches is the possibility of reconnection with that immense reality. This opens to Job the possibility of remembering something beyond his own suffering. What has happened to him is truly horrible, but it takes its place in a universe of wonder.

Honestly, this also connects with my own experience. When I get into despair and depression, doing some "forest bathing" (or something like it), deliberately taking time to go walking or sitting in the woods, helps me. It may not completely alleviate the misery, but it can give the misery a place on earth.

Peace & blessing,
David Rensberger
Associate of OEF

Thanks for this reflection on Job, and your reflection, David R. I see Job focused on his own suffering, and it is great, and wanting God to answer "Why?".

Many Christians, myself included, are focused on grace and goodness of God. So the book of Job, and the cross, remind us God is God. We tend to super-humanize God. God is a whole different realm which includes suffering as a given. Naturally, sometimes obsessively, as parents we tend to protect our young from suffering. So when

do they learn to suffer? To push through, together, through illness, frostbitten toes, missing meals, eating mush only, sweaty labor; empathy and engagement with those who suffer even more than they will ever know? May we expect suffering and practice and witness resilience; always realizing that our suffering is less than billions of others. Personally, I do not ask God in prayer for safe travel or healing for me or my family. We drive as safely as we can and take care of our bodies. If/when accidents and illness and deaths come, I pray for strength and courage to get through suffering and deal with it gracefully. I pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done..." My parents suffered many things, and we children were included in that... they never asked us to do anything difficult that they weren't doing even more-so. They were examples of how to suffer and go on, over and over again. We survived and strangely, we children thrived. All wounded, with scars and healing and manageable impairments.

Grateful for all of life,
Dale Carmen OEF

As I heard from Jacoba, many of the prophets didn't ask "Why?" but asked "How Long?"

Salachar

Not Biblical, but I find the question 'why' one of the most useless. Most of the time there is no real answer. Most useful is the question 'what can I do about it now?'

In my denomination we do not pray for specific outcomes. Instead we pray for the strength and spiritual guidance to deal with what is given us. How long usually is how long it takes me to wise up and learn from what is given me. A quote I love is "wisdom is crystallized suffering."

Your little sister,
Sharon

Dear Brother Steve, At first your comment seemed just what I needed to hear in my current situation. And no sooner had I decided to reply and thank you than a quiet voice came to me with the reminder: "my grace is all you need."
Joan S.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON FRANCISCAN UNITY

As most of you know, the Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity (JCFU) recently changed format and is now offering Zoom mini-conferences to draw together Franciscans of all Orders as a way to encourage building bridges and growing relationships with one another. In doing so, the focus of these mini-conferences is to highlight elements that we all share in common. September 10th was the first of these Zoom mini-conferences. A representative from each Order that make up the JCFU presented a brief talk about Baptism and its connectiveness that pools us all into the stream towards eternal life, a baseline common denominator. Although the outward sign can vary per denominational tradition, Baptism is an inward and outward commitment, not of just the individual, not just a “one and done,” but a life commitment of a family of believers to share in the growth and development of those precious souls given unto us and are now called family. All Franciscan Orders can draw from the understanding that we have a shared relationship with God through Holy Baptism (regardless of form). “This unity through Baptism is the underpinning for our shared worship and witness as Franciscans.” (Taken from *Elements of Franciscan Unity*). Along with the talks and beautiful slide presentation, break out room conversations allowed for individual sharing and response to related questions. The OEF had a healthy attendance number at this first gathering... with hopes for more in the future.

The next Zoom mini-conference is set for January 21, 2023 at 4:00pm EASTERN. The next element of discussion will be VOCATION. Please mark you calendars early! An invitation and registration for this free conference will be issued as we draw closer to the date. We would love to see this format succeed and our numbers grow. Remember that ALL Franciscans are welcome, so please, when the next invite comes out, be sure to share!

Ron Nuss-Warren, OEF
Deb Snider-Scott, OEF



A Few Thoughts on Intercessory Prayer

Intercessory Prayer presents me with several on-going struggles:

1) that I in fact DO what I say I will do when I say, “I will pray for you.” A prayer journal in the computer files and in a notebook is helpful to that. Yet, perhaps I say it too often; or perhaps not often enough... For how long do I continue to pray for that person, entity, or situation? With what frequency — daily, several times a day, weekly, occasionally?

2) the fact that we live in a milieu of massive information flow offers whelming-to-overwhelming and repeated calls for Intercessory Prayer. How to manage that? Or perhaps not to manage, but to go with the flow trusting God to do the tapping on the shoulder or, better, the tugging on the heart for my attention. Most likely both.

3) to lean towards “praying for the prey.” the most vulnerable, the marginalized, the desperate, the fearful ones. Ukraine, Somalia, Haiti, Florida, Pakistan... (here in the Fall of 2022, update always) people without shelter, people with no or too little income, victims of violence, etc.

4) praying for “the enemy,” those going and pulling on all of us in what seems an unhealthy direction for us and for their own souls and well-being; those so willing to use violence for their driven purposes. All while recognizing my own complicities in our shared mess.

And 5) what to pray for others as outcome or process — for healing is huge, for life vs. death even while trusting that death is both an ending and a new beginning; for relief from pain, violence, oppression; for resolution of conflict; for reconciliation and reparation, for renewal of what is broken, for wholeness restored; for strength and courage to carry though what is likely to last awhile. Praying for others is, for sure, serious business and requires both earnest discipline and spontaneity. And it is bread for my soul.

- michael v.





Words from The Servant Council



In the Northern Hemisphere, the days are shortening, the leaves are displaying their annual dance of color before the barrenness of winter arrives. In the Southern Hemisphere, new life is beginning to emerge as winter gives way to spring. God calls to us in times of change. Something old is falling away, the seeds of something new are forming. We have been moving through a season of reflection, pondering how we engage a world steeped in racism and patriarchy in ways that reflect the Gospel life following Jesus in the footsteps of Francis and Clare. How are we to be faithful to the past, a past that includes an understanding of the deep kinship with all creatures that was part of the insight of Francis and Clare, while also naming the many ways that same past has brought the sin of racism and patriarchy to us today through years, decades, centuries of centering differences in a way that places whiteness as the norm? How are we to be faithful to naming and speaking the truth of the kinship of all creation when this world we have inherited and live in is one that engages with us differently depending on the color of our skin?

This is work we have undertaken. It is difficult work. It is work that brought us to deep differences during our last Chapter. It is also work that, through prayerful discernment, through listening to the Spirit speaking to and through each of us, we found a way through the differences to find a path of engagement. It is work we will continue and bring back to our Chapter in 2023.

The minutes of our last Chapter give a glimpse of some of this challenging journey to which we have committed ourselves. We invite you to continue your reflections on how we together name in our Principles and live out in our rules and in our lives a commitment to dismantling white supremacy, patriarchy and other forms of oppression.

Times of change are liminal times. May our good and loving God be with us all in these days of change.

Blessings of peace,

Your Servant Council, Petra, Owusu, Magdalena, Ron, and Kathy

Abbreviated Minutes for the OEF Chapter - June 23-26, 2022

There was a Chapter Business session via Zoom on Saturday, June 18th, 5 pm EDT, for the presentation of the reports from the various Servant Teams as well as a review of the prayerful discernment process. All reports except the Treasurer's report and the Principles Revision Report were presented to and discussed by the Body gathered that day.

Friday, 6/24/2022

Servant Council Selection

After two rounds of discernment of the Body, with members not present using the proxy process to voice their discernments, the following were selected (listed alphabetically):

Kathy Lawler
Ron Nuss-Warren
Owusu Slater
Magdalena Stebbing
Petra Strand

Members Presented for Novicing and Profession

The Formation Team presented the following members for novicing and profession. All were accepted by the Body.

New Novices

Clinton Bennett
Dawn Dreisbach
Kris Eterea
Crystal Minugh-Brutscher
Kevin Przbylski



Newly Professed

Linda Rose Barley (Sr. Caritas)
Dale Blesz (Br. Dale Paul)
Mir Plemmons (Br. Mir)
Clair Slomski (Sr. Francesca Clare)

Saturday, 6/25/2022

Br. Jacoba opened the Chapter session presenting the OEF Prayerful Discernment process. With this reminder, the gathered body began to discern about the matters before the Chapter. We began with silence.

Request by Sr. Louann O'Bannion to be released from her vows, second consideration

Words from The Servant Council, continued

(first was in 2021). The request was granted.

Request by Associate Barbara Guther to be released from Association. The request was granted.

OEF Statutes (2016), second consideration. The Principles Revision Committee in its Report to Chapter 2022 suggested that the OEF Statutes adopted in 2016 be affirmed in order to ensure Statutes Article VII.D has been met: "Amendments made at any given Chapter will be reviewed and evaluated at the subsequent Chapter meeting." It is not clear in the historical record whether that subsequent consideration happened, so this item was brought to Chapter to assure that Statutes had been considered a second time. The Statutes were affirmed.

Revision of OEF Statutes (2016), Article VI, D (Journey into Membership), 4. Transferring and Returning Franciscan Seekers for Admission, first consideration, presented by the Formation Team. This revision adds subsection 4 to Article VI, D, to more fully address those who are asking to be readmitted to the OEF or who are transferring to the OEF having spent time in another Franciscan community. The revision was affirmed. It will need to return to a subsequent Chapter for final approval.

Treasurer's Report (written by Sr. Nancy, presented by Sr. Betty Lou), affirm the report and consider the proposal about having a goal of not having registration fees for Chapter attendance based on having a prudent reserve and the level of annual giving. The Treasurer's Report, including the budget, and the proposal were affirmed.

Principle Revision Committee's Report Br. John Michael and Sr. Kathy presented the report on behalf of the Principle Revision Committee Br. John Michael presenting Items 1-3 and Sr. Kathy presenting Item 4.

Item 1: Affirming the OEF's existing statutes from Chapter 2016, completed earlier.

Item 2: Removing Principle #17. This proposal was affirmed. As a change in the Statutes, it will need to return to a subsequent Chapter for final approval.

Item 3: Approve a new Principle articulating the OEF's commitment to prayerful discernment (Language: *When making communal decisions, we commit to a process of prayerful discernment, characterized by patient and deep listening to one another, the needs of the world, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. We abide by the statutes and norms that we have prayerfully discerned.*). This proposal was affirmed. As a change in the Statutes, it will need to return to a subsequent Chapter for final approval.

Item 4: Signal willingness to join in a guided reflection over the next year (see the final page of the report for the exact language, including the questions that would be considered in the reflection). Sr. Kathy presented this Item. There was significant opposition to the Item with several members standing in the way of it. Concerns were raised that Item 4 did not directly name or address white supremacy and patriarchy—both of which were named in the original draft given to the committee for consideration.

After a significant amount of discussion, reflection, prayer and silence, a revision of Item 4 was drafted that added language about white supremacism, patriarchy and other forms of injustice to the year-long whole Order reflection and discernment called for in Item 4. It also included a commitment to bring specific actions to be taken to Chapter 2023. The revised Item 4 was affirmed.



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





Shadows of Light in Darkness



Once strong arms reveal sturdy bones beneath
the wasted flesh

- skin now foreign -
textured, tanned and stained.

A version of my father's face and jaw
- translucent now and angular -
inexplicably pasted on his near-spent body.

Two sparkling dark raisin eyes fasten on my lips
as I speak.

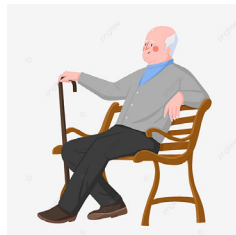


He's all there. Witness:
his curious look
quick laugh
impish glance
quicksilver retort;

His customary attention to others with
a knowing nod
understanding shrug
and dignified acceptance.

And now, fully rendered:
his willingness to find shadows of light within
dark circumstances.

He is the one who asks for the unvarnished
truth quietly appraises
and chooses without drama -
thereby freeing himself and
liberating others.



My father:
wholly constituted
a treasured inspiration.

-Catherine Maine, n/OEF



OEF Online Bible Study

The weekly OEF Bible Study has moved to
Thursday, at 8:00 pm EST. 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 com-
munity. Then time for general
sharing on the passage.

You are most welcome to join!

Br. Juniper, OEF





Fellowship News



The Crossroads Fellowship had an in-person gathering on the weekend of September 24th at Summit Lake State Park located in Henry County near New Castle, IN. Markie, Eleanor and Scout secured a double camp site for us to stretch out in the Fall air and sunshine. A campfire crackled and kept us warm, as well as being the perfect source for warming up chili, cooking hot dogs and hamburgers, pancakes and bacon! Everyone pitched in on sides, making us joyful and full Franciscans. Campfires always provide the perfect circle for conversations typical of Franciscan siblings. The gentle breeze allowed each of us to take in the “incense” of Brother Smoke. It did seem as if Br. Smoke was following some more than others around the circle!

Our Crossroads Fellowship was six Franciscans strong. The scope of our conversations stretched out to include updates on individual involvement in area ministries; local, state, national and global issues of racism, supremacy, oppression, capitalism, consumerism and challenges of folks who continually, as Howard Thurman would say, have “their backs against the wall!” Yep, heavy hitter conversations!

Along with all the above, we had a review of Formation Chapter 3 (Penance), a review of our Rule of Life, an Agape Meal, and a dedication of our most current Rule of Life. We all came away knowing each other better through listening, sharing and being present with one another!

Crossroads will continue having our monthly Zoom gatherings so our entire region can come together in fellowship to listen, share and be present for one another. We encourage “table fellowship” of those Franciscans who are in close proximity of each other. We encourage and support continuous movement forward in our area ministries. We encourage and support peaceful forms of social justice action. We encourage and support our OEF family as we continue to grow in numbers, grow in Spirit, and grow in following the ways of our Saints Francis and Clare.

A final note for our Order: Markie and Kelly continue with their Sidewalk Monastery Podcasts in which they speak to all people about anything! They have had some tremendous conversations with LGBTQ kids, affirming pastors, Muncie Pride, Systems of Oppression, and much more. Please seek out their Podcasts and have a listen. They can also be reached at sidewalkmonastery@gmail.com

Peace and Prayers Always ,
Crossroads Fellowship

A Bluebonnet Sighting!

We found each other at the same conference on Hunger and Poverty! Can you identify these people? Extra bluebonnets if you can guess our names!

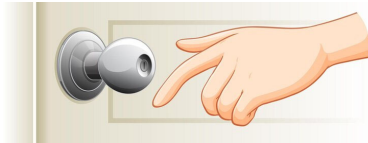


The Northern Lights (newly forming Canadian contingent of the OEF) have started to meet via Zoom and are getting to know one another.

Sr. Catherine

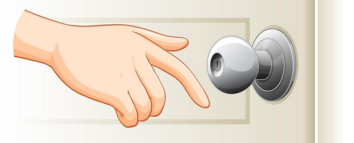
Great Lakes Lighthouse Fellowship had our monthly Zoom gathering on Sunday, October 30. We welcomed new postulant Reed, from St. Paul, MN, and shared some stories of OEF history. We had a great time catching up on each others' lives, along with a few siblings from other regions: Br. Louis in FL, Sr. Kiwi in New Zealand, and Br. Stephan in WA.

Peace, Sr. Chris



Homecoming

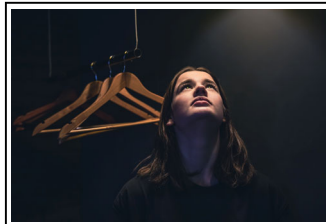
The Woman at The Well



From my desert days I will limp home in
The vesper light to a love that spies me
From afar, asking no questions.

Father, Lord, I am spent.
Sit with me in the basement,
In the closet of my soul as I surrender
Thickly gathered pains,
Dropping these liabilities that brought no
Increase and how could they, without you?

In the closet, the Spirit remembers what
The mind has forgotten:
At the centre is not emptiness,
But piercing the very depth
Of everything,
Every Darkness,
There is light,
There is You.



Forever ready and full of wisdom,
Humility, goodness, beauty and truth.

Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned.
I let the word talk me out of my godliness
To wander with the wild animals in the
Wilderness.
Yet here you are
With my brokenness

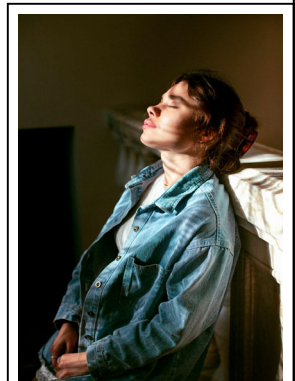
In the basement,
Beating me to it
So that I would not sit alone
But may place my head on your breast,
Till I dare seek your face.

Let us not weep.
You still desire to love me?

Truth has met me in the flesh
That I would stand upright to follow Him in
The Spirit.

And still you ask no questions,
Holding me,
Ready to turn my life around,
To satisfy me,
To set your tent around me if I let you.

*(This poem was inspired after contemplating
the story of the Prodigal Son, thinking, too,
about my biological father whom I have never
met and whom I will never
be able to show what I
have become.)*





Farewell to A Dear Friend



Muriel Enid Saunders passed away peacefully in the company of her best friend and husband **Stephan Scott Gerhardt** at the age of 90 on Tuesday September 27, 2022. Muriel was a loving wife, a caring aunt and a friend to many. Muriel is survived by her husband Stephan, her cat Buddy, her brother Arthur, her sister-in-law Carolyn, her nieces and nephews; Debbie, Dave, Diane, Beverly, Barbara, Judy and many close friends.

Muriel was born in Heston, England in 1932, the daughter of Marie Alice Gilbert and Albert Arthur Saunders. In 1948 following the end of the Second World War and the passing of her father, Muriel came to the United States with her mother and brother on a converted U.S. Troop ship, and then made her way by train from New York to Seattle. On Pentecost Sunday 1949 with encouragement from her minister Oswald W. Jefferson, Muriel joined Pilgrim Congregational Church now All Pilgrims Christian Church where she spent the next 70 years serving in a variety of roles as

office assistant, Sunday school teacher, historian, and most notably as treasurer for the finance team. Still in her teens with a gift for numbers, Muriel went to work for Seattle First National Bank in 1950 where she went on to become an Operations Officer and ultimately helped Seattle First National to find their way into the world of computer banking. After 37 years of service, Muriel retired to care for her mother, her stepfather and her dearest friend Mary. Muriel's wants in life were simple; a cup of tea, a cat and a good book, and lots of walking adventures filled with plants and wildlife. Muriel was a sweet soul who left her footprints in every heart she encountered.

A celebration of life (was) held at University Congregational United Church of Christ 4515 16th Ave NE, Seattle, WA, 98105 on Sunday October 9th at 2:00pm. In lieu of flowers, memorials can be made to University Congregational United Church of Christ or to the charity of your choice.





Formation Station



Hello Sibbs!

I am reaching out again to ask you to share your experiences with formation in OEF. This conversation could focus on materials but what we really want to hear about are your experiences. We (Nancy Menning, me, Shoshanah Kay, Mir Plemmons, and Carol Stiver) really want to know your thoughts on your experiences.

Each of us in OEF has unique experiences from our own formation and, for some, as formation companions. We want to hear about your experiences as we imagine possible revisions. Might we meet with you as a group or individually, over Zoom or the telephone or email, whatever mode will work for you, to gain insights from your experiences and to hear any suggestions you might offer for our consideration?

We would like to have these conversations with YOU before Thanksgiving and the season of Advent.

Peace and all good,

Samuel



The Adventures of Brother Rat, OEF

Br. Rat enjoys the piano. He is quite adept at the keyboard being a graduate of the School of Rattle. He is getting ready for a squeak-along with his little mouse siblings. His progress in the OEF formation program is so slooow, nevertheless, he is persevering :)

My little dog, Lucky Me, is teaching me some Franciscan hospitality. She and Br Rat are very friendly and even chow down at the same doggie bowl! Will I invite Br. Rat into my kitchen? More on this adventure to come ...

Sr. Denise M, OEF





Lifelong Formation Station



The Lifelong Formation Team, with enormous help from Salachar, Sr. Denise Magnuson, Br. Louis Canter, and all of the reading participants kicked off an early Transitus Zoom Service on Saturday, October 1st, at 3:00 pm Central. We had 57 attendees which included visitors from the OFS, TSSF, and Little Sisters of St. Clare. The theme this year was *"A Light In The Darkness."* Along with the traditional story telling of St. Francis' Transitus from "here to there" an emphasis on being a light for others in the world was woven throughout the service. The Scripture base was from John 8:12 *"When Jesus spoke again to the people, He said, 'I Am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of Life.'*" Following here is our dear Sr. Denise's message. Although it was inspired to be a Transitus message, it is a message for every season under the sun:

"I love this passage because it begins with Jesus and ends with life, and in between is us, our walk on Earth.

"In this reflection, I will share a few words, about light, St Francis, and the blessings of community.

"When Jesus says he is the Light of the world, he is saying that his whole being is One with the Source of all Light. Neil Douglass-Klotz, who translated the 'I am' statements of Jesus from the Aramaic, says that the light Jesus speaks of here is Genesis light. It is creation light, it is God-revealing light, revealing the wonders of our world from the smallest quark to the largest galaxy and beyond! This light is within us and in all of creation without exception."

Douglass-Klotz says that when Jesus says, 'I am the Light,' 'this Light is at once past, present, and future.' When I read that, this is what came to my mind: Jesus is the greatest revelation of the Divine Mystery we call God!

Life has many challenges for us, some are personal, some are communal, many are global. We face sickness, the suffering of loved ones, the suffering of the poor, the injustices of racism, the depletion of the resources of our earth, just to name a few. How do we

address these? It begins in our heart. We look to Jesus. Jesus invites us to live like Him, with our hearts open to the Source of all Light so that in His Light we will see the next step we are called to take.

St Francis received this revealing Light when, from the Cross in San Damiano, Jesus said, "Francis rebuild my church." Francis' understanding of what that meant grew with time and his life experience. His heart was open to follow Jesus and the Light of Christ revealed the path of his calling. Increasingly, the Light illuminated his choices and he responded with extraordinary joy. May it be so with us.

Douglass-Klotz reminds us that we receive revealing Light at the right time and at the right place in our lives. Jesus, the Light of the world reveals not only the beautiful, but also things needing change, healing, rebuilding, and rethinking today, in the now in which we live.

To live, to heal, to rebuild, to rethink cannot be done alone. As the saying goes, "it takes a village." It takes teamwork to develop a vaccine, it takes super teamwork to respond to a natural disaster as we are seeing firsthand in the wake of hurricane Ian. We as human beings need the blessings of community.

We saw an example of such a blessing in the prayerful discernment that took place at our Chapter/Convention in June. In our wonderful diversity, we were one. Each heart opened to the Light of the Holy Spirit, we listened and prayed and together we found a path forward, we took the next step in our journey as OEF Franciscans.

The creative light of God is within us dear siblings. We are little lights, for one another, reflections of the Light of the World. When our light becomes dim, not to worry, someone is ready to share their light with us and we are uplifted and together we carry-on.

(Continued on page 12)

Lifelong Formation Station, continued

This is part of the little way of loving one another in Franciscan community. Near or far let us help one another to follow Jesus, the Light of the World.

Pace e bene everyone! Amen.”

Blessings from the Lifelong Formation Team:

Br Stephen Scott-Gerhardt
Sr. Dale Carmen
Sr. Francesca Clare
Sr. Deb Snider-Scott

An Invitation:

Slbs,

I've really enjoyed classes with Sylvia at Bibleremixed. She is offering a class during Advent that you might be interested in taking. The classes are basically pay what you can. If you can't make the class in person, you will have access through YouTube.

The Secret Life of Hope: Reading the Beatitudes

**Monday Evenings,
November 28-December 19,
7pm EST on Zoom**

**The The Secret Life of Hope:
Reading the Beatitudes**
an advent zoom course by
Dr. Sylvia Keesmaat

Are the Beatitudes a fantasy vision of an impossible world? Or was Jesus providing a glimpse of a radical new world, where hunger, mourning, poverty, and innocence are the seeds of God's new community? And where might we see this community bringing healing and reconciliation today?

Pay what you can.

Suggested amounts: \$125 (full fee)
\$ 75 (reduced fee)

\$ 40 (discounted fee)

It is also possible to have your course fees covered by our scholarship fund.

For further information or to register:

www.bibleremixed.ca

Registration is open! Feel free to pass on information of about these courses to friends and family who might be interested, as well as with any faith communities of which you are a part. I have attached posters for both courses below! As always, there is also more information on the website: www.bibleremixed.ca

-Br. Sam Loudenslager

The Lifelong Formation Team invites our OEF family and all Franciscans to our annual **Zoom Advent Service** on December 3rd at 3:00pm Central. Please mark your calendars and begin inviting other Orders. There's always room at the table! The Zoom link info follows:

Topic: OEF Advent Service

Time: Dec 3, 2022 03:00 PM Central Time
(US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8132765508>

Meeting ID: 813 276 5508

One tap mobile:

+13126266799,,8132765508# US (Chicago)

+16469313860,,8132765508# US

Dial by your location:

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 931 3860 US

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Lifelong Formation Station, continued

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

+1 309 205 3325 US

+1 564 217 2000 US

+1 669 444 9171 US

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

+1 719 359 4580 US

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 360 209 5623 US

+1 386 347 5053 US

Meeting ID: 813 276 5508

Find your local number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8132765508>

Your Lifelong Formation Team

Sr. Francesca Clare

Sr. Dale Carmen

Br. Stephan Scott-Gerhardt

Sr. Debra Snider-Scott



Make for The Light

Vincent Van Gogh



Let us go forward quietly, forever making for the light, and lifting up our hearts in the knowledge that we are as others are (and that others are as we are), and that it is right to love one another in the best possible way – believing all things, hoping for all things, and enduring all things....And let us not be too troubled by our weaknesses, for even he who has none, has one weakness, namely that he thinks he has none, and anyone who believes himself to be so perfect or wise would do well to become foolish all over again.

Source: [The Letters of Vincent van Gogh](#)

*Submitted by Br. Juniper, OEF

NEXT "FIDDLESTICKS" DEADLINE

Submissions for the **Lent 2023** issue of "Fiddlesticks" will be accepted immediately.

Deadline for submissions is January 15, 2023.

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!





RE-IMAGINING FORMATION



The initial and ongoing spiritual formation of members is central to our work together as the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. Focusing on the initial formation process, we have been blessed over the years with many people who have served as members of the Formation Team and as Formation Companions. We have rejoiced as new postulants joined the spiritual journey. For those who discerned a call from the Spirit to continue their formation as novices and — later — for those who discerned a call to profess lifelong vows, we have celebrated with beautiful rites of passage.

Over the years, the formation team has made numerous adjustments to their materials and processes to improve the formation experience. However, the substantive content of our formation materials — the thirty ‘chapters’ — have not been thoroughly revised for more than two decades.

We are now in the process of re-imagining our formation materials. Nancy Menning is coordinating this effort. Four others — Shoshanah Kay, Samuel Loudenslager, Mir Plemmons, and Carol Stiver — are serving on an ongoing advisory team for the effort. Ten others, folks among us who have experience teaching adults, have been brainstorming together this fall, imagining what is possible in the postulancy experience. Many more of you have received an invitation to share your experiences in formation (and, for some, as formation companions) with members of the advisory team.

If you haven’t heard from us yet, you’ll hear from us before we’re done. There is a way for each one of us to contribute something to this overall effort.

Our current focus is on gathering wisdom, listening to one another’s experiences, and

freely imagining possibilities. There is no need to wait for us to reach out to you about this project. If you have any thoughts, suggestions, or concerns — now or in the coming year — please reach out to Nancy, Shoshanah, Samuel, Mir, or Carol. Your insights are valuable. And our service to the Order in revising the formation materials is made more joyful by your willing and enthusiastic support.

Formation Revision Committee:

Sr. Nancy Menning
Sr. Shoshanah Kay
Br. Mir Plemmons
Sr. Carol Stiver
Br. Samuel Loudenslager

A Note From Our Treasurer

As you may joyfully recall, there was no registration fee for this past summer’s Chapter/Convocation.

OEF members gathered at the 2022 OEF Chapter affirmed a goal of continuing to provide a registration-free Chapter/Convocation. Our ability to do that is dependent on contributions received throughout the year.

Please reflect prayerfully on your patterns of giving to OEF. (Reach out to Nancy if you have questions about that history.) Your contributions through the end of December will determine whether we’ll be able to offer a registration-free Chapter/Convocation in 2023.





A Litany of Autumn



God of the Seasons, there is a time for everything; there is a time for dying and a time for rising. We need the courage to enter into the transformative process.

Response: *Transform us, O God.*

God of Autumn, the trees are saying goodbye to their green, letting go of what has been. We, too, have our moments of surrender, with all their insecurity and risk. Help us to let go when we need to do so.

Response: *Transform us, O God.*

God of fallen leaves lying in colored patterns on the ground, our lives have their own patterns. As we see the patterns of our growth, may we learn from them.

Response: *Transform us, O God.*

God of misty days and harvest moon nights, there is always the dimension of mystery and wonder in our lives. We always need to recognize Your power-filled presence. May we gain strength from this.

Response: *Transform us, O God.*

God of harvest wagons and ripened fields of grain, many gifts of growth lie within the season of our surrender. We must wait for harvest in faith and hope. Grant us patience when we do not see the blessings.

Response: *Transform us, O God.*

God of geese going south for another season, your wisdom enables us to know what needs to be left behind and what needs to be carried into the future. We yearn for insight and vision.

Response: *Transform us, O God.*

God of flowers touched with frost and windows wearing white designs, may Your love keep our hearts from growing cold in the empty seasons.

Response: *Transform us, O God.*

God of life, You believe in us, You enrich us, You entrust us with the freedom to choose life. For all this, we are grateful.

Response: *Transform us, O God.*

Closing Prayer

God of love, You enter into our autumn seasons, into our deepest places of inner dwelling, into the heart of our transformation. You give us glimpses of the truth. May we allow our experience of autumn to speak to us of necessary change and growth. May we accept the invitation to reflect upon our own death. Grant us an openness to the continuous process of letting go and moving on that is part of the human condition. We are grateful that You are our faithful Companion on this journey. *Amen*



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
3175 Duke Snider Ave
Eugene, OR 97402**





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



“Why We Come”

By Philip Britts



We have not come like Eastern kings
 With gifts upon the pommel lying.
 Our hands are empty, and we came
 Because we heard a baby crying.

We have not come like questing knights
 With fiery swords and banners flying.
 We heard a call and hurried here –
 The call was like a baby crying.



But we have come with open hearts
 From places where the torch is dying.
 We seek a manger and a cross
 Because we heard a baby crying.

Source: [*Water at the Roots: Poems and Insights of a Visionary Farmer*](#)

* Shared by David Delacroix, OEF

