

FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 145

Lent 2023



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Franciscan Action – A Wide Spectrum

By Dale Carmen, OEF

At one of the OEF Bible Study times I heard someone say that we “really needed to print up something about how we are living out our Franciscan rule of life”. Many of our members are working in non-profits that are servants to many needs. Most of us support local food pantries and our church ministries. I thought I’d just share a few of our (my husband, Ken and I) efforts that have been built into my personal Rule of Life for decades and may add variety.

We support, financially and in other ways, Dakota Resource Council, which is an advocacy organization that began to protect farmers from the powerful coal and oil industries, and now includes many agricultural related issues. We support Seed Saver’s Exchange (based in Iowa) and Livestock Conservancy, which both are concerned with increasing genetic diversity for food security on the planet. We give to Nature Conservancy which works with local, state, and national entities to conserve and protect land and water for the common good. We support “Rails to Trails,” which works to turn abandoned rail lines into hiking and riding trails. We also support the “North Country Trail,” which connects the Appalachian Trail with the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean.

These all are ways to live out Principle # 13: “We shall respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which “bear the imprint of the Most High; and we shall strive to move from the temptation of exploiting Creation toward the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.”

There are more ways to live out our Franciscan calling than there are snowflakes in a last-gasp winter storm!

**Editor’s note: We have a booklet of OEF members’ missions published a few years ago by Deb & Mark Scott.*



Poems and Prayers for Lent

(Shared on OEF-Chat)



It Can't Be Carried Alone - Richard Rohr

How can we not be filled with shock and rage
At what is happening to the people of Ukraine--
As we watch their suffering unfold in real time
From an unfair distance?
Who of us does not feel inept or powerless
Before such manifest evil?
In this, at least, we are united.
Our partisan divisions now appear small
and trivial.
Remember what we teach: both evil and goodness
are, first of all, social phenomena.
The Body of Christ is crucified and resurrected at
the same time. May we stand faithfully inside both
of these mysteries (contemplation).
In loving solidarity, we each bear what is ours to
carry, the unjust weight of crucifixion, in expectant
hope for God's transformation.
May we be led to do what we can on any level
(action) to create resurrection!
The people of Ukraine have much to teach the
world.

**Shared by Br. Stephan, OEF, April, 2022*

An Ancient Poem

We awaken in Christ's body
as Christ awakens our bodies,
and my poor hand is Christ,
Christ enters my foot, and is infinitely me.

I move my hand, and wonderfully
my hand becomes Christ...
Do my words seem blasphemous? –Then
open your heart to Christ

and let yourself receive the one
who is opening to you so deeply.
For if we genuinely love...
we wake up inside Christ's body

where all our body, all over,
every most hidden part of it,
is realized in joy, as Christ,
and Christ makes us, utterly, real,

and everything that is hurt, everything
that seemed to us dark, harsh, shameful,
maimed, ugly, irreparably
damaged, is in Christ transformed

and recognized as whole, as lovely,
and radiant in Christ's light
Christ awakens as the Beloved
in every last part of our body.

Symeon The New Theologian, as quoted in *The
Enlightened Heart: An Anthology of Sacred Poetry*,
by Stephen Mitchell

**Shared by Br. David D., OEF, November, 2022*

For Lent:

"Blind is the soul
Imprisoned deep
In weary flesh
And spirit-will
I wrenched away
From living good.

But we may tread
The road the Christ
Did follow then:
When all the wrong
And all the pain
We're gathered up

That He, the Lamb
Might bear for us
The bitter load
And meet with us
The prince of hell
In the soul's night."



Adam Bittleston, "Meditative Prayers for Today."

**Shared by Sharon Inglis, March, 2021*

DISTURB US, LORD; THE REVERSE ST. FRANCIS PRAYER

(DIFFERENT VERSIONS SHARED BY SR. CRYSTAL AND BR. DAVID D.)

I recently came upon this prayer, reportedly written by Sir Francis Bacon. And while of the two Francis', I prefer the one from Assissi, there is some holy truth in this "Reverse St. Francis Prayer."

-Crystal

Lord, make me a channel
of disturbance.

Where there is apathy, let
me provoke;

Where there is compliance, let me bring
questioning;

Where there is silence, may I be a voice.

Where there is too much comfort and too little
action, grant disruption;

Where there are doors closed and hearts locked,
Grant the willingness to listen.

When laws dictate and pain is overlooked...

When tradition speaks louder than need...

Grant that I may seek rather to do justice than to
talk about it;

Disturb us, O Lord.

To be with, as well as for, the alienated;

To love the unlovable as well as the lovely;

Lord, make me a channel of disturbance.

David's take:

I beg to differ on the origin of this prayer. The language seems far too contemporary to be attributed to Francis Bacon. (I found this same) prayer that is attributed to two women.

This more contemporary source seems a better fit to me. In researching this I came across a prayer by Brother Desmond Tutu who reworked an old prayer by Sir Francis Drake: (this is Drake's version written in 1577)



Disturb us, Lord, when

We are too pleased with ourselves,

When our dreams have come true

Because we dreamed too little,

When we arrived safely

Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
with the abundance of things we possess

We have lost our thirst

For the waters of life;

Having fallen in love with life,

We have ceased to dream of
eternity

And in our efforts to build a new
earth,

We have allowed our vision

Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,

To venture on wilder seas

Where storms will show Your mastery;

Where losing sight of land,

We shall find the stars.

We ask you to push back

The horizons of our hopes;

And to push back the future
In strength, courage, hope, and love.

This we ask in the name of our Captain,

Who is Jesus Christ



(Continued on page 4)

Disturb Us, Lord... continued

And here is Desmond Tutu's version:

Disturb us, O Lord

When we are too well-pleased with ourselves

When our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little,

Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, O Lord

When with the abundance of things we possess,

We have lost our thirst for the water of life

When, having fallen in love with time,

We have ceased to dream of eternity

And in our efforts to build a new earth,

We have allowed our vision of Heaven to grow dim.

Stir us, O Lord

To dare more boldly, to venture into wider seas

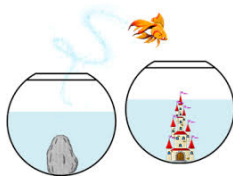
Where storms show Thy mastery.

Where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars.

In the name of Him who pushed back the horizons of our hopes

And invited the brave to follow.

Amen



Anyway, **THANK YOU Crystal** for a very thought-provoking prayer Journey for me this afternoon, no matter who wrote what! I am blessed by your sharing!!!

-David D., OEF

A Benediction for Lent

Come, let us go into the wilderness,

Knowing we have been called by God to this journey.

Let us go into the wilderness,

For God will be with us.

There we can better hear the voice of God.

There we are most likely to see bushes that burn.

Let us go into the wilderness,

Even though we are more than a little afraid,

For there we are most likely to stand on holy ground.

There we will find strength for the mission to which we are called.

Let us begin our journey in hope,

That we might arrive at Easter morning with a new song,

Ready to bring the light of God to the darkness that surrounds us;

Ready to bring the peace of God where there is violence and chaos;

Ready to bring the love of God to shattered hearts;

Ready to bring the joy of God to a joyless world.

Katie Cook, OEF

Seeds of Hope 2023 Sacred Seasons Lent/Eastertide Packet



JOINT COMMITTEE ON FRANCISCAN UNITY

The Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity (JCFU) changed its format in 2022 to be able to reach out to more Franciscans. As you know, we are offering Zoom mini-conferences to be able to reach more of our Franciscan siblings of various orders. Our committee is currently comprised of two representatives from the OEF, TSSF, OLF, and the OFS.

Our Mission Statement is: “For the sake of creation, we are called to bear witness to the essential unity of the church, the Body of Christ, by working towards Franciscan unity in all of its expressions. We will achieve this through dialogue and collaboration among the Orders which follows Christ in the traditions of Francis and Clare. In addition, this committee is to live out the dream of Franciscan Unity. Shared prayer, shared action and shared worship have validity for this committee’s work.”

Our Zoom mini-conferences began September 10, 2022 with the first recognized element of Franciscan unity, **Baptism**. Our second mini-conference was January 21, 2023 covering **Vocation**. Our future dates include: April 22, 2023, covering **Charism**; July 22, 2023 on being **Christ Centered**. We will finish up the year with an in-person retreat November 9-12 at the Capuchin Retreat Center in Washington, Michigan. In which all five elements will be discussed including **Prophetic Voice**.

Our OEF response to the Zoom mini-conferences have been great. Please continue to take advantage of these times to gather with Franciscan siblings. If you think you’ve heard it all before at previous JCFU conferences, think again.



Each element is presented by the Committee representatives with new “flavor” and “fervor” each time. Attendees have so much to share and bring to the table. We always come away with a better sense of unity, community and commitment! Don’t miss out on these Holy events that brings us ALL together. Invitations/registrations are usually posted in our OEF-chats and in email deliveries.

The song, “We Are Family” by Sister Sledge comes to mind! I would just edit it to say, “Got all my siblings with me!”

Peace and Prayers Always-
Your current JCFU representatives,
Ron Nuss-Warren, OEF
Deb Snider-Scott, OEF



Words from The Servant Council



The Servant Council had its first planning meeting for this year's Chapter and Convocation. The gathering will be as previously planned, June 21-25, 2023, at the Palatine Retreat Center near St. Louis, Missouri.

Keeping in mind comments given by last year's attendees, we will do our best to provide a speaker/spiritual director for our time together. We will be working with the theme, "Kinship: Restoration and Healing."

In preparation for the retreat we are sending out a questionnaire weekly that hopefully will generate thoughtful responses from our siblings that will help us begin to discern the path forward on several issues.

As with last year we are counting on prior donations to help fund this year's retreat. We do, however, anticipate new expenses. We are weighing whether they can be covered by the generosity of our wider fellowship and the generous donations of our siblings. Donations we send to the Order are tax deductible. Gifts to the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans are to be sent to Nancy Menning.

Another issue is transportation for Chapter/Convocation. We expect this to be paid for by each person attending. We ask that our siblings be in touch with each other and find ways to lessen the burden of the cost of transportation. Ride sharing is one such possibility. Another is us seeking and sharing each other's gifts and burdens. What a blessing when one's need becomes another's opportunity for generosity. Let us pray for the day when generosity by all means scarcity for none.

Chapter/Convocation 2023!

Officially, registration for Chapter/Convocation 2023 opens on April 1 at 12:01 am EST (US) and ends on May 31 at 11:59pm EST (US).

Dates for Chapter/Convocation: Early arrivals, Wed. June 21st. The official start is Thurs. afternoon, June 22nd. Chapter ends on Sun. June 25th after lunch. Lunch is served at noon.

Location for the 2023 Chapter/Convocation is at the Pallottine Renewal Center, Florissant, MO, a northeast suburb of St. Louis.

Remember there is no registration fee for Chapter/Convocation 2023.

Please fill out the online form with as much detail as possible.

Go to
<https://forms.office.com/r/Xh4bDzjCYU>

Or you can Google "OEF" and "Chapter 2023 Registration" will come up.

On our website, there is a tab marked "Chapter Info." The password is:
Francis2023!!

Hope to see lots of Franciscans descending on St. Louis that week!

**There is also a copy of the registration form and QR code in this issue of "Fiddlesticks."*





Not Done Yet

Mary Luti*



The Last Supper wasn't. Jesus ate many meals with his friends after that "last" one. A snack of fish in a locked room, breakfast on the beach, supper in Emmaus, and untold others in the forty days after God raised Him.

"But God raised Him on the third day and allowed Him to appear to us who were chosen as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead."

- Acts 10: 41 (NRSV)

Dying and rising seems to have stimulated his appetite. It's like he's saying, "The worst thing imaginable happened. But look at us now. Me, with scars in my shining flesh; you, with a hint of courage in your timid hearts. We made it through. Let's eat. We're not done yet."

The story of our lives, the story of the church: The worst things imaginable happen. Yet, somehow, by grace and grit, we're still here, weary and scarred, but breathing, more or less upright, taking nourishment.

We're not done yet. Not done blessing, singing, giving thanks. Not done washing feet, feeding, consoling, emptying jails. Not done multiplying justice like bread. Not done feasting at the table of life.

Which makes me wonder: When we do Communion, why is it usually a Last Supper of dread and death? Why not do New Suppers of relief and resilience as well? We could call them Stunned Snacks in the Locked Room, Beauteous Breakfasts on the Beach, Dazzling Dinners in Emmaus, Triumphant Feasts of Forty Days.

We could bless the bread and cup with new words, too. Maybe these: "We remember, O God, that the worst happened. But here we are. By grace and grit, we're not done yet. Pass the bread, good Jesus; pour the wine."

Prayer

Gather us in grateful relief, Good Jesus, at the Table of Not Done Yet.

Remember with us that love outlives death, the work goes on, the feast never ends.

Amen

**Shared by Br. Michael Vosler*

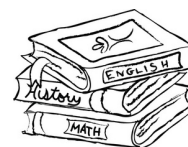


OEF History Project



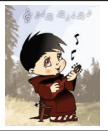
For those who haven't heard, we (Sr. Dale, Br. Ron, Sr. Markie, and I) are working on a history of The Order. As we move forward, it would be helpful to me to receive copies of pictures, notes, meeting records, and the like to help fill out the content of the book, especially anything that reflects not only "business" decisions but personal takes on The Order at any given moment in time.

Thanks,
Betty Lou





Fellowship News



Crossroads Fellowship continues to meet by Zoom on a monthly basis. We spend time catching up with one another and praying for one another. Our Spiritual Enrichment includes discussion on Formation Chapters. We cover one chapter a month. We are finding this to be a way of hearing what our fellow siblings are thinking and feeling. With having Postulants, Novice, and Professed in our regional family, this style of review allows us to get to know each other more, to share where we are Spiritually, and help our "newbies" on their Franciscan journey. It keeps us connected, which is so important for all of us.

Peace and Prayers Always-

Crossroads Regional Fellowship

One Friday in December, Reg and I joined with some of the Gubbio (Wellington Region) TSSF fellowship at St Paul's Cathedral Wellington for midday communion. We made up a large percentage of the congregation.

Afterwards we crossed the road to The National Library and had lunch together in the cafe there.

Kiwi

Kris and Mir Plemmons were in Eugene this morning (Jan. 16), so Alison and I got to have breakfast with them!

Nancy



L-r: Kris, Mir, Betty Boop, Alison, Nancy

The Great Lakes Lighthouse Fellowship continues to meet via Zoom on the last Sunday of the month. We met on Sunday, January 29. Present were John Son-of-Syvert, Ron Nuss-Warren, Dale Carmen, Reg Weeks, Helen Bathurst, Christine Petersen and inquirer David. We each introduced ourselves to David, and learned of his background in OFS. Dale led a discussion of OEF's history and origins, and we talked a bit about the Principles. It was a lively discussion!

Peace,
Great Lakes Lighthouse Fellowship

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 community. Then time for general sharing on the passage.

You are most welcome to join!
Br. Juniper, OEF



OEF Chapter 2023 Registration

Required*

1. Name* _____

2. Pronouns* _____

3. Street Address* _____

4. Town/City* _____

5. Zip Code* _____

6. State* _____

7. Country* _____

8. Email* _____

9. Phone Number _____

10. Phone Number used while traveling* _____

11. Relationship to OEF

- ☐ Inquirer
- ☐ Postulant
- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Professed
- ☐ Other

12. Transportation

- ☐ Car
- ☐ Bus
- ☐ Train
- ☐ Air

13. Day of Arrival* _____

14. Day of Departure* _____

15. If arriving by car are you able to at least make one (1) shuttle run to pick up or return a sibling/guest at/to the airport, train or bus station? Please send by Wed. June 14th arrival info - time, flight number and airlines, etc

markie.f.oliver@gmail.com

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16. Food allergies and other(s) (smells, ivy, etc.) and other diet information _____

17. Overnight accommodations

- ☐ Private room (Twin bed)
- ☐ Room for couple (1 Queen bed)

18. Would you be willing to share a room?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

19. If so, roommate request: _____

20. Other necessary room accommodations

21. For our table services (Communion) do you prefer

- ☐ Grape Juice
- ☐ Gluten free bread
- ☐ Wine
- ☐ Bread with gluten

Those who prefer may scan this QR code
to register online

OEF Chapter 2023 Registration

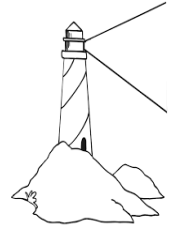




Christmas Night 2022, Maine Coast

(A reflection on the darkness of Winter)

By Dawn Dreisbach, n/OEF



The wind from the December 23rd storm has passed, but its presence is still everywhere.

The white wall in my parents' living room is maybe 15 feet away from me but I haven't seen it for hours. The flickering glow inside the wood stove does not reach that far. There is no glow from the stove's clock or from my phone, which doesn't have signal up here anyway. Outside, clouds block light from moon and stars. The pine woods around the yard are just part of the dark. Unseen, like everything else.

On this Sunday night, we know that power might not return until Thursday.

My father assembles two recorders. I play variations of Christmas carols by ear. It is too dark to read anything but the most familiar notes. He and I play two of the three lines of the Christmas Pastoral by Corelli, which we play each Christmas. My mother, usually the third recorder, is spending the dark night upstairs reading by dim lantern. Dark night? I had just asked my mother the time. I figured it was 10:00 or so. It was 6:30. Only their two sleeping dogs seem unperturbed.

Darkness.

Every week, I say the Collect in the Book of Common Prayer, "Shed thine unending day upon who watch for thee." "Unending day" has never resonated with me. Every other night, even on the longest night of the Winter Solstice, if I desire daylight, I turn on a lamp. I control unending day all the time.

Not tonight.

Tonight is Christmas. Where is the light of the world? Has God's light arrived? Is this some kind of Franciscan joke?

Deep in the darkness, I am aware of every movement and breath, of myself and the dogs and my parents. I sense my own ancient human need for love and connection. I feel my desire for God. Have I stumbled on the desire for unending day? Is it possible that my ease with light and dark actually dulls my own deep yearning for the Holy? In this darkness, nothing can distract me from God. I gradually sense God all around me in the endless shadows. More palpable than ever, more real than ever imagined. In the darkness, God reaches out.

This Christmas, perhaps, the blessed event is that what unnerves me the most - the dark - is where I find deepest connections to God.





Gethsemane

By Mary Oliver



*The grass never sleeps.
Or the roses.
Nor does the lily have a secret eye that shuts until
morning.*

Jesus said, wait with me. But the disciples slept.

*The cricket has such splendid fringe on its feet,
and it sings, have you noticed, with its whole body,
and heaven knows if it ever sleeps.*

*Jesus said, wait with me. And maybe the stars did,
maybe
the wind wound itself into a silver tree, and didn't
move,
maybe the lake far away, where once he walked
as on a blue pavement,
lay still and waited, wild awake.*

*Oh the dear bodies, slumped and eye-shut, that
could not
keep that vigil, how they must have wept,
so utterly human, knowing this too
must be a part of the story.*

**Shared by David Rensberger, March 30, 2021*

Others respond:

David R, thank you for sharing this Gethsemane poem by Mary Oliver.

As I sat down this morning (after Zoom-praying with my Thursday morning contemplative prayer group), I had this poem about Gethsemane in mind. And I was thinking as well of another Mary Oliver poem, the one where the black bear has emerged from hibernation and is coming down the mountain. And I wrote this:

Mary Oliver's bear comes down
the greening mountain
tasting and breathing
the loamy silence
She senses them
long before she sees them
The sounds of three men



deep in sleep
And the bitter smell
of another's anguished sweat

She sits and waits for him
Holding the silence while he prays

Then as he rises and wakes his
friends
and they leave the garden
– the one wearied, the others
refreshed –
she continues down the mountain
winter-tender feet padding softly
practicing her perfect love

Blessings of Holy Week to you all,
Nancy Menning, OEF, March 31, 2021

Poetry elicits poetry....
Poetry teacher catalyzes a poem...
And Jesus....prays on...still..
Disciples slept then, and now.

Julia Stankova lifts participatory images of roses,
a lily,

a cricket, stars, wind, a silver tree, the lake "where
once he walked".

The Black Bear's emergence is twice observed
descending

by Mary Oliver in homage to Spring;

and then in "the looming silence" of Holy Week by
Nancy M.

And we all "see"....again....Gethsemane.

- Michael V., who just learned the
meaning of "Metis,"
April 1, 2021





Formation Station



Introducing:

Darian Banks:

I'm Darian Banks! I live in Southwestern Ontario, Canada with my partner and our cat. I enjoy reading, nature hikes, going to antique markets, and embracing hobbit culture as a Tolkien fan who's very short (I'm not quite 5'0")!

Henrik Holben :

I'm Brethren Henrik from Denmark and I'm very much looking forward to meeting other new OEF Brethren throughout the world. I would like very much to see if there could be a way to start regular OEF Brethren Zoom meetings, perhaps a few times weekly, where everyone could meet-up and chat together. It would be a great way to get to know each other better and to make good OEF friendships. Hope there's an interest in this? If so, let me know and I'll try my best to get Zoom meetings up and running with mutual ideal meeting times and what days during the week. My proposal could perhaps be a lunchtime meeting US EST and late afternoon or early evening Europe CET with a Six Hours time difference.

Russell Rohloff:

The Lord's peace be with you all:

My name is Russell Rohloff and I live with my wife Kathy in the State of Vermont, USA. At 72 years of age I have responded to the calling to join with the Order a bit late in life. I was baptized into the church as an infant but really heard the invitation to follow Jesus at age 27. I started on that pilgrim road and have not looked back. For many years I paid the bills as a

Chemical and Environmental Engineer but finally retired a few years back. But my true vocation is as a pastor/teacher and I served several congregations in pastoral ministry. My life's verse is Romans 1:15 (KJV) "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel..." While I remain as active as possible in that calling, I was searching for something that would continue my own spiritual growth and help me finish the course set before me. I was delighted to encounter the OEF after being introduced to the various Franciscan Third Order movements by a friend who is part of the Third Order of The Society of St. Francis (TSSF). I am looking forward to beginning this new chapter in my spiritual journey and look forward to joining with you all in the work.

**Joan Schroeder from Germany has been approved to take novice vows. Time and place to be arranged.*

Postulants and Novices who want to be considered for profession or novicing at Chapter/convocation should be talking to their formation companion about it and contacting the Formation team now.

*Sr. Kiwi (Helen) Bathurst, OEF
Sr. Carol Stiver, OEF
Br. Louis Canter, OEF*





Lifelong Formation Station



The Lifelong Formation Team hosted our annual Zoom OEF Advent Service on December 17th. The service embraced our deepest and greatest gifts that leads us and prepares us to receive the Lord. Our Franciscan hearts are to be transformed and filled with Faith, Hope, Peace, Love and Joy, with the greatest gift being Love. Our Br. Stephan shared from his heart the following message:

“And the Greatest of These Is Love”

By Br. Stephan Scott Gerhardt

And so the story begins again. We wait for the child knowing that his life will be short but still we wait out of love for what has and remains good and comforting in our relationship with Jesus. Some of us are excited for the possibilities that come with birth and new beginnings while others of us sit in the dark of winter willing our hearts in the midst of our sadness to be converted. Converted in a way that allows us to see that Joy and sadness can coexist within and that while we miss what and who is absent from us, we have loved well and we will continue to love well because we remember. We remember the stories that bring us Hope, Peace and Joy. We remember the people and the prophets that have taught us how to experience these things in tandem. We remember our loved ones; today we remember the birth of Jesus.

And so I say to you the greatest of these is Love. Why? Because love is what calls us to be vulnerable and look for the best in one another even when the door to the inn is closed. Love calls us in the midst of our

vulnerability to have faith in humanity even when the world appears to be nothing more than a stage for violence and political domination. We are no longer like the baby in a manger but I pray that we have not lost our ability to love one another in the midst of uncertainty and the cynicism that colors the world of so many in these trying times. This year as we await the birth of the Christ child let us tend to our own births by reflecting on where we have been made to feel hopeful, where we have been given opportunity to give and receive the love that inspires others to have faith in the idea that; Yes! Something good is happening in the world and it can begin with me if I am willing to open my heart. Advent is a time to hope for a better world, a time to appreciate the beauty of God's creation as we choose to open ourselves to collaborative relationships making ourselves vulnerable to the world in service to others. And most importantly, in our willingness to be vulnerable to our own self-discovery after all, this is where it all begins.

Recently our congregation has been working with the concept of **Ubuntu** [Nguni Bantu](#), a term meaning "humanity" often translated to mean I am because you are or I am because we are. I bring this up because I believe that it is our willingness to see one another as part of the plan, as someone who, no matter their ability, cannot be done without because, like us, they too are God's creation. Without them, there is no us. Without them, there is no hope, no place to instill our faith,

(Continued on page 13)

Lifelong Formation Station... continued

no place for us to give and receive the love that is what begins this cycle of what I call, "the romance of Advent."

Our ability to Love one another, to appreciate what God has created within each of us, our willingness to be vulnerable to the process of connecting with one another in meaningful ways.

These are the things that bring joy, peace, hope and the ability for us to put our faith in something beyond our understanding, something that is beyond the limits of our hearts and minds as they exist in the now, something that makes us want to remember a story about child born in adverse conditions to a mother and father who had no place in society. A mother and father, who out of love, remained faithful to God's plan in the face of adversity. And so I say to you the greatest of these is Love because wherever there is Love... Faith Hope and Joy will surely follow. Amen.

Lent will be another time of preparation and reformation for our Franciscan souls!

[March 4th](#) we have another opportunity to gather as a family to pray, worship and fellowship with one another. These Zoom services are possible because of each and every one of you OEF siblings! Thank you for attending! Thank you for serving as readers, messengers, and prayer leaders!

A HUGE THANK YOU to Salachar for graciously hosting and guiding our technology to be a successful presentation. Another Thank You goes out to all of you who share resources on our OEF-chat so

that our Order continues to grow and deepen our Franciscan vocation and our Faith. So many wonderful opportunities! Our Vocation is for Life, so we should never stop learning, stretching and growing; therefore Lifelong Formation is all of our responsibility. We are in this together! May our journey never be a flat line, but one of hills, valleys, twists and turns! Amen? Amen!

Your Lifelong Formation Team:

Dale Carmen OEF

Stephan Scott-Gerhardt OEF

Francesca Clare OEF

Debra Snider-Scott OEF

Tired of searching on-line for movies and books about Francis or maybe you're looking for a phone app to augment current prayer practices? What ever your quest may be come and check out the new formation resources tab on the OEF website where you'll find an ever expanding list of contemporary and traditional resources for all parts of your Franciscan journey. (oeffranciscans/resources.org)





A Few Good Reads: Watch This Space!



Brandan Robertson -- who, after meeting Louis Canter somewhere, briefly entered postulancy with us some years ago, but who didn't have the time for virtual community then -- has written a number of books about Christianity from a queer perspective. He is currently pursuing a PhD in theological studies at Drew University.

He announced on his Instagram page this morning this news:

I'm thrilled to announce that yesterday I signed a two book contract with St. Martins Essentials/MacMillan!

Over the past ten years, I've been so privileged and honored to contribute my own words and work to the ever expanding library of progressive spiritual writing, and each project I've gotten to work on has been a major turning point in my own thinking. For me, each project helps me uncover what I really believe, what I really think, and frankly, who I really am.

This particular book deal marks a transition in my career, now getting to share my words and ideas not just to a religious audience, but to a more general audience. This has long been a goal of mine- to get to work with a major mainstream publisher who can help me speak to those who may never pick up a book by a traditional religious book. When my new editor at St. Martin's reached out to say he believed in my voice and wanted to help me share it with the wider world, I couldn't have been more humbled.

We're obviously still at the very early stages of both of these books, but what I can tell you is that the first of these next two books will focus on articulating a radically inclusive vision for Christianity, reframing a Christian position on

sexuality, gender, and sex that is truly liberating and leads to wholeness and flourishing for us all. The second of these books will be a shorter, accessible devotional guide aimed at queer people, helping us to create lives of meaning and purpose in our ever evolving world.

I imagine some of us will be eager for each of those books to be released.

Pace e bene,

Nancy Menning, OEF



NEXT "FIDDLESTICKS" DEADLINE

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

Deadline for submissions is April 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!



JONAH AS SLAPSTICK



The word of God came to Jonah a second time, saying, "Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you."

—Jonah 3.1-2

I bet your Sunday School teacher wasted that wonderful felt board to teach you some somber lesson about Jonah the prophet, without a single confetti of irony. Too bad. The story of Jonah is a farce—some of God's best slapstick. Picture Jonah as one of the Three Stooges. Read it all at once (really—it'll take ten minutes), with your sense of humor intact. Read it and laugh. Here's some of what your Serious Sunday School teacher may have missed.

- Life is more of a comedy than a tragedy. Lighten up.
- As dangerous as God is, the greatest risk is in trying to be safe.
- Ever watch somebody on slippery ice trying hard not to fall down? God is gravity. It's almost always funny when we try to resist it.
- The storms in our life are not a test. But they might be a question.

- Your best friends won't throw you under the bus, but they will throw you overboard.



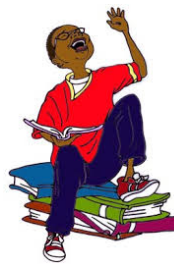
- In the middle of a raucous slapstick tale, Jonah, at the bottom of the sea, prays a beautiful prayer. Turns out the belly of a whale is a great place for contemplation. Seriously.



- When a big fish swallows you, don't worry. Sooner or later it'll barf.



- One thing that makes it hard for people to repent is that we expect them not to.
- When saints judge people they trade places with the sinners.
- Ever notice how often we're mad because God isn't?
- God loves everybody, even our enemies. And also much cattle.
- Nothing can overwhelm love, but even a worm can upset pride.
- It's OK to read the Bible and laugh. Just remember:



- God always gets the last laugh. And it's pretty funny.

Steve Garnass-Holmes
*Shared by Br. Juniper, OEF

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.

**Articles for the Eastertide Issue are being accepted immediately. The deadline is April 15, 2023*



I Am Going to Tell You Something Awe-Full

Br. Coyote Nabhan, OEF



If you turn to wild nature in the winter,
 Not merely for exercise but for guidance
 You might find that hidden in the duff
 Are beings that are doing what you are doing:
 Taking a long sigh, stretching, then napping
 As the sometimes-harsh brilliance of the sun
 Soothes and warms rather than burning.



I do not know what to say any more
 About the human world of "civilization,"
 For it seems it holds more flaws and horrors
 Compared to the frolic and humor we once knew
 When we were children. We can't dismiss it
 But we can open ourselves within and beyond it
 To embrace all that human brains cannot control.

I do not have any answers to console you through
 The longest, darkest nights, but can only point
 Like some Nova Scotia Duck Trolling Retriever
 Toward what remains hidden in the cattail patch
 Or in the cave in the riverbank where no one else
 Has gotten down on their knees to peek for years.

Be alert to the clandestine treasures.
 Delight in any silly, surreptitious adventures
 That can sweep us away from the staid and solemn.
 Grow more attentive to the tiny wonders
 Beneath our feet, beyond our grasp or
 Above our heads that might humble us
 At the same time that they fill us with awe.

