

## Chapter 6: Dee Dobson, From Guardian to Minister Provincial 1981-90

John Scott's era as Guardian saw plenty of precedents set and Provincial firsts. However, Kale King's resignation as Provincial Minister after only one year created a large, new precedent. Since his resignation occurred between elections, the Statutes empowered Chapter to choose a new Guardian to complete King's term. Dee was unanimously nominated in September, and was chosen by acclamation of Chapter to become the new Guardian.



### Dee's Lack of Vision?

In her very first report to the First Order after she had been Guardian for all of three months (from "Guardian's Report to the First Order, February 1982"), Dee made this curious statement: "I realize that our [First Order] Provincial would like perhaps a two or three page outline of a 'vision,' but I really do not feel that such an outline is feasible. We are all seeking the same goal, to be with our Lord in the way of Francis."

It takes a while to grasp what Dee Dobson achieved or fostered over her nine years as Guardian/Minister Provincial. Much of the heat in the conflicts of the John Scott era (women's ordination and gay ordination) were largely dissipated by the time Dee became Guardian. The union of two disparate Third Order Franciscan communities—separated by an ocean, and requiring a new constitution and statues—was finished. The long position papers on big topics or multinational reports from abroad were, for the moment, no longer being written. The central provincial or interprovincial focus of the *Franciscan Times* or *Newsletter* was eroded initially by budget concerns—the single Epiphany-tide issue during Kale King's term cost more than a whole year of issues. As the *Times* temporarily diminished in importance, an inexpensive monthly newsletter, the *Information Sheet*, began. (The complete run of the *Information Sheet* from November 1980 to June 1998 is scanned, available, and indexed on the TSSF website.) Moreover, the 1980s also saw the flowering of many newsletters written and produced by local fellowships. So in the 1980s, the *Franciscan Times* primarily became a pastiche of articles from these local newsletters rather than large position papers on big topics or multinational reports.

Parallel to all of this was the demise of the the Provincial Convocations. Chapter began to realize that the "Provincial" Convocations drew few outside the immediate area of where it was held. Moreover, Provincial Convocations were expensive to Chapter because they were underwritten by Chapter funding and controlled by Chapter. Dee effectively stopped supporting Provincial Convocations after 1982. (The final Provincial Convocation during the John Scott era nearly depleted the Provincial funds. One more would be scheduled for 1982 in Seattle, but none until much after that.)

What replaced these Provincial Convocations were many Regional Convocations. Dee and Chapter found it easier to focus on the local and regional structures because the regional convocations could be led and funded by local groups of tertiaries without the need for control or funding from Chapter. Almost from the moment Dee was elected as Guardian, regional convocations began to occur. In 1981, convocations were held in the Northeast, in the Southwest, and five other regions scheduled joint retreats to mark the 800th anniversary of Franciscanism.

So whether Dee Dobson had a stated "vision" or not, the result of Dee's and Chapter's specific, pragmatic decisions effectively decentralized the focus of the Province to local and regional concerns. Consider, for example, the role of Fellowships in the Province. Originally there was little attention paid to Fellowships. However, the first mention of a Provincial Officer called the Fellowship Coordinator did not occur until the 1975 Provincial budget; only in the 1981 Chapter was a *Fellowship Coordinator* described, and it wasn't until 1983 that a draft of the *Fellowship Conveners Handbook* was presented to Chapter. Even as late as 1983, only 50% of the members of the Province belonged to Fellowships.

One can also track the relative importance of Fellowships by the size of the annual TSSF budget given to the Fellowship Coordinator ("Where your treasure is; there your heart will be.") Initially the financial commitment to Fellowships was relatively small: 7% of that given to the Provincial Chaplain and 50% of that given to the Area Chaplains. However, by the second year of Dee Dobson's first term, 50% of what was given to the Provincial Chaplain and 200% (later 300%) of that given to the Area Chaplains, was budgeted for the needs of the Fellowship Convener.

	Percent of Funds Budgeted for Fellowship Coordinator Compared to that Budgeted for Area Chaplains	Percent of Funds Budgeted for Fellowship Coordinator Compared to that Budgeted for Provincial Chaplain
<b>John Scott Era 1975-80</b>	50%	7%
<b>Dee Dobson Era 1982-90</b>	300%	50%



Dee and John at the New Orleans Provincial Convocation 1997

Yet for Fellowships to grow, they needed a leader, a champion for its interests. This is exactly what Dee Dobson proposed in her first Report to Chapter as Guardian in November 1982:

*As you know, Fellowships have been a concern. Some are hale and hearty and emulate Franciscan love, community and commitment. Others could, for the want of a better term, be called mediocre with sporadic showings of commitment. Still others - I can thankfully say, very few—can only be described as disasters. Marie Webner has graciously consented to be our Fellowship Coordinator. It is expected that she will chair a group to draw up flexible guidelines, guidelines that have been distilled from the input of Fellowships. In the future when funds become available, we hope to have a training session for Convenors. In the interim, Marie and I hope to meet with Convenors at regional convocations.*

**The Rise of the Fellowship Coordinator and Marie Webner**

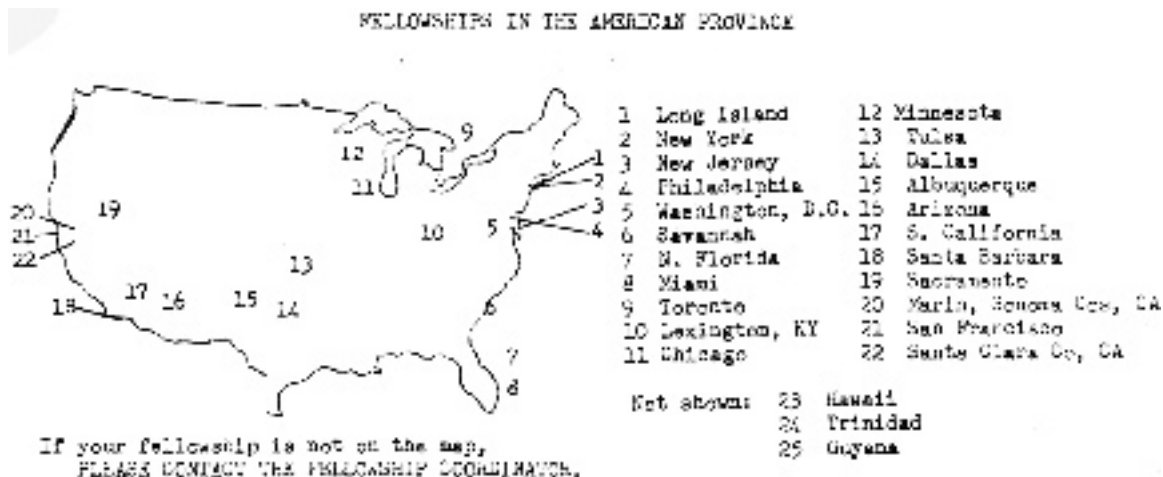
The position of Fellowship Coordinator, now a member of the Standing Committee of the Order, was not listed in the directory for the first six years of John Scott’s tenure (1971-76). In looking for information about the characteristic activities of the Fellowships, Provincial Secretary, Helen Webb, had to survey the majority of existing Fellowships to find out what their meetings and activities were all about (*Franciscan Times*, December 1976). That same year, 1976, Marie Webner (26 years in profession) was appointed by Guardian John Scott and confirmed by Chapter to be the “Fellowship Contact Person” (by June 1978 she was using the now familiar title of “Fellowship Coordinator”), and, by the May 1977 issue of the *Franciscan Times*, Marie was writing short articles summarizing Fellowship Best Practices (May 1977, “Fellowship Partnership”; June 1978, “A Report Summarizing Fellowship Annual Reports”). After one term of three years, in January 1979, John Scott and Chapter named a new Fellowship Coordinator, The Rev. Annjane Tanner of the Long Island Fellowship. For the next three years, “reports” from Fellowships seem to be collections of personal information about who was moving, being noviced, having picnics, etc.

With Dee Dobson’s election, Marie Webner returned as Fellowship Coordinator in 1982 and remained as Coordinator for the next nine years until she was elected as Provincial Chaplain. In 1983 there were 25 Fellowships in the Province, and four regional convocations each year. When Webner stepped down in 1992, there were 38 Fellowships and either regional convocations. With such a dramatic shift from the John Scott “Provincial” settings for Convocations to the Dee Dobson/Marie Webner “Regional” settings for Convocations, Chapter had to redefine the word “Convocation” in the *Statutes* to indicate both “Provincial” and “Regional” meetings.

In the January 1978 issue of the *Franciscan Times*, “Fellowship newsletters” are first mentioned: *Sursum Corda*, a 16-page newsletter, produced by the Long Island Fellowship, and *The Franciscan Flyer* from the San Francisco area was already up to Vol 2, No. 2. In May 1980, the *Franciscan Times* noted that the Minneapolis Fellowship had produced a bi-monthly newsletter; that the *W. I.* (West Indies) *Franciscan News* was being produced by the Trinidad Fellowship; and a Spanish-language newsletter, *Carta Franciscana*, was being produced in Columbia. In Epiphany-tide 1981, the *Franciscan Times* noted that the Puget Sound Fellowship announced the birth of their fellowship newsletter, and the San Francisco Fellowship announced the publication renewal of their newsletter.

By the time Webner left her position, these six Fellowship newsletters grew to fifteen. Many were rather hastily put together by cutting and scotch-taping typewritten pieces, having the whole thing photocopied, and then sent out by post. Many were just one page front-and-back including such typical items as invitations and announcement of upcoming local and regional events; reports of past meetings or events: ordinations, professions, novicings, and the arrival of new postulants; a few poems and short essays; and some reprinting of other Fellowship newsletter materials and some forwarding of provincial information.

Two newsletters from the mid-1980s, however, stand out from all the rest: the *Seedlings Tidings* produced by the Mustard Seed Fellowship in Upstate New York and *Caritas* produced by the Toronto Fellowship for the Third Order in Eastern Canada. Both were substantial pieces of work with some of the typical fellowship newsletter items augmented by the kind of material that formerly appeared in the *Franciscan Times*—extended, substantial essays drawing from authors province-wide. In just the first issue of *Seedling Tidings*, Marie Webner and Provincial Chaplain, Robert Goode (Gooch), penned pieces about Fellowships specifically for this newsletter (see Gooch’s example below). In later issues, articles by Bishop Desmond Tutu, Joanne Maynard (editor of the *Times*), Presiding Bishop Edmund Browning, and Archbishop Runcie were reprinted in this Fellowship newsletter.



## ***Franciscan Times* and the *Information Sheet* Reflect A New Emphasis on Local and Regional Information, and *Pax et Bonum* Debuts**

In 1978 Peg Shull began editing the *Franciscan Times* continuing to the 1981 Epiphany-tide issue. The Epiphany-tide issue was the *Franciscan Times*'s handsomest issue ever, but it was out of sync with the new emphasis of Guardian Dee Dobson and Chapter on keeping costs down and focusing on the local and regional events. Shull's Epiphany-tide 1981 issue went 30% over the whole year's budget with just the one issue. As a result Chapter decided to cease publication of the *Franciscan Times*, and to shift publication of all news to the monthly, quick-copy format of the *Information Sheet* as of December 1981. (The *Information Sheet* had only begun publication in November of 1980. The complete run of the *Information Sheet* is available on the TSSF website, and it is indexed for searching.)

However, the story quickly got complicated because a new editor, Roberta Beisel, was appointed to direct the *Franciscan Times*, and she produced one issue, Easter-tide 1982, that was nicely formatted without the use of color in the Epiphany-tide 1981 issue. Beisel's version of the *Times*, however, still required a printer to produce it. At the 1982 Chapter, Chapter changed its mind once more and now looked for a parallel production of the *Franciscan Times* and the *Information Sheet*; the *Times* as a quarterly with feature stories and the *Information Sheet* as a bimonthly with more breaking-news information.

Joanne Maynard who had recently written a book published by Forward Movement, *The Burning Mushroom: And Other Epiphanies*, was appointed as the new editor, and she produced the *Franciscan Times* for the next eight years until she asked to step down when Dee Dobson completed her three terms in office as Minister Provincial in 1990. Maynard's *Franciscan Times* reflected Dee's and Chapter's new emphasis on Fellowships and Regional Convocations and was primarily a pastiche of short pieces gleaned from Fellowship newsletters, Fellowship annual reports, and reports from Regional Convocations. Like the Fellowship newsletters, this pastiche was photocopied, scotch-taped together, and then the whole thing was photocopied. Discussions of anything larger than Regional Convocations disappeared. There were few, if any, long, substantial articles, which evidently left a desire in the Order for someplace to publish longer articles, poems, reviews, etc.

To fulfill that desire something new was created by Terry Rogers and Arthur Wolsoncroft and endorsed by the 1987 Chapter, *Pax et Bonum*. *Pax et Bonum* was designed to come out twice a year and be composed of "articles by Tertiaries on a variety of issues and from diverse points of view. The overall purpose is to deepen our sense of our Franciscan vocation, stimulate our thinking, and widen our view of the unique gifts and unique lives within our Third Order Community" (Terry Rogers in *Information Sheet* December 1987). Two issues were produced (1988 and 1990), but only the 1990 issue was found in order to be scanned and included in the *Franciscan Times* collection on the TSSF website.

When Robert Durand succeeded Joanne Maynard as editor of the *Franciscan Times* in 1991, he folded in the content focus of *Pax et Bonum* into the *Franciscan Times*. Thus while maintaining the local and regional focus for part of the *Times*, he now began including longer, more substantial pieces of province-wide interest.

## **Robert Goode (Gooch) Lays Down His Mantle as TSSF Chaplain After 14 Years in 1985**

Gooch was either our Assistant Chaplain (when that was all the pastoral leadership that was allowed by the First Order to members of the Third Order) or Provincial Chaplain for 14 years during the very formative years of TSSF of John Scott's era and the first half of Dee Dobson's. He first appeared in the record as a novice in the First Order, but was professed in the Third Order, like the High Priest Melchizedek, on an unknown date. He died during Francistide in 1998. Here are three important pieces he wrote for a fellowship newsletter *Seedlings Tidings*, the *Franciscan Times* and the *Information Sheet*.

### **What a Fellowship is Not**

*Provincial Chaplain Robert Goode*

*(From the fellowship newsletter Seedlings Tidings 1985; reprinted in the Information Sheet 1985)*

There are several things fellowships are not. They are not an advertising cartel to promote St. Francis. In other words, a fellowship should not be composed of everyone in the surrounding ten counties who likes St. Francis.

A fellowship is not primarily a support group. There are, however, many periods in our Franciscan life when the support of a fellowship keeps us going. But a fellowship is not therapy, and a person who is in the formation process particularly should be doing his or her own growing in places other than the fellowship, as well as within the dynamic of the fellowship. It is not always advisable to share your innermost secrets with members of a fellowship. We are not all equally mature. Members come and go; people move. Fellowships, like people, change.

Nor can a fellowship be a substitute for a spiritual director. As Chaplain, I deal over and over again with situations where the novice counselor, a friend in fellowship, a friendship with a friar, becomes a substitute for a spiritual director. It is too easy for a spiritual director to be just a name on a report form. This is where your trust and confidence should lie. This is where crises and problems should be resolved. All too often, I get requests for release from vows which show that the spiritual director hasn't even been asked for an opinion.

People should bring as much or more to a fellowship as they take from it.

More than anything else, a fellowship is a reinforcement of one overriding fact about us. We are committed to this way of life. Good times, bad times; dry times, full times, we are trying to follow our Lord in the way of St. Francis for the rest of our lives. High Church, Low Church, charismatic, Anglo-Catholic, whatever, our unity lies in the common vow. We live in an age when promises are broken

not only frequently but casually, when we are taught to believe we owe everything to ourselves and little to others. It is the vow that separates us from those called to walk in other ways. Yet our vow is only part of our baptismal vow.

Think of the consequences and importance of a vow in terms of the theology of St. John, where a word becomes a living and effective entity, where the Godhead itself is described as The Word. May your word as a Franciscan be an extension of The Word in the life of the Church.

### **Imitation of St. Francis?**

*Provincial Chaplain Robert Goode (from Franciscan Times 1981)*

Very few of us care to literally imitate St. Francis, for a variety of reasons. When we seem to be straying from the Franciscan way, there is sometimes a desire to drag out one of the original rules and reform things. Often, we satisfy ourselves that we are doing the work and witness of Francis when we confront the corrupt, the powerful, and the wealthy on the behalf of this world's poor. We think we manifest his love of creation when we hook up with some organization concerned for the environment. We think humility consists of humiliating and embarrassing those in authority.

Francis was not a socialist or even a social reformer. The evidence seems to suggest that he accepted the feudal theory of his day, but took the political vocabulary of his time and made it a paradigm of the Kingdom of God. His witness was personal and individual. This was its very charm, along with its totality and its intensity. Francis was poor because he thought it was holy, not because he hated the rich. When he confronted the infidel, there was no anger in the confrontation, merely a concern for souls and for the truth. Francis would never have countenanced a triumphalism of any sort, not even of the poor. It is not popular to say so, but he would not have rejoiced in the understandable but unlovely roar of sweet revenge as the Third World finds its way to a place in the sun.

The secret of the popularity of the Franciscan Movement remains the same. It gave the world the hope that each life could make a difference, provided it was turned around and pointed God-ward.

Quite rightly, we probably would not want to have the worldview of St. Francis, nor his emotional or psychological makeup. But I do think it is possible for us to have his motivation. We must never let anger or self-righteousness be part of our humility. Manipulation, however it may discomfort this world's powerful, is not to be hidden under the brown habit's skirts. And if an old order is to pass away because of our response to a Franciscan call, let it be for no other standard than the one that was his when he prayed: "My Lord, My God, My All."

### **On The Role of Confession in the Third Order**

*Provincial Chaplain Robert Goode June 15, 1983 letter to Helen Webb*

...As to your queries about confession, the problem is that we all go back so far it is sometimes hard to remember things. Maybe I can jog your memory a bit. During the tremendous time of change when we abandoned the manual of OSF, you may remember that there were many who were upset at giving up names, habits and the Credenda. In a way, it was an enormous change. We began a whole new set of statutes and changed the report form. During that Chapter and what I believe we called convocation, we agreed on a few things without putting them into elaborate systems of rules in order to avoid the very rigid and legalistic tone of the former manual. You may recall that in a spirit of keeping the basics and partly to conciliate those who were being asked to give up many things, which were precious to them, we agreed that two things were characteristic of the American Province and would be kept. One of them was the recitation of the Daily Office. The other was the fact that confession was a normative practice for us. I remember this well because I was on the committee that changed the report form, and it was clearly understood that the penitence section would be kept and that it referred to the Sacrament of Penance as well as any devotions, such as examination of conscience that a person saw as part of their Franciscan spirituality. ...So, our policy has always been to talk about the sacrament as being a normative part of our life, rather than to talk of it as "required." Do you understand the difference in tone I am talking about?

We are a voluntary association in the Episcopal Church. No one has to belong to the Third Order. We require spiritual directors, and we require recitation of the office, none of which are requirements for the ordinary Episcopalian. I believe at least half of the various associates and companions of the other religious orders not only require the use of the sacrament of penance, but sometimes even attempt to set the frequency. In fact, the Rule of Life of the associates of the Sisters of the Holy Nativity is more rigorous than ours, and incidentally, you might want to know that they do not allow their associates to become tertiaries.

Anyone who is immersed in Franciscan spirituality knows that the Sacrament of Penance and the penitential life in general is as major a theme as poverty and that our other names are "Little Brothers and Sisters of Penance." That is why the friars to this day keep two Lents. Franciscans are the most popular confessors in the world, and there is a whole definitively Franciscan approach to the Sacrament of Penance, as characterized by St. Leonard of Port Maurice. This tradition is very much alive and well today, as evidenced by the fact that while many Roman Catholics have fallen away from the Sacrament, churches run by friars continue to have lines outside the confessional.

With beginners it is natural that there might be questions and some ignorance, but I would suggest you express your puzzlement with someone in this category because a serious objection to the Sacrament of Penance is so incompatible with Franciscan spirituality and tradition as to make someone's grasp of the Franciscan life questionable, if they cannot see this. This is the sort of person who ought to be a candidate for the associates. This is also a time when even Protestant ministers are again hearing confessions, so this kind of reticence on the popular level is very out of touch with what is actually happening.

Now, we do have people in the Episcopal Church who try to make a thoughtful and cogent objection to the Sacrament of Penance. Granted, these are few and far between these days, but the tradition from which they speak is also opposed to vows and blessings and is opposed to the whole idea of the religious life. So, I would find it hard to understand why such a person would want to be a tertiary in the first place. The relationship with a spiritual director is far more intimate and revealing than that with one's confessor, for in it one must lay bare one's besetting sins and the whole pattern and structure of sin in one's spiritual life. So, again I would be puzzled as to why someone would be willing to have a spiritual director but not a confessor.

I think that what you have done as a matter of course is the right way to handle it. Get the person's spiritual director to discuss this with them and show them what a marvelous means of grace it is. I have many times gotten letters from people, perhaps even some you have counseled, who have said that the single greatest blessing of their being a tertiary was that the Order moved them to make use of the Sacrament when they might not otherwise have done so. Occasionally, we do get a newcomer who has not used the Sacrament and who might have been scared off if we had all kinds of material about it in our introductory literature. But the process of being open to all of the things they have to do to become tertiaries makes them especially open to using the Sacrament as just one of many new things that are now coming into their life. Most of the time, however, aspirants are already penitents. So, as I have said above, try to be firm and gentle and talk about the sacrament naturally. People will often grow into things if you give them leadership. We are not trying to whip them into it. Yes, I do expect people to use the Sacrament, but I hope my counselors and formation directors will be tactful, gentle, and firm.

The larger we get, the more diverse we get, and while we have abandoned many of our practices, such as requiring belief in the Immaculate Conception and some of these rightly so, we must be very careful to resist the equally growing pressure to so water down our life that we end up being a bunch of people of good will who happen to like St. Francis.

I can easily see how it might have happened that something like this slipped past you and for reasons that I have already outlined above, I do not pound on it. I do apologize, however, if there are some counselors who do not understand this. However, because of your experience and the length of time you have been on this journey, I trust you to have a feel for the right touch in dealing with this. Does this help answer your questions?

---

## Remembrance of Gooch

*Masud I. Syedullah*

*(Franciscan Times Fall 1998)*

I remember Gooch as a person who naturally exhibited qualities of humility and joy. He was my immediate predecessor as Provincial Chaplain for the Third Order. One of the things I remember most about him was the way he responded to me being selected to be the next Chaplain. I was greatly moved when, after Chapter ratified the Provincial Minister's nomination that I be Chaplain, he began right away to plan an induction service. It was marvelous! Not only was the rite constructed well, eloquently expressing the duties and responsibilities of the Chaplain, but also Gooch's joy permeated the event. It was as if he were handing over, not only the symbols of office, but a part of himself as well, as a personal gift. He embodied for me, in those arts, the Franciscan ideal of egalitarian relationships. It was from him that I discovered much of what it means to humbly serve and, when the time comes, to joyfully celebrate and support the gifts and ministry of those who follow—to cheer them on.

## Election of Masud I. Syedullah, TSSF Chaplain 1985-88

*Little Chronicle 1985*

Masud is the first chief pastor to have developed his vocation as a Franciscan entirely as a member of the Third Order. (Gooch had begun his Formation as a First Order Brother.) Masud's election as chaplain is a significant new move in the life of the Third Order towards autonomy and self-development. For the first sixty years of its existence in the Episcopal Church, the Order was run by a friar-priest. But as research into the early Franciscan roots has shown, The Third Order that St. Francis founded was intended to be an autonomous, self-supporting organization.

---

## Making Chapter More Internationally Representative

In 1986 Ewan Macpherson, editor of *Caritas* (newsletter for Franciscans in Eastern Canada), member of the Toronto Fellowship, and Area Chaplain, was elected a member of Chapter, but took a parish in the UK and left the Province. In 1989, the next round of Chapter elections, Ewan's successor as Convenor of the Toronto Fellowship, Warren Beal, was elected to Chapter. However, before he took his place on Chapter, he asked to be released from vows. Ruth Duncan of Ontario was appointed to join the Chapter with voice and vote, and, subsequently when another person resigned from Chapter, Ruth was appointed to fill out that member's term, becoming the first Canadian to be part of the elected Chapter. (Muriel Adey, also a Canadian, was an ex-officio member of Chapter when she was Women's Formation Director at the end of John Scott's era.)

Presence on Chapter for members from Trinidad and Tobago happened a bit quicker. In 1982, Jackie Richards was invited to attend Chapter, and, in 1985, she became the "Caribbean Representative" and reported to Chapter on events in the Caribbean and South America. In 1989, Jackie became Assistant Formation Director for the Caribbean, and, in 1992, both Jackie and Gloria Waldron were elected to Chapter from the Caribbean.

## TSSF Formation Moved Contemporary Franciscanism Beyond The Anglican Communion

### (1) Order of Ecumenical Franciscans

*From OEF Website, "How It All Began" 2008*

In 1980, Dale Trana (name later changed to Dale Carmen) petitioned the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis to accept her as a postulant, so that she could learn the spiritual disciplines with guidance. [Ed. *Very much like Father Joseph in 1918-19 went to SSJE for Formation as a future leader of an Order.*] Even though she was not Episcopalian, they accepted Dale into the formation program, which became a river of life-giving water to a parched soul. At this same time, God's mysterious planning brought Ron Nuss-Warren, Charles Maxfield, Dale Carmen, and their families together on a farm in North Dakota. It was there that they discovered common ground in the search for spiritual growth. They longed to be nurtured by a Christian community called to serve Christ in the spirit of Saint Francis. Ron, Charles and Dale were all pastors in the United Church of Christ serving small churches in North Dakota, and they realized the importance Francis gave to accountability in the church. Therefore, they sought obedience and responsibility through proper channels in the United Church of Christ. For the next three years, letters flew between UCC dignitaries, TSSF officers, and an increasingly excited trio of dreamers who sought to form an expression of Franciscan community within the protection and direction of the United Church of Christ.

In August of 1983, Ron Nuss-Warren, Charles Maxfield and Dale Carmen claimed an empty room at Annunciation Priory south of Bismarck, North Dakota, and began to hammer out, sentence by sentence, word by word, a General Rule and Principles for yet another expression of Franciscan community. Their primary building blocks came from Francis' "Rule of 1221" and "Rule of 1223" as expressed in *Source Documents: For the Living Tradition of the Society of St. Francis* (commonly known as the *Book of Roots*) published by the Society of St. Francis, and a summary by Fr. Marion A. Habig, OFM on "The New Rule Approved for the Secular Franciscan Order, by Pope Paul VI in 1978" (from "The New Rule in a Nutshell," p.82).

Over 90% of the words of the "General Rule" and "Principles" of the Order come from these primary documents, and only those words were changed that were necessary to have this new Franciscan Order be inclusive of all Christian denominations. After three long days of work and prayer, a fledgling "Rule" and "Principles" were ready for review by the sisters and brothers in established Franciscan communities. Through the grace of God, Br. Robert Hugh, SSF, Minister Provincial of SSF, was nearby in Minneapolis, Minnesota (only 500 miles away!). Dale Carmen hand-delivered the new "Rule" and "Principles" for his scrutiny. Graciously, Brother Robert Hugh offered to stop in North Dakota on his way to California to discuss possible corrections in the document.

On the plains, scattered clouds on the horizon are reason to hope that God may gather them into a thunderhead laden with rain for parched earth. And so it seemed the will of the Lord when, on November 22, 1983, Ron Nuss-Warren, Charles Maxfield and Dale Carmen met a notary at the bank in Parshall, North Dakota, and signed papers of incorporation (by the State of North Dakota) for the Third Order of St. Francis – United Church of Christ. On that same evening, a "Celebrating Birth" service was held at the Parshall United Church of Christ. The main speakers were Rev. George Metcalf, Chaplain of the Minnesota Fellowship of TSSF, and Rev. Marwood Rettig, Conference Minister of the North Dakota Conference of the United Church of Christ. Witnessing to the spirit of ecumenism, the service was blessed by the Lutheran minister, Assembly of God pastor and Roman Catholic priest – all from Parshall – and the Sisters of the Benedictine Priory at Garrison, North Dakota. Fumiko, a Japanese exchange student, played classical music; the choir offered up "Seek Ye First" and the local priest sang "Prayer of Saint Francis," accompanied by a Vietnamese-born guitarist.

During the service, the Rev. Metcalf read a framed parchment signed by TSSF officers, blessing us with these words:

*We the capitular tertiaries of the American Province of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis greet you as you begin to provide for a Franciscan expression of the Gospel life in your part of the Lord's vineyard. We pledge to you our fellowship, and our concern and those sharings that occur between brothers and sisters. May your walk in the steps of the Little Poor Man of Assisi be one blessed with peace and perseverance.*

The blessing from TSSF was followed by the reading of the Rule and Principles of the new Order. The Rev. Metcalf received the vows of Profession from Dale Carmen, and Dale received the vows of intention to the postulancy from Ron Nuss-Warren and Charles Maxfield. Later, seventy-some worshippers gathered for fellowship in the church basement. A tangible sense of hope and joy permeated the gathering as though they had, indeed, become instruments of God's peace. In some humble way, there was a sense that they had participated in one of God's awesome mysteries.

### (2) Secular Franciscans Order (Roman Catholic)

*From the OEF Website, "A Little History of OEF Roots," January 2012*

[W]hen in 1966 Brother Paul OSF was elected to be the new Minister Provincial, he had a vision for the Third Order that would have it stand free and clear as an Order in its own right, with its own leadership, administration, pastoring and formation, parallel with rather than dependent upon or defined by the life of the Friars and Sisters. When Br. Luke SSF became Minister Provincial in 1970 he supported that vision and over the next eight years, first Br. Robert Hugh and then Br. Mark Francis, had the task of "working themselves out of a job" as Friar Chaplain to the Third Order, visiting Fellowships and individual tertiaries to share this vision. So since the late seventies, the Third Order has directed its own life. Peter Funk and Marie Hayes were the first tertiaries to lead Novice Formation, John Scott to lead Administration, and Kale King to provide Chaplaincy.

A later Director of Formation was Glen Ann Jicha in Chicago. Glen Ann was working in [Ed. *Chicago's*] Loop and started regularly attending the OFM parish St. Peters. Benet Fonck OFM became Glen Ann's spiritual director, and Benet Fonck was the friar who was

responsible for the Third Order groups in the Province of OFM. He became interested in the structure being developed by the TSSF. Shortly thereafter, Benet was taken to Rome by the American Minister General John Vaughn to become the Friar responsible for the Third Order. Benet took with him the TSSF structure and formation letters and over the next few years in conversation with the OFM Caps and the OFM Conv, SFO was born as the modern expression of the secular Third Order. The American TSSF structure largely influenced the SFO structure over the 1970s. It is quite amazing the degree of consultation between Anglican and Roman Catholic Franciscans at this time around Third Order structure.

### Factoids of the Dee Dobson Era

- 1981 — Fifty people attend Province's first regional convocation in the Northeast
- 1982 — TSSF joins with the Roman Catholic SFO in the National Franciscan Communication Conference
- “Convocation” designated to mean not only Chapter-sponsored Provincial meetings but also fellowship-sponsored regional meeting
  - International Roman Catholic Congress (CIOF) held in Rome invites Anglican/Episcopal representatives for the first time to attend: John Scott, Dee Dobson, Anita and David Catron from the American Province and Richard Scott from the European Province.
- 1983 — The majority of the professed are not pledging; 1985 finds that less than 300 out of 700 members pledge
- Ken Cox, Men's Formation Director, dies. Alden Whitney becomes the new Men's Formation Director.
  - Marie Webner begins drafting the first *Fellowship Convenor Handbook*
- 1984 — Dee Dobson re-elected as Guardian
- 1985 — Masud ibn Syedullah elected as first Provincial Chaplain after Robert Goode retires as Chaplain
- Mary Ann Jackman creates the Dancing Francis (*left*) as the TSSF Province of Americas logo
- 1986—To parallel First Order nomenclature, Chapter votes to rename the “Guardian” as “Minister Provincial”
- TSSF is recognized by the House of Bishops as a Christian Community and enters ECUSA's annual *Red Book* for the first time
- 1987—At the conclusion of the Inter-Provincial Third Order Chapter (IPTOC)—the highest level of legislative authority in the world-wide Third Order—TSSF elects Bob Pope of the European Province as its first Minister General of the Third Order
- 1988 —Jack Stapleton elected as Provincial Chaplain resigns within one week; Alden Whitney appointed Interim Chaplain
- 1989 —Chapter studies the possibility of moving the 1991 Chapter meeting to the Caribbean (Chapter 1990 proposed taking a future Chapter meeting to Trinidad in 1993; Chapter 1991 voted down the proposal to take Chapter outside the US)
- Marie Webner is elected as Provincial Chaplain; Anita Catron takes over as Fellowship Coordinator
  - Br. Dunstan leaves Trinidad and Tobago, ending the First Order presence on these islands
  - 50% of professed are not reporting annually; and only one third of Area Chaplains are reporting annually
- 1990 —Ruth Duncan, a Canadian, is invited to Chapter with voice and vote
- 50% of members are not pledging



**In the end, by conscious planning or inadvertant pragmatic decisions, Dee Dobson changed the course of the Third Order in the Province of the Americas by making it much more localized, regional, and diffuse in its organization. From methods of communication to types of meetings to empowering and funding a Fellowship Coordinator, what Dee Dobson left after her three terms were over was not the Third Order John Scott had led. Thus the Minister Provincial to be elected next was presented with a much broader map by which to steer the Order—and his or her dilemma was well defined by Marie Webner in the following memo to her fellow Chapter members.**

### “The Future of the Third Order”

Memo by Marie Webner addressed to “My fellow members of Chapter, Third Order, SSF” on March 26, 1985.

*...Does it occur to you that we are in a singularly unattractive adolescent stage of development? We have simply not decided what we want to be or how to go about it (whatever it is). We wobble....Until we decide what we want to be and how to go about it, we obviously are in no position to take risks. In the long run, however, if we take no risks, we will never reach maturity (that is, our full potential).*

*I am convinced that a great deal of our identity crisis has its roots in our inability to find a model. We look for one in the First Order, but the model there is not completely appropriate to our large numbers, our scattered members, and the diversity of our members*

(especially the diversity in understanding). When we turn to the Roman Church for a model, we find that the hierarchical and priest-dominated authoritarianism there is also inappropriate to the Third Order of St. Francis in the Episcopal Church. Another model might be found in professional nonprofit associations, but the goals of these organizations are far removed from our own imperatives. We have already discarded the Third Order model in England because the friars there are sufficiently numerous to continue to provide direction, specifically in the form of a full-time chaplain.

*I believe that our first task as Chapter members is to recognize our uniqueness. Yes, our uniqueness. We can learn from the examples provided by the First Order, the Secular Franciscans, and professional organizations, but we will not find any of these models adequate to our own unique situation.*

*The first point, then, is that we need to be creative and open-minded in seeking our identity as it unfolds in the patterns of our administrative action....*

## How Did Dee Ever Become a Tertiary?

*"A Meeting of Franciscans" by Bill Graham, Part 3 of 3, Summer 1998, Franciscan Times*

*Dee:* The offices were the main reason that I didn't join a lot earlier. I was teaching and just couldn't work them in. We're a lot more flexible now. Tertiaries once wore a garment called a scapular and were to keep their membership rather secret. They were not to wear their profession crosses outside. Now, we encourage them to do so.

*Fr. Bill:* Dee, who was your counselor when you were a novice?

*Dee:* I had Peter Funk, and he was excellent. Peter was a freelance writer and still does the monthly "Word Power" section in *Reader's Digest*. He wrote our first set of formation letters.

*Fr. Bill:* I've met Peter several times, and I've quoted from his letters in sermons, retreat meditations, and Cursillo talks. You couldn't have had anyone better. How did you become interested in the Order?

*Dee:* I was looking for something to deepen my spiritual life. Brother Dunstan was a particularly strong influence on me.

*Fr. Bill:* That sounds pretty much the case for me as well. I was influenced by Fr. Scott and Br. Robert Hugh, the First Order Visitor, when I joined. How has the Order changed since you joined?

*Dee:* I mentioned the reorganization of 1972. Br. Robert deserves much of the credit for that happening. Others helping were Fr. John Scott, Helen Webb, Fr. Warren Tange, Fr. Robert Goode, and myself. We were still under the First Order, but were given a lot more control. We had our own guardian. John was our first one and served six years in that capacity. I was guardian for nine years. In 1981, we strengthened our international ties, becoming completely autonomous in 1987.

## Denalta (Dee) Dobson died August 15, 2001 in Miami, Florida

*Julia Bergstrom, Provincial Chaplain, Franciscan Times*

There were expressions of grief at the service, but Dee's family and friends, especially her children, made the open house a joyous occasion. This was the first time I had met her children, and I think they're wonderful. As we know, Dee had many children besides the six biological ones. In fact, several people who were friends of her children in high school flew in because Dee was their mother too. In her honor, her children made her lasagna and key lime pie recipes, enough for 75, for the open house.

At the funeral, Br. Robert Hugh celebrated the Eucharist, and Br. Dunstan preached, using the last chapter of Proverbs. We sang "All creatures of our God and King," "Joyful, joyful we adore thee," and "Lord, make us servants of your peace." The Cantic of the Sun was printed on the back of the program. Her obituary, written by Bill, Jr., talked about her participation in TSSF. We thank you, God, for Dee's life and witness. There is rejoicing in heaven!



*(Left to right) Dee Dobson, Maryann Jackman (creator of the Dancing Francis logo), and Alden Whitney (next Minister Provincial)*