

## **Introduction to this Edition (2017)**

The Church goes through major transitional moments about every 500 years. This is necessary because society itself goes through major upheaval and change, and thus the Spirit must call the Church to a new Pentecost to provide the new “tongues” that communicate the meaning of the risen life of Jesus to a new world. In this moment, the pace of change is escalating, but the Spirit-led Church is up to the task.

St. Francis, in response to the Spirit of God and the need for the Church to be “rebuilt,” began a revolution that closely mirrored Christ’s revolution (N. T. Wright’s word) in the first century. Francis understood that God is not found most clearly in edifices or the trappings of power and kingdom, but in close relationship to God the Trinity and all the children and creatures of God. The resurrection event of Jesus (death, burial, resurrection, ascension) opened to humanity a radically different way of being, which Francis embraced. To be fully human and alive, one must move from the exile in which one loves created things more dearly. Humanity has endured exile for millennia because it has failed to believe God and be God to the world. Through Christ’s sacrifice and our belief, love, and action we move to freedom and our true humanity that sees and engages the world differently.

Francis understood that nothing may stand between God and God’s people, and so he laid aside, wealth, power, and possessions, and devoted himself to a community that served the very poorest. He and his community conversed with those who stood outside their faith tradition. They devoted themselves to Scripture, study, prayer, service, and the sacraments, from whence they drew the sustenance to be Christ to Earth’s children.

There is every indication that the Church and the Franciscan Order need revival and a renewed mission. The Church is in a fragile moment in which it fails to speak Good News to all the peoples of the earth. Our response as the Church ages may be to strive to maintain the status quo. This will bring death on many levels. We might decide to embrace the new Pentecost that is upon us so that we might see where the Holy Spirit is leading us to act and speak. Where the Spirit is, there is life and vitality.

We Franciscans are well positioned to be at the fore of a new “Jesus Movement.” We value the simplicity of life that lays aside all attachments so that we may follow Christ and be poised to mediate the risen Lord to a world in new ways so that all can hear in their “heart language” (their own tongue). We are committed to make our Lord known and loved everywhere. And we are devoted to spreading a spirit of love and harmony. These values are timeless and oriented outside ourselves to those for whom Christ gave his life. Others await our invitation to join this Franciscan moment of transformation.

Dear conveners, this small booklet offers resources for your consideration as you and your fellowships grow in community life, vocations, accountability, study, and openness to all that the Spirit is saying to us about the mission of Christ and Francis. Our Minister Provincial invites us to rebuild the Church. May God work through us all as new work begins. May we joyfully invite new Franciscans to join us.

## **The Fellowships**

*They devoted themselves to the Apostle's teaching and fellowship and to the breaking of the bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42*

Fellowships are groups of Tertiary sisters and brothers, Associates, seekers, and perhaps Franciscans from other orders who gather together to study Scripture, worship, study, and provide companionship to each other as they grow in their Franciscan vocations. New in this handbook is openness to all Franciscans and seekers as part of our missionary calling, (i.e., Secular Franciscans, TSSF, Associates, Ecumenical Franciscans, and Lutheran Franciscans). Fellowships are sometimes defined by geographical proximity, or for isolated Franciscans an online fellowship, and now a mission to prisoners.

Fellowships study Scripture or pray it using *lectio divina*. They pray together using one of the Daily Offices or, if a priest is present, Holy Eucharist. There is usually a time of study of Franciscan principles and spirituality, or consideration of possible engagements with Church and culture. Time is spent in building community by sharing lives and vocations with each other, prayerfully listening to each other as friends, and encouraging each other in our vocations and faithfulness to our Rules of Life. We encourage fellowships not to focus on problem solving or group therapy. Franciscans have usually found that the best place to process such things is with a therapist or spiritual director.

Fellowships have found that they also practice pastoral care, particularly with those who are unable, because of health or distance, to attend fellowships. This is done variously: one-to-one meetings, phone calls, letters, and e-mail.

Some fellowships have work projects or special activities. Fellowships have recently taken on the responsibility of assuring that those in their geographical area receive a copy of the *Franciscan Times*. If a Tertiary is unable to access a computer, the convener arranges to have a fellowship member provide a copy to home-bound Tertiaries.

**Virtual Fellowships:** It has become clear that many Franciscans have become "isolated" for all sorts of reasons, some of which have little to do with geography. Chapter decided that this was a situation that needed some attention. With the amazing technology at our fingertips, we can connect with Tertiaries who previously did not have regular fellowship opportunities. We have groups that meet face to face using platforms such as Google Hangouts, e-mail (listserv), and FaceBook. The beautiful result of these groups is that there are members in fellowship together from all over the Province of the Americas, sharing their ministries and their experiences, and being able to connect, some in real time, to other members of the Order.

## Responsibilities of the Convener

The convener of a fellowship is charged with calling together Tertiaries in his or her geographic area for regular prayer, fellowship, and growth in Franciscan spirituality and mission. The way conveners fulfill this pastoral ministry will be as varied as their spiritual gifts and the Tertiaries in their fellowships.

**Prayer:** When we are together at fellowship, there are disciplines that we do together that deepen the faith and work of Tertiaries. Most of our fellowships begin their work with either a setting of Daily Office drawn from one of the Anglican Communion's Books of Common Prayer or, if a priest is present, we celebrate the Eucharist. This way of praying binds us together in the love of Christ and gives us the opportunity to engage the Apostles teaching and the Prayers, the breaking of bread, and the dismissal to mission.

**Music:** Some groups sing psalms and spiritual songs. One fellowship has created a Franciscan hymnody for the Third Order that is available on the TSSF website. The music is currently available through the Long Island Fellowship. Another fellowship sings the songs of Taizé; simple, very accessible music. There is also the rich music of the Anglican hymnals.

**Sharing:** It is the practice in our fellowships to check in with each other, to catch up with each other. This can be done around a meal or as it fits in your patterns of being together. We encourage your sharing to reference your Franciscan vocation and your ministries. One of our conveners is preparing a study on discernment, which we hope will become a resource to all Franciscans on listening to each other as friends without "cross examination" and problem solving. We want to call the gift of the Spirit forward in each of us so that we can faithfully do Christ's work in the world about us.

**Study:** It is the practice of our fellowships to engage in study of Scripture, Franciscan spirituality and practice, creation and cultural studies that lead us to engage the broken places of society with faithful and prophetic mission, and ways of praying and contemplation. In 2017-2018, Chapter is inviting the fellowships to a visioning process that will focus on several passages of Scripture using *lectio divina* that will inform St. Francis's call to "*simply live the Gospel.*" We are in the process of creating videos of presenters at our various convocations, and we hope to put them on line for your use in fellowships. The TSSF library is now available online thanks to the careful work done by John Brockman and Janice Syedullah.

**Mutual Accountability and the Rule of Life:** A crucial role for the convener is helping a fellowship to find a balance between individual and corporate praying, personal and public piety, and personal and corporate mission to the world about us. By inviting the faithful annually to reflect on their Rules of Life, conveners seek to invite Tertiaries to mutual accountability to the vision and way we each have articulated our calling to follow Francis and Christ. The rule is in most cases a balanced way of living for Christ in the world. In our daily prayer, study, and reading of Scripture, we learn from Christ what he is saying and doing through us for the whole creation. In our yearly retreat and

confession, we seek to set aside anything that would hinder us from obedient service through vocation and mission. It is a pastoral ministry that reminds the professed of their responsibility to continue to grow in their Franciscan spirituality and to keep their responsibilities of reporting, annual renewal, and financial pledge to the Third Order.

**Inquirers:** As fellowships, we consider together persons we perceive to have potential vocations to the Third Order. We then intentionally invite them to Inquirers' Meetings once or twice a year. Suggested times would be around Francistide when we renew our vows or at the time of a profession.

While in the past, fellowships have found that intimacy and in-depth work are best accomplished by restricting meetings to Tertiaries and Novices, Chapter has heard the Holy Spirit remind us of Francis's three aims. Specifically, he said, "we are committed to make our Lord known and loved everywhere." We understand that this means our fellowships will live into this by inviting all who are seeking Francis and Christ to be with us in fellowship. Therefore, we urge fellowships to include seekers and to invite others to come and experience Franciscan spirituality, practice, and mission so that we may share with and incorporate them into the Franciscan family.

While a major purpose of the fellowship is to deepen Franciscan spirituality and mission for every member of our Franciscan family, we remember also the Franciscan aims of simplicity. Open meetings can be a resource in meeting these aims.

**Some Tasks for Conveners** to perform or delegate to a fellowship member:

1. Notify members of meetings.
2. Offer pastoral care for members of your fellowship. An important aspect of the convener's role is encouraging and caring for members. If a problem starts to surface, always feel free to contact the Fellowship Coordinator for prayer and counsel.
3. Be sure that every Tertiary in your geographic region receives a copy of the *Franciscan Times*. Either send a printed copy or appoint a member of your fellowship to print copies for Tertiaries who do not have computers.
4. Do not assume that everyone has e-mail. If letters are sent to those who are online, make sure to include those persons who are not online through other means of communication.
5. Supply each member with a list of members, their addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses.
6. Write recommendations of prospective novices and professed after soliciting the opinions of the professed members of the fellowship.
7. Your fellowship may want to consider annual retreats.
8. Make provision for the visitation of the sick and shut-ins within the fellowship.
9. Arrange for the annual recommendation of the convener by June 30th and include this information in your report. The Fellowship Coordinator must ratify

the appointment of the convener. The convener's term will become effective at Francistide.

10. Maintain contact with the diocesan bishop. An annual letter or a visit are possible ways.
11. Maintain records of attendance, novicing, and profession.
12. E-mail all meeting notices and newsletters, to the Fellowship Coordinator. Also send notices of special meetings, retreats, and newsletters to the Minister Provincial and the editor of the *Franciscan Times*.
13. Send address changes and notices of novicings and professions to the Provincial Secretary.
14. Encourage all members to use Third Order Source Materials in addition to the Daily Readings of the Principles.

## Resources for Fellowships

The ideas presented here have all been used by fellowships. Pick and choose among them, according to the needs of your particular fellowship. Those needs may vary from time to time. As you are attentive to the varying needs of the group and its members, and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you will discern which of these fit your need.

Please do not feel limited to the suggestions given here. If you devise a new program or discover a book that lends itself well to group discussion, share your ideas with other fellowships by sending your suggestions to the Fellowship Coordinator for distribution.

### Studies on Basics:

1. Bring your TSSF Directory to each meeting to ensure familiarity with the contents and to incorporate recent updates.
2. Periodically review the statutes and constitution.
3. *Forming the Soul of a Franciscan* is used in classes, and sent to all those in formation. The Letters may be discussed one by one, thus providing more than two years of monthly meeting material. You may obtain a set by writing to the Literature Distribution Coordinator (see the Directory). A donation to cover postage and printing would be appreciated.
4. Some fellowships have a meditation by one of their members at each meeting. Time should be allowed for group discussion and sharing after the meditation.
5. Each member may be asked to prepare a program on a favorite saint. Programs should provide opportunity for discussion.
6. One of the previous sets of formation papers gives the following list, which may serve as the basis for seventeen fellowship study programs, using the three-volume set *Francis of Assisi* (New City Press) or other materials as resources. Tertiaries are called:
  - a. To live in the love of God the Father
  - b. To live in abiding communion with Christ
  - c. To follow Christ, poor and crucified
  - d. To be open to the action of the Holy Spirit
  - e. To participate in the life and mission of the Church
  - f. To live the Gospel life according to the spirit of St. Francis
  - g. To be loyal to the Church in dialogue and cooperation
  - h. To live in brotherhood (community) with all people and with creation
  - i. To experience continual conversion of life and manners
  - j. To be an instrument of peace

- k. To be apostolic in life and witness
  - l. To serve the poor for Christ's sake
  - m. To live a life of personal, communal, and liturgical prayer
  - n. To believe in joy
  - o. To strive for a validly secular spirituality
  - p. To be aware that we are always pilgrims on the way to God
  - q. To be given to simplicity, humility, and "littleness"
7. A rule clinic. One fellowship discusses each of the nine points of the rule once a year. This is especially valuable where there are many novices, postulants, and aspirants in a fellowship. It may be conducted by one person or in small groups, each headed by an experienced Tertiary in profession. All experiences are valuable, of course. It is our intent to invite essays on each of the nine areas from some of our spiritual mothers and fathers in the Order to enhance conversations in the fellowships.

Going Deeper:

1. Speakers may be invited: Some of the metropolitan areas have better access to a greater number of speakers, but every fellowship may consider the possibility of a speaker from Franciscan groups in the geographical area or representatives from special interest groups (social action, peace, etc.) Provide opportunity for questions. Don't forget the wealth of speakers among our own Third Order members. Ask for suggestions or choose from among the following list:
  - We are growing a library of resources from the Order that will be available online. These will include:
    - Presentations from Convocations that are suitable for use at Fellowships of Fellowship retreats are on [www.TSSF.com](http://www.TSSF.com)
      - A presentation by Murray Bodo, PC 2017
      - A presentation by Charlie McCarron on Franciscan contemplation.
      - A presentation by Anton Armbruster
    - Online conversation with Third Order Franciscans with expertise in areas you are considering.
  - Your bishop or diocesan clergy
  - Visiting speaker/missionary to your Church or diocese, e.g., on storytelling, parables...
  - A First Order brother or sister
  - A Third Order speaker

- A speaker from another Episcopal/Anglican religious order (SSM, SSJE, OHC...)
  - A speaker from the Roman Catholic Secular Franciscans (OFS) or Ecumenical Franciscans (EFO)
2. A personal spiritual check-up (may be combined with intercessory prayer below).
- a. Centering down
- Relax. Sit in a comfortable place and position. Consciously release the tension of every nerve and muscle from your eyelids to your toes.
- Breathe. Become aware of how you are breathing. Now feel the beating of your heart. Match your breathing to its rhythm.
- Pray. Having centered down, pray the Jesus Prayer as you continue to let go and allow God to enter. "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner."
- Continue to slow your breathing as you pray the prayer continuously.
- Check up on possible blocks to opening to God's love and to being able to offer love to others.
- Read the questions below. Reflect on them and resolve to become more open and loving.
- 1) St. Francis used the greeting, "God give you peace." Does God give you peace in your heart? Is there some part of your life that most needs to feel God's peace? If so, what first step can you take today?
  - 2) Is there a personal relationship in your heart that stands unreconciled? Does it wait for your willingness (a) to be forgiven by God, (b) to forgive yourself, (c) to be forgiven by someone else, (d) to take the first step? If so, what first step can you take today?
3. Intercessory Prayer. Four steps to follow in considering intercessory prayer:
- a. Be still and quiet.
- Use the breathing technique and the Jesus Prayer, as practiced in the spiritual check-up.
- b. Offer yourself to God to be used for other people.
- Pray something like this: "Take all the love of my heart for my family, my friends, my possessions. Take all my power of thinking, of hoping, of loving. Take my talents, my time, my desires. Use me for your children for whom I now pray."
- c. Place the person in the presence of God.
- Take the person for whom you are praying and place him or her by an act of the imagination in God's presence. Think of God's love coming through that person, penetrating into the deepest parts of that individual. A simple



reminder of God's love and concern can help make you aware of His power coming through the person. Recall: "God loves the other as He loves me." "God is his creator, too." "She is a child of God."

d. Imagine the person as a changed person.

See the broken areas made whole. See the person as peaceful, loving, joyful, etc.

4. The TSSF Library has an extensive list of titles, many that are available on line on the TSSF website by clicking on the library link. There you can search by author or title. Then note which collection the book is in. If it is an e-book, you can view it right there. Other books are available through the mail.
5. Books that have been used as the basis of study programs include:

Franciscan Studies

*Francis of Assisi* (three volumes; New City Press)

*St. Francis of Assisi*, by Johannes Jorgensen

*Instrument of Thy Peace*, by Alan Paton

*The Journey and the Dream*, by Murray Bodo

*God's Fool*, by Julian Green

*The Devotional Companion*, TSSF

*Instruments of Peace: The Role of Franciscans Today* (Pamphlet), by Brother Michael, SSF

*A Wild Goose Chase: An Introduction to the Anglican Franciscan Third Order*, by Paul Alexander, TSSF

Significant Biblical Studies

*Surprised by Hope*, by N. T. Wright

*The Day the Revolution Began*, by N. T. Wright

Spiritual Discipline

*A Celebration of Discipline*, by Richard Foster

*Addiction and Grace*, by Gerald May

*Contemplative Prayer*, by Basil Pennington

*Mission Groups*, by Basil Pennington

*Falling Upward*, by Richard Rohr

*Immortal Diamond*, by Richard Rohr

Toward Franciscan Responsibility in the Created Order

*Laudato Si*, Pope Francis's encyclical on the Creation

6. Movies

From the St. Alban's Institute in Washington, DC or ask your clergy or diocesan librarian.

*The Sultan and the Saint, 2016*

*Finding St. Francis*

7. Visit TSSF shut-ins. Have meetings where they live when possible: their own home, assisted living facilities, or nursing homes.
8. Write advocacy letters on peace and justice issues.
9. Organize a Quiet Day
10. Sponsor a retreat. Consider inviting your diocese and other religious orders.
11. Have an exhibit booth at your diocesan convention/convocation/synod or deanery meetings. Obtain TSSF brochures from the Secretary for Publications. Obtain SSF/CSF newsletter samples from First Order brothers and sisters.
12. Write articles for your diocesan paper. Occasionally invite the editor to your meetings.

## **Keeping Records**

Fellowships may vary in their need for keeping records. There are no requirements, but here are some examples of records that will be helpful.

1. It is highly recommended to keep attendance records. A possible form is in Appendix B.
2. Dates of admissions of postulants, of novicings, of renewals, and of professions.
3. Scrapbook of photographs for your enjoyment.
4. Financial records: contributions toward newsletter, toward scholarships to regional or provincial convocations, etc.
5. Up-to-date mailing list, with copies to members, Fellowship Coordinator, and Provincial Secretary.
6. The annual report is sent to the Fellowship Coordinator by June 30. Copies of newsletters are sent to the Fellowship Coordinator.
7. Brief reports of convocations, if hosted by your fellowship, are sent to the Fellowship Coordinator.

## **Money Matters**

A fellowship of three or four members who live in close proximity to each other probably has no money matters. E-mail or phone calls serve to remind members of meeting dates, and there are no extra expenses.

When mailings other than e-mail became necessary, expenses begin and should be shared. Too many conveners bear the steady drain of monthly mailings, copying, and phone calls without requesting reimbursement.

Donations for the *Franciscan Times* and formation material are welcomed.

## **Attendance at Fellowship Meetings**

We have come to understand that the fellowship is the principal place for lifelong formation for Franciscans.

Some tertiaries may not know or clearly understand the importance of fellowship meetings in the life of the Order. Others may have difficulties because of poor health or handicaps, family or work responsibilities, or distance. Some may not have made the fellowship a serious priority in their lives. It is important for the convener to learn, if possible, what the factors are that affect the attendance of each person in the fellowship. The time and place of meetings ought to be varied, as far as possible, to accommodate particular responsibilities and ministries.

A. Convener attendance

The fellowship convener, or representative, is normally present at any meeting of the fellowship. From time to time the Fellowship Coordinator, Minister Provincial, or Regional Chaplain may choose to visit or be asked to be present.

B. Attendance of postulants and novices

When someone begins as a postulant (or when a Tertiary moves into the fellowship area), the convener makes sure that the person understands the expectation to attend. This is a good time to discuss what potential difficulties might be. Postulants and novices should clearly understand that their attendance at meetings will be considered when they request novicing and profession.

When you notice that a novice or a postulant is not coming to meetings regularly, try to find out why, and let the person know that he or she is missed, that everyone's presence is valuable. If you sense that the person is not making a real commitment to the community of the fellowship (as opposed to having external difficulties), it is important to say so. People who are exploring a Third Order vocation need, and are entitled to, loving and honest feedback about fellowship participation as an essential ingredient of their lifelong formation. This may be a time for you to receive feedback about the fellowship. Be prepared to receive it with humility, love, and openness.

If a postulant or novice is absent from meetings over an extended period without explanation and does not wish to discuss reasons with the convener, encourage them to write to the Formation Director. If the situation does not improve, the convener should notify the Fellowship Coordinator after advising the postulant or novice of this intention.

C. Attendance of the professed

As with postulants and novices, explore the reasons for nonattendance. Be as flexible as possible in scheduling for everyone's convenience. It should be understood, however, that fellowship attendance is part of our Franciscan community responsibility.

Annual letter to the professed at Francistide.

*Dear Professed Brothers and Sisters,*

*As the convener of your fellowship, I wish to greet you this Francistide. As you know, the statutes of the Third Order specify that the professed shall renew their vows at Francistide, and this normally takes place in the context of a fellowship meeting or a regional convocation. The professed of this fellowship will be renewing our vows at (place) on (date and time). Please let me know if you will be taking part.*

*Attendance at fellowship meetings is part of our commitment as Tertiaries, and I hope you will all be able to meet with us in the coming year. The life*

*of the fellowship is greatly strengthened by the presence of the professed. We need to be available for those following us in formation. If you anticipate serious problems with this in the coming year, please let me know. As a family, it is important for us to share our joys, our sorrows, our needs, and our thanksgivings and to always support each other in prayer.*

*Yours in the name of Christ and Francis,*

*(Your name)  
Convener*

The Fellowship Coordinator should be consulted about professed who fail to respond to such a letter.

What you as convener can do to encourage people to come to meetings:

1. Schedule meetings far enough in advance for people to make plans.
2. Try to be flexible in meeting the needs of active members by varying the time or place of meetings.
3. Encourage the fellowship to be warm and welcoming to newcomers.
4. Involve members in the planning and work of the fellowship.
5. Find ways to reach out to the sick, or those who are unable to attend meetings.
  - Send audio or video tapes of meetings.
  - Encourage correspondence and phone calls.
  - Hold occasional meetings in the homes of those unable to attend meetings.
  - Take another Tertiary with you on a home or hospital visit.
  - E-mail.

D. Attendance of non-Franciscans

We encourage fellowships to invite and incorporate inquirers. At times, some fellowships find that an inquirer remains an inquirer for a prolonged period. Reasons for noncommittal should be explored with the person. Significant others of tertiaries are always welcomed.

E. Attendance of SSF Associates and other Franciscan communities

Secular and Ecumenical Franciscans and Associates are always welcomed to fellowship meetings.

## **Managing Difficult Situations**

1. Do you have people who want to be in control or to sabotage?

Role of the convener: Be firm, even to the point of consulting with other professed about the desirability of excluding the person from meetings. The health of the entire fellowship is at stake. Seek advice from the Fellowship Coordinator.

2. Do you have a lack of balance: too much work and not enough play, or too much play and not enough work?

Role of the convener: Keep the balance of fellowship, study, and prayer. Socializing, the time spent learning to know and love our brothers and sisters in an informal setting, is as important as prayer. Prayer is as important as study. Study is as important as the other elements. Keep the balance!

3. Prayer: Are people skipping out early or arriving late, conveniently missing corporate prayer?

Role of the convener: This is a subject you need to open to group discussion in terms of our vocation and its implications. Rearrange schedules as appropriate and as necessary to accommodate different responsibilities within the fellowship, but keep prayer a priority.

4. Are novices and postulants complaining about their counselors?

Role of the convener: Be sympathetic and helpful with beginners in the fellowship, but never interfere with the relationship between a novice and his or her counselor. If there is notable irregularity in replies from a counselor, encourage the postulant/novice to write the Assistant Formation Director or to the Formation Director with specific details and perhaps a request for a new counselor. Counselors, too, have problems – but the Formation Director needs to be aware of such difficulties. The postulant or novice also needs to be reassured that voicing legitimate discontent with a counselor will not jeopardize his or her Third Order life. Also notify the Fellowship Coordinator.

5. Are there people in your fellowship who tend to flaunt their Third Order affiliation as an endorsement or as a means to secure special privilege?

Role of the convener: Keep this tendency in check vigorously, by personal consultation. If the situation continues, notify the Fellowship Coordinator. Our lives are hidden in Christ, and our membership in the Third Order entitles us to nothing but the privilege of servanthood.

6. Is your fellowship regularly meeting at the same parish Church, with the result that the parish priest has begun to view the Third Order fellowship as part of the parish or mission, subject to the authority of the rector or vicar?

Role of the convener: Change your meeting place for variety. Meet at other Churches on a rotating basis or meet in the homes of members. Meeting always at the same Church does not inevitably result in a feeling of possessiveness on the part of the priest-in-charge, but it is a danger to be on guard against, especially when most of the Tertiaries in the fellowship are members of the parish. Such a parish identification will also tend to discourage visitors and aspirants from other parishes. Remember that the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis is extra-parochial. Its members may find their ministries in their own parishes, but Third Order fellowships should eschew parochial attachments.

7. Is a particular group inappropriately dominating the fellowship (e.g., members of one parish, those with a particular churchmanship, or those sharing a particular political or social interest)?

Role of the convener: Living in the spirit of chastity means that we are to strive to be open and welcoming within as well as outside the Order, and sometimes this can be difficult. To some extent, you as convener can help the group to grow in this manner by setting an example in the way you deal with others. You may wish to vary the place, program, and style of meetings to move beyond the limitation of a special interest. There may be a point at which the fellowship should pray and talk about this together.

Courtesy and concern should characterize all our relations with our brothers and sisters, and neither manipulation nor dominance is appropriate in Franciscan fellowship. If you cannot achieve harmony, consult the Fellowship Coordinator.

## **Delegation of Responsibilities**

Delegation, in the life of the fellowship, includes three basic elements: the ability to share leadership responsibilities, to encourage emerging new leadership, and to enable the fellowship to work most fully as the Body of Christ. Delegation is a tool that enables, and it is a gift. It is a gift in leadership that strengthens community life, allowing it to grow in creative ways, deepening the common bond in Christ and Francis.

Delegation, or the ability to delegate, has its roots in prayer. As we contemplate Christ in others, we learn to see the uniqueness of each member, his or her special strengths, weaknesses, level of participation, particular gifts and talents. There can be no creative delegation without a deepening awareness of what each member is currently able to offer and what that member may be able to offer at a future time. Prayerful consideration of each individual in the fellowship must, then, be a required prelude to the sharing of various responsibilities.

All people need to feel needed, to be asked to contribute their gifts. A request that a person assume a particular responsibility is most often met with a positive response, the gift coinciding with the need. At the same time, unforeseen circumstances, inappropriate timing, or the priority of family commitment may make a “no” response necessary. This should be respected and accepted in love. A person who delegates well does not pressure or manipulate.

This is not to say that new leadership does not sometimes need encouragement. Encouragement is different from pressure. A negative response provides an opportunity for the convener to look for other ways a person may be able to serve the fellowship.

A fellowship is a small Body of Christ, with each member a unique and valuable part. Each member within the Third Order community is committed to the building up of the fellowship family, either by taking the initiative, by offering the gifts of who they are, or by responding to the recognition of that gift with a willingness to share it. With prayerful delegation and with each part of that body working as fully as possible, new leadership can emerge, responsibilities can be carried out, and the fellowship can continue to grow in its life and witness.



## **Annual Report of the Fellowship**

Conveners are required, by statute, to submit an annual report of the fellowship to the Fellowship Coordinator, and they are to submit these reports by June 30th. This duty may be delegated and the evaluation may be shared.

THE REPORT IS DUE BY JUNE 30th.

The report should include the following information:

1. A current roster of members, with professed, novices, postulants, aspirants and isolated designated. Associates, OFS members, and OEF members who regularly meet with the fellowship should also be included. Include all contact information and the diocesan affiliation.
2. Changes in conveners. Conveners may be recommended annually and the Fellowship Coordinator must ratify the appointments. Only tertiaries who renew, report, and pledge may be recommended.
3. Strengths of the fellowship; growth in numbers or in closeness and community; any meetings that especially deepened ties.
4. Areas of concern. Any problems with nonattendance of professed, with meeting times or programs, communications, disruptive members?
5. The fellowship's sources for program and discussion.
6. Fellowship policy on open or special meetings. Do you have meetings just for novices, just for professed? In response to what need?
7. Are there any postulants, novices, or professed who are clearly out of touch with the community?
8. Changes in demographic patterns. Have people moved from or to your area? Are there indications that a new fellowship is needed? Are there increases in membership or population shifts or dispersion?
9. Ties with Roman Catholic Secular Franciscans, Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, or with other Franciscan denominations. What have you shared?
10. What are your goals or projections for the coming year?
11. When does your fellowship meet (time, day, frequency)?
12. Areas where the convener needs help or advice.
13. Who is your Area Chaplain? Have you invited the Area Chaplain to any of your meetings?
14. Concerns or sources of joy you wish to communicate to Chapter
15. Additional comments or questions.

Fellowships may make this evaluation together, if possible, in preparation for the convener's report. It thus becomes a creative tool for looking at strengths and weaknesses, the past and the future, and provides a means of continuing renewal.

## **Fellowship Officers**

Convener

*Optional Offices* (These offices vary from fellowship to fellowship).

Co-convener

Secretary

Treasurer

Archivist

Librarian

Newsletter editor

Technical support

In addition, volunteers may be requested for such one-time responsibilities as arranging a retreat or quiet day, planning a profession party, etc.

## **Recommendation and Ratification of Conveners**

The fellowship recommends one of its professed members who reports, renews, and pledges as convener and submits the name with the annual report to the Fellowship Coordinator for ratification. The Fellowship Coordinator will send a certificate to the fellowship stating the name of the convener and the term which extends between Francistides. The convener may serve additional terms, but they must be ratified annually. Avoid perpetual convenerships. Sharing responsibility by rotating the office is an excellent way to build a strong fellowship.

Novices and professed Tertiaries participate in the recommendation of the convener.

See Appendix D for an example of certificate and Appendix E for a service for new conveners/co-conveners.

## **Instructions to Fellowship Conveners for Letters of Evaluation to the Formation Director**

A vocation to the Third Order is a call to a life in community. For all of us in the Third Order, this is a lifetime commitment and an ongoing process which we undertake in our many different ways. We ask you to keep in mind the wonderful diversity of the Third Order and the continuing formation that we all experience as you write a letter of evaluation for your brother or sister in the formation program. Please involve all the professed members of the fellowship in this evaluation process. Please consider the following points:

Is there a serious commitment to community, including attendance at fellowship meetings, convocations, and other opportunities to meet with Tertiaries?

Is this person making a valiant effort to experience a Franciscan community given his or her work and family situation?

Can you give examples of how this person has been actively involved?

Has this person shown stability within the fellowship, sensitivity to others, recognition of diversity, a sense of humor, emotional and mental balance, etc.?

Are there serious issues in the fellowship that need reconciliation involving this person?

Has an effort been made to seek reconciliation?

In the fellowship's opinion, would this person benefit from more time as a Postulant or Novice?

Your brothers and sisters welcome your participation in the formation process. The novicing or profession of a member of the Third Order is always a joyous community event.

Your letter will be kept in confidence and it will be destroyed at profession. Please seal your letter and mail it to:

The Formation Director  
As listed in the Directory

## **Relationship with the Bishop and Diocese**

For advice or assistance with any of these items contact the Secretary for Advertising.

Conveners of Third Order fellowships are to make their presence known to the bishops of the dioceses in which they meet. This may be done in person or by a letter, which will include the following information: the names of those who share the responsibility of convening the fellowship and the names of the clergy who are involved. Also include a brochure describing the Third Order and put the bishop on your mailing list if you have a fellowship newsletter. The bishop may be invited to attend a fellowship meeting or lead a fellowship retreat or quiet day. When a bishop, priest, deacon, or a lay conductor, of a retreat, convocation, conference, or fellowship meeting is coming from outside the diocese, it is appropriate that the bishop be notified. This is a matter of ecclesiastical protocol and is important for maintaining good relations with the diocese.

Please extend the same courtesy that you owe your bishop to any priest whose parish Church you are using as a fellowship meeting place. Consult the priest regarding requirements for the use of the space. Courtesy, graciousness, and consideration should be Franciscan hallmarks. Remember to send a note of appreciation.

### Diocesan convention/synod (convocation) or deanery meeting

To inform people of the diocese about the Third Order, it is useful to display an exhibit of Franciscan materials, brochures, photos, newsletters, etc. Be present, if you can, to answer questions and tell inquirers about the three aims of the Society of St. Francis. Also notify people of meetings. You may wish to share an exhibit with other Episcopal/Anglican religious orders and Christian communities.

### Diocesan newspaper or other diocesan bulletins

Notify the editor of the existence of the Third Order in your diocese. If appropriate send a brochure or press release. An article may be written for the newspaper or bulletin periodically. Once the process is ongoing, you may wish to send the editor notices of retreats or other functions that would interest and include the diocese. Allow ample lead time, as editorial deadlines are strict.

Sample Letter to your bishop about the Third Order

A sample of a letter that might be sent to your bishop is given below. Vary the style and content according to your discretion and knowledge of the bishop in question.

*Date*

*The Right Reverend A. Jones*

*Diocese of (Place)*

*Address*

*Dear Bishop:*

*As members of the Third Order, Province of the Americas, Society of St. Francis, a religious order of the Anglican Communion, we wish to notify you of our existence within the Diocese of \_\_\_\_\_. We meet \_\_\_\_\_ times a year to share in study, fellowship, and prayer, at \_\_\_\_\_.*

*We hope that you will be able to join us sometime when your schedule allows.*

*If we can be of any assistance to you in the diocese, please feel free to call on us.*

*Faithfully yours,*

*Jane A. Smith, Convener*

*Name of fellowship*

*Your address, and phone number*

## **Public Speech and Action**

Public witness, in speech and action for peace and justice, the integrity of creation, and the Church's preferential option for the poor, is a Franciscan charism. Members of the Third Order, Province of the Americas, Society of St. Francis, are encouraged to make such witness, as Christians and Franciscans.

Individuals and groups within the Third Order should take care that their witness is consistent with the Principles of the Third Order.

In making such witness, the principle of subsidiarity applies for authorizing use of the name of the Third Order, Society of St. Francis: e.g., a statement of an individual is on her or his authority and conscience; a statement by a fellowship must be authorized by the fellowship; and a statement by a convocation or region must be authorized by the convocation or region. A statement on behalf of the entire Third Order, Province of the Americas, must be authorized by Chapter. Interprovincial statements should be authorized by the Interprovincial Third Order Chapter.

## **Community Events in Fellowship Life**

### 1. Professions and novicing

A profession without Third Order members present is a little like a wedding with a bride but no groom. The fact that we must make it possible for isolated tertiaries to be professed without benefit of community in attendance should not blind us to the fact that a profession is normally a community event. A person is, after a long and sometimes arduous trial period, finally being allowed to make a vow with life intention to follow our Lord Jesus in the way of St. Francis within the context of the Third Order, a community of fellow Franciscans. If someone has a call to a Franciscan lifestyle but no call to community involvement, that person should, long ago, have realized that he or she belongs in the Associates, not in the Third Order. Tertiaries usually do not live together in community, but every Tertiary has a fundamental commitment to love and support his or her brothers and sisters within the Third Order family. Some can only do so by prayer, but fellowship attendance is the normal practice.

It needs to be understood and taken for granted in every fellowship that professions and admissions to the novitiate are fellowship events. A candidate who wishes to have such an event at a regional convocation or within a different fellowship setting (because of special links there) is expressing a desire for identification with community, and his or her wishes should be respected. Even so, courtesy demands that the plans be cleared with the local fellowship convener. Consult the special booklet entitled "Orders for Admissions and Renewals" (1997) or the Devotional Companion.

#### Considerations on individual preference

The parish Church is the fundamental Christian community. Persons called to a vocation in the Third Order quite rightly retain a deep loyalty and commitment to their local parish and often wish to include the parish family in the special events of their Franciscan life. That is a desire that should be honored.

It is usually inappropriate for a profession or admission to the novitiate to take place at the major Sunday Eucharist of the candidate's parish. Then it becomes a parish event rather than a Third Order event. Exceptions to this general rule should be cleared with the Provincial Chaplain. Remember that your profession should be in the presence of other Tertiaries, since profession is to the community. Sharing this important event with your fellowship is central to your vows.

It also needs to be remembered that a professed member of the Third Order is the right and reasonable person to receive a novice pledge or profession vow. How can you be received into a community by someone who is not a member of that community? For persons isolated from any possibility of fellowship within the Third Order community, we provide the option of being received by any priest of the Church. This option needs to be regarded, however, as a concession to unusual circumstances. It is not normal practice. A member of the First Order who is present at a profession or novicing may appropriately be asked to preach,

celebrate, or give the blessing at the end of the admission service, but a Third Order member in profession should receive the vow and pledge.

Permission for profession is granted by the Provincial Chaplain, who is acting for the Chapter. In other respects, the profession service should be viewed as a major event in a person's life over which the candidate should have control. A professed person receives the vow. The location (in consultation with the convener and subject to the fellowship's convenience) should be the candidate's choice. Special speakers, in or out of the Third Order, are normally the candidate's choice. Special music or soloists should be the candidate's choice. The candidate should be encouraged to invite his or her parish priest and spiritual director – and perhaps will want to ask one of these persons to celebrate the Eucharist. We have a commitment to community, but we remain persons in the eyes of God, and we have the right to express our personalities at the moments in life most significant to us. As convener, provide pastoral direction to ensure the following:

#### Keep the lid on expectations

Every experienced convener knows how difficult it is for those who have sent in their request for profession not to begin planning the event. Please discourage optimism about the speed of the process. Allow up to three months between applications and election to profession. Do not schedule the profession until after the mandate has been received. Legitimate reasons for hurry (such as leaving the locale, imminent surgery, etc.) will be honored by formation directors and by Chapter. A preferred date is not normally a legitimate reason.

#### Balance

Remember that the novitiate is just a good beginning. A profession, on the other hand is a life commitment. Conveners need to maintain a balance in planning celebrations accompanying these events. Pull out all the stops for professions (gifts, champagne, balloons, or whatever suits). Admission to the novitiate is a happy event in the life of the community, but it does not qualify as a major celebration.

## 2. Renewals

Renewals are not an option for the professed; they are required by the Provincial Statutes, Section III.C.5, which reads as follows: "All professed brothers and sisters shall renew their profession annually on or near the Feast of St. Francis. Any professed brother or sister, or if necessary, any available priest, may receive this annual renewal without further mandate."

It is the responsibility of the convener to arrange for the renewal service, which will normally also include renewal of novice pledges. Please use the current "Order for Admissions and Renewals" (1997). Announcement should be made well in advance to give opportunity for revising rules (if necessary). The convener may wish to receive renewals or may designate another professed brother or sister to do so. The person receiving renewals may designate another professed Tertiary (or priest, if no tertiary is available) to receive his or her own renewal.

This is a solemn but happy occasion. Allow a little time to acquaint everyone with the procedure. Identify beforehand the novices who wish to renew their pledges at this time. Encourage people to bring copies of their rules – but someone is sure to forget. A piece of paper or an envelope saying, “This represents my Rule of Life in my file at home” will suffice.

There is a wonderful symbolism in a stack of rules on various kinds of paper piled on the altar: a common way of life offered in all its individual variations to Almighty God!

3. Orders for release

There may be a time when a fellowship will experience the release from profession of one of its members. This is a sad time, but one that requires closure. There are two forms that may be used – one for when the person is present and one for when the person is not present.



## **Organizing a Convocation**

From time to time, your fellowship may be responsible for planning a regional convocation. You may find some of these guidelines helpful – but don't hesitate to be creative!

1. Choose the convocation coordinator(s), preferably one year before the convocation.
2. Select the date and location early. Look into the cost immediately and see if a chapel is available for the celebration of the Eucharist. Don't assume that the chapel can be used. Let the cost and convenience for attendees be your guide to the choice. Convocations generally begin Friday evening and last through Sunday lunch.
3. Invite the convocation presenter by letter, giving some ideas of themes preferred by the convocation group. The presenter may also have suggestions to offer.
4. Decide the format and theme of the convocation, allowing time for silence, meditation, fellowship, Eucharist, healing service, or whatever is desired. Opportunities to rest and relax are desirable also.
5. Secure a list of all the members, inquirers, and friends of all the fellowships as well as those in isolated areas within the convocational area. The conveners should be able to give you a list of members and aspirants, or write to the Provincial Secretary. Also invite Associates, the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, and Secular Franciscans in your area. If there is a question of space, TSSF members should be served first. Send a notice of the date to the Provincial Secretary, Fellowship Coordinator, and the *Franciscan Times*. All TSSF members are welcome to all convocations.
6. Approximately 3-4 months before convocation, formulate the tentative registration form. Consider that airfares are less expensive when arrangements are made weeks in advance. Allow for special diets, health conditions, or other requirements.
7. One to two months before, send out the final registration form to all members within the convocation area. Ask for a deposit (or the full fee if needed).
8. To those who register, send a map and other details necessary to their comfort and travel.
9. Please invite the TSSF Minister Provincial. You may also invite any of the following people.

TSSF Chaplain  
TSSF Assistant Chaplain  
TSSF Formation Directors  
TSSF Fellowship Coordinator  
TSSF Minister General (occasionally)

CSF and/or SSF visitors attend each convocation. The Friar and Sister Visitors plan their annual schedules based on convocation dates provided to them from the TSSF Chapter. Travel expenses for the visitors are budgeted by TSSF. Registration and lodging fees for the visitors are paid from the convocation's own budget. An honorarium is presented to the visitor for any presentation. Chapter pays the expenses for its appointed representatives. The convocation is not responsible for paying expenses of the Minister General. If your convocation wishes to invite a particular Friar or Sister to make a presentation at your convocation, the request should be sent through the Friar or Sister Visitor to avoid confusion.

10. How to decide the cost of the convocation. First determine the retreat center's cost for meals and lodging. You will want to charge participants more than the actual cost of the facility. This extra overhead is to pay for:
  - mailing costs
  - phone calls for planning
  - expenses for program guests
  - extra food (if you have a party)
  - scholarships
  - an initial operation fund for next year's convocation, e.g., deposit for the facility
11. Arrange for the renewal of vows, acceptance of novices, and profession during the Eucharist. Select the professed member who will receive vows. Chapter members who are present should be asked to officiate.
12. Coordinate transportation, music, and photography.
13. At the convocation itself, set up a registration table about a half an hour before guests are to arrive. Keep accurate records of expenses. Give each person a schedule of events. Provide for housekeeping, announcements, and introductions of attendees.
14. Leave about 30 minutes on the final day to evaluate the convocation and to help plan for next year's convocation. At this time, you may wish to select the new coordinator and committee members, and to decide on a theme or range of themes. It is appropriate to invite the Minister Provincial, the Regional Chaplain, and Chapter members to speak briefly to the group at this time or elsewhere in the weekend's activities.
15. Send a brief report of the convocation to the Fellowship Coordinator and the editor of the *Franciscan Times*.

## **Associates of the Society of St. Francis**

Associates of the Society of St. Francis live according to their own personal Rule of Life based on the principles of the Franciscan Life.

You may direct interested persons to write for information to:

Secretary for Associates  
As listed in the Directory

Associates are welcome to attend fellowship meetings. However, they have no voting privileges.

## **Ecumenical Franciscan Relationships**

There is a unique richness in community when fellowships reach out and share with Franciscans from other communions. The possibilities are varied and change somewhat, depending on circumstances, but the planning and work involved result in deeply meaningful opportunities to celebrate the Lord Jesus in our midst and to share together our journey with St. Francis.

Roman Catholic Secular Franciscans (OFS) and Episcopal Third Order Franciscans have shared on many levels in various gatherings across the country as well as on an international level. In some places, our fellowships and Roman Catholic fraternities have shared a meeting together, or joined in a common ministry, while others have planned special joint Franciscan celebrations. In one city, representatives of the fellowship were given a place on the regional council of the Secular Franciscans. Individual ties also enable friendships and offer encouragement and insight within both communities. In all places, these ecumenical ties have been a means of deeper understanding, of both reconciliation and joy.

The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF) has drawn its membership from various denominations and meets on a regular basis. Each community has been a guest of the other at respective Chapter meetings. There is a rich history of sharing between OEF and TSSF.

The Lutheran Franciscans are a new Order with whom we are now in relationship. We send representatives to their Chapter and Convocations and they reciprocate.

Ecumenism is an attitude and a way of life, a tool for living in such a way that understanding can grow and barriers can be overcome. There may be very real differences in viewpoint, in practice, and sometimes in belief, but all of these can become instruments of great richness when individuals come together in love and with a willingness to embrace others where they are, in acceptance and in peace. In that embrace, then, together we can proceed to learn, to know, to rejoice in the Christ within each person, to be instruments of peace and reconciliation within the Body of Christ and to the rest of the world.

A Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity composed of TSSF, OEF and OFS has been formed. They “recognize that all of our Orders understand that our Franciscan vocation proceeds from our relationship with God through Holy Baptism in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” As members of Franciscan orders, they pledge themselves with lifelong intent, to live out their Franciscan vocation in community with their brothers and sisters. They strive for justice and peace among all people and are committed to the integrity of creation and therefore to its protection and restoration.

### **Formation of a New Fellowship**

When three or more professed tertiaries are able to fulfill the responsibilities of a fellowship they shall contact the Fellowship Coordinator concerning their desire and ability to form a fellowship.

The Fellowship Coordinator will provide assistance and guidance in their discernment as to whether they are ready to form a fellowship.

All potential fellowship members shall be committed to the formation of the fellowship.

They shall be prepared to share responsibility. They shall review the Handbook for Conveners to foster awareness of the function of a fellowship.

A roster of potential members names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses and diocesan affiliations shall be submitted to the Fellowship Coordinator and two meetings will be held with reports submitted. The proposed fellowship shall recommend one or more of its professed members to be ratified as convener. A proposed name for the fellowship shall be submitted. A commitment to submit annual reports shall be made.

Following consultation with the Minister Provincial, the fellowship shall be established, name confirmed and the convener will be ratified.







Appendix D  
**RATIFICATION OF CONVENER FORM**

**The Third Order**  
**Province of the Americas**  
**Society of Saint Francis**

Has Ratified

TSSF

AS CONVENER OF \_\_\_\_\_  
FELLOWSHIP

FOR

THE TERM COMMENCING AT FRANCISTIDE 2005

AND CONTINUING UNTIL FRANCISTIDE 2006

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fellowship Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



Appendix E

**SERVICE FOR NEW CONVENERS OR CO-CONVENERS**

To mark the beginning of a new convenership, the following service may be used. The officiant may be the past convener, the Area Chaplain, or any member of the fellowship.

Officiant:

Let the convener(s) of the \_\_\_\_\_ Fellowship of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis come forward.

\_\_\_\_\_, you have been recommended by the fellowship to serve as our convener(s) and have been duly appointed to this office by our Fellowship Coordinator. Do you commit yourself to this work?

Response (individually if there are co-conveners):

I, \_\_\_\_\_, commit myself to the faithful performance of the office of co-convener of the fellowship as art of my work for the spread of God's kingdom and the promotion of the Franciscan way of life.

Officiant:

In the name of the \_\_\_\_\_ Fellowship of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis, I commend you to this work and pledge you our prayers, encouragement, and support.

Let us pray. O God, you have joined to the Society of St Francis a Third Order dedicated to your service. Grant, we pray, that being knit together in fellowship, we, your servants, may glorify your holy name after the example of Saint Francis, and win others to your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

To the prayers of the saints, I commend you.

May our Blessed Lady pray for you.

May Saint Francis who bore the marks of the Crucified, pray for you.

May Saint Clare pray for you.

May Saint Louis and Saint Elizabeth, illustrious saints of the Third Order, pray for you.

And I shall pronounce upon you the blessing which blessed Francis gave to Brother Leo, his companion:

*The Lord bless you and keep you;*

*The Lord show His face to you and have mercy upon you;*

*The Lord turn His countenance toward you and give you peace; my brothers and sisters, the Lord bless you.*

Appendix F

**WELCOMING OF NEW FELLOWSHIP FORM**

**The Third Order**  
**Province of the Americas**  
**Society of Saint Francis**  
**Welcomes the Admission of the**  
**\_\_\_\_\_ Fellowship**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fellowship Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix G  
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