

Approved May 28, 2019

Minutes of Chapter meeting. 4.23.2019. Called to order 8:03. Celso led all in prayer.

Present: Janet Fedders, Celso Franco de Oliveira, Jeff Gollhofer, Verleah Kosloske, Josiah (Jotie) Noel, Millicent Ramcharan, Alison Saichek, Rick Simpson, Peter Stube

1. The minutes of the March meeting were accepted by consensus.
2. Alison presented a 6 month budget report. We are \$2,000 off on donations, but Alison is hopeful that this will correct itself. She says that people have finally realized there is a new post office box for sending in their contributions. Expenses have been slightly reorganized to allow a travel budget for the Minister Provincial to attend Brazilian Chapter. There were many expenses in early April. And she anticipates a flurry of reimbursements in the next few months. All support for other organizations has been paid for the year. We still have the \$1,000 allocated for First Order Visitors to attend convocations. The brothers and sisters have been advised of that. Website improvements this year were not anticipated in the budget, so the \$1,400 for those will just have to be absorbed somewhere. She is preparing a balance sheet for the next Franciscan Times. The Medical Mission Fund has just over \$7,000; the Tom Johnson Fund has \$1,300. The Companions Fund had \$3,500, but there have been expenses against that for pins etc. We are just the caretakers for these 3 Funds. The Central Fund grant money has been sent to Cuba and Brazil. Alison will send out a 7-month total at the end of April. A show of hands provided consensus over this report. Alison was thanked for her work.
3. Janet explained the revamping of the Secretary duties in anticipation of filling the Secretary position at the end of this year. It is split now into 3 parts. We will have an I.T. Guardian (Jeff Bonner), who can help us with mailings and postings etc. And the Directory will have its own Editor (Janet Nail) who will also be responsible for pulling together Hot News. These positions will be "clerks" under the Secretary, in compliance with the Statutes. Janet will send around the description for all to see. The filling of the Secretary position will be initiated in July.
4. Robert Dimmick, secretary-treasurer of the European Province and administrator of the Central Fund, is retiring this summer. Janet showed the book she will inscribe and send to him in thanks for all of his work. She invited other ideas as well.

5. Discussion on Sacred Ecology.

This was led by Jeff Gollhofer (JG). He began by saying that the significance of what we call an emergency cannot be overstated. We need to figure out how to make this our responsibility as Chapter to help the Order strengthen itself. It will take the guidance of Chapter. We have to learn to take a leadership position. Jeff asks how recently has the Order communicated province-wide? What happened before the internet? How do we see ourselves as a larger group.

Liz Peacock said prior to just recently Chapter only met once a year. There might have been contact in between but there wasn't much else. Peter Stube mentioned that the Order had been working in South America, but only in small groups.

Jeff said even the goal of mobilizing on this scale is new. The crisis we are facing is new. Humankind has not experienced this kind of crisis before. This kind of crisis facing the world and lives will be disorienting and disheartening.

Jeff said that if you look at the Three Aims of the Order (Make our Lord known and loved everywhere, Spread a spirit of love and harmony, Live simply), that these, whenever they were written, they are right on the money. They are who we are as a Franciscan Order. We don't have to add something. These are the essential pieces of who we are. Given the times, we need to find a way to make who we are available and better known. We need to learn to be a global Order, intentionally.

We all come together for meetings, but we need to learn how to have a meeting differently. To talk about being a Franciscan. The question Jeff says he asks himself can apply to the Order: "Would St. Francis look at my life and say – Yes, Jeff, you've got it?" What we need to do is to imagine St. Francis is talking to us in Chapter meeting.

Jeff went on to talk about Fellowships. Fellowships are part of being a Franciscan. The 3 goals of Contemplation, Community and Missional Action are really important. We will need to strengthen the fellowships and through them the Order. This is important because of the politics and economics of the times we are in.

Starting with Contemplation. It's vital to see things from the inside-out. The web of life is alive and not anthropocentric. We get there through contemplation. Increasingly, we are living in a world that is more object-like, less alive. Fellowships can help strengthen us.

Also JPIC. It is important too. Jeff asks: How much do Franciscans do this (referring to contemplation and going deeper). Janet describes her trips to visit Fellowships and how she is seeing that Fellowships are doing exactly that. Peter Stube says, Yes, a lot. Inviting the entire Order to engage in this is deeply Franciscan. This will move us to a larger view, to see things that God views and values.

Jeff: There have always been challenges (plagues, inquisition etc) but now it is much different.

Jeff asks Rick Simpson how we can focus more on how we communicate this so that it becomes energizing.

Rick speaks of the Franciscan Tradition, that Francis wrote letters to the emperor to save the song-birds. Intervening is in the model of Francis. We also need prayerful work, perhaps work sheets for Fellowships to use. There is so much information out there. Part of the electronic communication would be to access the URL's of science.

Rick also spoke of the cultural memory many Scandianvians (including his own family) have of the Little Ice Age, and how that climate change affected huge numbers of people. The Norwegians called it The Great Hunger. There is cultural memory on this. He added that we do have stories we can tell of the devastation of climate change.

Jeff: Telling the Francis story from our own experience is more than “news” or making a “statement”. Rick Simpson added that we will want to put things into a spiritual context to move to action.

Jeff: The world feels more de-personalized now. There is a need to become a real person, from a Franciscan perspective. For example, he related that if he is giving a talk and the audience knows that he is talking on a deeper level, they listen. Young people don’t want a sales job. Francis was recovering what it was to be a human being. We need to go there too.

In the church generally there is a new financial model, almost of “selling stuff”. People are trying to convince us of something a lot. New reports that come out get tied to money. There is a corporate mentality. In the church there is little training, for example, on mentoring of clergy once they are newly ordained. There needs to be more face to face training. Very few activists too are trained in community organization any more. We need to focus our attention on what would Francis do.

Let’s share our stories. That’s how Franciscans gather.

Discussion followed about JPIC. How does it work? What does it do in our Order?

Verleah said that the previous JPIC animator was Joyce Wilding and she was frustrated as she tried to do things but they didn’t go anywhere (with Chapter, but otherwise too). JPIC has gotten sidelined with the whole Solidarity Tables initiative and is now looking at who they are and what they can do.

Organizationally, they have not taken things to Fellowships. But members of JPIC, of course, have presented their own individual Fellowships with the work they are doing. If the Fellowship had one of the JPIC people, then they were getting fed.

Jeff: What about Justice issues in Brazil? Verleah: Brazil needs to take its own lead, in the sense that they know best what is needed there.

Jeff: JPIC came out of the WCC. There are innate problems with it because of the many regions/cultures/theologies involved. There is a need to rethink how JPIC could work as an organization, in Brazil, in Canada, in the U.S. etc.

Peter Stube: You get into questions where you meet theologies that do not ponder the working of the Holy Spirit. Catholics expressed dissatisfaction that JPIC has too much complexity to function together.

Jeff: The efforts around unity globally are good. We are walking the walk (as Franciscans), but we’re missing something – a regional something. Taking into account the idiosyncracies of different regions. Justice issues need to arise out of the Local and into the larger picture. Within the U.S. for example, we are not kidding ourselves in thinking we are more than one country.

Jeff asks Peter about JPIC and missional action. Can JPIC be used to help Fellowships discern their missional action better. Would there be a possibility of a contemplative side. We will need contemplative groups. He asked if we had such. Janet replied that John Rebstock is actually pulling together a group of contemplatives, to be used for mentoring. Jeff says everyone who does Spiritual Direction will need help on how this works from a Franciscan point of view.

All regions will have their distinctive needs. The corporate world is exploiting the Local. We need to “get back in our bodies again”. We’ve given Linda King Watkins, JPIC animator, a task she cannot possibly do. Jeff asks” What would the JPIC voice look like coming out of Newfoundland.”

Celso: In Brazil we live in a continental country. Communication is very difficult. Very difficult, even in Rio. What gives Celso hope is the retreat that is coming up in Cuba. The Theme is Walking with Francis and Clare, under the same call. All Franciscans in Cuba are being encouraged to be integrated within the Diocese. The Bishop Griselda will be attending the retreat.

Jeff Gollhofer: This will be increasingly true around the world. The church is looking for hope and we need to be sure that when someone asks, we have something to offer. We need to be Franciscans where we live and tell that story.

Celso. A week ago there was heavy rain in Rio. It was Thursday, the day of the Last Supper. He visited the site where two buildings collapsed and 25 people were killed. He stayed there and eventually renewed his ordination vows in that place, in that terrible place. And Saturday he did foot-washing in the street.

Jotie Noel. If we are going to make ourselves available, we’ll need to have sources of accurate local information. In Canada, corporations are providing measures that are inaccurate. Locally, we will need good accurate information that we can provide and then move to missional action. He hopes that this work will mobilize Canadian Franciscans to a common identity.

Jeff: We have the Global and we have the Local, but political systems are regional. There needs to be an intermediate organizational capacity. For example, ecologists talk about and show eco-regions. You can see them on a topo map. The church still thinks in terms of political boundaries; the indigenous see beyond those to regions.

Jotie: The reality of life in Canada is that we need Franciscan ecology. Fisheries in Newfoundland are being destroyed and he imagines those fisheries in the U.S., south of Newfoundland, are also being affected. It crosses borders.

Jeff: Getting back to JPIC, maybe we need many JPICs throughout the province. JPIC could send representatives to Fellowships. We could have JPIC visitors to Fellowships.

Peter Stube: In his experience, each Fellowship tends to have a certain focus, some on action, some on contemplation, but they should all have all three: contemplation, community and missional action, in some kind of balance.

Jotie Noel: We talk a lot about mission in Canada. There are the “marks of mission” Anglicans will be familiar with that term.

Jeff: How can we become stronger? How can we get closer to the ecological ground? Where do we live? A question to ask: Is my work related to where I live?

Peter Stube. There is a question circulating in churches – if your church closed today, would anyone miss it?

Jeff: Linda King Watkins says her bishop has people walk the Appalachian Train with him. How can we do this?

Janet wrapped things up, asking everyone to email (hit Reply All) as we move forward with this. She said we might want to call an extra Chapter meeting to further discuss things. She spoke of the Zone of Genius represented in Chapter, and how it is no coincidence that this group has been called together. She asked for Chapter to provide leadership in this area. She closed with a description of her Good Friday experience of realizing that she crucified Christ, that she crucifies Christ every time she does not do what is needed where she lives.

Meeting ended at 9:17