

# FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 130

Easteride 2019

## Reflecting on 35 Years of OEF



Hey Siblings,

The month of Nov. (was) our birthday month. We are 35 years old. We have come a long way in 35 years. From a small group of 3 or so, to where we are today.

But let's back up a bit. As we spend time with family and friends over the Thanksgiving Holiday, we give thanks for many blessings. This is a Thanksgiving I think many of us are thankful to be alive, maybe healthy, have shelter, supportive friends and basic needs met. Let's us also think about the blessings we receive and give to each other within our Order.

I am thankful that Dale had a vision and a calling to begin this Franciscan journey.

By the way, do you remember where you were 35 years ago? What was your journey looking like at that time? For me, in 1983 I was trying to finish college, just moved to a new town with friends who were starting seminary, we all were from a college where we were living in Christian households and experiencing living in community and beginning to cross Francis' path. It then took a couple more years to find Dale and this small band of Franciscans.

From the many Chapters we have had over the years there have been many funny stories, powerful worship experiences, challenging spiritual formation discussions, difficult decisions made, awesome one-on-one conversations and small groups, and always a feeling of coming home. A home where everyone is welcome and affirmed. We all find a way to worship and pray together, sing together, laugh together and just be together. We are a little awkward at times but it works out.

Has there always been harmony? Well no. There have been disagreements. We are different people with different ideas and experiences. But we do have each other. We do have Francis and Clare as our siblings to look to.

We do have Franciscan values that guide us. We do have the love of Christ to surround us. We all have stories about our journey with this band of folks. I encourage you to share those stories with one another in whatever method/form you wish. Please forward this post to those who do not use OEF-Chat, or email by snail mail or phone calls or text.

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Reflecting on 35 Years... continued

Stories are powerful and we have stories to share. Just think of all the stories we will have in another 35 years.

Begin the fun!!!  
Peace and all good, Markie

\* \* \* \* \*

Ah, beloved OEF. Happy 35th birthday! November is my birthday month as well. And, shockingly, it seems I must have already been in my 20s when the OEF was born. :)

I am constantly proclaiming my love for and reliance upon the "mutual support and accountability" that OEF provides. And yet today, as I ponder the transitions I am in the midst of, I want to also lift up our little Order's ongoing witness to the dual nature of the Franciscan charism, with some of us leaning toward **action** while others of us lean toward **contemplation**. I suspect I am much more of a contemplative at heart, though I have given myself repeatedly to action as I have sought to respond to the needs of the world.

Siblings and friends, please pray for me as I strive to shift the balance over the next couple months a little more toward the contemplative side. In fact, if anyone wants to pick up Robert Sardello's book on *Heartfulness* (see link below) and begin to practice a little heartfulness meditation, perhaps a small group of us can organize some way to support one another in that discipline.

Here's the web address:  
<https://www.amazon.com/Heartfulness-Pocket-Robert-Sardello/dp/0692850562/>

I encourage anyone who -- after exploring a bit online about what this heartfulness practice of Sardello's is all about -- feels a call to this practice to pick up a copy of Sardello's book. Then, perhaps after the first of the year, we can find a way to connect periodically to support one another in the practice.

Peace and All Good, Nancy

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MONTH TO US/OEF!!  
FROM THE VOSLERS

1983 was a major transition year — the year that I/we stepped out of our 14 years of “living in community” all around the world with the Chicago-based Ecumenical Institute/Institute of Cultural Affairs. These religious/secular twin missional organizations were staffed by Members of "The Order: Ecumenical" comprised of volunteer families, us and our daughter among them, trained to work, worship, eat, play and study together. The O:E had evolved a

curriculum of shared images and methods towards a renewal of local churches and their communities through disciplined engagement in America’s cities, towns, and parishes across the US & Canada, and then overseas as well.

These families were invited to accept assignments throughout the U.S. and the world, for very short or very long periods of time. So had we done. In 1983, Anne Nancy was well into her studies towards a PhD in Social Work at Virginia Commonwealth University, and I received a call back to the congregation in Cincinnati I had been serving 14 years before. So began the “commuter form” of our marriage over the next 6 years. 15 years would go by before She met a fellow faculty person in Social Work at Washington that colleague was John George [Br. Juniper] Robertson. I drove Anne Nancy to North Dakota for her first Chapter Meeting with the OEF — and Francis beckoned. Praise God for all the events, discernments, and “callings” that brought us together to be the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

Michael and Anne Nancy V.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thank you, Sr. Markie, for starting this! In 1983, I was beginning my fourth year of seminary teaching at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. I was working on my first published article on the gospel of John.

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Reflecting on 35 Years... continued

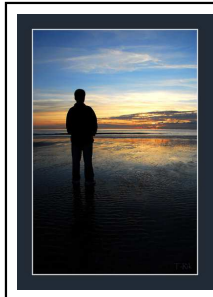
So, I was well started on the career of an academic and scholar. I was also probably already feeling something tugging at me inside, reminding me that this was not all that I desired, remembering the contemplative or mystical readings and practices I'd discovered 15 years earlier, perhaps picking up Thomas Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation* again and having a sense of a further calling. The following year, I'm pretty sure, is when I bought a *Book of Common Prayer* and began working out a pattern of morning and evening prayer. It would be 10 years after that until I stumbled onto the OEF. Many people are looking for something Franciscan to belong to when they find this little order. I was looking for an order I could belong to when I found these Franciscans! So, I add my gratitude to Dale and the others who accepted God's inspiration to start "cooking up" the OEF in 1983.

Let me say one other thing. Since I am only able to be very marginally involved in the OEF, I am also grateful that my wife and I are able to belong to not one but two local congregations where we can find shared visions of what it means to both believe in Jesus and follow him, to engage in worship and discipleship with equal dedication. In other words, and please forgive the paradoxical sound of this, I am grateful to have places other than the OEF to be my spiritual homes as well. Yet on those rare occasions when I am able to come to Chapter/Convocation, I also find, as Markie says, a profound sense of coming home, of being where God made me to be. For that I am grateful beyond words.

Peace and blessing,  
David Rensberger

\* \* \* \* \*

Hello, All!



I've been percolating on this for over a week! It's nice to recall where we have been, and look to where we are going. In 1983, I was a transfer student to Eastern Illinois University-- my first time living away from home! Home was 4 hours away, and I was fortunate enough to find

friends who shared my values. I searched for a church, but it wasn't at the top of my list, so I drifted. It wasn't until I left college that I found a permanent church home in the UCC. God was still influential in those first years, though! I found a friend who introduced me to Christian contemporary music. Music is always the first language of my soul. Later, I had a Catholic roommate who encouraged me to experience a Koinonia retreat. It knocked my socks off! From then on, God had a firm grip on me, and I continued to search. Several years later, well into my counseling career, I got involved in a retreat movement called Tres Dias. However, these folks were determined to "save" me from being a mediocre Christian. I tried to share a guided meditation with them, and they decided it was an evil exercise. When they became more aggressive and tried to force me to believe as they did, I had to leave. Fortunately, my minister at the time was Gordon Grant, a member of OEF. He advised me to separate myself from this abusive group and look into OEF saying, "I know you, and I believe you are a Franciscan!" Well, he was right! I missed him greatly when he left the Order and disappeared. I professed with OEF in 2002, and never looked back! I am so grateful for this small band of siblings! As others have said, coming together with this group is like coming home.

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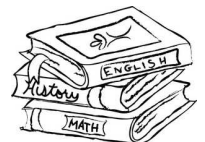


## OEF History Project



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

Thanks,  
Betty Lou



Reflecting on 35 Years... continued

I have only missed one Chapter since I began, and that was due to surgery! I wouldn't miss it by choice in a million years!

Peace and All Good, Sister Chris

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Brothers and Sisters, It is encouraging to hear reflections on 35 years of OEF. Forty years ago I didn't know squat (a quite descriptive adjective:) about the spiritual life and how and even 'why' to grow closer to the love and knowledge of God; and yet was drawn, pulled, prodded in that direction. About that time, (or was it recommended to me by an early Formation Counselor?), I studied Foster's CELEBRATION OF DISCIPLINE. Discipline was not an appealing word to me who has experienced it in violent forms; yet I digested Foster's words and, yes, even celebrated them; all with the help of budding religious community. Essential to my religious re-education was learning the faith stories of sisters and brothers on the journey...and also having the requirements of Formation counselors/now, Formation partners, and Spiritual Directors. All together they have shattered, helped sweep up the pieces, re-thrown this lump of clay (North Dakota dirt!), all to the good of my soul and the human condition. Now, everything in my life; from my laundry practices, to what I drive, to our budget, to what I eat, to when and how and I pray, to my part-time work and discretionary time, even how I breathe sometimes; is all influenced by our Franciscan Principles practiced in Community. All of life is a CELEBRATION due to OEF, even fatigue and suffering with those who suffer; and especially when I dance the Hora, Miserlou, Butterfly, South-side Shuffle and Chicken dance:). Life, this one and the next, is a Banquet and you are all there.

Peace and Joy, Dale Carmen OEF



Markie presented an interesting challenge that I have mulled over since she posted her request. My own journey with the Order has been "the best of times, the worst of times", but more like family than anything I experienced for most of my life.



I came to explore the Order in 1988 out of a response to the romantic portrayal of Francis' idealism in the famous "Brother Sun, Sister Moon" film that I had seen several years earlier, and because an Episcopal priest friend of mine was exploring a relationship with the TSSF. I was hungry for a community, having lived in community as a college student and living alongside a radical community in Pasadena during my seminary days in Pasadena, CA. I have always felt that call, that insight from first century Christianity, that our faith cannot be lived out fully outside of community. The OEF offered a semblance of that community, close enough for me to move forward and make profession in 1990. Profession and 'coming out' occurred at the same Chapter in Cleveland, OH. Spiritual honesty was required of me. Psychological honesty was demanded by the Spirit. And so I was empowered by the community to take 2 powerful steps in one night. Life as I knew it suddenly exploded in so many ways!

I recently came across these words written by the theologian Karl Barth written in 1917: "We must once and for all give up trying to be self-made individuals. Let us cease preaching by ourselves, being sensible by our selves, improving the world by ourselves. God wants to do everything, certainly through us and with us and never without us; but our participation in what he does must naturally originate and grow out of his power, not ours. O, how we could then speak with one another. For whatever does not grow out of God produces smoke, not fire." (as quoted in "Watch for the Light", Plough Publishing, 2001, page 139)

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Reflecting on 35 Years... continued

So much invaluable spiritual development has happened in my life because of our community that I cannot describe it all here. Suffice it to say that this little brother would probably be nothing but dust were it not for the love expressed so dearly and honestly by the fellowship we call OEF. I have much to learn about living in this community. It's often a dance between living in the truth of our life together and living beside our life together. May God's love continue to bind our hearts and souls together as we embrace the Christ Jesus in each and every one, to become more than a collection of individuals interested in Francis and Clare, but to genuinely be the Body of Christ in the world, the Light, Salt and Voice of the voiceless.

your little brother, whether you like it or not!  
(giggling) David Ian Wirick Delacroix, OEF

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Brother David, Markie, Brothers and Sisters,

(My reflections are novelesque and loooong. You may want to grab a cup of coffee and pull up a chair!)



I too have been pondering the 35 years remarks shared by our dear foundress Dale Carmen. I am fascinated to hear the ways God has drawn us, from differing denominations, from differing geographic locations, from different places and seasons of life...all toward this little order, with humble Francis and Clare at Its center. I am beyond grateful. I must tell you that having grown up in a very fundamentalist church, the appeal of OEF's welcoming and affirming stance to ALL...ANY who sought to follow in the Little Way, was remarkable to me. Always being a student of the Bible, as well as many "monk" theologians, I felt the very crux of the Christ-following life was to emulate the love expressed by Jesus. The more I studied His life and movement through the world, the more I was convinced that the "us/them," "we are right and you are wrong" mentality was a man made

construct. The more I embraced unconditional love and grace, the more I found myself at odds with church leadership. Enter OEF.

I was inexplicably drawn to anything Franciscan (love and care of the earth, serving the poor, "embracing the leper," etc.) When I was 10, I had a vision of myself walking the countryside in a brown robe. What did an Assembly of God girl know of brown-robed Franciscans?! It looked more like Jesus than anything I had seen in my Assembly Of God upbringing. A community church minister said to me (when I was telling him of my discomfort in such a legalistic place)... "You'll never flourish until you are in a place where there is grace. A place where you are totally and completely accepted and loved."

This set me on a path to find such a church...and such a community. I knew OEF said they welcomed ALL, and ALL were able to minister and serve (yes! Even women!) I began the formation process, and in the infinite wisdom of...someone, Dale? Markie? I was given David Delacroix as my Formation Companion. Could they have POSSIBLY CHOSEN ANYONE MORE DIFFERENT THAN ME? I think not.

I wrestled and struggled through the whole "gay thing", and kept coming back to "the primary directive of Jesus was "Love God, love people." I HAD to find a way to love this guy...and others with whom I had zero understanding of their life and struggle.

I went to my first OEF Chapter. I met David (I'm thinking not too long after he had "come out" and professed)...and I saw a love in him for Jesus I had NEVER seen in anyone in my church. Or anyone in my life for that matter! Grace and gratitude and a great compassion for EVERYONE. Even legalists. Even fundamentalists. (Although he had been terribly hurt and wounded by them...still such love!) That was it. I loved him. I loved his heart. I loved his goofy, childlike exuberance in leading us in an "action song" A Peach of A Savior. I had NEVER sang an "action song" as a grown up. It was liberating!



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Reflecting on 35 Years... continued

I felt David and Dale and Nancy and Petra and Bob and Jacobus and Shoshanah, others of you whom I've come to know and love, had fallen head over heels in love with Jesus as Francis had. I wanted that. I wanted to be a part of that. I cannot tell you how I've grown during my time with OEF. My church, Grace community, was given no choice but to love me and embrace me when I became a Franciscan,



because they said, "You're seeking to follow Jesus as Francis and Clare followed Him. You've been nothing but loving and gracious to us all. How can we (not) ACCEPT that?!"

My recent joy expressed here on the List in Grace's

changing the language of their constitution to be more inclusive (OEF has taught me that being welcoming is not enough. To be AFFIRMING of ALL is what's truly needed.) I feel a prophetic calling to be one who (having been in this church for over 20 years now) holds them to actually "live out" those changes in service to our community and to one another.

I recently was given "opportunity" to lovingly show them they were NOT being true to their statements about not just "allowing" women in leadership...(I actually abhor that language and told them so) and then took a 4 month sabbatical to help them see what life in the Body is like when we are not ALL WELCOMED to the table. And now, the constitution's language change. Wow.

I've seen my Peace loving brothers and sisters of OEF "duke it out" online and in person (Michael Vosler comes to mind) to help inquirers and nay-sayers and fundamentalists and others, understand that WELCOMING AND AFFIRMING is not just who we SAY we are, it IS OUR DNA. Sister Dale made sure of it in our original documents. ALL who love Francis and



Clare, ALL who love Jesus, are welcomed and affirmed.

I am convinced our little OEF community is, with all of her foibles, with all of our missteps and mistakes, THE most "Christian" community I've ever had the privilege to be a part of. Now, having been a professed member for over 10 years, I am thrilled to see how far we've come and who we've become in the Franciscan community. And in the world.

I say this and mean it with my whole heart: I SO LOVE YOU ALL! And I am beyond grateful for OEF and the "safe space" it has become. A space that allows us all to be who we were created to be. So, so very thankful.

With You All In Solidarity, Paula Clare

\* \* \* \* \*

The recent posts regarding OEF's 35th anniversary drew me to these famous words of Thomas Merton, who died 50 years ago this week. They are from say, "The Time of the End is Time of No Room," published in *Raids on the Unspeakable*:



*Into this world, this demented inn, in which there is absolutely no room for Him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because He cannot be at home in it, because He is out of place in it, and yet He must be in it, His place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who do not belong, who are rejected by power because they are regarded as weak, those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, tortured, exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in this world.*

It seems to me that this is something essential to the Franciscan charism, and perhaps to that of *Ecumenical* Franciscans in particular, to become a place for those who have no room elsewhere, and to be willing to be those who have no room, like the homeless infant Jesus. As our planetary inn becomes ever more demented, such places become ever more necessary!

Peace and blessing,  
David Rensberger





# Farewell, Dear Brother Romero



Greg passed peacefully from this life at 7AM, Thursday, February 14th, 2019. Siblings respond:

Brother Romero will be missed greatly. He was a wonderful example of humility and love. May the angels and saints meet you and present you to God. Rest in heavenly peace.

--Br, Joseph Thomas



Our collective description of Brother Romero here (& so far) includes: David R. - a blessing; Keith - humility and love; Petra - one who nudged us in the right direction, and will...; Sam - a strong spiritual presence; Kiara Mychal - faithful servant; Nancy - seat saver;

To these I'll add: Courageous - more needs to be told of Brother Romero's participation in the long — for him, life-long — struggle for racial and economic justice; then add - his willingness to place himself among us a contributing minority presence, - his living in real poverty for certainly most of his life, some of it as one homeless, - his love of the street and its people. He's still part of us! Joining our 8 sisters and brothers in the OEF Book of Life to make 9.... I'm somewhere in those dots, as are all of us!

Save us a seat, Brother Romero! - michael v.

(Continued on page 8)

May you go into your rest upheld by arms of love. I will miss your bodily presence as Br. Romero. May you continue to accompany us, nudging us always in the right direction, as we continue our sojourn into the challenging years ahead. We need you. --Sr. Petra Aleah

I only had the pleasure to be with him at one chapter but even then he had a strong spiritual presence. I will miss him. --Br. Sam

No doubt, God will give a welcoming, loving hug and say to Br. Greg, "My faithful servant, well done." Of all days, Valentine's Day, when our Brother Romero passes, reaffirms God's Love and promises made for us how Jesus and the Cross conquers death. Blessings along the way home, Br. Romero. Keep us, your family and friends down here, in your prayers until we all meet again. --Sr. Kiara Mychal

Romero, save us a seat.  
--Sr. Nancy



## Hear Ye, Hear Ye!

Submissions for the Post-Chapter\* 2019 issue of "Fiddlesticks" will be accepted immediately.

**Deadline for submissions is July 15, 2019.**

Send submissions to Sister Chris at  
capoef@solarus.biz

or snail-mail to:

Christine Petersen, OEF  
853 Norwich Ct.  
Nekoosa, WI 54457



**Thank you!**

*\*Note: to make article deadlines a little easier, "Fiddlesticks" will now be distributed in February, May, August and November.*



Farewell, Dear Brother... continued

Thanks, Michael. I was especially fond of Br. Romero. I found in him a snuggly (good hugs), supportive, non-judgmental brother -- one like everyone should have and needs from time to time.  
Peace, Betty Lou



My prayers are with all who have known and love Brother Romero and with his spirit as he ascends into the eternal and blessed embrace of God our Father and into the heavenly presence of Christ our Lord. R.I.P. our good brother.

Pax et Bonum,  
Bro. Craig Robert

Brother Romero,  
May you rise into the strong and tender arms of God, may you rest in peace and may you surround us always in the Great Cloud of Witnesses.  
Peace and All Good! ~ shoshanah

PS: And like the others say:  
Yes, save us a seat. :)

And let us be mindful of Br. Romero's friends among the Friends in New England, who will no doubt be sad over his departure as well. May God hold them in light.

Peace and blessing,  
David Rensberger



Dear Sibbs,

Brother Romero's Sister (Artlee) has asked for those of us who knew him to relay stories to her (on Caring bridge) or on her Facebook page (Artlee Williams) about her brother. She didn't know much about his Quaker life nor about his life in OEF. She would like to share stories with the family.

I didn't know Brother Romero well, but had met him and spoke with him at Chapter several times over the years. I wrote the following for his sister. If any of you can add stories or more detail about his time with us, please feel free to chime in on the Caring Bridge or FB website. Artlee will be monitoring it for awhile.

"Your brother found us at Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, and like so many of us, he felt he had truly "come home." As brother Romero (the name he took when he professed to OEF), he was a constant source of humility and information regarding a population some of us knew little of...homelessness and abject poverty. Brother Romero was continually inviting us to turn our gaze toward those who suffer, live on the streets, and those who had little access to help or hope from govt. agencies. His love of "justice for all" was ever present and evident in many of his Rails of Justice rants. We considered his a prophetic voice reminding us all that those pushed to the margins of society are in very good company...as they have been joined by the likes of Jesus, Francis and Clare.

He was always challenging us to go beyond what's expected or required...to reach toward generosity.

Our dear friend and brother will be sorely missed...and I smile when I think of him hanging out with Jesus and Francis





Farewell, Dear Brother... continued

in heaven, having great discussions about justice and the importance and dignity of every human soul. Save us a seat, dear friend! We will be with you again soon!

Paula Clare, OEF

\* \* \* \* \*

February 14, 2019

*Journal entry by Katie Bond — on Caring Bridge:*

Dear family and F(f)riends of Greg:

Greg passed peacefully from this life at 7AM, Thursday, February 14th, 2019.

Thank you to everyone who visited so often and offered support to Greg, especially over the last weeks of his life. He was surrounded by your love and caring.



I will post details here of funeral/memorial when they are made.

Blessings,  
Katie

\* \* \* \* \*

March 29, 2019

*Journal entry by Katie Bond — on Caring Bridge:*

Hello, all:

The memorial service for our Friend, Greg Williams, will be on Sunday, June 16th from 2-4p at Friends Meeting at Cambridge, 5 Longfellow Park in Cambridge, MA. More details to follow

as time gets closer.

Looking forward to gathering with all his family and friends to celebrate and remember Greg.

--Katie Bond



**Romero, Our Brother**  
By Sr. Shoshanah Kay, OEF

Romero, our brother . . .  
Of dark chocolate skin and woolly white hair  
Of sauntering gait and warm embrace

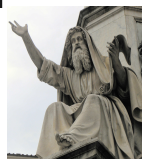
Our brother too . . .  
Of tenacious attention and engaging intention  
Of honest challenge and gentle wit  
Lifting up heroes; honoring innocents  
Naming our history; calling dark into Light.

Romero, our brother . . .  
Of deep Catholic roots  
Of strong Quaker branches  
With Franciscan sap flowing freely throughout  
No car, no cash. No less for not having  
Of simple means and giving spirit  
Lending an ear; making a call  
Coming by bus or coming by train  
Making the trek to commune with us all.



Romero, our brother . . .  
Pushy insistent bold gentle soul  
A bit of a rebel -- and so proudly so --  
A Franciscan fool? Quite cheerfully so!  
Creative; Determined;  
A light and a spark -- with a fire in your heart

Romero, our brother . . .  
An eloquent writer  
A witness for justice; a speaker of truth  
Stubborn in faith; unyielding in hope  
Building bridges, not walls  
Seeking ever more Light



Romero, our brother . . .  
Thanks be to God for your presence among us  
Singing and praying and harmonica-playing  
Romero, our brother . . . Pray for us all  
Now and forever  
Pray for us all . . . . .



# Words from The Council



It's getting close to Chapter/Convocation and there are some information and reminders to consider. At this Chapter/Convocation we will be celebrating 35 years together. Come with stories to share about past gatherings. We will be spending time sharing together and hearing from Dale, Ron and Charles Maxwell about our earliest days and those days before we were us.

This year we are selecting the next Council. Please read the statutes regarding the process. These can be found on the website and there are many copies floating around the Order. We will be spending most of Fri. in this process.

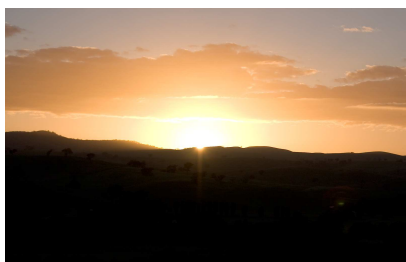
We will be having morning prayers (7:30am) and evening prayers (5:30pm) each day and evening worship services at 7:30pm on Thurs., Fri. and Sat. night. Remember Sat. night worship service is our Rite of Passage service. On Sun. morning our worship service will be at 8:45am. There will also be a vespers service on Wed. night at 8:30pm for anyone who arrives early.

Our Social gatherings will happen at about 9pm each evening. Sat. night will be our annual Junipter Cup.

Our business meeting will only be on Fri. morning. This meeting will also include a review of the selection process for Council. Everyone reporting please give us the highlights.

We are working on possible Thurs. morning community service activities. Watch on the OEF-Chat for details when those are confirm. Please spread the news when the details come out.

There will be opportunity to hear from several of our people and our guests through out our time together. There will be times we will be in small groups. And there is time to nap,



walk, catch up with people, sit, pray, and just be together.

Like last year we are working on being more green. Please consider bringing a travel cup/mug with you. Some will be provided. Only a few paper copies of the schedule will be made and a few will be posted around the center in key locations.

There will be plenty of games, puzzles and stress relief objects in our main meeting room. If you have an instrument you are willing to bring, please consider bringing it along. This would great in worship but more so in our social gatherings. There are wonderful paths to walk and places to sit. Let's hope for good weather.

Our snacks will be tasty and some will be healthy. Some will be sugar-free, some gluten-free. All will be awesome. Plenty of fresh coffee and tea for our early risers. If you have any requests please let Markie know.

Chapter/Convocation is many things to us. There are things we need to do as an organization but there are also things we want to do to be in community. Taking the time to be together, to listen to one another and to encourage one another. To share our stories, our hopes, our dreams, our struggles, our concerns, our needs, we come together to be community. I hope all of us are looking forward to being together in June.





## Fellowship News



### PART 2, APRIL 2019 FELLOWSHIPS OVERVIEW FROM THE MISSISSIPPI TO HAWAII

To finish what we started in the last issue of Fiddlesticks, we now stand hip-deep in the great Mississippi River by the St. Louis Arch, Gateway to the West. Extending our arms in both directions, East & West, we take in....

#### THE US CENTRAL PRAIRIE AREA

Sister Paula Clare is our lone presence in Central and Southern Illinois, with long-time Friend of the Order Karen Medina just to her north. With proximity to St. Louis and a good bridge to cross, she links to **The Gateway Fellowship** inclusive of Missouri, and we saw the picture of Steve Bowman, Paula Clare, Bob Blattner, Jacoba Ketchum, and Jonathan Savage as they gathered in St. Louis.

Staying with the River, but way further north, we come to **the Great Lakes Lighthouse Fellowship**, which gathers OEF Siblings from Northern Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota with a long reach over to North Dakota to include Sister Dale Carmen, because she's been willing to do the travel, thus gathering with Craig Robert Miller, Dale Blesz, John Son-of-Syvert, Joseph Thomas Downey, Christine Petersen, and Kiara Mychal Hart. As we think about and pray for this area we keep a mindfulness to include Western Ontario and the Manitoba Province of Canada.

Moving west, we extend that Canadian mindfulness to Saskatchewan then move south to what may one day be a Fellowship to include North & South Dakota and Montana, with Sister Dale Carmen in the center of it ...as the Spirit moves.

Further south we come to Brother Ron Nuss-Warren living at the base of Scott's Bluff in Nebraska, Dennis Johnson over in Jackson, Wyoming, both with some proximity to Colorado siblings John Gaudreau and Sharon Inglis. There are the seeds of a Fellowship in that vast geography, but not yet coalesced.

#### THE CENTRAL PLAINS AREA

Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Arkansas await an evolving configuration of the rise of the Ecumenical Franciscan charism both within that cluster of states and what might emerge on its edges to the north; to the east, to the south, and to the west. Brother Neal Dunnigan in Kingfisher, OK (temporarily in Ireland), looks both to the east with Brother Sam Loudenslager in Bigelow, Arkansas, and both have looked to the south where the

**Blue Bonnets** continue to pulse life into our collective body as an Order. Neal has also been actively participating local Franciscan interactions with TSSF and OSF colleagues — *a worthy consideration for all of us who are isolated as OEFers*, And let those in strong Fellowship areas consider invitations to potentially isolated colleagues from other Franciscan Orders. We grow deeper into our charism as we walk with those moved by the same memories and references on this journey of Franciscan Spirit.

To **The Blue Bonnets Fellowship** we go, centered on the energies of Sister Katie Cook in Waco, and Sister Alyssa Claire Magdalena over in Huntsville, now with the accompaniment of Billie Stofleth of The Woodlands and now Professed Louann O'Bannion in Austin. Sister Denise Magnuson is in College Station, midway between them. There's a long history of **The Blue Bonnets Fellowship**. May the Spirit Holy continue to move among them.

Go west and we pass over New Mexico for the present to behold our collective life in Arizona with Sister Lone Parsons in the northeast Phoenix Metro area (Peoria!), Brother Maseo Gray in Phoenix, and Brother Coyote Nabhan down in Patagonia. We look forward to hearing of a meet-up and the naming of a Fellowship — we suggest "the Saguaro Fellowship."

North of Arizona is currently barren territory for our little Order. We register very light flickers of interest in Utah, but nothing in Nevada or Idaho. We'll trust the winds of the Ecumenical Franciscan charism will blow there as well. And further north, we exercise our awareness of Alberta, Canada.

As we move towards the coast, we commit to being aware of British Columbia and enter into the realm of **the Juniper Fellowship**, the founding Fellowship on the west coast, now consisting of everything from Eureka, CA to Vancouver. Spokane, WA is the east-most city with a longtime Friend of the Order Debra Masters. The heart of our Washington State presence is Brother Stephan Gerhardt in Seattle, and Sister Jul Baker in Olympia. Between them has been some interest bubbling in Tacoma.

We go south to Wilsonville, Oregon, and are greeted by Sister Sophie Dale, the lone remnant of the original Juniper Fellowship configuration. Then a short hop southeast to Salem and Brother Jahiro Yeshua LeFevre. Those four form the core of the Juniper Fellowship.



(Continued on page 12)



Fellowship News... continued

Then way down the coast to the San Francisco Bay and the iconic Golden Gate Bridge. From 2 Professed to now 6 Professed, the **Golden Gate Fellowship** has Anne Nancy & Michael Vosler in the North Bay, Brother Sophia Longino in the City, Karen & Kathy Lawler in the Sacramento Valley, and Sister Betty Lou in the Monterey Bay area, the early Franciscan Mission town, San Juan Bautista. PLUS the blessed presence of Brother Steve Jerbi in Encino, northwest of Los Angeles, and Sister Doris Telles in the mountains of the San Bernardino National Forest. This coming year we hope to call the **Southern California Fellowship** into being to better include Brother Brandon Robertson in San Diego, and some other folks still exploring.

Nothing in Mexico yet, or south of there. But hop to Hawaii and a seed might be growing... We can anticipate additional convenings of our **Online Fellowships**, with Brother Neal coordinating. Signal him if you're interested. Sibling Jacoba continues to gather our sharing of **"Ministries in the Church and the World,"** allowing us to discern shared passions and focus for engagement, and revealing unique and surprising leadings of the Holy Spirit.

So ends the OEF Fellowships Tour of the World. The hope is that we all might be grounded in a Fellowship of our choosing. All Fellowship Gatherings are open — go where you can when you can, but let them know you're coming.

- Brother Michael V., for the Fellowships Team  
Siblings Neal Dunnigan (getting Irish & Irish), Sam Loudenslager, Fred Jaxheimer, Jacoba Ketchum, and Markie Oliver from the OEF Council

\* \* \* \* \*

Br. Reg and Sr. Helen, our two kiwis, gathered with the Wellington Area TSSF group on Saturday 16th March. Naturally the horrendous shootings at the mosques in Christchurch the previous day were at the forefront of our minds. We began the day with a period of quiet prayer for all involved in the tragedy, the victims, the families, the Muslim Community, police, ambulance and hospital staff and for all New Zealanders who are so shocked that anything like this could happen here. Then, still in a somber mood we moved into a celebration of the Eucharist. After a potluck lunch, we moved into a time of study. We have been reading **Looking to St Francis** by John Bohrer and Joseph Stoutzenberger together, and today we discussed the last chapter - Joining the Gospel Story. Helen/Kiwi

Four of us gathered on April Fool's Day to ponder together what is truly foolish to a Franciscan. David Rensberger, Trey Morrison and James Schwarzlose along with TSSF Associate Sara Turpin met for rather deep and intriguing conversation as we supped together on April 1<sup>st</sup> in North Atlanta. (There would have been five but for "Dove," the car, breaking down and keeping TSSF Associate, Gayle Roberts, from joining us - except in the Spirit and by text. We rejoiced to learn that "Dove" was healed on a Franciscan budget!) Our discussion was prayerful and wide-ranging, touching on modern wise ones such as Richard Rohr (latest work: The Universal Christ) and Ian Cron (Chasing Francis) and then wound around to being summed up by the words of an older (but no less modern) wise one, Thomas à Kempis. Brother David recalled these words from Book 3, Chapter 3 of *Imitation of Christ*:

**The voice of Christ:** *My child, I will teach you now the way of peace and true liberty. Seek, child, to do the will of others rather than your own. Always choose to have less rather than more. Look always for the last place and seek to be beneath all others. Always wish and pray that the will of God be fully carried out in you. Behold, such will enter into the realm of peace and rest.*

We concluded with some agreement that that is the foolishness we seek in following Francis and Clare, and departed assured of the peace and rest that is to come for all fools.

pace e bene, Br. James  
\* \* \* \* \*

From April 3, 2019:

'Tis Wednesday prior to the gathering of our colleagues of the great **Northeast Fellowship** in New London, CT, on this Saturday, the 6th, in this month of April, 2019... the Season of Lent with Palm & Passion Sunday & Holy Week fast approaching. We pray for safe travel, for deep Franciscan Fellowship, for joy and blessing for those who gather. On May 4th, we have a 2nd Northeast gathering in Pennsylvania with Fred Jaxheimer hosting the Tri-State Fellowship in Sugarloaf. And on Sat. May 25th, the Golden Gate Fellowship will gather near the SF Bay. This is a reset of a planned April date towards which Brother Brendan Shaffer set his intention to join us, but contingencies abounded for the rest of us. Any Table Fellowships to share from Atlanta? Indianapolis? Ireland? New Zealand? and the infamous Other? Peace to all!

- michael v. for the Fellowships Team



## Greetings & Gnawings from Brother Rat



It's been a busy Spring trying to prepare for the various outdoor ministries here in the Northwest. As I will not be here for the Rhododendron Rehabilitation program this year I was asked to see to the religious



training of the daisies and the miniature roses. I must say religious instruction for Perennials and Annuals is quite a challenge when all

they've ever heard is something about from dust we came and dust we shall go. Suffice it to say, I've had many questions from my students about compost, mulch, reincarnation and of course the biggie... "what does resurrection mean for us?" On the bright side my students were delighted with the idea that God made them specifically for the purpose of creating color. And I thought teaching communion to a cat was difficult! Sheesh! These kids have a question for everything!

Needless to say, I've been spending a lot of my free time exploring new forms of meditation to keep my chakras in order so that I don't have a melt down or pass out from mental exhaustion.

I am currently taking instruction in a meditation



form called the "Holy Cow." This particular meditation focuses on self-control, in other words, focusing on the aroma and the color of Blue Cheese while being mindful as to how it pairs with a wine rather than mindlessly gobbling down the cheese and slurping the wine directly from the bottle. I have been spending a lot of time meditating in the Ashram with Blue Cheese and Wine, and the results have been very life giving.

Would love to chat and squeak more but there's work to be done and Chapter's right around the corner!

See you there!

Br. Rat



### An Important Reminder

**Reminder! Nancy Menning is the OEF Treasurer. Contributions can be made by sending a check (made out to "Order of Ecumenical Franciscans") to Nancy at:**

**Order of Ecumenical Franciscans  
Nancy Menning, Treasurer  
521 N Aurora St.  
Ithaca, NY 14850.**





*Fiddlesticks*  
 c/o Christine Petersen, OEF  
 853 Norwich Ct.  
 Nekeosa, WI 54457  
 U.S.A.



## A Little Humor



*In the midst of all the dreadful seriousness of this moment, here are some jokes that were posted in an online spirituality group. All clean, nothing to offend.*

- Ever stop to think, and forget to start again?
- If you try to fail, and succeed, which have you done?
- What if there were no hypothetical questions?
- My life has a superb cast, but I can't figure out the plot.
- No sense being pessimistic. It wouldn't work anyway.
- I used to have a handle on life, but it broke.
- My reality check bounced.

Peace and blessing,  
 David Rensberger, Associate of OEF

## From The Newsletter of Pastor Steve Garnas-Holmes...

Begin with gratitude  
 for all you have received, that you see and that you do not see.  
 Let your gratitude grow into trust  
 that you are included in a great wonder; and entrust yourself to  
 the grace you are given.

Let your trust blossom into compassion  
 for all those who are also part of this oneness who have  
 been excluded, used or targeted.

Let your compassion flourish into solidarity,  
 knowing you are one with those who suffer and that their  
 wholeness is part of yours.

Let your solidarity bear fruit in justice,  
 working for freedom and fullness of life for all, against all  
 evil and oppression.

And when you are most challenged  
 by the forces of injustice, most weary and discouraged,  
 Return to gratitude  
 that you are guided, accompanied, empowered and saved;  
 and entrust yourself to the undying love of God.

- Submitted by Br. David Delacroix, OEF

