

New Council Formation Program Guide

BACKGROUND

Welcome to the New Council Formation Program put together by members of Blessed Junipero Serra Region in Northern California/Northern Nevada who were happy to share it with other Regions. Therefore the Five Franciscan Martyrs Region adapted and revised it for use within our region. This program was initiated because there seems to be a universal and real need for newly elected fraternity council members to understand how a council works and what the responsibilities are.

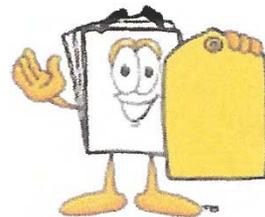
There are two parts to the program: Part 1: Introduction to Servant Leadership and Part 2: The Nuts and Bolts of Being a Council. The whole program can be viewed at one sitting or done on separate days. We encourage you to pause the DVD for questions, clarification and discussion at any time. There will be specific times in part 2 when we request you pause the DVD to read pages in your packets and have discussion.

PREPARATION

Please make sure that everyone participating has a copy of the packet that accompanies this DVD program. We encourage you to keep the pages in this packet for future reference.

The following pages should be in the packet that is given to all participants:

- * The True Meaning of Community by M. Scott Peck
- * Respectful Communication Guidelines! Mutual Invitation
- * Local Fraternity Council Guidelines and Responsibilities
- * Individual Office Responsibilities (Each person receives only the page for their position)
- * Fraternity Gatherings
- * Annual Calendar
- * Formation Overview
- * Pathway to profession - visual chart
- * OFS Affiliate Orientation program
- * Review of Attendance
- * Membership Status
- * Excused Members
- * Guidelines for Cells
- * Structure of the OFS
- * Websites and Acronyms
- * Record Keeping
- * Renewal of Commitment
- * Care and Feeding of Councils



RUNNING THE PROGRAM

If you'd like to begin the program by singing *The Servant Song* with us, click on that icon in the main menu first.



At this point there is an OPTIONAL activity that takes about 20 minutes. This is an especially good activity if council members don't know each other well.

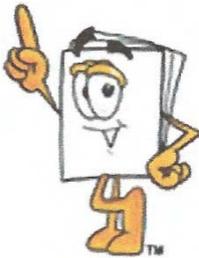
1-Do a partner interview.

Pair up and ask each other about such things as basic family/living information; a BRIEF summary of how the person was called to the OFS; and one's vision as a leader of the fraternity. (limit interviews to 4 min each = 8 min total)

2- Introduce your partner to the group. Let each person introduce their partner (no more than 2 minutes each).

Now go to the main menu of the DVD and click on "Introduction to Servant Leadership." There are two sheets in the packet that are used at the end of this section. (*The True Meaning of Community* by M. Scott Peck; and *Respectful Communication Guidelines/ Mutual Invitation*).

You will need to return to the main menu to begin part 2: "The Nuts and Bolts of Being a Council." The remaining papers in the packet will be used in this section.



THE “NUTS AND BOLTS” OF BEING A COUNCIL



The True Meaning of Community

Highlights from
A Different Drummer
Community Making and Peace
by M. Scott Peck

Basic Definition:

A group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their **masks** of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment to rejoice together, mourn together, and to delight in each other, make others' conditions our own.

Community **is** something more than the sum of its parts, its individual members.

Community **is**, and must be, inclusive.

- Commitment, the willingness to coexist, **is** crucial.
- Community **is** a group that has learned to transcend its individual differences.
- Appreciate differences, differences are celebrated as gifts.
- Decisions in a genuine community are arrived at through consensus.

A community **is** realistic.

- Individuals are free to speak their minds **and** buck the trend.
- Incorporating the dark and the light, the sacred and the profane, the sorrow and the joy, the glory and the mud, so its conclusions are well rounded.

A community **is** contemplative.

- A community **is** humble and realistic because it **is** contemplative.

A community **is** a safe place.

- The result of a safe community is that old wounds are healed, old resentments forgiven, old resistances overcome—fear is replaced by hope.
- Human beings have within them a natural yearning and **thrust** toward health and wholeness and holiness.
- A group of humans becomes healing **and** converting only **after** its members have learned to stop trying to heal and convert.

A group that can fight gracefully.

- In a genuine community there are no sides.
- Conflict can **be** resolved without physical or emotional bloodshed.

A group of all leaders.

- An essential characteristic of community **is** a total decentralization of authority.
- A group of all leaders.
- There is a flow of leadership.

Community **is** a spirit.

- The spirit of true community is the spirit of peace.

RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

R = take Responsibility for what you say and feel
without blaming others

E = use EMPATHETIC listening

S = be SENSITIVE to differences in communication styles

P = PONDER what you hear and feel before you speak

E = EXAMINE your own assumptions and perceptions

C = keep CONFIDENTIALITY

T = TRUST ambiguity because we are NOT here to
debate who is right or wrong.

Mutual Invitation

*In order to ensure that everyone who wants to share **has** the opportunity to speak, we will proceed in the following way:*

The leader or a designated person will share first. After that person has spoken, he or she then invites another to share. Who you invite does not need to be the person next to you. After the next person has spoken, that person is given the privilege to invite another to share. If you have something to say but are not ready yet, say "pass for now" and then invite another to share. You will be invited again later. If you don't want to say anything, simply say "pass" and proceed to invite another to share.

*We will do this until everyone **has** been invited*

Local Fraternity Council Guidelines and Responsibilities

Based, in part, on Articles 50-52 of the General Constitution

Local Fraternity Council

- ◆ Promote the activities necessary for fostering fraternal life, for improving the human, Christian, and Franciscan formation of its members and for sustaining their witness and commitment in the world
- ◆ Make concrete and courageous choices, appropriate for the situation of the fraternity, from among the numerous activities possible in the field of the apostolate
- ◆ Decide on the acceptance and admission to profession of new brothers and sisters—requires a council secret vote
- ◆ Establish a fraternal dialog with members when there are difficulties and adopt consequent measures—requires council secret vote
- ◆ Receive the request for withdrawal and decide on the suspension of a member from the fraternity—requires council secret vote
- ◆ Decide on the establishment of sections or groups in conformity with the Constitutions and the Statutes
- ◆ Decide how to budget available funds and, in general, deliberate on matters concerning financial management and the economic affairs of the fraternity—requires council vote
- ◆ Assign duties to the councilors and to the other professed members
- ◆ Request from the superiors of the First Order and the TOR candidates for spiritual assistants
- ◆ Perform such other duties as are required by these Constitutions or which are necessary to carry out its proper purposes
- ◆ Be responsible to assure that the fair share is paid to the region in a timely manner before distributing money to any of your other apostolates

Minister

- ◆ Make sure that the directions and the decisions of the council are put into practice
- ◆ Oversee that all council members are fulfilling their assigned duties
- ◆ Keep the council and fraternity informed about activities and information from the regional fraternity and insure that the region is informed about changes
- ◆ Communication link back and forth between the region through your Area Councilor and the local fraternity. (The local Fraternity Ministers should consider their Area Councilor as a resource person and someone to whom they can turn for help and suggestions in time of need.)
- ◆ Call, preside at, and direct the meetings of the fraternity and council
- ◆ Minister must request, every three years, the elective chapter of the fraternity, after discussion with the council: 1) Be sure member's 'Transfer Papers' are complete before nominating them, 2) Be sure all members are aware of the responsibilities of each office as outlined in Constitution, 3) Note next to any nominee's name if this is his/her 3rd term in the same office, 4) Send roster, with profession dates, and possible slate to Presider & Friar Witness at least 2 weeks in advance of the election
- ◆ Prepare the annual report to be sent to the Regional Minister and the Regional Treasurer after it has been approved by the council of the fraternity
- ◆ Represent the fraternity in all its relations with ecclesiastical and civil authorities, when the fraternity acquires a juridical personality in the civil order, the minister becomes, when possible, its legal representative
- ◆ Request, with the consent of the council, the pastoral and fraternal visits, at least once every three years
- ◆ Provide, annually, an accurate head count to the Regional Minister and the Regional Treasurer ending on December 31st of that year
- ◆ Make sure updates to the directory are returned in a timely manner to the Data Base Manager
- ◆ Perform such other duties as are required by these Constitutions or which are necessary to carry out its proper purposes
- ◆ Update and maintain the Minister's Binder containing: your agendas, annual regional reports, results of the visitation, copies of your advertizing, job descriptions for each council member, retreats that were offered, and fraternity rosters and, upon leaving the office, pass it on to the new minister

Vice Minister

- ◆ Collaborate with and support the minister in carrying out his or her specific duties
- ◆ Exercise all functions assigned by the council
- ◆ Take the place of the minister in both duties and responsibilities in case of absence or temporary impediment
- ◆ Assume the functions of the minister when the office remains vacant
- ◆ Update and maintain the Vice-Minister's Binder and, upon leaving the office, pass it on to the new Vice Minister

Treasurer

- ◆ Keep accurate records of each receipt in the appropriate register, with the date received, and the name of the contributor
- ◆ Record in the same register the items of expense, specifying the date and the purpose, in conformity with the directions of the fraternity council
- ◆ Submit a financial report and the bank account register for approval monthly or at regular intervals as decided upon by the council
- ◆ Submit the annual financial report to the Regional Minister and Treasurer, at the end of the year
- ◆ Deposit all funds of the fraternity in their bank account, keep an accurate ledger
- ◆ Pay out money as required and voted on by the council, keep an accurate ledger
- ◆ Upon request, provide individual members with a statement of annual contributions for tax purposes
- ◆ Send the assessed fair share to the Regional Treasurer in total preferably before February 28th of each year and before giving money to any other apostolate.
- ◆ Keep a copy of, and update if necessary, the fraternity's Tax ID
- ◆ Update and maintain the Treasurer's Binder and, upon leaving the office, pass it on to the new treasurer

Secretary

- ◆ Compile the official minutes of the council and also of the fraternity (if it is the fraternity practice) and any general notes about gatherings and assure that they are sent to other fraternity council members
- ◆ See to the updating and preservation of the records and registers, noting admissions, professions, deaths, withdrawals, and transfers from the fraternity
- ◆ Maintain and update fraternity register with names, addresses, phone numbers and emails of all members
- ◆ Maintain a confidential file for each fraternity member
- ◆ Provide for the communication of the more important facts to the various levels and, if appropriate, to provide for their dissemination through the mass media
- ◆ Keep attendance records of fraternity meetings
- ◆ Assist the minister in sending announcements of upcoming meetings or activities
- ◆ Assist the council with general communication
- ◆ Update and maintain the Secretary's Binder and, upon leaving the office, pass it on to the new secretary

Formation Director

- ◆ Coordinate, with the help of all the other council members, the formation program of the fraternity and be sure each member takes a turn at being the moderator (not teacher or theologian) so that everyone, when divided in groups of 3 or 4, gets a chance to speak and leaves feeling inspired, fulfilled, and happy to be a Franciscan
- ◆ Along with the formation team, instruct and enliven the inquirers during the time of initiation, the candidates during the period of initial formation, and the newly professed
- ◆ Make recommendations to the council after doing the interviews at the First Contact, Orientation, Inquiry and Candidacy prior to profession, concerning the suitability of the candidate for a commitment to live according to the Rule
- ◆ Work with the Spiritual Assistant in leading the fraternity formation team
- ◆ Keep written records of all the participation in the initial formation program for each person
- ◆ Update and maintain the Formation Director's Binder and manual, and upon leaving the office, pass them on to the new Formation Director
- ◆ Coordinate Area Professions with the Regional Formation Director so the date may be placed on the regional calendar thus giving other fraternities the opportunity to share in the profession and the Franciscan celebration

Councilors

- ◆ A fraternity may elect a councilor to strengthen the relationship between members of a fraternity and assist the council, when deemed necessary due to language barriers, distance, size of a fraternity, or other needs both administrative and pastoral in nature
- ◆ Collaborate with the council in determining areas of need within the fraternity, and follow through on jobs assigned
- ◆ Hold voting privileges and are accountable for all decisions made by the fraternity council
- ◆ Maintain accurate and organized records of all communication in regards to the fraternity members they serve
- ◆ Keep notations or a short summary of important conversations or actions in a file for future reference
- ◆ Maintain a Councilor's Binder, and upon leaving, pass it on to the new councilor
- ◆ No councilor should stay on the council in the same position for more than 9 years because this causes the fraternity to stagnate (The attitude becomes: If it works, why change it?) and it also causes everyone to rely on that one person which destroys the true meaning of 'fraternity'



Other Helpful Advice for Councilors:

The Fraternity Council makes ALL the decisions at Council Meetings; support each other at Fraternity Gatherings. The Minister *inspires and animates* both the Council & Fraternity gatherings.

Read the book, "Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership" thoughtfully and often. It contains a good deal of useful information. Give everyone on the council a copy and assign a few pages each month then discuss what impressed you. Be sure everyone speaks.

Know every member of your fraternity by name and by their strengths & weaknesses.

Give each a responsibility accordingly so they feel they are vital to the fraternity.

There are many societies in the Church which both pray and do good works. Both the Knights of Columbus and the Council of Catholic Women do that. Franciscans do MORE! *We inspire each other* to live better lives! The Minister and Council must be exceptionally careful to treat all members with respect and love - Christ lives in all! - and the members will be aware of it.

As leaders, you must *keep the monthly gatherings positive and inspiring*. Apologize rather than offend... "I may have misunderstood or made a mistake" are good phrases, then go to next item on agenda. Never argue or complain, even if you are correct. Keep the gathering in a positive tone.

You will not always make popular decisions. Thus, don't expect everyone to love you all the time. You must do what the Council believes is right and then convey this to the members... with love and concern. Give a reason for the decision.

Communicate often with the individual members. Asking for volunteers at a gathering might glean one or two, if any at all but, if you phone them and personally ask them to do something - they will usually respond positively. Circumstances permitting, attend all the functions that the Council decides to put forth. That shows you think they are important and they will follow your lead.

Once you are a leader, others can read through you and know if you are doing your best and if your Franciscan promises are important to you. If something else is more important in your life - it will show. On the other hand, you will not *always* succeed. Try not to focus on the disappointments; look ahead to the possibilities of attaining the goals: both the current and the long-term ones. Remain open to the "promptings" of the Holy Spirit. You can do nothing - God will do it through you if you allow Him!

Lastly, it is important that you replenish your own spiritual and fraternal life. Take advantage of any retreats so you can spend quality time with God. Also take advantage of the minister gatherings to replenish your fraternal life by sharing your problems, tasks, questions, etc. with the others who may have experienced the same things. If nothing else, we can listen to each other and empathize! We need God. We need each other because God is in us.

IDEAS for OUTREACH



1. Place an ad in Church Bulletin on monthly basis informing of upcoming gathering. Change the icon and first line each month. Examples: Are you looking for a deeper meaning in your life? God wants you!
2. Keep pamphlets of the OFS available at Church entrance. Change both the pamphlet and the color of the paper annually.
3. Speak about the OFS at all the Masses.
4. Speak about the OFS to the various groups: CCW, K of C, Legion of Mary, etc.
5. Speak to the RCIA once they are accepted into the church. Give them a Congratulations card, a fraternity pamphlet and a small book on St. Francis.
6. Hold profession during a regular Sunday Mass or join another fraternity for a celebration.
7. Invite parish to say Prayers for the Unborn on Jan 22. Explain and use the crown rosary.
8. Have special Masses on August 2 for Portiuncula Indulgence, October 3 for OFS deceased, feasts of St. Elizabeth or St. Louis, our patrons, etc. and invite the parish to a free continental breakfast afterward. Have brochures, etc. available.
9. Wear the TAU cross and you fraternity name tag each time you perform a ministry such as lecturing, distributing communion, helping in the food pantry or bingo, etc.
10. Hold annual party for Christmas or at Beach and invite your family and all your friends.
11. Ask to pray the Liturgy of the Hours before or after Mass everyday or on certain days. Lead the Stations of the Cross during Lent or the Crown Rosary during May or October in your parish. Always tell them you are the OFS, etc. before you begin.
12. Attend a later Mass as a group then go to lunch together. Remember to wear the Tau.
13. Have a pot luck and then do Lectio Divina at someone's home. Invite your friends.
14. Sponsor a retreat.
15. Show a movie ("Brother Sun, Sister Moon" or "The Way") and serve popcorn and soda. Start a discussion on the movie.

SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER
FIVE FRANCISCAN MARTYRS REGION
IDEAS for MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

To foster a feeling of belonging and to assist with the many responsibilities of a fraternity listed below are a few duty ideas that can be disseminated to the members and written in the roster by their name.

1. Of course, each council member may have their office listed by his/her name
2. Send Birthday Cards
3. Design Anniversary of Profession Cards – either distribute at gathering or mail
4. Infirmarian is someone who calls or visits the sick and reports to the fraternity
5. Sends Get Well Cards, like a sunshine Ministry (hand made if possible)
6. Librarian can bring several books and periodically give a short synopsis
7. Historian
8. Poet
9. JPIC Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation – write an article or update the group of diocesan events such as the Leaven Conference, etc. at each gathering
10. Prayer Ministry maintains a book. Members call or email their prayer requests and these are read monthly during the Gathering. Members pray for everyone who is listed in the book
11. Telephone Relay – Call all those who do not have computers, email, etc. With important information
12. Newsletter Editor
13. Hospitality - calls to remind members that they are doing hospitality that month
14. Distributing prayers, song sheets, Liturgy of the Hours, before and after each Gathering
15. Cantor – someone who chooses the songs and intones them for the group
16. Fundraiser
17. Photographer and/or Album Keeper (1 or 2 members) Someone who takes pictures of various events and puts them in an album with annotations with the names, dates, type of events, etc.
18. Roster – Someone keeps the roster updated and distributes it to the members twice yearly

The entire council may help match the member with the responsibility but it would be best if the Minister called or approached the member on an individual, personal basis and asked if they would be willing to take on this responsibility because you and the council feel he/she is best suited and talented to accomplish this task.

Five Franciscan Martyrs Region

The Fraternity Gathering



Fraternity Meetings

A meeting generally refers to those times when the fraternity council comes together to deal with the business of facilitating the activities of the local fraternity.

Fraternity Gatherings

A gathering is when the fraternity comes together in community to pray together; to explore, through ongoing formation, the spirit of Francis and Clare and the Franciscan way of life; and for sharing and support. Article 22 of the SFO Rule calls for the fraternity gathering to be “a visible sign of the Church, a community of love. It should be a privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation, and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.”

General Elements of a Fraternity Gathering

Prayer

Prayer at a fraternity gathering can take a variety of forms, the precise form is not important. What is important is that the fraternity spends time in community prayer. The most common form is the Divine Office: The Liturgy of the Hours.

Ongoing Formation

Ongoing formation occurs at each fraternity gathering and involves all members of the fraternity – inquirers, candidates, visitors, and professed. Initial formation takes place at a time separate from the fraternity gathering. The content of the ongoing formation is open to a variety of topics, but whatever the topic, it should be related to the Franciscan charism. Ongoing formation is an opportunity, through dialogue, for the brothers and sisters to explore and further enrich their Franciscan way of life.

Business

Business should be a very small part of the fraternity gathering; usually it would entail the council reporting back to the fraternity at-large. The only need for minutes would be to record a decision made by the entire fraternity, and these would be an addendum to the council minutes. Many business items can be shared with the fraternity through the fraternity newsletter.

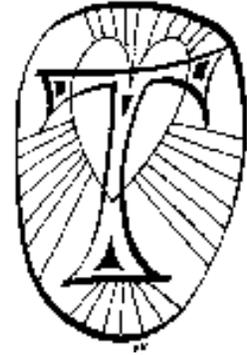
Social Time

Social time is a very important part of each fraternity gathering. This is the time when Franciscan brothers and sisters informally and joyfully are present to each other. This time is key to the formation of a community of love. Often it is the time when true sharing occurs – sharing food as well as sharing stories and ideas. As a community the Franciscan Spirit grows.

Annual Calendar

Month	Fraternity Gathering Activity	Other Activities
January		
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		

Formation in the Secular Franciscan Order



Formation is the broad term we use when we speak of the process of fostering the overall spiritual growth and development of the vocation of potential members and professed members of the Secular Franciscan Order. Especially as it is understood from the Franciscan perspective, formation is an encounter with the Lord. It begins with the call of God and the response of the individual person in answering that call with a decision to walk with Saint Francis in the footsteps of the poor and crucified Christ as His disciple under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is a continuous process of growth and conversion involving the whole of a person's life in the radical living of the Gospel within the context of fraternity. It is a dynamic process of growth in which the person opens their heart to the Gospel in their daily life and opens themselves to full conversion in following Jesus Christ.

The formation of Secular Franciscans can be spoken of in terms of initial formation and on-going formation. **Initial formation** deals with the process of becoming a Secular Franciscan while **on-going formation** refers to the continuing process of spiritual support for professed members. Formation is a life-long process for Secular Franciscans.

Formation, whether initial or on going, concerns itself with the overall development of the Franciscan person. We can speak of formation in terms three dimensions: **the human, the Christian and the Franciscan**. All three of these dimensions should be present and reflected in a balanced and well-planned fraternity formation process.

The human dimension is reflected in relation to the individual, the community and to the world. As regards the individual, this dimension of formation consists in coming to know oneself and accepting oneself, through growth in freedom and responsibility, in developing oneself physically, psychologically, morally, spiritually and socially. It includes development of balance emotionally and affectively; it involves sexual integration and growth, honesty and loyalty, joyfulness and a sense of humor. As regards the human dimension of community, formation leads the individual to be able to relate well with others, the ability to communicate and deal with conflict, develop a spirit of cooperation and to develop the sense of openness and flexibility. In terms of the human dimension in relation to the world, formation should lead the individual to develop the ability to "read the signs of the times" and develop a sense of solidarity with the poor and marginalized.

The Christian dimension of formation is reflected both in relation to God and in relation to the Church and the world. Formation should develop one's sense of gratitude to God, one's on-going conversion and one's life of faith and hope. It should promote growth in unconditional love and the seeking of the will of God in all things. With regard to one's relation to the Church and the world, formation should develop one's sense of God's presence in the world; it should promote knowledge of the Catholic faith, and a love for the Catholic Church. It should promote a missionary and ecumenical spirit and the pursuit of justice and peace.

With regard to the Franciscan dimension of formation, in relationship with God, formation should promote the following of the poor and humble Christ through a radical living of the Gospel, by means of a life of penance and lived in the spirit of prayer and devotion. With reference to the fraternity, Franciscan formation should develop a love for the brotherhood/sisterhood and a love and understanding for each brother and sister, it should call one to fraternal service especially to the elderly and sick members. It should promote fraternal obedience to one another through the overcoming of one's egoism, one's own will and the forces that block the building up of the fraternity. It should develop a willingness to work with one's own hands and promote participation in community prayer and liturgy. Finally, in relation to

the Church and the world, the Franciscan dimension of formation should promote a love for the Church and for loving obedience to the Church's ministers, a desire for evangelization and mission, a prophetic spirit, an embrace of the option for the poor, a commitment to reconciliation and forgiveness and respect for nature and the environment.

Initial formation is a process, not a program. That is to say, there should be no rigidly definite time frames but instead should be somewhat fluid. The process should be adjusted to the needs of the individual in formation. Broadly, it should respect a gradual process experienced in several stages that mark a person's growth and gradual entrance into the fraternity. Broadly defined, these periods are:

- **Orientation**—a period of at least 3 months followed by:
Ritual of Welcoming

- **Inquiry**—a period of at least 6 months followed by:
Ritual of Acceptance into Candidacy

- **Candidacy**—a period of at least 18 months followed by:
Ritual of Commitment (which is of a permanent nature)

(Optionally, depending on a person's readiness, Temporary Commitment may be made for one year and renewed up to three times after which Permanent Commitment is made.)

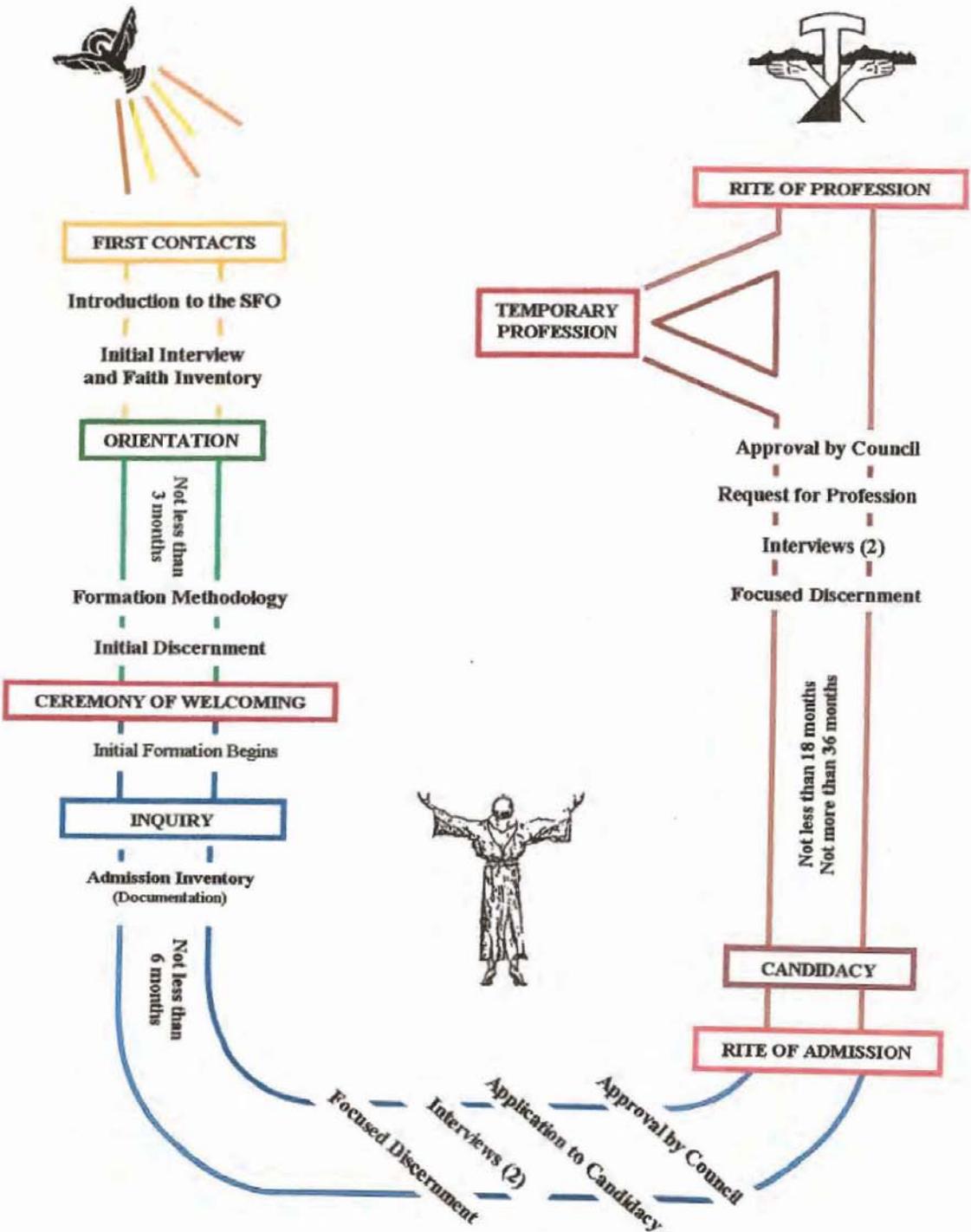
During these periods of formation, the individual follows a curriculum that introduces him or her to the history, theology and spirituality of Franciscanism. They follow a personal daily regimen of prayer and study and meet regularly with a group of fellow candidates for study, dialogue and prayer. Franciscan ministerial/apostolic experiences should also be a part of initial formation that gives the individual a sense of the Franciscan apostolate and an opportunity for group sharing discussion and dialogue.

The individual in formation is the most important agent in this entire process. They themselves are responsible for their own growth as adults within the overall formation process. In addition, the fraternity spiritual assistant, the fraternity director of formation, the fraternity council and its professed membership all have a role to play in the formation process. Finally, it is the Holy Spirit who is the *Agent par excellence*, of the journey of formation, a journey leading to commitment to the Franciscan way of life.

On-going (or permanent) formation is that period of formation that follows initial formation and permanent commitment to the Rule and Life of the Secular Franciscan Order. Its purpose is to continue the development of the Franciscan vocation in the life of the individual Secular Franciscan. Franciscanism is a life journey, it is not an individual achievement and cannot be marked by "an arrival." We are always on a pilgrimage to the Father following the way of the Lord Jesus in the manner of St Francis. This journey requires a continuous process of support in the movement towards full maturity in Christ and commitment to the Gospel way. It needs continuous nurture of a critical consciousness—the Franciscan vision. It demands regular and constant updating-- a continuous rediscovery of the poor and crucified Christ in the daily experiences of one's life through prayerful reflection, dialogue and support in fraternity.

Ron Pihokker, sfo, Regional Director of Formation,
Our Lady of the Angels Regional Fraternity

PATHWAY TO PROFESSION



Proposed SFO Affiliate Orientation Plan-- (referenced authority:see General Constitutions article 53.5 & 103.1 and NAFRA Statutes Article 18# 13)

Process

- Before proceeding with a request for affiliate status, read pages 13-25 in "*Praying with Francis of Assisi*", the section "Is praying with Francis for you?" and the overview on Francis and Franciscan Spirituality.
- An interested individual makes a written request to the local fraternity minister and is interviewed by a member of the local fraternity council
Submits letter requesting affiliate status to the local minister.
- A sponsor (a professed SFO or SFO affiliate) is assigned and orientation materials are provided.
- Should a person in affiliate status seek to become a professed member of the SFO, then the requirements of the formal formation program supersede all parts of the affiliate orientation plan. Affiliation orientation does not shorten or alter the norms of the Formation Program of the SFO.
- Note that at the beginning of affiliate orientation the local fraternity minister and assigned sponsor must clearly advise that the affiliate, once approved, has no juridical bond, voice (right to vote & hold office), or official status within the SFO

Orientation

- The sponsor and affiliate in process meet monthly to complete 12 sessions from the one of the suggested resources.
-
- Con-currently with beginning the 12 sessions, the person seeking affiliate status is presented and asked to read some selections on Franciscan Spirituality
-
- With recommendations by the sponsor and local minister, the local council approves the affiliate.
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- Once approved, the initial affiliation is made for a period of two years and commences with simple welcoming in the context of a fraternity social gathering, (meeting, pot-luck, picnic, but not a Mass or a Rite), and a simple certificate of affiliation is presented.
- An additional medal of St. Francis may be presented, but not the Tau or Tau jewelry, (which are reserved for the members of the Order).

Ongoing

- The affiliate must express a desire to remain as an affiliate and make a written request for renewal every 2 years.
- If approved, a renewal ceremony occurs, similar to the initial welcoming.
- Affiliate continues to grow through prayer, study, and immersion into the life of the local fraternity.

REVIEW OF ATTENDANCE

The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order

Article 22...*The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.*

Article 23... *Profession by its nature is a permanent commitment.*

Members who find themselves in particular difficulties should discuss their problems with the council in fraternal dialogue. Withdrawal or permanent dismissal Order, if necessary, is an act of the fraternity council according to the norm of the constitutions.

1. As part of the formation process as well as during on-going formation, the need of attending fraternity gatherings as a way of participating in the life of the fraternity needs to be emphasized.
2. Following the National Statutes and the General Constitutions, when the need arises, a sister or brother of the fraternity should request to be excused by discussing the reasons with the Council. An Excused Form stating pertinent reasons for such a request must be submitted to the Fraternity Council. If the member is ill or cannot meet with the Council, the Minister or delegate should attempt to meet with the brother or sister and/or send the required Excused Status Form to be completed and returned to the Council for approval/disapproval.
3. All communications regarding this matter are confidential and need to be kept on file and noted in the council minutes.
4. It must be made clear to those excused that they must continue their commitment to the fraternity to the Franciscan way life to the best of their ability.
5. Those sisters and brothers who continue to be absent from the fraternity gatherings and or other activities without becoming excused as above should be asked to meet with the council concerning this problem. After due consideration, the council may declare the person lapsed. All communications and actions must be noted in the minutes of the council meetings
6. All actions must be in accordance with the General Constitutions, and National Statutes.

Member Status

An Active Fraternity Member is one who participates both by attending fraternity meetings and by providing financial support to the community, or whom the fraternity has excused from such obligations. (Nat'l Statutes, Art. 18.7.a)

STATUS: ACTIVE OR EXCUSED

A Lapsed Fraternity Member is a brother or sister who neither attends meeting, supports the community financially, nor has valid reasons due to health, family, work or distance; and who, after personal invitations to return to fraternity, consciously and deliberately rejects or ignores the invitation. A lapsed member will not be carried on the fraternity membership roll nor reported as a member to higher fraternity councils. (Nat'l Statutes, Art. 18.7.b)

WE NEED THE DATE THE COUNCIL VOTES THE MEMBER LAPSED TO ENTER IT INTO THE NATIONAL DATABASE.

Moved: A member who moves away remains on the fraternity roster unless:

1. They submit transfer papers, or
2. After many attempts to contact the person, the council votes the member lapsed.

Some members move where there is no fraternity. They may request to be kept on your roster. Hopefully they will contribute to the common fund and will receive your newsletters and good wishes.

Transfers: We need the name of the fraternity the person is transferring into, the Region it is located in, and THE DATE.

Deaths: Please send the DATE of death. Again we need it to enter the information into the National Database and for the Regional Directory.

EXCUSED MEMBERS

The General Constitutions of 2000 have clarified the procedure to be used in cases of absent brothers and sisters and this procedure is the subject of this document. (An excused form is available online at the Five Franciscan Martyrs website: <http://www.franciscan-sfo.org> and should be reviewed annually unless deemed inappropriate).

Distinctions

The local Councils cannot treat all the absent brothers and sisters with the same criteria in due consideration of the fact that various types of hindrances exist:

The elderly and the sick. These people must be treated specially and be offered a special service by the Fraternity. The elderly have already contributed their share. If they cannot go to the Fraternity themselves, the active members must go to them and support them in every possible way, both spiritually and materially. Regarding financial contribution, they will continue to contribute, if possible, with the maximum comprehension and tolerance on the part of the Fraternity Council.

Sporadically hindered members. Those, who for any reason, are legitimately hindered from participating in the meetings, but not in a permanent manner. They must make a point of justifying their absence and possibly give prior notice. They should still contribute to the common fund.

Permanently hindered members. They can be brothers and sisters who cannot attend the Fraternity on a permanent basis for reasons connected with their work or studies, family commitments or change of residence to a location where there is no SFO fraternity. They do not cease to be Secular Franciscans for reasons such as these. They should explain their situation to the Council and ask for exemption from attending meetings. They should try to keep up to date with the life of the Fraternity also by making their financial contribution, which is a way of showing interest and communion with the Fraternity. The Fraternity, in turn, will find the means and way to keep in touch with them.

FIVE FRANCISCAN MARTYRS REGION
Secular Franciscan Order
REQUEST FOR EXCUSED STATUS

Fraternity _____

I, _____
(Name) (Date)

I request that my fraternity consider me an excused member for the period of one year (I will renew this annually as needed) or for a shorter period of _____ months.

I am unable to meet in community with my Franciscan brothers and sisters because:

Signature _____ Date _____

GUIDELINES FOR CELL GROUPS IN A FRATERNITY

*Where the situation and the needs of the members require it, sections or groups which gather members having particular needs, common interests, or the same choices, may be established within the fraternity **under the guidance of one council.***

Such groups can give themselves specific norms relative to their meetings and activities, firmly remaining faithful, however, to the requirements that arise from membership in the one fraternity. National statutes may establish criteria suitable for the formation and functioning of these sections or groups.

SFO General Constitutions - Article 34

Establishment of sections or cells

a. Should one or more groups desire to establish permanent sections within a local fraternity based on particular needs or common interests, they may do so subject to the direction of the Local Fraternity Council (cf General Constitutions - Article 50.2.d) so long as they continue to participate fully in the local fraternity's fraternal and apostolic life. The Regional fraternity will receive notice of the formation of such groups.

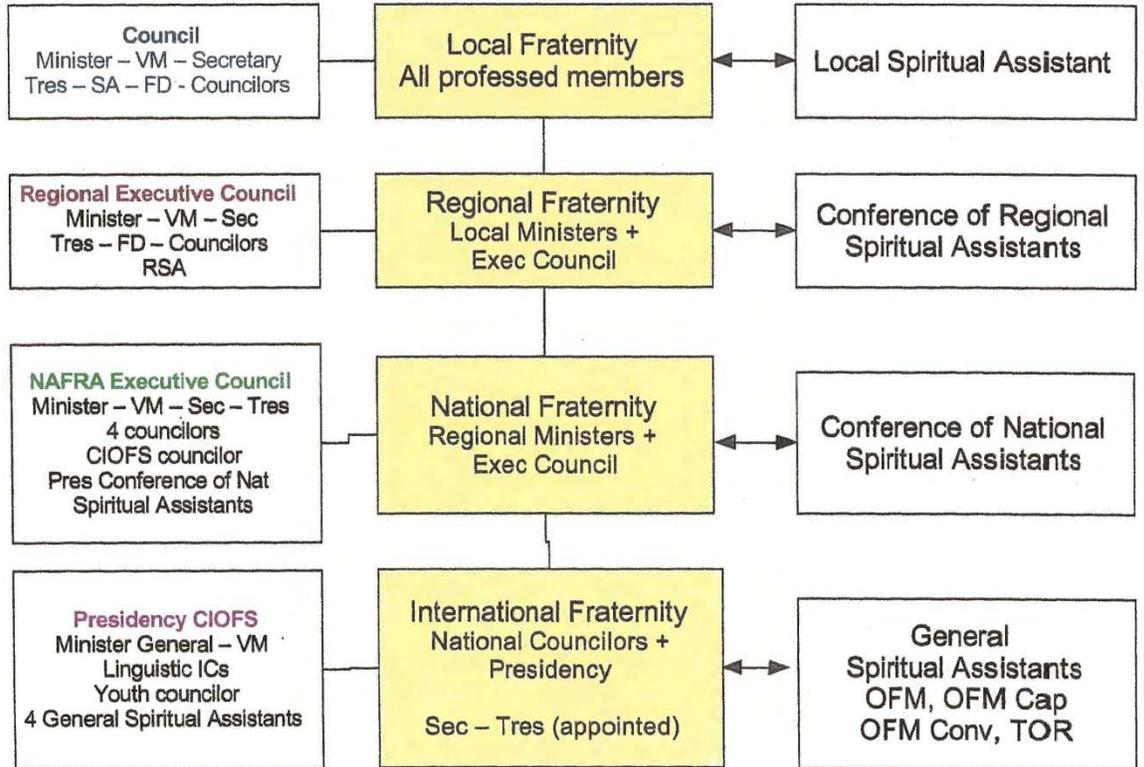
b. Such sections remain subject to the local fraternity as constituent parts of it. (cf General Constitutions - Article 34 -above)

USA National Statutes - Article 18.5.a.,b

We (CNSA) make the following recommendations for cells or sections within one fraternity.

1. A cell group may include people who wish to meet more than once a month in a more home-like setting or who may be linked to a special apostolate etc.
2. A cell group exists for the good of its members and the local fraternity. The cell people continue to support the activities and financial needs of the local fraternity as well as attending the regular gatherings of the local fraternity. The cell is part of the local fraternity. It may be good to spell out these issues in a written document when a cell is started. It is too easy for cell members to begin to withdraw from local fraternity life instead of nourishing it.
3. Initially the local fraternity council may appoint someone to lead the cell group. After the group is firmly established the members may take turns in leading the cell or section. Such action helps to develop leadership. A local fraternity may determine that one member of the cell becomes a non-voting member who attends the local Fraternity Council meetings as mutually determined.
4. A cell should see itself as contributing to the vibrancy of the local fraternity. This can only be accomplished if the members of the cell attend the local fraternity's regular gatherings. It is vitally important for cell leaders and the fraternity council to maintain both good communication and good relationships. *It is ONE FRATERNITY and it expects all its members to contribute energy, ideas, support and financial "fair share" to the local fraternity.*
5. Problem issues shall be mediated through common dialogue between the cell and the local fraternity council - the sooner, the better.

Structure of the Secular Franciscan Order



UNITED STATES WEBSITES AND ACRONYMS

REC	Regional Executive Council http://www.franciscan-sfo.org
NAFRA	National Fraternity www.nafra-sfo.org messages: klick@ieee.org
JPIC	Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Coordinator: Kent Ferris, ofs ferris@davenportdiocese.org
FAN	Franciscan Action Network www.franciscanaction.org
CIOFS	International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order www.ciofs.org/en.htm
TAU	National newsletter sent to all professed members

RECORD KEEPING



It is the responsibility of the outgoing council and minister to meet with the incoming council and minister to provide for the turnover of all records. The new council and minister should determine the principal location of the documents and records so that the regional councilors can readily access that information. Those records should be kept in a safe place and include:

1. Document of canonical establishment
2. Ritual
3. Rule
4. General Constitutions
5. National Statutes
6. A file containing guidelines for:
 - Elections local and regional
 - Duties of councilors
 - Reports to National and Region
7. History of the Region
8. Up-to date inventory of all equipment, which belongs to the region, such as computers, office furniture and miscellaneous supplies.

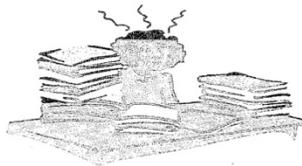
HARDBACK BINDERS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR:

- Minutes of council meetings.
- Ledger showing income, expenses and balance, treasurer's reports
- Formation Material

Also considered essential to keep files for:

- Correspondence by date
 - Formation material:
 - Guidelines for Initial Formation published by National formation commission.
 - Up-to date record of formation procedures including texts used.
 - Information for the National Data Base
9. It is the duty of the **regional councilor and minister** to see that **each local fraternity** has an up-to date register of the brothers and sisters which includes:
- Date of admission
 - Date of profession
 - Date of transfer, including fraternity of origin and destination.
 - Date of death

(Fraternal visitors will check this register)



Renewal of Commitment

"Let us bless our Lord and **God**, living and true; to him we must attribute all praise, glory, honor, blessing, and every good forever."

We thank you, Lord, for calling us to the **Secular** Franciscan Order. We ask your pardon for all our shortcomings, weaknesses, and transgressions against our commitment to the gospel life and against the Rule. We pray that you will allow us to experience once again the fervor and readiness of that first day when we entered the fraternity. We renew once again our commitment to the gospel life, according to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, until the end of our days. Grant also that we may live in harmony with our brothers and sisters, and may give witness to younger people of the great gift we received from you: our Franciscan calling to "go forth as witnesses and instruments of the Church's mission among all people proclaiming Christ by our life and words."

"All praise be yours, O Lord, through all that you have made." Amen.

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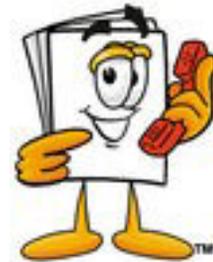
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Other items to consider:



1) **Annual Regional reports**

2) **Contact information for the Regional Executive Council**



3) **Your Regional Calendar**