Guidelines of the Regional Fraternity of the Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis of the Secular Franciscan Order

Introduction

We, the Regional Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) in the United States of America, called to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi, to provide for the life of the region and specifically for its organization and function, do establish and adopt these Guidelines.

All regulations not in accordance with the present *Regional Guidelines* are abrogated [cf. *General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order* (hereafter *General Constitutions*), article #7].

Section I

Organization and Structure

Article 1 - Regional Fraternity

The Regional Fraternity of Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis is an organic union of locally established fraternities, emerging communities, newly forming groups and reactivating fraternities. Middle and Eastern Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina and designated portions of Georgia and Alabama comprise the region. Memphis, Tennessee area is in the Saint Clare Region (74) and Mobile, Alabama area is in St. Joan of Arc Region (60). Southern Georgia is in Five Franciscan Martyrs Region (51). Regional fraternities may change boundaries if both regions agree, and the National Fraternity approves their request.

1. The regional fraternity is divided into five areas, each of which is served by at least one councilor.
2. The regional fraternity is animated and guided by a Council and Minister who are duly elected. [cf. *General Constitutions*, article #61:3]
3. The regional fraternity is organized and functions in conformity with the *Code of Canon Law*, and the following OFS documents: the *Rule*, the *Ritual*, the *General Constitutions*, the *National Statutes,* and these *Regional Guidelines*.

Article 2 - Governing Body

1. The governing body of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region is the Regional Fraternity Council. The Regional Executive Council (REC) acts on behalf of the Regional Fraternity Council when the members of the entire Council are not in session.

2. The *National Statutes* indicate the criteria for the organization of the OFS within the United States. The application of these criteria is left to the prudent judgment of the leaders of the fraternities concerned and of the National Council. [cf. General Constitutions, article #29:3]
3. The application of these criteria is described in these *Regional Guidelines* and may be amended by an absolute majority vote of all members of the Regional Fraternity Council.

Article 3 - Regional Fraternity Council

1. The Regional Fraternity Council will function in accordance with the *General Constitutions*, article #62 and the *National Statutes*, article #22.
2. The Regional Fraternity Council is composed of members of the Regional Executive Council, the ministers of every canonically established local fraternity in the region and the member(s) of the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants.
3. The Regional Fraternity Council has the following duties:

    a) To promote the spirit and life of the region.
    b) To exercise a prophetic role that challenges the members of the regional fraternity to new areas of growth in their Franciscan, ecclesial, and apostolic commitments.
    c) To vote upon proposed budgets. This shall include establishing the recommended fair share contribution to the regional fraternity from the local fraternities and groups.
    d) To vote upon amendments to these *Regional Guidelines*.
    e) To discuss, approve or disapprove recommendations from the Regional Executive Council.

Article 4 - Regional Executive Council

1. The Regional Executive Council will function in accordance with the *General Constitutions*, article #61:3 and the *National Statutes*, article #23.
2. The Regional Executive Council is composed of elected members, appointed members, and the regional spiritual assistant. Only the elected members and the spiritual assistant vote.
3. The Regional Fraternity is animated and guided by the REC. The REC shall include the following:

    - Regional Minister (elected)
    - Regional Vice Minister (elected)
    - Regional Secretary (elected)
    - Regional Treasurer (elected)
    - Regional Councilor Area[1] 1 (elected/minimum 1)

- Regional Councilor Area 2 (elected/minimum 1)
- Regional Councilor Area 3 (elected/minimum 1)
- Regional Councilor Area 4 (elected/minimum 1)
- Regional Councilor Area 5 (elected/minimum 1)
- Regional Formation Director (elected)
- Regional Spiritual Assistant(s)-Appointed by Province(s)

4. The REC must be composed of at least eight professed members, not including Regional Spiritual Assistant(s).
5. The Regional Spiritual Assistant shall be a member of the REC. Together with the Regional Fraternity Council, the Regional Spiritual Assistant provides for the spiritual welfare of the Regional Fraternity, assists in achieving the purpose of the Regional Fraternity Council and provides such other assistance and advice as may be requested from time to time.

    • If an elected member of the council is appointed to a vacant position within the council the elected member still retains voting privileges. The spiritual assistant does not vote on financial matters or in elections.

The Regional Executive Council has the following duties:

a) To exercise a prophetic role that challenges the members of the regional fraternity to new areas of growth in their Franciscan, ecclesial, and apostolic commitments.
b) To build relationships with local fraternities and groups by providing consistent informed guidance, leadership, and encouragement.
c) To foster cooperation and communion among the local fraternities and groups.
d) To propose recommendations to the Regional Fraternity Council and to implement the approved recommendations.
e) To foster relationships with other branches of the Franciscan family.
f) To make the charism of our Seraphic Father present in the life and mission of the Church.
g) To promote life-long commitment and knowledge of the Franciscan way of life.
h) To represent Secular Franciscans and promote mutual relationships with other church or civic organizations.
i) To follow the directives of “Process for Establishing a New Fraternity” in the *Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order* **(revised 2012)** when giving guidance to those wishing to establish a new fraternity. The following addition (1) and change (2) to the directives shall apply.

    1. If those wishing to form a new group belong to an existing fraternity, they submit a written request for approval to the council of that fraternity. The council acts on the request. If the council approves the request it is submitted to the Regional Executive Council for its approval. If the Local Executive Council and the Regional Executive Council approve the request,

the group is given status of newly forming group and “begins the process to fraternity status.”

2. When established the new fraternity holds its first chapter of elections for its council as soon as possible after establishment rather than one year after canonical establishment. The regional minister or representative presides at the elections and a member of the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants or representative witnesses the elections.

j) To obtain a facility, schedule a date, and plan the schedule for the Annual Regional Gatherings.
k) To appoint or reappoint the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Animator(s), Franciscan Youth and Young Adult (FY/YA) animator(s) and the Multicultural Commission animator(s) at least every three years.
l) To appoint or reappoint an editor for the Communio, the regional newsletter, at least every three years.
m) To make sure the treasurer is maintaining adequate records and discharging the duties of the office in a Franciscan manner. (cf. Fraternity Internal Controls and Treasury Guidelines, General 3)
n) To schedule a financial review every three years, just prior to end of the Council’s term of office. (cf. National Statues article #4.5)
o) To financially plan according to the Franciscan principles listed in *Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership* (revised 2010) – Leader Guide 14 adapted for regional use.
p) To periodically review these *Regional Guidelines*.
q) To appoint or reappoint a councilor(s) to the Emerging Communities or Newly Forming Groups every three years as needed.
r) To approve the formation program for the instruction of Inquirers, Candidates, and ongoing formation in the local fraternities.
s) To provide a forum for discussion of common problems and goals.
t) To be a voice in the public forum for Secular Franciscans.
u) To make fraternal and pastoral visits and chapters of elections to local Fraternities when requested and according to the provisions of the General Constitutions. Local fraternities are responsible for the travel costs, including possible stipends, for visitations and elections.
v) To provide in general for the life of Secular Franciscans at the level of the Regional Fraternity.

Article 5 - Duties of Members of the Regional Executive Council

The **Regional Minister** is the chief executive officer of the Regional Fraternity. The Regional Minister shall carry out the duties of his/her office as determined by the provisions in the National Statutes and General Constitutions, article #63. In addition to the duties prescribed by the guidelines of the Secular Franciscan Order, the Minister will:

1. Prepare, along with the regional treasurer and the regional secretary, the annual report to the regional fraternity and to the national fraternity. The annual regional report to the national fraternity will include the requested fair share contribution, the Treasurers Report and updated information as requested.
2. Prepare, along with the regional treasurer, a proposed annual budget. At least two weeks prior to the last meeting of the calendar year, the proposed budget will be forwarded to the Regional Fraternity Council.
3. Approve when necessary extraordinary (non-budgeted) expenditures, not to exceed one per cent (1%) of the annual regional budget.
4. Preside over the meetings of the REC and the Regional Fraternity Council.
5. Present the agenda for the regional council meetings.
6. Speak in all matters for the regional fraternity in any contacts with other church and civil organizations as well as with the general public. (GC 51.1)

The **Regional Vice Minister** shall carry out the duties of his/her office as determined by the provisions in the National Statutes and General Constitutions, article #52.1. In addition to the duties assigned by general and particular law, the Regional Vice Minister performs such duties as the Regional Fraternity Council may designate. (GC 52.1)

The **Regional Secretary** shall carry out the duties of his/her office as determined by the provisions in the National Statutes and General Constitutions, article 52.2. In addition, the Secretary will:

1. Record the minutes of Regional Fraternity Council Meetings and distribute them to the Regional Executive Council for review before the next scheduled Regional Executive Council - Commissions meeting.
2. Distribute the reviewed minutes of the Regional Fraternity Council Meetings within one month to the Regional Fraternity Council and the leaders of the newly forming groups and emerging communities and again at or before the next Regional Fraternity Council Meeting when the minutes will be approved.
3. Record the minutes of Regional Executive Council meetings and forward to the Regional Executive Council for review within one month.
4. Prepare a summary of the approved minutes of Regional Executive Council meetings and distribute them to the Regional Fraternity Council and the leaders of the newly forming groups and emerging communities.
5. Furnish a copy of the approved minutes of Regional Executive Council meetings (excluding personal or sensitive matters) *when requested* by a local minister or leader.
6. Assist the regional minister and regional treasurer with the annual report to the regional fraternity and the national fraternity.
7. Assist in maintaining the national database as needed.
8. Perform such other duties that the Regional Fraternity Council, Regional Executive Council and Regional Minister may designate.

The **Regional Treasurer** shall carry out the duties of his/her office as determined by the provisions in the National Statutes and General Constitutions, article #52.4. In addition, the Treasurer will:

1. Function in accordance with the Fraternity Internal Controls and Treasury Guidelines.
2. Assist the regional minister and the regional secretary with the annual report to the regional fraternity and to the national fraternity.
3. Send a copy of the approved budget to the region after it is approved by the Regional Fraternity Council. This approved budget shall be published in the regional newsletter.
4. Perform such other duties that the Regional Fraternity Council, the Regional Executive Council and the Regional Minister may designate.
5. Keep accounts of all money and is the overseer of the property of the Regional Fraternity, unless otherwise determined by the REC.
6. Deposit all funds of the Regional Fraternity in such bank accounts as the Regional Council designates and in the name of the Regional Fraternity (GC 52.4).
7. Make financial reports for approval at each regular meeting of the REC and Regional Fraternity Council.
8. Pay out money as the business of the regional fraternity may require on the order of the REC.
9. Arrange for an audit by a qualified accountant/auditor, preferably a professed member of the Secular Franciscan Order. The audit shall be conducted every three (3) years immediately prior to the regional executive council elections. Audits may be scheduled at other times if deemed prudent by the Minister or the Regional Executive Council.
10. Prepare and present an annual budget to the REC for approval.
11. Those authorized on the bank signature card are the Minister and Treasurer.

The **Regional Formation Director** shall carry out the duties of his/her office as determined by the provisions in the National Statutes and General Constitutions. In addition, the Formation Director will:

1. Assume the position of Regional Formation Commission Chair after being duly elected to the regional council and Facilitate the Regional Formation Team in the implementation of the nationally approved formation materials (GC 52.3; IS *13.1b)*
2. Involve the Regional Spiritual Assistant(s) in all formation including the development of formation programs.
3. Conduct the deliberations of the Regional Formation Commission and reports such deliberations to the Regional Executive Council.
4. Perform such other duties that the Regional Fraternity Council, Regional Executive Council, and the Regional Minister may designate.
5. Submit a regional formation report to the National Formation Director upon request.
6. Coordinate with the REC on topics related to ongoing formation.

The **Regional Area Councilors** have the following duties:

1. To serve on the Regional Formation Commission under the guidance of the Regional Formation Commission Chairperson.
2. To visit fraternities and groups within their assigned area when formation guidance is requested or needed.
3. To periodically contact all fraternities and groups within their assigned area no less than two times a year to encourage and discern if there are needs or problems.
4. To preside and confirm the elections of local fraternities and conduct fraternal visitations of fraternities and groups within their assigned area when requested by the Regional Executive Council.
5. To preside and confirm the elections of local fraternities and conduct fraternal visitations of fraternities and groups as a delegate to another area when requested by the Regional Executive Council.
6. To attend admissions, professions, canonical establishment ceremonies and other special events within their assigned area whenever possible.
7. To perform such other duties that the Regional Fraternity Council, Regional Executive Council and Regional Minister may designate.

Refer to the "*Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership*" (revised 2010) and the "*Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order*" (revised 2012) for further directives.

The **Regional Spiritual Assistant(s)** has the following pastoral responsibilities:

1. To serve the region in accordance with the Guidelines for Regional Spiritual Assistance as described in the *Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order* (revised *2012*) and the 2002 *Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order*.
2. To collaborate with the regional council in its work of animating and guiding the regional fraternity.
3. To help the regional council realize the spiritual dimension of its leadership to serve, animate and guide the regional fraternity.
4. To serve as a resource or agent for the formation process by means of the testimony of life, the effectiveness of preaching, and the quality of teaching.
5. To be involved with those responsible for formation on the regional level in the preparation of local formation directors and the development of coordinated local formation programs.
6. To build up the ecclesial, apostolic, and Franciscan community within the region by sharing the Eucharist and the Word.
7. To nourish the spiritual life, develop the Franciscan life, promote the apostolic life, and strengthen fraternity life through preaching and conferences, personal testimony and modeling, dialogue, and other efforts to animate the regional fraternity.

8. To exercise a prophetic role that challenges the members of the regional fraternity to new areas of growth in their Franciscan, ecclesial, and apostolic commitments.
9. To conduct Pastoral Visitations of local fraternities and groups or delegate this responsibility.
10. To witness and confirm elections of local fraternities or delegate this responsibility.
11. To participate in Annual Regional Gatherings and Regional Executive Council meetings whenever possible.

Section II

Voting and Conduct of Business

Article 6 – Convocation

1. The Regional Fraternity Council shall meet in person at least once a year. It shall also meet virtually at least once per year to approve the annual budget.

2. A quorum, which consists of more than fifty percent of those members eligible to vote, must be present at any regional fraternity meeting to conduct official business.

3. Only those elected members of the Regional Fraternity Council that are present at the meeting can vote. This includes delegates. No mechanism is in place for absentee balloting. As a member of the Regional Fraternity Council every minister of an established fraternity and every member of the Regional Executive Council has the responsibility to be present at the Regional Fraternity Council Meeting. If unable to be present the fraternity minister must delegate this responsibility to a professed member of their council or fraternity. The fraternity minister must give the delegate written authorization to vote.

4. The Regional Executive Council, prior to the last meeting of the Regional Fraternity Council of the year, shall appoint a nominating committee consisting of at least two members.

Article 7 - Elections

1. The Regional Fraternity Council will conduct elections for the regional offices of minister, vice minister, secretary, treasurer, formation director, area one councilor, area two councilor, area three councilor(s**),** area four councilor(s**)** and area five councilor(s**)** every three years in accordance with the *Rule*; the *Ritual*; the *General Constitutions*, articles #76, #77, #78, #79, and #80; the *National Statutes*, article #14:1 and #14:2 and these *Regional Guidelines*.
2. No member may simultaneously hold two elected regional offices.
3. All officers except the regional minister may also hold positions concurrently in their local fraternities or groups.

4. The regional minister may not hold any other elected or appointed position within the REC or the NEC and must vacate the position of regional minister if elected or appointed to any national fraternity office.
5. A local minister must vacate this position if elected regional minister.
6. The Regional Fraternity Council shall consult the *Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order* (- latest edition) for procedural information to complement and clarify the norms of elections.
7. Spiritual Assistants in training may continue, if previously elected, to serve on the local fraternity council. If minister or vice-minister, this individual can serve in that position until appointed to assist a local fraternity.
8. To be nominated to a council position the individual must be Professed for 2 years. (International Statues Article 8).
9. A married couple may not be elected to both minister and vice minister position.

In a Chapter of Elections at the local level, neither the Commissioned SA nor a SA in Training can be nominated or accept nomination for the position of minister or vice-minister. This same individual may be nominated as secretary, treasurer, formation director, or councilor and if elected serve until appointed to assist a local fraternity. They are encouraged to resign the position when and if appointed as Spiritual Assistant to a local fraternity. However, exceptions can be made for the good of the fraternity (i.e. like the exception made to allow for appointment as SA to their own fraternity). Local Spiritual Assistants are eligible for nomination and election at the Regional level.

It is recommended that prior to serving as local fraternity minister, the individual hold an elected position on the fraternity council.

Article 8 - Finances

1. The regional fraternity shall function in compliance with the Fraternity Internal Controls and Treasury Guidelines while demonstrating sensitivity to the financial circumstances of the local fraternities and groups in such matters as setting Fair Share amounts, travel expenses, regional gathering expenditures, etc.

2. Canonically established fraternities, emerging communities, newly forming groups and reactivating fraternities shall financially support the region.

3. Requests for financial assistance from fraternities and groups that face an unusual financial demand will be evaluated by the area councilor and a recommendation made to the Regional Executive Council.

    a) Ordinarily it is the responsibility of the individual local fraternities and groups to address unusual financial requests from its members. This does not prevent the fraternity from reimbursing members for expenses occurred on behalf of the fraternity.

b) The local and regional fraternity may not provide direct financial assistance to a fraternity member from the fraternity resources. This does not prevent the fraternity from reimbursing members for expenses incurred on behalf of the fraternity.
c) Fraternities and groups will provide a stipend to the Visitors for travel expenses in accordance with the *National Statutes*, article #18: 8.

Section III
Fraternal Life

Article 9 - Local Fraternity and Group Responsibilities

The local fraternity and group have the following responsibilities:

1. Exercise a prophetic role that challenges its members to new areas of growth in their Franciscan, ecclesial, and apostolic commitments.

2. Observe the Rule - article #25, which states the order of priority assigned to the necessary expenses: a) life of the fraternity; b) needs of worship; c) needs of the apostolate; d) needs of charity.

3. Pay appropriate expenses for local ministers and spiritual assistants, which precede and take precedence over any charitable contributions. This includes paying for the expenses of local ministers to attend regional meetings and the stipends usually given to local spiritual assistants.

4. Financially plan according to the Franciscan principles listed in the *Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership* (revised 2010) – Leader Guide 14.

5. Function in accordance with the Fraternity Internal Controls and Treasury Guidelines.

6. Submit the Annual Fraternity Report to the region when requested by the Regional Executive Council.

7. Determine the status of its members and submit the fair share contribution when requested by the Regional Executive Council. [cf. *National Statutes*, article #18:7].

8. Appoint one qualified professed member who does not serve on the local fraternity council to review the treasury records every year.

9. Notify the regional minister well in advance every third year to schedule a Chapter of Elections and request a Regional Fraternal Presider and Ecclesial Witness for the elections.

10. Determine that a quorum, which consists of more than fifty percent of those members eligible to vote, is present at any fraternity gathering before conducting official business.

11. Seek concurrence of the Regional Spiritual Assistant(s) prior to request for appointment of spiritual assistant.

12. Invite the outgoing minister to act in a consultative role and attend the gatherings of the newly elected council, if appropriate, to facilitate the transition in leadership.
13. Accommodate time schedules for Fraternal and Pastoral Visitations.

14. Encourage participation in the Annual Regional Gatherings.

15. Send fraternal news and encourage members to send personal testimonies and stories to the regional newsletter.

16. Purchase the *Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order* **(revised 2012)** for the spiritual assistant and fraternity or group and to use it as a resource.

17. Follow the directives of “Process for Establishing a New Fraternity” in the *Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order*. **(revised 2012)**

The following addition (a) and change (b) to the directives shall apply.

a) If those wishing to form a new group belong to an existing fraternity, they submit a written request for approval to the council of that fraternity. The council acts on the request. If the council approves the request it is submitted to the Regional Executive Council for their approval. If the Local fraternity Council and the Regional Executive Council approve the request, the group is given the status of newly forming group.
b) The new fraternity holds its first chapter of elections for its council as soon as possible after establishment rather than one year after canonical establishment. The regional minister or representative presides at the elections and a member of the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants or representative witnesses the elections.

18. To enhance its service as servant leaders by considering the recommendations in the *Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership*.

19. Member Status

The choices for OFS related persons are Visitor, Aspirant, Inquirer, Candidate, Professed, or Temporary Professed. Only Candidates and Professed (either permanent or temporary) are formally members of our order.

Refer to the Profession and Membership Status Primer, found in the OFS-USA Database User Guide, under Special Topics “Profession and Membership Status Primer for the definitions and categories that can be assigned.

20. Dealing with transfers from another fraternity (active members)

Fraternities should follow the procedures of the 4-page OFS-USA Transfer Form of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, approved December 2022.

The professed member informs the Council of the fraternity to which he or she is a member; and then makes the request, including the reason(s) for the transfer, to the minister of the fraternity to which he or she wishes to transfer. The Council makes its decision after having received the necessary information in writing from the fraternity of origin.

Before the transfer is complete, there must be a period of discernment (a minimum of several months from the submission of the transfer papers, but not more than a year). Modification of this time frame is left to the discretion of the receiving fraternity Council. During this time the transferring member and the Receiving Fraternity get to know each other. In addition, the Minister of the Receiving Fraternity must consult with the Minister of the Fraternity of Origin to obtain additional details about the transferee not contained in the transfer form.

When a professed member transfers from another regional fraternity, he or she may not run for a local or regional executive council position in the new region for several months after the transfer is complete.

22. Dealing with the return of inactive members (voluntarily withdrawn, suspended or inactive transferees)

Fraternities should handle these situations as follows:

1. Voluntarily withdrawn or suspended members must make a written request to be readmitted in accordance with Article 57 of the General Constitutions. The council shall then decide based on the relevant facts.
2. Prior to accepting the return of an inactive professed member (including transferees), or one who had voluntarily withdrawn or had been suspended, the local fraternity will exercise a period of discernment (recommended 9-12 months) during which time the member faithfully attends fraternity gatherings and participates in fraternity life. The local formation team and fraternity council will determine the necessary formation for the member using the current formation materials of BSSF Region. After the formation deemed necessary for this member and a secret vote by the council, the return/transfer will be approved or declined. The specific reasons for the decision of the council must be clearly documented.

3. Candidates who withdraw or are suspended from formation and wish to return later must start the formation process at the Orientation phase.

21. **Affiliates with a Local Fraternity**

Affiliation is a special form of association: “Those who, without belonging to the O.F.S., wish to participate in its life and activities (see GC Art. 53.5 and 103.1) according to Franciscan principles and teachings, may be welcomed by the local fraternity, so as to make their communion living and effective” National Statutes, Art. 18.13). Our association with the affiliates is a more formal recognition of the individual’s desire to share our Franciscan fraternal life.

The interested individual is encouraged to attend gatherings for six months prior to requesting affiliate status to allow for proper discernment by both the individual and the community as to the benefit of the relationship.

The BSSF Region recommends that “The affiliate will have his [her] own orientation phase to help develop an understanding of who we are as Secular Franciscans and to more fully experience and embrace the charism and priorities of St. Francis.” (O.F.S. Affiliate Educational/ Instructional Plan). It is the responsibility of the formation director to provide guidance during this orientation phase.

It is the local council’s responsibility to discern the affiliate’s Ongoing Process of Affiliation with the fraternity. Affiliates are required to submit a written request for renewal every two years.

It would be judicious for the local council to: thoughtfully read all referenced documents, understand, dialogue with membership, and agree with each other when considering someone for association as an affiliate in your fraternity.

References: (1) *General Constitution*, Art. #53:5 and #103.1
(2) *National Statutes*, Article 18:13
(3) O.F.S. Affiliate Educational/Instructional Plan (NAFRA website: Resources/Guidelines, Forms & Other Resources/Miscellaneous Items)

Article 10 - Regional Commissions

The commissions are Formation, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, Franciscan Youth and Young Adult, and Multicultural. They serve the regional fraternity, the local fraternities, emerging communities and newly forming groups in accordance with the directives of their mission statement. The Formation Commission is composed of the formation director, the area councilors, and the regional spiritual assistant(s). The

formation director serves as chairperson. The regional minister exercises a consultative role to all the commissions.

The Regional Formation Commission has for its purpose the promotion of optimum formation and a firm foundation to live the Secular Franciscan way of life through guidance. To give "spirit and life" to this purpose it will address orientation, initial and ongoing formation by identifying four pillars – Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity and Apostolate. The intent of addressing formation by these four pillars is to offer our members a "reality lived" mode of formation; uniformity and consistency in our formation; and to promote unity in our region.

The Regional Formation Commission assumes the following responsibilities:

1. To develop and promote a coordinated vision and common guidelines for formation in accordance with the *Rule*, chapter #3:23 and chapter #3:24.
2. To distribute National Formation Commission information to members of the Regional Formation Commission, local ministers, local leaders, and local formation directors.
3. To periodically report formation activities to the Regional Executive Council and the Regional Fraternity Council.
4. To give encouragement, guidance and information to the local fraternities and groups to enhance the spirit and life of their formation programs.
5. To evaluate the formation programs in local fraternities and groups.
6. To perform such other duties that the Regional Fraternity Council, Regional Executive Council and Regional Minister may delegate.
7. To use the National Formation Commission website including the Formation resource manual as a resource: https://secularfranciscansusa.org/formation-spirituality/

The Regional Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Animator serves the Region by concentrating on the areas of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. The animator works with local fraternities and individual Secular Franciscans to integrate these ideas into their Franciscan spirituality. The animator challenges the members to explore the basics of justice, peace, and integrity of creation from the perspective of the four pillars – Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity and Apostolate.

The Animator is non-voting member of the Regional Executive Council and periodically reports JPIC activities to the REC. In addition, he or she acts as a liaison between the National Fraternity by forwarding information from the National Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Animator.

The Regional Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Animator has the following responsibilities**:**

1. To develop a vision and common guidelines for the regional Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation activities.
2. To promote the apostolic expression of justice, peace, and integrity of creation in accordance with the Rule and the General Constitutions.
3. To communicate with National Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Animator(s) and distribute information to local Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation animators, and members of the Regional Fraternity Councils.

Article 11 - Franciscan Youth and Young Adult (FY/YA)

The **Regional Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission** has for its purpose to spread the Gospel and witness to Jesus Christ through ministry with Youth (under 18) and Young Adults (18 – 35). Led by professed OFS servant leaders who journey with young Catholics and share the Franciscan charism by their witness, Youth and Young Adults are called to enliven and enrich the Church, as well as the world, through formation specific to their needs, liturgies, and works of mercy, community building activities, social activities, and events.

The Regional Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission has an Animator that is appointed by the Regional Executive Council at least every three years.

The Regional Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Animator has the following responsibilities:

1. To promote FY/YA in accordance with the *Rule*, *General Constitutions*, National Statutes, Formation materials, International guidelines (CIOFS), and information regarding St. Francis of Assisi, St. Clare of Assisi, and Pope Francis, to advocate a Gospel life.
2. To develop and promote a coordinated focus, vision and guidelines for Youth and Young Adults in accord with the National Commission to bring the next generation of Catholics closer to Christ through Franciscan spiritual experiences.
3. To periodically report to the Regional Executive Council.
4. To encourage, guide and inform local fraternities and groups to enhance the life and spirit of their efforts in outreach to young Catholics.
5. To promote the outreach to young Catholics in local fraternities and groups utilizing the resources on the National website for the Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission.

Article 12 – Multicultural Commission

The racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the people in our five-state Region requires us to be agents of the new evangelization and make the Secular Franciscan Order a welcoming and inclusive home for everyone in our region, so that all people have a chance to discern a call to our Order. The mission of the multicultural commission is to

educate and raise the awareness of our Franciscan brothers and sisters in our region to the diversity in our region, our Church, and our fraternities.

The Regional Multicultural animator will:

1. To work with and assist the Regional Fraternity Council and local fraternities to assess the needs of the region to reach out to the Black more effectively, Hispanic, Asian, and other communities in our region.
2. Discuss lessons learned from and challenges and opportunities arising in the Regional fraternity Council and local fraternities.
3. Identify formation materials in Spanish and other languages that have been approved for use in the United States and help local fraternities obtain them.
4. Address the linguistic challenges inherent in ministering to any immigrant population.
5. Encourage the development of ongoing dialogue among our leaders and throughout the Secular Franciscan communities to deepen our experience of community and help us to be “joyful and ready to place ourselves on an equal basis with” one another (OFS Rule, Art. 13).
6. Develop effective strategies to attract, evangelize and form potential members to the Secular Franciscan Order.
7. Report its progress and lessons learned to the Regional Fraternity Council.

Article 13 - Further duties of the Regional Minister and Regional Executive Council

1. 1. Once every three years, the Regional Minister and the REC must request the National Minister to make a Fraternal Visit to the Regional Fraternity Council. A Fraternal Visit by the National Minister may also be requested at other times for important reasons. The Regional Fraternity Council will pay the stipend and travel expenses for the fraternal visitor(s).
2. Once every three years the Regional Minister, with the consent of the REC, must request a pastoral visit from the National Conference of Spiritual Assistants. The Regional Fraternity will pay the stipend and travel expenses for the pastoral visitor.
3. The Regional Minister is a member of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the OFS-USA (NAFRA) and is to attend its meetings. If he/she is impeded from attending the annual meeting of OFS-USA, he/she shall be represented by the Regional Vice Minister or, if necessary, by some other elected member of the REC designated by the REC.
4. The common fund of the Regional Fraternity Council shall pay the travel expenses of the REC when on official business.
5. All common funds paid by Fair Share should be used for operations of the region only as documented in the approved annual budget.

6. The Regional Fraternity contributes annually to the common fund of the National Fraternity as called for by the directives of OFS-USA.

Article 13 - Amendments

These guidelines may be amended, altered, or repealed and new guidelines may be adopted by a majority vote of the Regional Fraternity Council. The undersigned members of the REC do hereby certify that the Guidelines set forth were duly adopted by the Regional Fraternity Council at a meeting held on:
Date:
Minister: …….
Secretary: …….

Previously Amended:

Amended: July 29, 2001
Amended: September 28, 2003
Amended August 13, 2006
Amended August 8, 2009
Amended August 4, 2012
Amended August 8, 2015
Amended August 8, 2020
Amended March 26, 2024
Amended to bring in line with National Guidelines
Amended June 30, 2025
Amended to update for Five Areas